

Irvington Town Homes Testimony

LU 25-007018 HRM

Irvington Community Association
Land Use Committee

May 19, 2025

Proposed: Inconsistent Submission Documents



Modification Submission:

- Doesn't speak to 200' context
- Site plan & section indicate basement
- Alternate "B" Massing: more favored by LUC



Historic Resource Review Submission:

- An alternate "preferred" massing
- Does not align with planning documents
- Does not align with elevations
- Narrative does not reflect current design

ICA Testimony RE: LU-

ICA Land Use Committee (LUC) Applicant Engagement Approach:

The LUC seeks support our Irvington neighbors and the historic district character through the following:

- Review and advise developers and home owners on how to be most successful with PP&D to achieve their goals
- Offer history and experience of precedent and examples of previous approved (and rejected) projects and developments
- Despite insinuations, encourage and support thoughtful development that retains Irvington Historic District's character in concert with accommodating affordable multi-family housing

LUC Engagement with Applicant:

The LUC has engaged with this development team over many months:

- ICA Land Use Committee (LUC) began meeting with this applicant the fall of 2023
- LUC advised applicant that an “original” first town homes concept, with multiple double garage entries fronting Schuyler, would face opposition from PP&D and was considered a “non-starter” by LUC members.
- LUC encouraged applicant to pursue other planning and massing approaches
- LUC shared multiple other contributing and non-contributing multi-family development examples within the district for reference

This aerial map displays a residential neighborhood with property boundaries and addresses. A red rectangle highlights a specific area, and a red dashed line runs horizontally across the middle. Various properties are highlighted in yellow, green, and red.

Highlighted Properties:

- Yellow:** 1022-1036, 1410-1418
- Green:** 1819, 1803, 1816, 1223, 1233, 1306, 1311
- Red:** 1806-1808

Streets: NE 11th Ave, NE 12th Ave, NE 13th Ave, NE 14th Ave, NE Schu

Addresses: 1003, 1017, 1803, 1817, 1818-1820, 1823-1827, 1824, 1832, 1009-10, 1010-10, 1103, 1117, 1125, 1133, 1908, 1902, 1217, 1901-1903, 1909-1911, 1307, 1311, 1329, 1409, 1830, 1837, 1839, 1837, 1820, 1823-1827, 1839, 1404, 1414, 1816, 1804, 1730, 1011, 1015, 1025, 1120, 1205, 1222-1224, 1727, 1722-1726, 1312-1316, 1731, 1721, 1301, 1323-1337, 1405, 1411

Pertinent reference:

- Project site
- 200' zone of compatibility
- PP&D compatibility examples
- Multi-family Contributing structures
- Non-Contributing LUC referenced compatibility examples
- PP&D stated “transition” area
- Setback

Proposed Development Context



LUC Responses to Proposal

LUC Response to Proposal:

Overall, the LUC believes this proposal neither consistent with nor supportive of the historic district character directly (within 200') or the historic district character as a whole

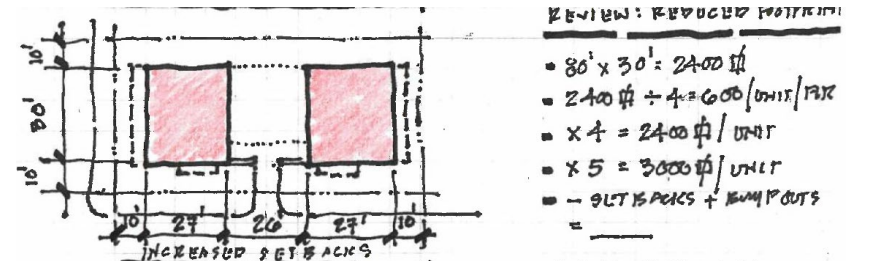
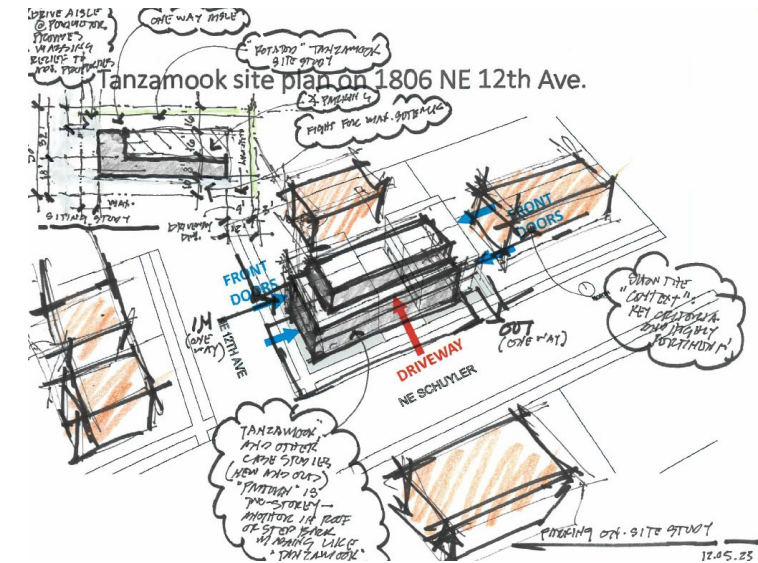
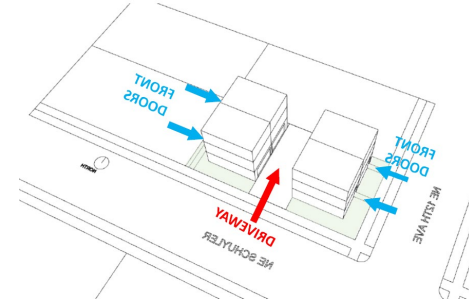
- The proposed development siting and massing is simply too large for this specific site
- The proposed development makes no siting, massing or architectural design effort to related to the adjacent contributing resources
- The size, scale and massing of the proposed development is too large for this specific 5000sf site, seemingly resulting in the need to seek relief through setback modifications
- The proposed development, both in siting and massing, does not well address, negotiate or support the PP&D stated goal of “transitioning” from the zoned density to the south to that to the north.

LUC Commentary:

As evidenced by examples shared as part of this testimony the LUC believes the applicant had ample opportunity to achieve a “win-win” design solution.

- Multiple contributing and non-contributing resources within the district have achieved equal developable area while also meeting minimum setback requirements
- Multiple contributing and non-contributing resources within the district have achieved equal developable area even at story lower than this proposed development
- Multiple contributing and non-contributing resources within the district have related to their specific siting context and the pedestrian experience through more responsive massing, scale and proportions

LUC Shared Precedents & Shared Analysis



Staff Report Criteria Areas of Focus

The LUC concurs that the most pertinent and applicable criteria for determining whether the proposed development meets or better meets the historic district approval criteria are Criteria #8 and #10. In summary and highlighted by the LUC, those criteria are the following:

Criteria #8. Architectural compatibility. New additions, exterior alterations, or new construction will be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features of the landmark or contributing resource and, if in a district, the district as a whole.

When retrofitting to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities or accommodate seismic improvements, design solutions will not compromise the architectural integrity of the landmark or contributing resource.

Criteria #10. Hierarchy of compatibility. New additions, exterior alterations, or new construction will be designed to be compatible primarily with the landmark or contributing resource and, if located within a district, secondarily with contributing resources within 200 feet and, finally, with the rest of the district. Where practical, compatibility in districts will be pursued on all three levels. The “onion” compatibility analytical methodology as utilized by PP&D historically (LUC note)

Review of Staff Report Criteria Analysis

Staff Report:

Upon review we believe the following staff report observations and conclusions are particularly pertinent and significant:

- “The subject site is non-contributing to the significance” of the district.
- This area of the historic district functions as a “transition area”
- Contributing structures within 200’ (abutting subject site) are no more than 2.5 stories in height and are set back substantially from their respective streets
- Staff cites only two contributing structures as precedent

ICA Response

The LUC does not believe this proposed development meets or better meet the criteria and has the following overarching responses:

- The proposed development size, massing and scale and proposed modifications do not meet or better meet the purpose of the standards
- LUC agrees that the site falls within a “transition area”; it is HOW the proposed development addresses and resolves that “transition” in terms of massing and siting
- Multiple multi-family structures in the “transition area” better negotiate size, scale and massing AND are setback further from the street.
- Allowable zoning and attendant FAR have historically been treated by PP&D staff and commission as subordinate to the historic district criteria and the purpose of the standards

Compatibility: Staff Report Precedent



The Bonnie Bray Apartments

The Bonnie Bray Apartments are beautiful, but its' success is distinguished from this proposed development by the following:

- This building is a decided “exception” within the neighborhood and the historic district character as a whole in terms of massing, size and scale and relationship to the street.
- The overall height and massing of this resource is mitigated along Hancock by the primary massing stepping back and away from the street by over 7.5’ along its’ longest elevation
- A series of two-story high entry bays along Schuyler Street help the larger massing “transition” down to the size and scale of the district on the north side of the street

Compatibility: Staff Report Precedent



The Rockaway Apartments

The Rockaway Apartments are also beautiful, but its' success is distinguished from this proposed development by the following:

- This contributing resource is also one of only a few of this size, scale and character in the district.
- Mass and setbacks do not conform to the defining character of the district as a whole
- The overall height, massing, size and scale of this resources is hugely mitigated by its' stepping back and away from the streets to create a large neighborhood-wide “shared” space



Modifications: Setbacks

Staff Report:

PP&D staff report addresses the setback modifications sought in the context of meeting or better meeting the purpose of the standards by stating and citing the following:

- Proposed development “contrasts slightly with lower rise multi-dwelling development”
- The cited comparables are exceptions to the pattern of the district as a whole, the “transition area” and the immediate context specifically
- “Retain and promote a reasonable physical relationship between residences”
- “Setbacks less than single-dwelling to the north”(of course)
- That the proposed development is “consistent with taller multi-dwelling development in the southern portion of the district”

LUC Response

As mentioned throughout the LUC review and analysis, approving the currently proposed setback modifications immediately places this structure at odds with its immediate and district-wide context and character:

- The proposed modifications do not demonstrate that this proposed development better meets the approval criteria
- The proposed modifications do not better meet the purpose of the setback standard
- The proposed siting of the structure makes no attempt to relate to or engage the contributing structures adjacent
- The reduction in setback along Schuyler presents is overwhelming and creates a non-pedestrian environment, unlike others nearby or elsewhere across the district
- The proposed minimal site setback on Schuyler is inconsistent with the pattern of both contributing and non-contributing multi-family resources the length of Schuyler Street

LUC Proposal Review Summary



LUC Recommendations:

LUC recommendations and proposed modifications to this proposed development include:

- Staff & applicant to affirm which massing concept they are proposing to build.
- Reject the request for modifications to setbacks, especially as pertains to NE Schuyler: 100' feet of street frontage
- Lower the overall height of the proposed structure by a story.
- At a minimum, regardless of modifications, Alternate "B" more closely reflects a responsiveness to the site specific context and the character of the district as a whole
- Recommend reconsideration for use of Basement (ADU?), "Shop" area (habitable!!) and deck area to accommodate additional habitable area, actually useable ADU and reflecting the single automobile parking

LUC Conclusions & Recommendations

LUC Response to Staff Report:

Upon review of the staff report conclusions and recommendations the LUC offers the following:

- LUC disagrees with staff key findings
- LUC disagrees with the staff conclusion that the proposed development meets approval criteria #8 and #10
- LUC disagrees with staff that the proposed setback modifications better meet the approval criteria were they not allowed.
- LUC disagrees with staff that the setback modifications meet the purpose of the standards
- LUC disagrees with staff conclusion that this proposed development is compatible with its immediate context (200') and the overall character of the district as a whole
- LUC notes that a tremendous amount of staff review dedicated to style and materials. No amount of care can compensate for the reduction in setbacks and overwhelming massing on this site.

LUC Recommendations:

LUC requested and proposed modifications to this proposal:

- Reject the request for modifications to setbacks, especially as pertains to NE Shuyler Avenue: 100' feet of street frontage
- At a minimum, regardless of modifications, the Alternate "B" more closely reflects a responsiveness to the site-specific context and the character of the district as a whole
- Lower the overall height of the proposed structure by a story.
- Recommend potential redesign opportunities such as reconsideration for use of Basement (ADU?), "Shop" area (habitable!!) and enclosure of deck areas to accommodate additional habitable area, create a desirable ADU and define space allocation reflecting the single automobile parking