

SLABTOWN - BLOCKS 294E/295E

Design Advice Request Hearing / March 19, 2015

WRITTEN NARRATIVE

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OVERVIEW OF SITE AND VICINITY

The site for the proposed development is commonly referred to as Block 294E and Block 295E (two City blocks with a 60'-wide not-yet-developed pedestrian accessway). Specifically, the blocks are along the western edge of NW 21st between NW Thurman and NW Raleigh Streets. They are part of the larger Con-way Master Plan area. Con-way Inc. traces its history to Leland James, who, in 1929, founded a small regional trucking company in Portland, named Consolidated Truck Lines. The company enjoyed great success through expansion and acquisition, and was later renamed Consolidated Freightways (CF). Today, Con-way delivers industry-leading services through its primary operating companies of Con-way Freight, Con-way Truckload, and Menlo Worldwide Logistics. These operating units provide industry-leading regional, inter-regional and national less-than-truckload (LTL); logistics, warehousing and supply chain management services; as well as full truckload freight transportation to the best companies across North America and around the globe. Con-way and its subsidiaries operate from more than 500 locations across North America and in 20 countries across five continents. Although Con-way's headquarters are now located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, they still control 25 acres in Northwest Portland, and will continue to maintain a presence in two large office buildings they currently occupy (in the Con-way masterplan they are referred to as Blocks 294W and 293).

Con-way's property is located within the boundaries of the Northwest Plan District. The aggregate site area contained within the proposed Master Plan limits, excluding current right-of-ways, is 762,168 sq. feet, or 17.49 acres. Present uses of the Con-way property include office, industrial, warehousing and surface parking. The property originally accommodated a trucking depot and truck maintenance facilities; it evolved over time to include headquarters office facilities that supported the trucking operations. Trucking operations have moved to off-site locales. Today, Con-way owns and occupies office buildings on Blocks 293 and 294. The balance of Con-way's site area includes paved lots which are used for vehicular parking.

Northwest Portland is recognized as the City's most intensely developed urban neighborhood – a place of diverse housing options, substantial employment, and regionally recognized destination retail. It is a close-in neighborhood with a mix of land uses located side-by-side in a compact geographic area. As noted in Appendix D of the approved Master Plan, as of 2009 population of Northwest Portland was estimated at close to 9,400 residents. And, while the district is known for a large supply of high value vintage older homes, nearly 90% of residential units district-wide (including apartments) are renter-occupied.

The northernmost boundary of the proposed Master Plan area is I-405, the southernmost boundary is NW Pettygrove Street, the westernmost boundary is NW 22nd Avenue and the easternmost boundary is almost to NW 20th Avenue. NW 21st (included within the Master Plan area boundary) and NW 23rd Avenues are the major north-south commercial corridors of the Northwest Plan District. They can be characterized as successful, vibrant retail streets offering amenities like small retailers, boutique shops and a wide-range of restaurants to residents, office workers, and visitors including tourists. The proposed Master Plan is unlike the rest of the district in that it includes a vast area of surface parking lots and a few large office buildings.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Slabtown Blocks 294/295 project consists of a 2 block development on the west side of NW 21st Street, between NW Raleigh and NW Thurman. The proposed development will include 2 new mixed-use residential buildings with ground floor retail over a continuous 2 level underground parking structure.

- Block 295E will include approximately 158 apartment units over a retail/service base. The block is comprised of two buildings: a 6 story, 5 over 1 “L” shaped mixed-use building and a three story residential building. Preliminary materials include; Exterior building materials are primarily brick, with accents of glass storefront and metal panel, fiberglass windows, glass and metal balcony railings. Ground floor retail spaces have a variety of storefronts including natural wood, painted wood, aluminum storefront and metal canopies.
- Block 294E will be approximately 212 apartment units over a retail/service base (14 story concrete structure). The building is comprised of variety of building masses: one story at the main building entry, two story at the SE corner, 7 story with a 1 story glass penthouse, and a 12 story with a 2 story penthouse. Preliminary materials include; Exterior building materials are primarily brick, with accents of glass storefront, metal louvers, precast concrete window surrounds, painted metal sunshades, divided lite windows, and glass and metal balcony railings. Ground floor retail spaces have a variety of storefronts including natural wood, painted wood, aluminum and storefronts, metal canopies, and fabric awnings.
- The underground parking will provide parking for approximately 600 cars and 500+ bikes. Half of these parking stalls are replacement parking for Conway's existing surface parking lot and are the programmatic requirement to allow any redevelopment to proceed on this site.

This two-block development will be part of Cairn Pacific LLC development teams current five-block development in the Conway Master Plan district. Cairn Pacific LLC is the development team for the, currently under construction, Block 296 LL Hawkins/New Seasons project, as well as the development team for the redevelopment of the existing warehouse at Block 295W into a new Creative Office building which has a pending pre-application meeting on March 17th.

The Conway Master Plan has two open space requirements: a pedestrian accessway linking blocks 294 and 295 to 296 and a building forecourt along NW Savier in the southern portion of Block 294E.

NW Savier between NW 21st and NW 22nd is currently a private street. The intent of this project is for this portion of NW Savier to remain as a private street. The current master plan is unclear about the extent of Savier that is to remain private or public. To resolve this condition, a separate Master Plan Amendment is under development to resolve this issue through a separate Design Review process.

Final stormwater disposal methods are still under consideration but treatment and detention on site with eco-roofs, bio-planters, and on site water features in conjunction with possible stormwater use for toilet flushing and irrigation are being seriously investigated and considered.

To develop buildings that are appropriately scaled to the neighborhood. Façades have well articulated and offer diversity in volume and form along the street edge. The proposed buildings are divided into bays of varying width and color with differentiation also expressed at the individual ground floor tenant spaces, with additional variations in the fenestration and other details at the upper levels. The building is playful but not chaotic, modern yet traditional. Canopies are also provided at the street level to provide human scale. Although the building is to be constructed of brick forms, the significant amount of fenestration proposed lends to a feeling of lightness that will not overwhelm the sidewalk experience. The design is playful in its diversity of form, volume, and detail, but reads as an elegant introduction into the neighborhood.

DESIGN ADVICE REQUESTED

The project is a large multi-block development covering 116,385 total square feet of site area (Blocks 294E and 295E). Much of the existing utility infrastructure is being demolished, removed, and rebuilt including district scaled water mains, district scaled combo sanitary/storm lines, an at grade electrical transformer serving an existing building, and replacing a privately owned portion of street along NW Savier where the new 2 story underground garage will be built. The team has focused the first 3 months of design efforts on understanding the complexities of keeping the existing buildings in operation during construction activities, providing the necessary infrastructure improvements needed for the scale of the proposed development, and ensuring the urban design character as described in the Con-way Masterplan. As such, it is our team's intention to focus this DAR Hearing around the urban design, building massing, and site specific infrastructure features of the proposed development with specific comments about building design to be discussed at the future Design Review Hearing. That said, for your reference, included in this submittal are conceptual building sketches and plans to aid in the general understanding of the development.

Specific Design Advice being requested:

1. General commentary on the location of main building entries: the Block 294E main building entry is located mid-block along NW Savier street at the masterplan required building forecourt and the Block 295E main building entry is located on the southeast corner of the block along NW Raleigh street.

** See Appendix B, page 8*

2. It is the team's desire to continue the design strategies from Block 296 (LL Hawkins and New Seasons currently under construction) to provide a variety of building heights and masses. To that end, building massing and orientation on Blocks 294E and 295E have been studied and carefully articulated. Please comment on design approach to overall building massing, scale, and urban site design.

** See Appendix B, pages 12 & 13*

3. The pedestrian accessway is discussed in the Con-way masterplan (pages 76 and 97). Within the required 60' width, the masterplan calls for a 40' minimum clear width. The proposed design solution anticipates a small 20' x 25' shuttle elevator "pavilion" between the existing building on Block 294W and the proposed high-rise on Block 294E. This building would provide direct access for Con-way employees from the underground parking structure to the pedestrian accessway. Please comment on the design solution to locate the pavilion within the 60' pedestrian accessway and still provide the required 40' minimum clear width.

** See Appendix B, pages 8 & 20*

4. The 2 story, 2 block long underground parking garage requires significant garage supply and exhaust louvers for ventilation. On previous projects with large underground multi-block parking structures, the size and location of garage exhaust has been challenging (Hassalo on Eighth, Brewery Blocks, and the Center for Health and Healing in South Waterfront). The current design approach for the garage exhaust louvers is varied: into the building on 294E and side-walling out along NW Thurman as well as out along the pedestrian accessway, integrated into the garage shuttle elevator within the pedestrian accessway on Block 294, integrated into plantings and benches in the pedestrian accessway on Block 295, and up and through the building of block 295. Please comment on the variety of design solutions.

** See Appendix B, pages 10, 11, 20 & 25*

5. The required Block 294E Forecourt is discussed in the Con-way masterplan (page 77). The design team's intent for the programming and design of the forecourt is for a variety of uses: flexible public space, main building entry to the high-rise on Block 294E, public open space in the form of a landscape garden, and location of stormwater detention and treatment. The team is also considering a modest pavilion for a small cafe or coffee shop at the southwest corner of the forecourt. Please comment.

** See Appendix B, pages 8, 13, 19, 20, 30 - 31, 33 & 34*

6. The Con-way masterplan describes NW Savier between the pedestrian accessway and NW 21st to be dedicated from a private ROW to a public street. The design team has worked with PBOT to retain this section of Savier as a private street with a public easement. There are a number of critically important reasons for this including keeping the visual consistency of NW Savier from 22nd to 21st, to allow for a visual connection of the pedestrian accessway from 295 to 294, to allow for better flexibility of the needed infrastructure improvements, and reducing the cost of the underground parking garage. This requires a modification to the approved masterplan. Please comment.

** See Appendix B, pages 7 - 11, 13, 30 - 34*

7. On Block 295E the team is proposing internal private alleyways serving the ground floor apartments. Please comment.

** See Appendix B, pages 15, 25, 30 - 31, 34*

8. The Con-way masterplan describes streets where garage access and loading docks are prohibited (page 90). Block 294 has four frontages: one is a pedestrian accessway (without vehicular access), one has a required forecourt (where the design team does not think a garage entry or loading access is appropriate) and the other two are prohibited for garage access. The most logical and appropriate solution is to locate garage loading and access along NW Thurman where it is currently prohibited. This requires a modification to the approved masterplan. Please comment.

** See Appendix B, pages 9, 10, 11 & 20*

9. The proposed development will require the relocation of one at grade existing transformer and the integration of 5 new transformers. The design team has worked with PBOT and the local utility provider (PGE) to find a solution we believe is approvable to Design Commission. That proposed solution is to locate three transformers within the building on Block 294E on the ground floor, two transformers in one underground vault in a curb extension along NW 21st to serve Block 295, and one transformer in an underground vault in the private street along NW Savier on the southern portion of Block 294W. Given the current challenges with transformer and vault configurations, the team would like Design Commission feedback on the proposed transformer and vault design solution.

** See Appendix B, pages 9, 10, 20 & 25*

10. The Con-way masterplan describes required ground floor retail along NW 21st and required dimensions (pages 40 and 47). The design team is proposing ground floor retail in the required locations, but is seeking minor modifications to the required depth (less than 50'). Please comment.

** See Appendix B, pages 20 & 25*