

**MEMO**

**Date:** January 27, 2021

**Project:** West Powell Apartments, DRE/TR 20-26000305

**Location:** 225 W Powell Blvd., Gresham OR 97030

**Topic:** Continued Hearing February 3, 2021

**From:** John Heili, Associate Development Planner

**To:** Design Commission

**Attachments:** Exhibit A - Applicant’s Narrative Response

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On January 6, 2021, the Design Commission hearing for the West Powell Apartments development permit application (DRE/TR 20-26000305) was continued to January 20, 2021 to allow time for the applicant to address the Commission’s concerns with the proposal that included the following comments:

- The applicant was encouraged to further explore the design guidelines to create a more cohesive, simpler building design. Items to be addressed are summarized as follows:
  - For both buildings, consider alternate regional materials that might include more contemporary brick (dark color) and not rusticated; natural wood elements; an alternate to board and batten or modify batten sizes and spacing; alternate paint colors; and alternate window frame color.
  - For both buildings, consider fewer horizontal alignments and more vertical alignments, and reconfigure the window/PTAC assembly accordingly. Do more to integrate or screen the PTACs.
  - For Building B, consider moving the canopy above the transom panel to give retail space a more vertical feel. Consider a more contemporary glazing system for the retail spaces. Consider eliminating the base at the storefront windows and extend the glazing to the floor.

At the applicant’s request, the hearing was continued again to February 3, 2021. In response to the Commission’s comments on the buildings’ design, the applicant has provided revised design drawings with a summary of their design response. The summary is attached to this memo (Exhibit A). The revised drawing sheets are in the Drawings and Hearing Body folders in ePlan.

The proposal’s compliance with the Downtown District Design Standards and Guidelines was originally evaluated in the Staff Report dated December 30, 2020 and at the January 6 Design Commission hearing. This Staff Memo discusses how the proposed design revisions address the site and building design guidelines or standards where changes to findings in the original Staff

Report are necessary. This Memo also addresses the applicant's response to the public comment regarding the parking lot tree species received during the January 20 hearing and contains potential amendments to the conditions of approval to address updates to the site design.

## **DOWNTOWN DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

### **Site Design**

#### **4.1151(A)(3) - Walkways and Pedestrian Circulation**

The applicant has shown compliance with the design guidelines by meeting the clear and objective standards of this section. The revised design now complies with the standard 4.1151(A)(3)(d)(1) - Walkway Connections to Public Sidewalks because a walkway has been added along the rear of Building B which connects to the building pass-through across the public plaza to the public sidewalk on W Powell Boulevard. If acceptable to the Commission, this revision negates the need for Condition of Approval #11 that addressed the lack of an accessible route from the accessible parking stall to the ground level residential units in Building B and modifies Condition of Approval #19 as indicated in the Conditions of Approval section of this memo.

### **Building Design**

#### **4.1151(B)(1) - Massing**

The applicant has shown compliance with the design guidelines by meeting the clear and objective standards of this section except as follows. Application of the guidelines for 4.1151(B)(1)(C)(1) - Minimum Building Mass or Volume Change and 4.1151(B)(1)(C)(4) - DCC Upper Level Building Step Backs still applies to the revised building design. In addition, the revisions now require consideration of the guideline for the following item.

#### **4.1151(B)(1)(d)(10) - Distinct Building Base and Top for Multifamily Development.**

The prior iteration of the design for Building A included a change in siding type and paint color between the two lower floors and the two upper floors in compliance with the standard. This material transition has been eliminated to provide a simplified façade treatment. This standard and guideline prescribe criteria for differentiating between the base and the top of the building to enhance the pedestrian realm. Staff would like the Commission's input on whether the revised design warrants waiving the standard and guideline in support of this alternate design approach.

#### **4.1151(B)(2) - Façade Composition.**

The applicant has shown compliance with the design guidelines by meeting the clear and objective standards of this section except as follows. Application of the standards and guidelines for 4.1151(B)(2)(D)(1) - Screening of Mechanical and Communication Equipment and

Components and 4.1151(B)(2)(C)(2) - Through-Wall Heating/Cooling Systems still applies to the revised building design.

The façade treatment at the PTAC systems has been revised to incorporate a perforated metal wall panel set flush with the wall surface, aligning with the window system, and finished to match the adjacent wall surface. This guideline prescribes that through wall units shall not detract from the building architecture and façade composition and shall be designed to minimize their visibility in a manner that is integrated into the building's overall architectural design, facade composition, and detailing. Staff would like the Commissions' input on whether the revised design meets this guideline.

In addition, the revisions now require consideration of the guideline for the following item.

**4.1151(B)(2)(d)(11) - Window Recess for Multifamily Developments.**

The prior iteration of the design for Building A met this standard because it included a 2-inch recess for all windows while the revised design proposes the windows adjacent to PTAC's are recessed less than 2 inches from the adjacent wall finishes and instead proposed that those wall finishes are recessed 2 inches from the abutting board and batten wall finish. The guideline prescribes windows shall be used to provide articulation and designed to create depth and shadows and to emphasize wall thickness and give expression to residential buildings. Staff would like the Commission's input on whether the revised design meets this guideline or whether the revised design warrants waiving the standard and guideline in support of this alternate design approach.

**4.1151(B)(3) - Ground-level Details.**

The applicant has shown compliance with the design guidelines by meeting the clear and objective standards of this section except as follows. Application of the guidelines for 4.1151(B)(3)(C)(6) - Multifamily Ground Floor Use and 4.1151(B)(3)(C)(7) - Street-Facing Facades Ground-Floor Features still applies to the revised building design.

The raised planter configuration at the westernmost ground level unit has been revised to extend the full width of the unit adjacent to the entry stairs in lieu of the transition to an at-grade planter. These guidelines prescribe features and design strategies that distinguish between the public and private realms and that create defensible space and a separation between public and private spaces along ground level street facing facades of multifamily developments. Staff would like the Commission's input on whether the revised design meets this guideline or whether a continuous 30-inch-high evergreen hedge is necessary as required by Condition of Approval #16(f).

In addition, the revisions now require consideration of the guideline for the following item.

**4.1151(B)(3)(d)(2) - Storefront Bulkhead for Commercial Developments.**

The prior iteration of the design for Building B met this standard because it included a concrete bulkhead at the storefront adjacent to the commercial area of the building while the revised

design proposes the storefront extend to the ground level floor line in support of a more refined façade design. The guideline prescribes storefront windows shall utilize a bulkhead or other design feature to transition the building to the ground and establish depth and interest in the facade. Staff would like the Commission’s input on whether the revised design warrants waiving the standard and guideline in support of this alternate design approach to refine the façade design.

**4.1151(B)(5) - Transparency.**

The applicant has shown compliance with the design guidelines by meeting the clear and objective standards of this section. The revised design now complies with the 50 percent transparency of standard 4.1151(B)(5)(D)(2)(a) - Ground-Floor Transparency by Street Type.

**4.1151(B)(9) - Materials.**

The applicant has shown compliance with the design guidelines by meeting the clear and objective standards of this section. The revised design now complies with the 65 percent primary material standard for all facades for both buildings because the wood board and batten siding is classified as a primary material and has replaced the areas of previously proposed areas of fiber reinforced cement siding classified as a secondary material as prescribed by the standards of 4.1151(B)(9)(D)(1) - Building Façade Materials.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

At the January 20 Design Commission hearing for the continuation of this project, public comment from James Buck was entered into the record. Mr. Buck noted the Chanticleer Pear tree species, proposed by the applicant, is already prominent in Downtown Gresham, including on the site located directly east of the project site. Given the prominence of the Chanticleer Pear in Downtown, Mr. Buck felt that a different variety of tree would be beneficial to the proposed development and recommended the following species as alternates: Parrotia “Vanessa,” Nyssa “Afterburner” (a tupelo), or Ulmus “Frontier” (an elm).

The applicant has provided an updated landscape plan that has revised the previously specified Chanticleer Pear trees to the Nyssa “Afterburner” species.

**CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

The applicant has amended elevations, details, floor plans, and renderings for the Commission’s consideration in response to the comments of the Design Commission hearing of January 6, 2021. Those changes, if acceptable to the Design Commission, require modifications to staff’s original findings and conditions of approval of the Staff Report dated December 30, 2020. Staff recommends the Commission update the conditions of approval as follows:

- **AMEND Condition of Approval #16(e)** to state: *Parking area trees shall be of a species selected from the City of Gresham Right Tree in the Right Place Approved Tree List excluding the specified Chanticleer Pear trees which might be replaced with the following species of trees at the*

*applicant's discretion: Parrotia "Vanessa," Nyssa "Afterburner" (a tupelo), or Ulmus "Frontier" (an elm).*

Depending on the outcome of the Commission's discussion during the upcoming hearing, the Commission may wish to also alter the recommended conditions of approval as follows:

- **STRIKE Condition of Approval #11:** *requiring the building permit submittal drawings demonstrate an accessible parking stall located adjacent to the accessible route to the ground floor units of Building B.*
- **STRIKE Condition of Approval #16(f):** *requiring the building permit submittal drawings demonstrate a continuous row of minimum 30-inch-high evergreen shrubs shall be provided at the in-grade planter area adjacent to the north-facing façade of the western-most ground level unit of Building A.*
- **Amend Condition of Approval #19:** *requiring the building permit submittal include an updated drawing Sheet 114 P-14 Preliminary Photometric Plan indicating lighting for the walkway along the rear of Building B in compliance with Table 4.1151(A)(3).*

## EXHIBIT A



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### REVISED BUILDING DESIGN NARRATIVE 225 W.Powell Blvd. Gresham, OR 97030

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26th of January, 2021

John Heili, LEED AP - Associate Development Planner  
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To whom it may concern,

Thank you for assisting in the redesign efforts for 225 W. Powell Blvd. We appreciate any and all feedback that will help us achieve a design that will suit the needs of the Downtown Gresham neighborhood while offering a visually interesting and pleasing aesthetic.

We have addressed several concerns of the design committee as follows:

- 1. For both buildings; consider alternate regional materials that might include more contemporary brick (dark color) and not rusticated, natural wood elements, an alternate to board and batten or modify batten sizes and spacing, alternate paint colors, alternate window frame color.*

Per the issue stated, the design of the buildings has been updated to include a darker paint scheme and black window frames throughout. In addition to the darker paint we have omitted the horizontal lap siding entirely and substituted real wood board and batten throughout. The batten strips shall be spaced intermittently at 12", 16", and 24". We feel that these changes have modernized the appearance of the buildings while contributing to the overall vertical emphasis therein. The decision was made to keep the rusticated Westport brick with dark grout as we feel this color change offers a pleasant and necessary texture contrast to the design of the buildings.

2. *For both buildings; consider less horizontal alignments and more vertical alignments, reconfigure the window/ptac assembly accordingly. Do more to integrate or screen the ptacs.*

To address the above stated concerns, the design of the buildings has been updated to, once again, promote the overall vertical emphasis throughout with the addition of batten strips in lieu of horizontal lap siding. Also, the buildings have been updated to showcase shallow vertical window bays wherever the use of PTACs have been incorporated. Within these window bays, there have been perforated sheet metal screens added to hide the HVAC units with paint to match the black window frames. The screening will span the window bay and offer an architectural detail worthy of the DCC.

3. *For Bldg. B.; consider moving the canopy above the transom panel to give retail space a more vertical feel. Consider more contemporary glazing system at retail spaces. Consider eliminating base at storefront windows and extend glazing to floor.*

Per the concerns stated above, the design of the buildings has been updated by moving the canopy to above the transom windows while aligning all storefront windows to match the residential unit windows. This not only offers a more contemporary feel to the storefront glazing, but also contributes to the overall vertical emphasis of the revised building design. In addition, the concrete bulkheads have been removed from Bldg. B. and the glazing has been extended to the floor.

4. *You should probably also address the ped. access issue to bld. B so we can adjust the conditions of approval accordingly.*

To satisfy this concern, we have extended the pedestrian access along the north side of Bldg. B. to the ADA parking and pass-through at the east stair location. This provides ease of access to the ground floor residential units from ADA parking.

In addition to this site update, we have also omitted the fruit trees from the initial site plan (please reference AKS Site Plan).

Sincerely,

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