

CITY OF OLYMPIA
Olympia Design Review Board

COMBINED DESIGN REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
October 24, 2024

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| Case Number/Name: | 24-4519 Easterly Apartments Phase II |
| Applicant: | Aaron Angelo Development, LTD |
| Representative: | Josh Gobel, Carve Architects |
| Site Address: | 909/929 Eastside Street SE |
| Project Description: | Demolition of an existing building and add on to the adjacent existing 3 story apartment building with 18-residential unit addition. |
| Zoning District: | PO/RM- Professional Office/Residential Multifamily |
| Design Review Criteria: | 18.120 Downtown Design Criteria- Sub-District- Residential Neighborhood |
| Comprehensive Plan: | High Density Neighborhood / Professional Office Multi-Family |
| Notification: | Notice of the Project Informational Meeting, Application, and Design Review Board Meeting was posted on the site and mailed to the adjacent property owners within 300 feet of the project and to the recognized neighborhood associations in the area on September 4, 2024. |
| Board Responsibility: | The Board will make a recommendation to the Community Planning and Development Department (CPD) Director regarding the adequacy of the projects design. This application is for both conceptual design review and detail review combined and requires review of the applicable design criteria within the Olympia Municipal Code. In situations where explicit compliance is not feasible, the Olympia Municipal Code encourages creative solutions in meeting the requirements as long as these design solutions are equal to, or better than, the guidelines listed in the requirement sections. |
| Land Use Review: | The proposal is currently under review by the Site Plan Review Committee; no decision will be made until after that review is complete. A SEPA Determination has not yet been made. |

Project Overview:

At the time that Phase one went before the Board back in March of 2018, the project was reviewed for compliance of the Multifamily Residential Design Criteria. Since 2018, the City has adopted new Design Criteria for projects that are in the Downtown Design District, as which this parcel is located within.

This parcel is located within 2 different sub-districts of Downtown for design review, Residential Neighborhood and Business Corridor. Per OMC 18.120.1202, when there are two or more sub-districts that could be applied, the applicant may select which sub-district that they want to design there project around. In this case, the applicant has chosen the Residential Neighborhood sub-district.

The project consists of demolition of an existing building previously used as a credit union located at the corner of 10th Avenue and Eastside Street. The project will be to add onto the existing Easterly Apartments located just north of the site with an 18 residential unit addition.

The downtown design criteria is unique in that it is akin to a chose your own design with a menu of options to provide to ensure compliance to certain code requirements. There are seemingly limitless ways in which the code can be satisfied. To help the Board better understand the specific route chosen for this project, Staff has provided analysis for several code criteria much like one would typically find in the Design Review Checklist. The code requirement and analysis from Staff is provided. Ultimately, staff has found the project complies with all criteria and has not added conditions of approval for this project.

Review of Design Criteria:

This project is required to comply with the Residential Neighborhood design criteria of Downtown. The general objective of this sub-district states the following:

This Sub-District is envisioned as an urban residential neighborhood with a mix of uses and architectural variety in building types with landscape plantings in streetscapes, medians, and on private property. Office development is expected where zoning allows. New development is anticipated and is expected to be compatible with the residential character. Retaining historic buildings is encouraged.

18.120.220 Street Fronts. This code section addresses street frontage, ground floor setbacks, sidewalk access and surface parking areas requirements for the different type of street designation the site is subject to.

Staff Findings: Eastside Street and 10th Avenue are both a Type “C” Streets designation. Typically, this code section would require that the building be brought up to the street edge, but since this building is in the Residential Neighborhood there is an exception that allows to setback the ground floor up to 10 feet to allow front yards that include lawns and/or landscaping. The design of this development captures this intent with ground floor units along Eastside Street. It provides open space with landscaping, fencing for privacy and direct access to the street for those tenants which also mirrors what is provided in the existing apartment building. There are no ground floor units that are proposed along 10th Avenue, but the applicant has provided a covered secondary entrance that provides additional access to the building from that street edge. There is an existing surface parking area that is located at the rear of the parcel and fronting sidewalk access is provided.

18.20.270 Multifamily open space: All new multifamily buildings with five or more residential units must provide open space.

Staff Findings: The existing apartment building (phase 1) was designed and approved without any large-scale open space amenities because it was not a requirement at that time. Interestingly, the project did provide front yard open space for the ground level units which would be counted if current code were used. The addition follows the same open space being provided for the ground floor units only and within the applicant’s response, the proposal will be providing on-site indoor recreation facilities located in the basement areas (though the plans do not show this). Staff wants to bring it to the Boards attention that within this code section there is an exemption that indicates that this subsection does not apply to remodeling of existing residential units or additions to existing residential structures. Because this is an addition, this code section does not apply.

18.120.340 Landscaping Plan: Landscaping requirements are specific to the Design Sub-District the project is located within. The intent of the Residential Neighborhood Landscaping is to provide the following:

- a. For residences and mixed-use projects, landscaping must employ a mix of trees, shrubs, ground cover, and some lawn to both frame and enhance new development. Storefronts must feature pedestrian oriented façades so there may not be opportunities for landscaping if small retail shops are developed. Where appropriate, landscape screens must be installed to enhance privacy and reduce impacts on adjacent properties. Dense screens over 4 feet in height that prevent views from the street into front yards are prohibited as they present a security hazard. Landscape layouts may either be formal with symmetric, space-defining plantings, or may be informal with irregular plantings in a more “natural” composition.
- b. Plant Materials: A wide range of plant materials is appropriate for residential developments. Residential lots may feature formal or informal gardens, lawn areas, or more naturalistic landscaping emphasizing native species. Landscaping in residential developments must avoid large, paved areas except for small plazas designed for outdoor living that feature ornamental plantings and furniture.

Staff Findings: During Phase 1 of the project, perimeter landscaping and screening was provided at the rear property boundary and adjacent to the solid waste enclosure that are now part of Phase 2. This area is proposed to be protected during construction. The landscaping of phase 2 provides a layering of plant materials from lawn to low shrubs to trees along the other perimeter boundaries of the site which meets the intent of the code.

18.120.420 Building Character requirements: The architectural design objective for the Residential Neighborhood Sub-District is to create an urban residential neighborhood featuring a variety of residential types and building sizes. While architectural variety is important, emphasis is placed on ensuring the compatibility between old and new structures.

Staff Findings: This code section has an exception that allows additions to existing buildings to either design to the design requirements of the applicable Sub-District or to design the new building elements that positively relate to the architectural character of the existing building. The applicant has proposed to design the building around the existing building character design so the main objective for staff was to ensure that the building was designed for building character compatibility. The addition project mirrors the existing building with the same roof, front entrances and window designs and have matched the exterior materials that are found on the existing building meeting this requirement of the code.

18.120.440 Architectural composition, massing, and articulation. Façade Articulation.

Residential portions of new buildings must include articulation elements at intervals no more than every 30 feet to break up the massing of the building and add visual interest and compatibility to the surrounding context. The building must have at least three of the following elements at intervals no greater than the width of the residential unit, facing the street, (typically 25-35 feet wide).

- a. Window patterns or entries or both.
- b. Change in roofline pursuant to OMC 18.120.440.B.4.
- c. Change in building material, siding style, or window fenestration pattern. (This option may not be used as an articulation option in the Core Sub-District.)
- d. Vertical building modulation of at least 12 inches in depth. Balconies may be used to qualify for this option if they are recessed or projected from the façade by at least 2 feet. “Juliet balconies” (balconies that are so shallow that they cannot be occupied) or other balconies that appear to be tacked on to the façade do not qualify. The depth of the modulation must be at least 3 feet if not accompanied by roof modulation or a change in materials.
- e. Vertical elements, such as a trellis with plants, green wall, or art element.
- f. Other design techniques that effectively break up the massing at no more than 30 foot intervals.

Staff Findings: The design though based on the existing building character was found to comply with the requirements of this section of code, with providing articulation elements with modulation and material changes every 30 feet to break up the wall massing and providing the design elements of a., c., and d listed above to achieve design code requirements.

18.120.450 Human Scale building elements and details.

Human Scale elements. In the Residential Neighborhood Sub-District, the project must have a minimum of four of the human scale building elements.

Staff Findings: The proposal provides four of the listed elements required by code, these include individual windows on the ground floor that are less than 32 square feet per pane, porches and covered entries facing the public street, defining building elements such as canopies that define the space being occupied and landscaping components that meet the downtown design criteria.

Building entries. Must provide the following:

- a. All buildings must have a primary building entrance facing the street or opening onto a courtyard directly facing the public street. Exception: buildings that are situated immediately on a shoreline esplanade or public walkway must have a primary building entrance facing the shoreline.
- b. All primary building entries must be covered with weather protection at least 6 feet wide and 5 feet deep.
- c. All primary building entries must have lighting for visibility and security.
- d. Primary building entries within the Core, North Capitol Way, Business Corridor, Waterfront, and Entertainment Sub-Districts must be enhanced with at least two of the façade details required by OMC 18.120.450.B.3.

Staff finding: The primary building entrance is located within the portion of the existing building and faces the street. The covered area extends out 5 feet and is longer than 6 feet in length. This primary entrance allows for access to all units including the ground floor units. The individual entrances on the ground floor units also provides covered area that meets this requirement.

18.120.470 Materials and Color. Sub-District specific materials requirements are identified in the chart of what materials are permitted in each of the Downtown Design Sub-Districts and if any materials have limitations.

Staff findings: Based on the chart and the proposed materials, the project meets the criteria of this code section. The proposed primary materials include cedar panels and lap siding, and secondary materials used are corrugated steel panels that provide accent details that replicate the existing buildings design.

18.120.480 Blank Wall Treatments. Limiting blank walls and requiring blank wall treatments will ensure large expanses of walls visible from a public street or public park do not detract from the Downtown environment and add interest to local streetscapes. New blank walls facing a public street, pedestrian oriented space, common open space areas, or pedestrian pathways are prohibited, unless treated. Blank walls are defined as “Any wall or portion of a wall that has a surface area of 400 square feet of vertical surface without a window, door, or building modulation or other architectural feature or any ground level wall surface or section of a wall over 4 feet in height at ground level that is longer than 15 feet as measured horizontally without having a ground level window or door lying wholly or in part within that 15-foot section.”

Staff Findings: A blank wall exists along 10th Avenue at the southwest corner that is over 4 feet in height and measures over 15 feet in length and has no doors, windows or other openings. The applicant is proposing to provide a mixture of plant materials of trees, variety of shrubs and ground in the area adjacent to the wall,

which should provide vertical landscaping which will camouflage the span of the wall, meeting the requirements.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Design Review Board provide a recommendation to approve the Combined Design proposal as follows:

- A. Context Plan:** Approve as proposed
- B. Site Plan and Landscape Plans:** Approve as proposed
- C. Building Design:** Approve as proposed
- D. Detail Design Elements:** Approve as proposed

Submitted By: Paula Smith, Associate Planner

- **Attachment 1** - Staff Report
- **Attachment 2** - Design Review Checklist - Narrative provided by applicant
- **Attachment 3** - Combined Design Review Packet