

**CITY OF OLYMPIA**  
**Olympia Design Review Board**

**CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW**  
**STAFF REPORT**  
**February 27, 2025**

<b>Case Number/Name:</b>	21-2854 West Bay Yards
<b>Project Representative:</b>	Thomas Architecture Studio
<b>Site Address:</b>	1210 West Bay Drive
<b>Project Description:</b>	Development of 478 multifamily residential units in 5 buildings atop a single story of structured parking. Project includes ground floor commercial, public trails, street frontage improvements, and shoreline restoration work.
<b>Comprehensive Plan:</b>	Urban Waterfront
<b>Zoning District:</b>	Urban Waterfront
<b>Design Review Criteria:</b>	18.110 Basic Commercial and 18.155 West Bay Drive.
<b>Notification:</b>	Notice of the Design Review Board Meeting was posted, mailed adjacent property owners within 300 feet of the site, and sent to parties of record on February 7, 2025.
<b>Board Responsibility:</b>	The Board will make a recommendation to the Community Planning and Economic Development Department (CPED) Director regarding the adequacy of the project’s design. This application is for conceptual design review 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.
<b>Land Use Review:</b>	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:**

The project is subject to a Development Agreement vesting the project to the Land Use regulations in effect in 2021. The Shoreline Substantial Development Permit application with design review associated was also submitted in 2021. The project has undergone three previous rounds of review by the Site Plan Review Committee. In each review, Design Review was postponed because the possible modifications to site design related to the shoreline restoration work. Now, at the 4<sup>th</sup> Round of review, the applicant has made modifications that give increased separation between the two elements of the project. Modification to the restoration work is less likely to affect the upland project, therefore Design Review of the proposed buildings can occur.

**Site History:**

The West Bay Drive area is unique because it is one of the most extensively studied areas within the City. After the Hardel Lumber fire of 1997, the community embarked on a journey to determine how the area should best be redeveloped. In 2001, the community adopted updates to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code that envisioned significant urban scale growth to this area. The subject property was designated Urban Waterfront, which is intended to provide a mix of commercial, light industrial, and multifamily residential uses. The Comprehensive Plan envisions buildings of 3 – 7 stories and a minimum of 15 units per acre. This update was followed by the 2005 West Bay Drive Corridor Study, which was primarily a roadway capacity study that included goals for multi-modal improvement plans. The cumulative result of these efforts created unique and specific development regulations for West Bay Drive including height limits, view corridors, design standards, pedestrian trail plans, and even specific roadway design standards.

Since then, very little of the anticipated development has occurred. Regardless, the community has remained highly interested in this portion of the City. After the 2008 recession, efforts to study the area shifted towards restoration of Budd Inlet leading to the 2016 West Bay Restoration Assessment. This project includes an upland development which will be required to comply with all of the unique standards for West Bay Drive and a voluntary restoration component which has been designed to align with the 2016 Restoration Assessment.

### **Public Comments**

This project has received over 100 public comment letters through the various rounds of review, however only two letters include information directly intended for the Design Review Board or related to building/project design. Both comment letters are provided as attachment 4. Topics can be categorized as follows:

- Desire to see improved pedestrian access to the waterfront.
- Expectation that views will be preserved. Focus on evaluating Basic Commercial 18.110.060

### **Land Use Review**

The land use review process is currently underway. In addition to design review, the project proposal must meet building, fire, engineering, urban forestry, stormwater, shoreline, critical area and transportation code requirements. The City's Site Plan Review Committee is finalizing the 4th round of review. While the review is not complete, a few key topics that relate to the Design Review Board's review include:

- 1) Concerns regarding the adequacy of space for solid waste trucks turning around has been identified
- 2) Potential conflicts between pedestrians, bikers, and walkers in this same tight area adjacent to the solid waste enclosure.

It is likely relocation of the trail to the outside (north) side of the drive aisle will be required. This is relevant to the Board in the review the area adjacent to the parking structure on this side of the building.

### **DESIGN REVIEW**

Please note that this is a Conceptual Design Review. Conceptual review involves the major design elements of a project which include site analysis and contextual response, site development, and architectural and landscape concepts as they relate to the general Citywide design criteria and the specific design criteria of the design district. Detail design review (which will occur later) involves all the detailed design elements of a project including materials, colors, final architectural elevations, and final landscape design and lighting.

The section called "How to Use Design Criteria (OMC 18.100.100)" in the Olympia Municipal Code provides instructions for meeting the City's design criteria. Compliance with each requirement is necessary; the guidelines provide methods to achieve compliance with the requirements. Applicable guidelines must be incorporated into the project design except in cases where the proposed design solutions are considered by the Board and/or staff to be equal to or better than the guidelines and meet the intent of the requirement.

### **Review of Design Criteria**

Staff evaluated the project proposal based on:

- 1) A checklist prepared by the applicant indicating how compliance with the design criteria is met (Attachment 2); and
- 2) A design review packet prepared by the applicant with a project narrative and architectural plans (Attachment 3).

Staff found that the proposal generally addresses the criteria within the code, though some items may merit further review by the Board. These items are discussed below and included in recommended conditions of approval.

### **Review Approach**

The project can be best evaluated by breaking the project into two distinct parts:

- 1) The upland project: including the work anticipated 30' or more above the shoreline Ordinary High Water Mark. This would include the paved pathways, parking structure and buildings, frontage improvement etc.
- 2) The shoreline restoration: including the shoreline restoration work.

The Board's review should focus on the upland project as this is what the design review criteria relates to. The Site Plan Review Committee and outside agencies are continuing to review the shoreline restoration work.

The top (roof) of the parking garage structure provides a pedestrian plaza/parking lot at grade level with West Bay Drive. The five towers placed on top of the structured parking appear to be individual buildings when looking at the site from West Bay Drive. On the North, East, and South sides of the building the structured parking is the dominant feature at the pedestrian level and can be evaluated as a single structure. The elevation change between West Bay Drive and the pedestrian promenade along the waterfront is sometimes difficult to identify in plans but should be carefully considered when reviewing.

The project has applied for the maximum height bonus allowed by code. Plans are drawn with the assumption the bonus will be granted. The Board's review should focus on the plans as shown. Should the height bonus be denied or reduced, the building design would likely be significantly altered, and additional design review would probably be warranted. The height bonus is relevant to the design review in a few ways:

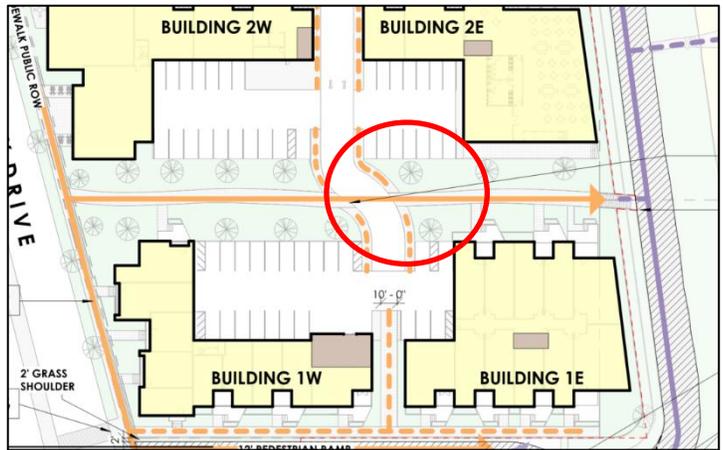
- 1) The pedestrian promenade / trail is provided and wraps around the building at the ground level. This pathway is required for the height bonus and will be required to be dedicated to the City. Building design from these vantage points are relevant to some of the design criteria.
- 2) View preservation is addressed in the City's code in three distinctly different places, all with nuancedly different requirements. The Board's preview applies to the Basic Commercial Design Criteria related to preservation of views. The Board does not have review authority over other code sections such as the Shoreline Master Plan.
- 3) View Corridors are required by the Municipal Code, and must be larger (wider) when buildings are taller. The distance between each tower is intended to meet view corridor requirements and cannot be reduced in width.

The project is intended to be built out in a phased approach. This is relevant to the Board because many of the amenities and site improvements may not be installed at the same time as each individual building. See the

phasing plan on sheet A 9 for details. The parking garage would be constructed first, with the 5 buildings / towers placed on top being constructed over a 15-year phased time frame.

### **Pedestrian Circulation**

Several code sections aim to achieve a functional pedestrian circulation route around and through the site. Staff found the requirements to be achieved and exceeded. The design shows a strong emphasis on the pedestrian experience including a crosswalk to the pedestrian trail across the street. As the Board reviews OMC 18.110.030 and 18.110.050, consider how pedestrian circulation and amenities have been designed and provided. An area of possible focus relates to the interaction between the vehicular traffic on the plaza and the movement of pedestrians. Sheet A 11 shows the proposed pedestrian routes and indicates bollards are intended to be placed in areas with vehicular traffic. The Board may want to consider if other features such as alternative surfacing materials, color and truncated domes are warranted. Similarly, plan sheets A 18 and A 19 show the design for benches and other pedestrian amenities, but their proposed locations are not clear. This level of detail is better suited for Detail Design Review which will occur with the future building permit applications, but the Board could provide guidance on location and timing of installation in association with the phasing plan.



### **View Preservation**

OMC 18.110.070 requires the applicant to address views from the public Rights of Way (ROW) to specific features as outlined in the Scenic Vista Overlay Map be preserved through site design. According to the Scenic Vista Overlay Map (see map to right), there are two view directions of particular importance from this location - that of Budd Inlet and Mt. Rainier. Plans provided indicate significant efforts to ensure views from West Bay Drive are maintained through the site. There are also additional public views being provided through the addition of the pedestrian promenade and public plaza spaces. The applicant provided a view study (sheets A 15 and 16) that addresses views from a variety of locations. It should be noted that the view study from the applicant addresses more view points than is required by the design criteria. This is likely because they are addressing additional code criteria outside the Boards review authority. Based on the view study information provided, Staff finds the design criteria has been met, but looks to the Board for consideration. This is a topic of particular community interest and should be carefully evaluated.



### **Blank Walls**

The façade of the buildings along West Bay Drive is designed in a way that avoids use of blank walls. The parking structure that faces the pedestrian promenade / dedicated trail surrounding the building on the north, east, and south sides include significant expanses of concrete wall directly adjacent to the primary pedestrian pathway. The Board may want to give feedback on ways to screen these walls, particularly on the north and south sides of the parking structure (see image below), such as vegetation that would grow up the walls, color or material changes, artwork, lighting, modulation, or other alternatives as appropriate. See Sheets A 37, A 41. The east façade (facing the shoreline) appears to be broken up by a series of retaining walls with vegetation, which is likely acceptable.



Invoking a Waterfront Heritage: OMC 18.155.050 relates specifically to the West Bay Drive design criteria and asks the applicant to use materials that reflect a traditional Pacific northwest Waterfront. The guidance provided are suggestions, but not requirements, but do give a more clear sense of the intent of a waterfront heritage than the requirement alone. The applicant's narrative states the project is in compliance and indicates queues have been taken from historical structures and other developments along West Bay Drive, but it is not particularly clear which features nor what nearby structures. The building's materials and colors are natural and include earthy tones. The Board should carefully evaluate materials and color related to the desire for a waterfront heritage perspective.

**Staff Recommendation**

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

- A. Context Plan:** Approve as proposed
- B. Site Plan and Landscape Plans:** Conditionally approve with the following conditions to be addressed with the Detail Design Review application:
  - 1) Add material changes, or other similar features to locations where pedestrians will cross drive aisles on the plaza level.
  - 2) Add landscaping, artwork, and other features to break up large expanses of concrete wall at the parking garage level along the north and south sides of the parking garage.
- C. Building Design:** Approve with conditions to be addressed with the Detail Design Review Application:
  - 1) Provide specifics on the other nearby buildings used as examples for the waterfront heritage evoked by this buildings design.
- D. Detail Design Elements:** Approve as proposed

**Submitted By:** Nicole Floyd AICP, Principal Planner

- **Attachment 1** - Staff Report
- **Attachment 2** - Design Review Checklist - Narrative provided by applicant
- **Attachment 3** - Concept Design Review Packet
- **Attachment 4** – Public Comments