CITY OF OLYMPIA
Olympia Design Review Board

COMBINED DESIGN REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
October 14, 2021

Project Name/Number:	401 Union Avenue Apartments, File 21-0800
Applicant:	Wade Stein, Project Manager Thomas Architecture Studio
Location:	401 Union Avenue SE
Project Description:	Demolition of the existing residences to construct a 70-unit, 4-story multifamily residential building. The project includes 2 levels of structured parking for 50 vehicles below-grade, site landscaping, street improvements and right-of- way dedications along Union Avenue and Jefferson Street.
Zoning District:	Downtown Business (DB)
Design Review District:	Downtown Design District
Comprehensive Plan Designation:	Central Business District (CBD)
Public Notification:	In accordance with the Olympia Municipal Code (OMC) 18.78, public notification was mailed on October 4, 2021, to property owners within 300 feet of the site, recognized neighborhood associations and parties of record.
Board Responsibility:	The Board will make a recommendation to the Community Planning and Development Department (CPD) Director regarding the adequacy of the project design. This application is for a combined concept and detailed design review and requires review of the applicable design criteria within the Olympia Municipal Code. In situations where explicit compliance with design guidelines (rather than requirements) is not feasible, the Olympia Municipal Code encourages creative solutions as long as the design solutions are equal to, or better than, the guidelines listed in the requirement sections.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Project Context/Existing Site Conditions:
The development site, approximately 26,000 sq.ft. in size, is in the south Downtown Neighborhood bordered by Union Avenue on the north, Jefferson Street on the east and Adams Street on the west. The site includes the entire block face on Union Avenue and approximately one-third of the block from north to south. Union Avenue is a Type B Pedestrian Street, and Adams and Jefferson streets are Type C Streets. The street classification for Adams Street is local access and for Jefferson Street it is an arterial.

The site is in the Downtown Business (DB) zoning district less than two blocks from the Capital Campus to the south. It is also on major bus and bicycle routes, minutes from the I-5 on-off ramp south on Jefferson St and east towards the Union Avenue and Plum St intersection and on a direct path to the downtown core via Adams St or Jefferson St. The Comprehensive Plan identifies this area of downtown as within the central business district and in a high-density neighborhood, allowing for a broad range of uses including high density apartment buildings. The residential neighborhood 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.*" (OMC 18.120.140)

The site is currently developed with residential single family and multifamily buildings that will be demolished and/or removed prior to construction of the project. Surrounding development consists primarily of banking and government office buildings, a parking garage and multifamily residential buildings. Building heights vary between two to seven stories; one of the tallest neighboring buildings is the Washington State Employees Credit Union at approximately 75 feet, constructed in 2007.

Design Proposal:
Five parcels will be combined to construct one 4-story apartment building with 70 residential units including ground related residential units. The height of the building is approximately 61 feet to the top of the parapet along the edge of the roof. The main residential entry and ground related residential units face Union Ave; single residential doors are located on Adams St and Jefferson St. Canopies are provided above the ground floor residential units and intermittently around the building. The main residential entrance is an enclosed lobby, floor-to-ceiling height of approximately 10 feet. Sidewalks are 10 feet in width around the building.

The applicant team met on-site with staff from the Solid Waste Division to determine an appropriate location for these facilities and concluded Adams St is the best location for waste storage and collection – solid waste reviewers found the design and plan for solid waste consistent with the City's requirements. Front- and side-load trucks will be used for pickup, necessitating street access and a roll up door along Adams St.

For a comprehensive description of the project including building, site, and parking programs, please refer to the Project Narrative (Attachment 2).

Land Use Review:
The land use development proposal is currently under review; no decision will be made until the review is complete. The project proposal was initially submitted and substantially reviewed by City staff in April of 2021. The applicant team submitted revisions in August of 2021 that addressed deficiencies. Significant efforts have been made by the design team and City modifying the street design through the EDDS deviation process to address safety and pedestrian circulation. The applicant has also applied for a parking reduction of 40%. The project is near but just outside the downtown parking exempt area. These two issues have been addressed through the Site Plan Review Committee's process. As the Board reviews the project, careful consideration of these elements and how any proposed design alteration might impact these features should be paid. Modification to these elements would need careful consideration by not only the Board but also Site Plan Review Committee to ensure code compliance is maintained.

DESIGN REVIEW

Combined Design Review: Please note that this is a *Combined Concept and Detail Design Review*.

Concept 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 criteria of the design district.

Detailed review involves all the detailed design elements of a project. This includes the architectural details of materials, colors, final architectural elevations, the final landscape design and the required lighting plan. The final details shall relate to the applicable design requirements, zoning classification, parking and landscaping chapters, and overlay districts contained within the Unified Development Code.

The section called "How to Use Design Criteria" in the Olympia Municipal Code provides instructions for meeting the City's design criteria (OMC 18.100.100). Compliance with each requirement is necessary; the guidelines provide ways or options in which the requirements may be met.

Design Review Board meetings are public meetings, and anyone is welcome to attend, however the meeting is not a public hearing and public testimony or comments are not taken at the meeting. Written comments for the Board may be submitted to staff prior to the start of the meeting. To allow for processing and distribution, it is recommended that written comments be submitted to staff by 4:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

Design Analysis: The project is subject to the Downtown Design Review District criteria, OMC 18.120. To assist in the Board's assessment of this project City staff have evaluated the project based on the design requirements and guidelines, the project narrative (Attachment 3), and the architectural plan set dated August 3, 2021 (Attachment 4). Staff's analysis of the design proposal is incorporated in the Downtown Design Review checklist (Attachment 2).

This report and the checklist focus on **those issues that may conflict with the City's design requirements, or when additional clarification is needed prior to land use approval**. Suggested conditions of approval have been provided below for the Board's review and consideration. The recommended conditions of approval below are intended to address final details that will be reviewed at engineering and building construction permit review.

Key Issues:

1. Type C streets are identified in the code as functional attractive streets that can handle a wide variety of uses, intended to provide efficient pedestrian access to building entries. Appropriately, the "front" of the building is located off Union. The solid waste service area has been located on Adams St and the parking garage access is located on Jefferson St. On alternate pick-up days dumpsters and carts will be moved from the waste room and placed in the public right-of-way, in the dedicated solid waste channelization area (not on the sidewalk). The site is unique, in that it does not have a traditional "rear", this has caused the design team to place the more traditional back side of the building elements on the street frontages of Adams and Jefferson, which is the preferred approach outlined in the Downtown Design Guidelines. The pedestrian flow and circulation along the Adams St sidewalk may be interrupted by cars backing-in to the two dedicated parking stalls, by solid waste vehicles that will be loading and unloading, and by residents exiting (or entering) the building. The Jefferson St streetscape from Union Ave south includes a right-in-right-out access to the building's parking garage. The Building Code will require advance warning that vehicles will be approaching – exiting or entering the garage for pedestrians and the frontage has been designed to comply with the City's Engineering Development and Design Standards. Nevertheless, staff encourages the Board to consider the pedestrian experience along these frontages and if appropriate work with the design team to enhance the walking environment, along both Type C Street frontages. Staff has provided a general placeholder condition in the "site and landscaping" conditions section, should the Board feel additional safety measures are warranted. If determined appropriate, the condition would need modification to add specificity. If not, the condition would need to be removed. Conditions under the building section have also been added that staff recommend.

2. A transformer is located in the northeast corner of the site at the intersection of Union Avenue and Adams Street. The transformer is prominently located on a primary street frontage and is minimally screened on the north side; all other sides will be visible from residences, and vehicles and pedestrians in the right-of-way. Ground-mounted mechanical equipment, utility meters, electrical conduit, and other service and utilities apparatus must be located and screened to minimize visual impacts to streets, sidewalks, and adjacent property. Staff encourage the Board to evaluate this location. It is unclear if alternative locations are viable. While parking is at a premium, there may be room for relocation. If there is no other location on the site for the transformer, the Board should request the applicant team produce a screen design that is compatible with the building design – materials, colors, scale – and ensures the box is subordinate to other site features.

Staff asks that the Board focus attention on the following code sections that provide intent statements and strategies (requirements) to assist the development team with effective project-specific street design:

- Street Fronts, OMC 18.120.220
- Pedestrian Circulation, OMC 18.120.230
- Solid Waste Facilities, Service Areas and Mechanical Equipment, OMC 18.120.260
- Security, OMC 18.120.280
- Lighting, OMC 18.120.360
- Building Entries, OMC 18.120.450
- Pedestrian Environment Enhancements (within 10 feet of sidewalk), OMC 18.120.490

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff has determined that the project design meets the intent of the design requirements and recommends the Design Review Board recommend approval of the combined project design for the 401 Union Avenue Apartments project, File 21-0800, as conditioned below. Conditions shall be met **prior to engineering permit review**, **prior to occupancy**, **or as otherwise stated**.

A. **Context Plan**: Approve as proposed.

B. **Site and Landscape Design**: Approve with the following conditions to be addressed at engineering and construction permit review:

1. Locate the transformer in a less prominent area of the site. If an alternate location is determined to be infeasible, additional screening of the transformer must be shown with the building permit application to include decorative metal panels, fencing, lattice work, etc. *OMC 18.120.260.*

2. Provide additional safety features on both Adams St and Jefferson St to better define the boundaries between the pedestrian and vehicular areas. *OMC 18.120.220.*

C. **Building Design**: Approve with the following conditions to be addressed at the time of building permit review.

1. Add features to the building façade, on both side streets, that would increase site safety for individuals by increasing awareness through pedestrian level signage on the building., *OMC 18.120.280.*

2. Each side street residential entry shall include human-scale lighting above or adjacent to the entry, and under-canopy lighting above the door. *OMC 18.120.360.*

3. Add opening(s) in the residential doors on Adams St and Jefferson St – depict the type and details of the windows in the building plan set. *OMC 18.120.450.*

4. Where the wall of the structured parking or garage is within 10 feet of the sidewalk edge, the grade level façade of the structured parking or garage must have a combination of artwork, grillwork, special building material, design, or other treatments as approved by the city that enhance the pedestrian environment. *OMC 18.120.490.*

5. Structured parking and parking garage lighting must be shielded to minimize or prevent direct view of light bulbs from the street level or sidewalk. *OMC 18.120.490.*

D. **Materials and Colors**: Approve as proposed.

Submitted By: Catherine McCoy, Associate Planner

Attachments:
Attachment 1 – Staff Report (This)
Attachment 2 – Project Narrative
Attachment 3 – Design Review Checklist, OMC 18.120
Attachment 4 – Architectural Plan Set, dated August 3, 2021