

CITY OF OLYMPIA
Olympia Design Review Board

COMBINED DESIGN REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
March 8, 2018

Case Number: 17-2528

Applicant: Aaron Angelo Development, LTD

Representative: Thomas Architecture Studio

Site Address: 929 Eastside Street SE

Project Description: A new 3 story, 21 unit apartment building. Onsite parking and landscaping will be provided.

Zoning District: PO/RM

Design Review Criteria: 18.170 – Multi-Family Residential

Comprehensive Plan: High Density Neighborhood / Professional Office Multi-Family

Notification: Notice of the Neighborhood 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, to the recognized neighborhood associations in the area, and to parties of record on January 22, 2018.

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.

Staff Provided Assistance:

City staff has evaluated this project based on the applicable design standards and has filled out the Multi-Family Design Review checklist to assist in the Board's assessment of this project (see attached). This report focuses on issues that staff recommend the Board discuss. Suggested conditions of approval have been provided for the Board's review and consideration.

Project Overview:

The project is situated on the edge of downtown and the eastside neighborhood. While technically within the boundaries of the “Downtown”, the project does not contain any commercial development and is therefore exempt from the downtown commercial design criteria. The project is required to comply with only the multi-family residential design criteria, however several of the requirements and guidelines from the downtown commercial code section have been met.

The Comprehensive Plan identifies this area as a high density neighborhood and allows for a broad range of residential, commercial and professional office uses. The 21 unit apartment complex is an allowed use within the zone. This area represents an important transition between the City’s commercial core and the adjacent low density residential neighborhood.

The site is unique in that it is situated on a previously disturbed portion of land directly adjacent to a wetland. The municipal code allows previously disturbed areas to remain in a developed / disturbed state, but prohibits further encroachment into the wetland buffer. The project design avoids further impacts into the wetland buffer.

Vehicular parking is tucked behind the building and accessed from a shared driveway off of 10th Avenue. This design allows for an enhanced pedestrian environment along Eastside Street and avoids further impacts to the wetland buffer. The fenced front yards attempt to strike a balance between streetscape activation and usable front yards for tenants.

Review of Design Criteria:

This project is required to comply with the Multi-Family Residential Design Criteria (OMC 18.175). Staff has reviewed the project for compliance with these criteria as is outlined in the attached “Design Review Checklist”. Staff found that the project design adequately addresses the criteria within the code, however there are a few issues that staff suggests the Board pay specific attention to which are outlined below.

Site Amenities:

Generally, the plans provided adequately address site amenities, however the location of the mailbox kiosk /or other anticipated mail drop off location does not appear to have been provided. Staff suggests the Board add a condition of approval to require more information regarding mail service with the building permit application.

Useable Open Space:

According to OMC 18.170.040 the project is to provide useable open space such as active recreation areas. The code does not establish a specific amount of open space that is required nor is a very clear identification of open space provided. The guidelines address elements such as sport courts, playground areas and other large-scale amenities, but does not specifically require these elements. The site does not provide large-scale amenities, but does include individual front yards for the ground floor units and balconies for upper story units as well as the passive wetland buffer area. Staff does not believe additional open space is necessary for this project, but looks to the Board for further analysis of requirement compliance, if necessary.

Fences and Walls:

The design criteria (OMC 18.170.050) asks for minimal use of fences that inhibit pedestrian movement or that separate the project from the neighborhood. The code states that front yards are to be visually open. The project includes 6’ tall masonry walls stepping down to 4’ tall wooden fencing that runs between the yards surrounding the front yard setback area. While

beneficial for tenants, the walls and wood fencing seem to conflict with this requirement. The design criteria lists several ways in which fencing could be integrated into the design such as use of landscape screening, variation of fencing setbacks, and integration of building elements into the fencing.

The proposed fence includes some landscaping at the base, but it is primarily ground cover varieties such as Mt. Vernon Laurel. The masonry walls bring in building elements, and could be extended further into the yard areas provided they are no taller than 4' in height when within the required 10' front yard setback. Staff encourage the board to consider ways in which the fencing and walls could be modified to achieve the design requirement. A condition of approval has been added as a place holder for the meeting which asks for increased landscaping and building elements to be incorporated into the fence with the building permit application.

Neighborhood Scale and Character:

Clear effort has been made by the design team to transition between the commercial development to the west and the residential neighborhood to the east. The design criteria (OMC 18.170.110) asks for the building scale to reflect the architectural character of the neighborhood (within 300'). The pitched roof, narrow building modulation, and parking in the rear of the building take queues from the surrounding residential development pattern. Careful consideration of transition within this area is important, therefore staff encourage the board consider these design guidelines and to determine if the project fits into the existing urban fabric.

Written Public Comments:

The Design Review Board does not take verbal public comment during the meeting. No written comments related to design were submitted to staff prior to the packet distribution (occurs 1 week in advance of the meeting). Subsequent written comments submitted prior to the 4:30PM March 8, 2018 specifically related to design, or specifically addressed to the Board will be provided to the Board at the start of the meeting.

Staff Recommendation:

Based on review and analysis of the applicable Design Review Code Criteria, staff has determined that the proposal meets the intent of the Design Review requirements. Staff recommends the Design Review Board to recommend approval of the Detail Design to the Director of Community Development, with the following conditions:

1. The location and design of the mail kiosk (or alternative service) shall be shown on the building permit application.
2. Provide espaliered vegetation in front of the fencing and add elements of the building façade materials into the fence design with the building permit application. (Note: All portions of the fence/walls within the 10' front yard setback are limited to 4' in height).

Preliminary Building Design: Recommend approval.

Submitted By: Nicole Floyd, Senior Planner

Attachment 1: This Staff Report

Attachment 2: Design Review Checklist (Multi-Family Residential)

Attachment 3: Design Review application and plans