

CITY OF OLYMPIA
Olympia Design Review Board

CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
August 13, 2020

Project Name/Number: Trestle Union Apartments, File 20-1786

Applicant: James and Shani Bauer

Representative: Collin McMaster, PE
Vector Engineering, Inc

Location: 710 11TH Ave NE

Project Description: Construction of one two-story apartment building with 9 units, parking for 10 vehicles, and short- and long-term bicycle parking.

Design Review District: Downtown Design District

Zoning District: Urban Residential (UR)

Comprehensive Plan Designation: Residential Mixed Use (RMU)

Critical Areas: Two Category IV wetlands exist on the parcel immediately east of the subject site. The proposed development is both wetland buffer areas.

SEPA Determination: The project is exempt from State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Review, OMC 14.04.

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Public Notification: In accordance with the Olympia Municipal Code (OMC) 18.78, public notification was mailed on July 30, 2020, to recognized neighborhood associations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Existing Context and Subject Site:

The subject site is in the southeast section of downtown, within the Downtown neighborhood. It sits on a slight bluff on what was in 1928 a railroad line that extended over Union Avenue – running from the southeast north to the shoreline and Port of Olympia. The railroad right-of-way and trestle over Union Avenue were abandoned and ultimately removed at some point before 1991 (D.Falter, Architect. Architectural Narrative, Site Plan) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Looking west on Union Avenue near Plum Street, 1928. Department of Highway Construction. Washington State Archives.

This area of downtown Olympia consists primarily single- and multi-family residential development intermixed with government office buildings and associated surface parking (Figure 2), which reflects the underlying zoning districts of Downtown Business and Urban Residential (Figure 4). The structure immediately west of the site is a single-family two-story residence, while south across 11th Avenue SE are two large residential developments – Chestnut Ridge Apartments and Capitol Crossing Apartments. West and north are commercial office buildings and east across Plum Street are mixed commercial retail, restaurant, office and hotel uses.

The site is an undeveloped forested lot, 0.39 acre, approximately 17,000 sq.ft. in area, oriented northwest to southeast. The parcel is bounded by Union Avenue, Plum Street (Figure 2), and immediately south of the site is 11th Avenue. From the parcel's north property line, the topography drops north and east in elevation to the right-of-way of Union Avenue.

Design Proposal:

The proposal is to construct a single two-story building with nine residential units on the lot; five two-story townhouse style apartments flanked by four one-bedroom apartments, one above the other. The building is rectangular, approximately 65' in length by 20' in width, oriented towards the Plum Street right-of-way with all units facing eastward. Asphalt paving and parking for 10 vehicles is proposed in front of the units, between the building and the east property line. Bicycle parking is located north of the building.

The architectural style of the building is what is generally called Pacific Northwest Craftsman with a gable and cross gable roof, hardi lap and shingle siding, and half-timber treatment at the upper gables. The five two-story units are each called out separately in neutral colors, with individual entries and garages underneath.

Land Use Review:

A preliminary round of departmental and agency review comments was provided to the applicant and development team on July 31, 2020. Several issues were identified in this early review that will

have bearing on the Board’s review and consideration of the proposed site and landscape design, and location of the building on the site. The applicant must respond to the design requirements, and other land use requirements prior to the final land use decision by the Director.

Key Preliminary Landuse Review Findings (Site Plan):

- The Urban Residential (UR) zoning district development standards **require the building to be located within 10 feet of the front property line.** The front property line is 11th Avenue – the building must shift south towards 11th Avenue. It is important to consider this minor shift in the building location as it correlates to the fencing proposed. Fencing of 6’ in height (as proposed) cannot be located in the front 10’ of the property, therefore the fence will likely be relocated in line with the building for at least the southwest portion of the property. The proposed site utilities are also located in the front yard setback area. It is unclear how the applicant intends to screen these, but it seems important to consider how the utilities and 6’ tall fencing will impact the traditional “front” yard environment of the building. Additionally, the front should be the “front”, but in this case the front of the building looks like a side yard being treated as the front for setback purposes only.
- The Engineering Design and Development Standards (EDDS) Transportation section block sizing regulations **require a 10-foot-wide public pedestrian connection from 11th Street to Union Avenue.** The code requires this be accommodated onsite, but the applicant may request a deviation to re-locate this pedestrian route off site to the existing unimproved right of way between 11th Avenue and Union Avenue on Chestnut Street. If relocated, it will not impact the proposed site design. If the public pedestrian connection is re-located, questions remain related to the project design and how onsite pedestrian connections are addressed. If a public pathway through the site is provided, the connection issues would naturally be resolved. It will be important to get a sense



Figure 2: Context and Vicinity

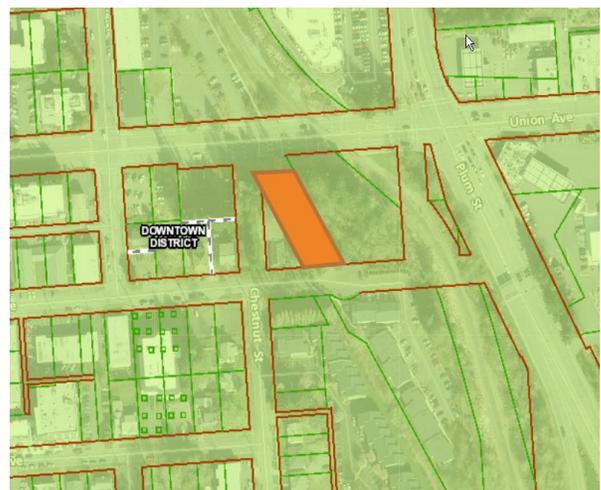


Figure 3: Downtown Design Review District

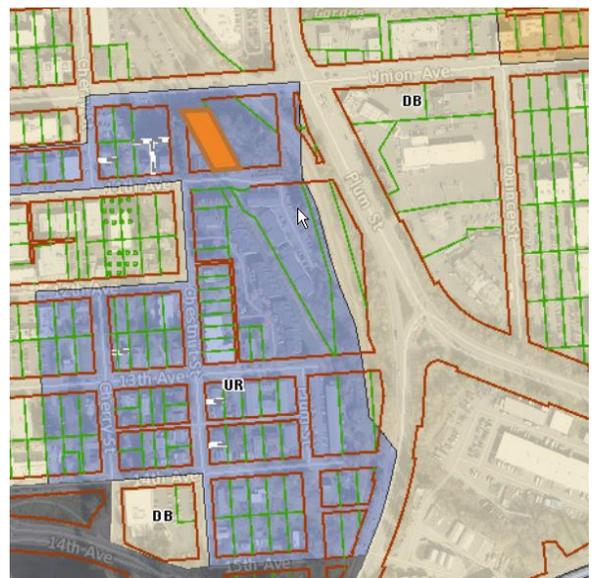


Figure 2: Urban Residential (UR) Zoning District

from the applicant as to what the anticipated approach will include.

DESIGN REVIEW

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

The Design Review Board will review the project to determine compliance with the applicable design criteria and make a recommendation to the Site Plan Review Committee regarding the adequacy of the project's early design program. The Community Planning and Development Director will make the final decision. Conceptual review involves the early design considerations and elements of a project, such as site context 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.

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 requirement. 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 in the Downtown Design Review District (Figure 3) and is subject to the Multi-family Residential Design Code, OMC 18.170. City staff evaluated the project based on the following items:

- Conceptual architectural plan set, preliminary landscape plan, building elevations, and preliminary building and site details (Attachment 3);
- Multi-family Residential Design Review Requirements and Guidelines, OMC 18.170; and
- Applicant's response to the Multi-family Residential Design Requirements (Attachment 2).

Staff's analysis of the design proposal is incorporated in the same Multi-family Residential checklist the applicant submitted as required (Attachment 2). The checklist identifies areas of compliance and deficiency, and staff recommended conditions of approval are provided for the Board's consideration. As outlined in the checklist, staff has found that the design program generally addresses the criteria within the code.

There are a few key issues that staff suggests the Board pay specific attention to, as issues mentioned below are inextricably connected to the preliminary land use review requirements above and should be factored into the conceptual and detailed plans.

First, and most importantly, the site plan will need to be revised to add a pedestrian connection, either on-site or in the Chestnut Street right-of-way, and to shift the building closer to 11th Avenue – these are underlying land use and engineering requirements as mentioned earlier in the report. The Board will want to note how these changes impact on- and off-site circulation, the building's interaction and connection with the sidewalk and streetscape, and how the open space plan will be

affected by the changes. The building must shift closer to the front property line, which will influence the front façade and front yard as they relate to the sidewalk and streetscape. While looking through the plans, consider the building façade treatments and what types of modifications might be needed to enhance the primary building frontage.

Staff recommendations are mainly based on two interconnected concepts:

1. The need for the building frontage on 11th Avenue to look more like a traditional building frontage and less like the side of the building; and
2. The site design's connectivity to the adjacent street and community. All of the following sections touch on these elements in different ways:
 - Pedestrian and Vehicle Circulation, OMC 18.170.020
 - Usable Open Space, 18.170.040
 - Fences and Walls, 18.170.050
 - Landscape Plant Selection, 18.170.060
 - Building orientation, 18.170.100
 - Building Modulation, 18.170.120

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based on review and analysis of the applicable Multi-family Residential Design Review Code, staff recommends the Design Review Board recommend approval of the conceptual design review proposal for the Trestle Union Apartments, File 20-1786, with the following conditions:

- A. **Context Plan:** Approve with the following conditions that must be reflected in the detail design review architectural packet:
 1. Include a pedestrian connection from the site to Union Avenue. The connection should provide a safe and comfortable connection and should tie into the pedestrian open space area.
- B. **Site and Landscape Design:** Approve with the following conditions that must be reflected in the detail design review architectural packet:
 1. Provide design details of the short-term bicycle parking, including details of the enclosed structure and method of securing the bicycles.
Provide design details of all proposed amenities and their design. Add amenities in the open space area for the site residents.
 2. Revise fence design as follows:
 - a. Revise the pedestrian gate and surrounding landscaping to enhance the pedestrian approach from 11th Avenue.
 - b. Ensure the front yard is visually open to the street and include gates or openings at frequent intervals around the project.
 - c. Repeat building façade materials in the fencing design and add trellises or other landscaping features surrounding the fence to provide variation.
 3. Relocate the utility services to ensure site utilities do not dominate the front façade or front yard area.
 4. Revise the landscaping plan as follows:

- a. Address suitability of plants to climate and location on site.
- b. Provide details regarding the proposed landscape treatments intended to break up the long expanses of fencing and walls, particular attention should be paid to the western building façade and fence.
- c. Show screening of the utility service equipment.
- d. Show plantings around the fencing and associated with any trellis features.

C. **Building Design:** Approve with the following conditions that must be reflected in the detail design review architectural packet:

1. Add modulation and architectural elements that add depth to the building's south façade, the wall facing 11th Avenue to ensure it is easily identifiable as the building front.
2. Add windows to the south side of the building to enhance the building frontage, consider duplicating efforts on the north facade.
3. Relocate the stairway to the second floor from the building frontage or if infeasible, demonstrate how the stairway has been designed to integrate into the front façade of the building.

Submitted By: Catherine McCoy, Associate Planner

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Staff Report (This)

Attachment 2 – Multi-family Design Review Checklist, OMC 18.170

Attachment 3 – Concept Architectural Plan Set