

**CITY OF REDMOND
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
December 5, 2013**

NOTE: These minutes are not a full transcription of the meeting. Tapes are available for public review in the Redmond Planning Department.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: David Scott Meade, Craig Krueger, Kevin Sutton, Scott Waggoner

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Joe Palmquist, Mike Nichols, Arielle Crowder

STAFF PRESENT: Steven Fischer, Principal Planner; Gary Lee, Senior Planner

RECORDING SECRETARY: Susan Trapp *with* Lady of Letters, Inc.

The Design Review Board is appointed by the City Council to make decisions on design issues regarding site planning, building elevations, landscaping, lighting and signage. Decisions are based on the design criteria set forth in the Redmond Development Guide.

CALL TO ORDER

The Design Review Board meeting was called to order by Chair David Scott Meade at 7:00 p.m.

PRE-APPLICATION

LAND-2013-01989, Redmond City Center

Description: Two 8-story residential towers to be built in two phases

Phase One: 168 units and approximately 20,000 square feet of retail

Phase Two: 357 units and approximately 5,000 square feet of retail

Parking will be on three levels including 536 stalls

Location: 16135 NE 85th Street

Applicant: Oscar Del Moro *with* Cosmos Development Company

Architect: Robin Murphy *with* Stricker Cato Murphy Architects

Staff Contact: Gary Lee, 425-556-2418 or glee@redmond.gov

Mr. Lee noted that this was the first pre-application meeting for this project, which will be on the old post office site Downtown. The property is in a zone that allows for eight stories, with a provision that 20% of the site would be available to the public in terms of the plaza, arcades, and other amenities. That is the requirement in order to get from five stories to eight stories. The applicant has a long way to go technically to make sure the site planning works, but staff wanted to get started with pre-application meetings with the architects and developers. The applicant would like some opinions from the DRB.

Oscar Del Moro presented on behalf of the applicant, joined by Robin Murphy from SCMA Architects and Mark Weisman with Weisman Landscaping. Mr. Del Moro reiterated that this project was in the heart of Downtown. The applicant said the site has an opportunity for public open space. He noted that the city is urbanizing and experiencing more density. He showed a typical mid-rise development downtown, which has five stories over one level of retail. Because of the open space requirement, the typical project lifts itself up on a podium. The applicant is hoping to sculpt an open space and then put buildings around it. The hope is that the open space has a purpose and a sense of scale that would connect to and from existing infrastructure. The applicant is asking for help in developing this concept. He is aware that there are Code requirements, and he would like to show the DRB how he could meet those requirements.

The applicant described the prescriptive method many projects have used Downtown so far, in that a building will fill in the boxes, have some negative space, and put some open space on a higher level of the building. The applicant said the challenge is to do something a little different, mainly because it can be too risky or too costly. But he would like to try it and utilize the full range of the Code, which allows for eight stories. The applicant is trying to work under a rapid schedule and would like the DRB's help in developing this idea.

The applicant showed the DRB the site, which has some challenges and opportunities. It is a large site, and on the south end are the travel center and skate park, which both have open space. The existing fire station is next to the site as well. The applicant regards the fire station as a transition space, as he believes it will not be in this location in fifteen years. He noted that this site is on a "superblock," much like Bellevue. These superblocks are too big to develop under one big Master Plan. In some cases, developing on them can create land-locked parcels that do not provide the connections the Code calls for. The applicant would like to take advantage of pedestrian connections through the site to connect to the existing surroundings. That would set up for another phase, where some developer could connect to this site. The applicant is looking for ways to entice other developers to get involved.

Mr. Murphy spoke next on behalf of the applicant about the pathways around the site. The applicant has been meeting with Mr. Lee and other City staff since last March, and a lot of research has been done. Several paths exist around the perimeter of the site already. To the right of the site is the transit center, and there is a path leading to it that the applicant would like to modify and connect to others. Right now, there are trails from NE 85th to NE 83rd on both sides of the site. In some cases, the trails are well defined, but in others, they are simply a concrete path. In the best case scenario according to City Code, paths would be built eight feet wide with 11 feet of landscaping on either side, thus creating a 30-foot wide path. Some of the paths currently look bleak and are bordered by brick. The applicant is proposing a more generous, free-flowing path that should encourage more public use.

Mr. Del Moro continued on behalf of the applicant, and noted that his team was before the DRB two years regarding the Redmond Square Apartments. The challenge on that project was to interpret the Code, set a standard for materials, quality, and architecture, and move quickly through the project. The applicant is also working on a project in the Lake Hills area of Bellevue to change an old seven-acre shopping center into a mixed-use village with residential, office, and library space. On that project, the applicant is creating a parking plaza, a central space where people can gather made up of low-scale materials, and pedestrian paths around the perimeter of the site. The applicant said he had experience with urban projects and could move quickly. Mr. Murphy said that on Redmond Square, one of the most successful elements was the interface between the street and the lower level of residential units. The hope is to carry that idea into this new project as well.

The applicant showed the DRB what was prescriptively required for the site in terms of zoning. On NE 83rd and NE 85th, there is an existing path on the eastern flank of the property that leads to the skate park. The requirement would be a Type 9 path, which, as described above, would be 30 feet wide. That would double the width of the current paths. There are additional setbacks around the site for commercial and residential units. Also, 20% of the site would be required for public open space. The applicant said this could be an amenity for the public to enjoy, and the hope is to integrate that in with the pathway system so it is actually used as a public feature as opposed to being a dead plaza. The residential common space is shown in the plans is noted as being 34,000 square feet. The entire property is 100,000 square feet, so there is a cap of sorts. When a project gets beyond 20% of the site, it does not have to provide residential common open space. About 4,000 square feet of open space is required if the Zoning Code is followed prescriptively.

The applicant is trying to show that he is gravitating to the simplest solution. He wanted the opportunity to think outside the box with the DRB and avoid prescriptive zoning, if possible. The layering of the pathways would be a goal for the developer. The applicant noted where transit circulation occurred near the site as well as bus storage. The Type 9 path would potentially connect NE 83rd and NE 85th. A secondary path runs east and west. The applicant has proposed orienting the open space in a unique way to allow for public open space as well as meeting the pathway requirements. The applicant is hoping the path could have a center element to draw focus on the project from the east and west. Then, there would be some secondary open space internally, semi-private, that would be open to the residential units. The applicant is considering pedestrian circulation through the site to the north and south as well as east and west. A hill climb or vertical transition would help the path get down to grade and provide an overlook to the skate park. The verticality allows for the possibility of a great civic connection from the site.

The applicant said the reason the pathway would come out of the ground is that the project is limited to one floor of underground use. The balance of providing enough parking versus the design takes away

usable land. Thus, the project must go up a little bit, which the applicant said was not bad if pedestrians are able to go up and over a central gathering spot to get to a park or open space. The applicant wants to activate that rise in elevation for pedestrians. Mr. Weisman spoke next on behalf of the applicant, and said if there were only prescriptive pathways on this site, they could be dead and lifeless. The hope is to aggregate the paths in this project on the west side, which will be sunny, and to create a good experience along the path to interact with stores and restaurants. Connections to transit could happen from the paths in the future. It is likely that the fire station to the west of the project will be redeveloped and could turn into a denser, taller space with below-grade parking. The applicant said the grade change could be exciting, in that it could create a continuous, linked sense of discovery along the pathway. Allowing for more sun exposure, a view of the skate park, access to the future use of the fire station property, and the connection to transit are all elements that point to creating the path on the west side of the site. The hope is to create an active shopping street, not just a prescriptive path that could be a dead zone. The path could have some water features and green screens, as well.

The applicant noted there were several challenges to the plan. The skate park becomes the front door for the project, which makes it an interactive zone. The applicant said the public open space will be best developed when the fire department property is redeveloped and an equal amount of property is dedicated to a central open space. With the current project, the applicant is proposing to build one half or more of it, which will stand and function by itself. It will come to full fruition when the fire station redevelopment is done. The applicant said the whole space cannot be molded, in that it was unclear what transit agencies would do near the site or what would happen to the fire station parcel. However, this project would be the first piece, and would be flexible to allow for things to happen.

The applicant noted that Downtown is getting denser, and said it was an obligation to show the DRB what could be and what might be. He showed the DRB a plan with two buildings on it, Building A and B. The hope is that Building A will be created in Phase 1. Building B would be Phase 2. The applicant will present designs on Building A, primarily, to the DRB over the next few months. Building B would be a secondary massing envelope, and would be similar to Building A, yet still distinct. Building B would be a separate design review project in the future. The applicant is trying to focus on the pathways rather than the buildings, at least for now. The applicant reiterated the pathway plan, and noted that the project can only go down 12 feet below grade. There are two levels of parking rather than three, which was the initial idea. Because of a 20% slope created by the additional parking, there is about seven and a half feet of elevation gain. An existing hardscape is right up against the property line.

Mr. Lee had asked the applicant to show what the Type 9 pathway would look like in a previous meeting. The applicant presented an elevated path that would not be considered common open space or residential open space, but would be part of the Type 9 path. It would have vertical connections to the parking below it. The buildings would have the necessary privacy setbacks as well as the bulk and scale setbacks. The buildings on the side yards are 26 feet from the property line. The applicant showed a vision for the project of linked spaces that give a sense of progression through a sloped area, steps that have a view of nearby activities, and sunny sitting areas. The hope is to create strong focal points at the ends of the main path, which may include archways or obelisks. Water could go along the path. Retail units could activate the space along the path. The applicant wants a safe, walkable, well-lit path that is interesting for pedestrians and a lively space for people to be. Potentially, this path could be a 24-hour experience with restaurants and stores that is next to transit, which Redmond has not had before. The applicant said having more stories was not a bad thing. He also said the skate park provides a foreground and background that helps the urban experience.

The elevated path and public space have to have access for fire trucks. That will be a challenge, but the applicant has done a similar project in Bellevue and says it can be done. The applicant wants to have a pedestrian walkway coming up and through the site that creates a link to the skate park and transit center. Through-block connections have been proposed in the fashion intended by the Code. Retail would be possible along several edges of the project. Restaurants with outdoor seating could be provided as well to energize the public space. Building A is retail and apartments, but Building B could have several options. Building B could be all office, or partially office and partially residential, or retail, office, and residential. Its use would be market-driven. People would walk along a raised path and walk down to the skate park next to a waterfall and natural amphitheater.

The applicant showed the DRB where stores and a potential grocery might be located on the site. On the south side, in the rear yard, there is a 10-foot setback before commercial units would start. That allows for hardscaping and landscaping. Existing landscaping would be enhanced along the east and west connection. The applicant showed where fire access would go through the site as well. One of the parking levels is two and a half feet below grade. The other level is ten and a half feet below grade. Thus, the top of the parking level would be seven and a half above grade, which is the limit before the applicant would have to deal with ramps. The two parking levels would have parking access back to NE 85th. On top of that access would be space for a pathway, which would not be a common space. Adjacent to the parking is a pathway that would also be a fire lane. There is an open space of landscaping nearby. Looking north through Building B, on the eastern property line would be an existing Type 9 with a hardscape path up against the property line. The applicant has provided an adjacent eleven feet for landscaping over the lower parking garage. The path then steps up, and there would be a deck with landscaping. The setback from the residential building to the property line is 26 feet. There is a good buffer there with landscaping at two levels.

The two parking levels would allow access at grade and provide retail loading areas as well. The public open space would have great western and southern sun exposure. It opens up into more private courtyards. Another common space will run through the site and have good access to the commercial locations. The applicant is hoping to work on a schedule similar to the one he used for the Redmond Square project two years. The schedule shows a concurrent review with the DRB and site plan entitlement process. It is a fast track schedule. After this meeting, there would be three or four months to figure out the design of the project. The hope is to be in the ground in August or September of 2014 and put foundations in by October. The garage would be built first, then Building A. Following that, Building B would be created based on what the market is doing. The applicant thinks he can have the design review process done in three months. He is asking the DRB for some help in the massing of the project, the open space, and any fatal flaws.

Mr. Fischer noted that there were some members in the audience hoping to make some public comment. Mr. Meade asked for that public comment, and Rosemarie Ives, former mayor from 1992-2007, spoke to the DRB. She says she walks around Redmond a lot and travels a lot. She returned from the East Coast a week and a half ago after being gone for almost four months. She said that the applicant's Redmond Square project is the only one with architectural integrity done in the last six years. Ms. Ives was told six months ago that she could not speak to the DRB and that email should be used, but that did not fly with her. She thanked the applicant for allowing her to use his project to speak to the DRB. She said the DRB is probably one of the most autonomous jobs in the City and also one of the most important in terms of community impact. Developers come and go, but the built environment is here to stay. She said that she did not know if there were problems with people being color blind, but she wanted to speak to color palettes and massing. She said what she sees in Downtown she does not like. She is really upset. She said she had never been so disappointed in how Downtown Redmond looks. She said the designs and massing are very disappointing.

Ms. Ives said the current project in front of the DRB looks like a future prison. She said it was unfriendly and not accessible. She said the shadow, grayness, and cold on this site are a function of serious zoning mistakes. She said the City should use the issue of the environmental negative impact of the shadow caused by massing as very important criteria by which a design should be affected. She said the greatest offenders in terms of negative impact are shadows. She said it was despicable to spend millions on a park in Downtown Redmond, and now, from Zeek's Pizza to Cleveland Street, all the buildings cast a shadow on the sidewalks and street. She said the view was God-awful ugly. She asked about the materials and color palette used in projects in the Cleveland Street area. She said the optician on Redmond-Woodinville road, which she looks at every day, is the issue that she was considering six months ago. She says this building in particular is a matter of public complaint.

Ms. Ives said she trusted the applicant on the project under discussion at this meeting in terms of his work on Redmond Square. She was concerned about how the City would interpret his work. She said it was time for the DRB to get bold. She did not know how the DRB could look at anything along Cleveland Street and the building across the street from City Hall. With that building, she was concerned about the

lack of color and the stone that was used. That building ends up shading all the glass on City Hall that was supposed to be passive solar. She said the City should strip off the LEED Certified Building sign on City Hall. She said she has been asked if the building across the street was low-income housing. She says she was asked a similar question about the buildings on Cleveland Street. She described them as new tenements and rabbit hutches. She said that was very disappointing. Back to the project under discussion at this meeting, Ms. Ives said the people of Redmond do not want this project to look like anywhere. She said this project was very important. She was glad to hear that the project is embracing the skate park, but a shadow from eight stories across 85th Street would not be good for pedestrians. She hoped that the DRB would understand that there was an opportunity to influence the future of Redmond. She noted that she was initially opposed to the development of Town Center. She said she wanted architecture that stands the test of time. The rest of Redmond deserves architecture, materials, and design that would stand the test of time. She said she would be watching the progress of this project.

COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Waggoner:

- Said he appreciated the work that has gone into this project. Mr. Waggoner said the height of the projects and the shadows, as was just mentioned by Ms. Ives, was a concern for him, especially in the internal courtyards. That would mean very little sun in the courtyard areas.
- He said the concept of having some public attractions along the paths would be great, and he would like to connect the natural paths that crisscross the site. He said that this site is buried in a superblock, and a lot of the amenities proposed are by nature in the center of that superblock and thus a challenge for visibility and access, especially for public uses like retail.
- Mr. Waggoner said even the area facing the transit center would not be all that active, in that people would be using the transit center at rush hour and might not interact with the project all that well. He was intrigued about the project having a use other than a residential use, to truly make this a mixed-use project so there would be an around-the-clock level of critical mass.
- Mr. Waggoner agreed with the applicant that Redmond is becoming more urban and denser. He liked the applicant's plans to create more activity and liveliness, but would like him to consider what the ultimate mix of uses on the site to create a 24-hour level of buzz, not just at rush hours or weekends. If retail is supposed to be a draw, the retail stores would need more attention and pedestrian traffic.
- He said when the dimensions of open space become compact and are surrounded by high walls that will often feel like an enclosure that is owned by the people in the tall buildings surrounding the space. The challenge with the public space on the site is to create a bit of daylight, dimension, or something to make people feel like they're not trespassing going into a space enclosed on three sides.

Mr. Sutton:

- Asked about the hill climb amphitheater and if it would be done on the applicant's property.
- The applicant said it was not entirely on his property. He said in the effort to enhance the transit center connection on the south side and encourage pedestrian connections through the site, the applicant has been talking with the parks department about continuing the augmentation of the pedestrian path through the site, through the skate park, and to the front of the transit center.
- That path would include an amphitheater that would be jointly in the center of those three spaces.
- Mr. Sutton said he was skeptical of the seven and a half foot rise and how well that connection would work. He asked if some of the skate park area or the transit center area could be used to ease that transition. He said the proposed rise in elevation blocks the view of pedestrians in some cases.
- Mr. Sutton shares Mr. Waggoner's concerns about the height of the building, in that a cavern of sorts would be created and the east to west connection would be pretty dark. He suggested stepping out the building a bit. He asked if the setback on the south side could be adjusted to help widen out the project as well.

Mr. Krueger:

- Appreciated the presentation by the applicant and the effort to do something different. Mr. Krueger said that the project was very different compared to other buildings around the region.
- Mr. Krueger said the unique aspects of the project do not read well in the overall massing standpoint. The concept of the connections is not visible or appreciated from the street level, either in walking or driving by 85th. Something would need to draw people in.

- He continued that pedestrians may come down the north and south sides of the building, but said something was needed to draw people in further.
- Mr. Krueger said he was concerned about 85th and the reaction from residents who might be driving down the street. If they look at the proposed elevation, it is simply a long, monolithic building. The height of the building is overwhelming.
- He said rather than the U-shape the building has now, an H-shape could be used. The east-west portion could be pulled down a little bit to add some interest along 85th. He said the two east-west towers could be stepped down to the street to allow more sunlight in.
- Mr. Krueger said the extra floors on the site seemed like a cool idea to him when he first heard about it. He was envisioning some towers similar to some designs in Vancouver, where the buildings are stepped up from the street level. He wanted to see the massing broken down, especially along 85th.
- Mr. Krueger said the applicant did a good job with the courtyards, south-facing and west-facing, for the residents. He liked the exposure to the transit center. He really liked the idea of mixed uses, and thought about Alley 24 in Seattle as a point of reference. He was mostly concerned about Building A going forward.

Mr. Meade:

- Said that the massing study was a good tool to use, in that it was similar to the Redmond Square project, which he believes is extraordinary. Mr. Meade would like to see the applicant pay attention to the western side. He said stepping back the tower massing from the retail would help break down the scale at the street level and create more of a pedestrian plaza experience.
- Mr. Meade echoed Mr. Krueger's concerns about the northern section along 85th, and said stepping back the building here could be helpful, too. A building just south of this site, Veloce, has an H-pattern that breaks down the mass on the northern portion of the building.
- Mr. Meade said the interior courtyard on Building A will be a challenge. He asked what Building B would do to impact that in the future, which will be a completely privatized section of that project. Mr. Meade said the courtyard would struggle from having too much shade.
- Regarding the hill climb, Mr. Meade said the concept made sense and he was confident that the applicant could create something extraordinary to draw people to and through the area. He suggested working with the concepts of water, light and sculpture.
- Mr. Meade said the future park Downtown the DRB is considering includes a lot of plaza concepts that could happen on this project, too. He said the applicant's creative staff could help draw people into this space.
- He said the retail on the south side would be difficult to access, as Mr. Waggoner mentioned earlier. Mr. Meade would like some answers to those concerns.
- Mr. Meade asked about the market concept on the project, which he found interesting. He thought the market could help support residents as well as some of the other retail units nearby. He said this would be a big change for Redmond to diversify its ability to shop for daily essentials, which he said was very cool.
- Overall, Mr. Meade is optimistic about this project based on the track record of the applicant. He said the Redmond Square project went up quickly and had a solid, collaborative effort behind it. He noted that Redmond Square is often used as an example for applicants considering a forward-thinking design that is still timeless. He hoped for a similar lush approach with this new project.
- Mr. Meade recognized that the applicant's work in Lake Hills in Bellevue was a brilliant infill piece, and said it was a culture-changing project for a once derelict building.
- Mr. Waggoner said everyone involved in this project wants it to be successful, lively and active. He suggested that filling the ground level areas with leased space can be successful, but can also turn into a situation of blight and vacant storefronts. That can make leasing above those floors difficult.
- Mr. Waggoner said he has seen developments work around specific tenants, which could be the case in this project with the grocery tenant proposed. That market could be a magnet for other activity. Mr. Waggoner noted that the recent Via 6 project in downtown Seattle filled up with retail activity first and thus was able to attract a strong demand for residential units.
- Mr. Waggoner said he was looking forward to working with the applicant as the next iteration of this project comes through. He appreciated the work the applicant has done in the past on other projects.
- Mr. Meade asked if the applicant had any questions. The applicant said he had some big challenges going forward. The overall challenge was leading the way and having others plug in. He noted that

some retail spaces in Bellevue languished for years before they activated, and said this proposed development will take its time to flourish in Redmond.

- The applicant continued that the Building B on this site will have to evolve along with the market, but the massing of the open spaces should be established and protected.
- Mr. Meade said Redmond Square was a good example of a good project and good collaboration with the DRB.
- Mr. Krueger asked about the spaces along the south end and if those spaces could be transitional, such as live-work spaces. The applicant said the west edge near the parking garage could potentially have a big buffer or a green screen. That buffer would go away if a parking garage from a future development to the west connects with it.
- The applicant said the suggestions about the south end of the project by the DRB were welcomed. He said it would be fun to imagine a clear direction forward on the project overall.
- Ms. Ives offered some additional public comment and said she did not support the idea of eight stories, even if it is stepped up. She said some sites in San Diego and Bellevue could serve as an example. She said there would be a lot of concern that everything that is being built in Downtown Redmond and Overlake is rental property.
- She said she did not want to sound like a snob. She wants to build community, which takes time. Yet, she said everything that has come online in Redmond in the past six years has been rental property and nothing is for sale. She would like to encourage the DRB to bust the paradigm and create housing for sale whenever possible.
- Ms. Ives said units for sale have been established in cities like Bellevue and San Diego. She would like to see different housing products in Redmond, and said it was time for that to happen.

ADJOURNMENT

IT WAS MOVED BY MR. KRUEGER AND SECONDED BY MR. WAGGONER TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:22 P.M. MOTION APPROVED (4-0).

MINUTES APPROVED ON

RECORDING SECRETARY