

**CITY OF REDMOND  
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

August 2, 2012

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, Joe Palmquist, Scott Waggoner, Craig Krueger, Mike Nichols

**EXCUSED ABSENCE:** Lara Sirois

**STAFF PRESENT:** Steve Fischer, Principal Planner; Kelsey Johnson, Associate Planner

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Susan Trapp, 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 Chairperson David Scott Meade at 7:48 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**IT WAS MOVED BY MR. PALMQUIST AND SECONDED BY MR. WAGGONER TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF THE JUNE 21, 2012 MEETING. MOTION APPROVED (2-0) WITH THREE ABSTENTIONS.**

**PRE-APPLICATION**

**PRE120017, Bear Creek Apartments**

**Description:** A mixed-use project with 105 residential units, approximately 5,000 square feet of retail space, and 163 parking spaces in a below-grade parking garage

**Location:** Union Hill Road & 178<sup>th</sup> Place NE

**Applicant:** Nora Pena Klenner *with* Driscoll Architects

**Staff Contact:** Kelsey Johnson, 425-556-2409, [kmjohnson@redmond.gov](mailto:kmjohnson@redmond.gov)

Ms. Johnson noted that this project is in the Bear Creek neighborhood on a vacant piece of property adjacent to Union Hill Road and directly across the street from 178<sup>th</sup> Place NE. Bear Creek runs on the north side of the property, and therefore its buffers encompass a majority of the property. The project would have 105 residential units, approximately 5,000 square feet of retail space, and a below-grade parking garage. There are some Code-related areas of concern, including the southwest portion of the building, which encroaches into the 30-foot setback. That will need to be adjusted slightly, which may affect the design of the building. The upper floors on the north side of the building have decks projecting into the buffer. The buffer is in the shoreline jurisdiction, which involves a 35-foot height limit. Therefore, some of those decks may need to be removed or recessed slightly. Staff would like the DRB's thoughts on some of the design elements, including additional amenities within the plaza at the entrance along Union Hill Road and the building materials and colors.

Architect Nora Pena Klenner spoke on behalf of the applicant. She showed the DRB a site plan and a list of the sustainability elements of the project. Two other versions of projects at this location have been presented to the DRB in 2008. There has been some design guidance along the way. The building has been adjusted to deal with the buffer and also to deal with changing market conditions. The applicant showed the DRB the project, with Bear Creek running along the back third of the site. Due to the buffer, the creek takes up quite a bit of the site. The southern portion of the site is zoned BP and the northern portion is zoned RA5. In 2008, the Code allowed for a buffer averaging system, which squared off the buffer and allowed a building to be built within that area. That system is no longer used, such that the buffer is more

literal and goes off the top of the bank for the screen. Therefore, the applicant has to deal with the dip in the buffer within the design of the building.

The applicant showed the history of the drawings of the building from 2008 to 2012. One of the main differences is that the applicant used a mirror image design. That design is no longer possible, in that the buffer has moved where the center of the building is. The building is now a little bit longer. The north side of the building shows the dip that is required by the buffer. The benefits of the new design include that all parking is behind the building and all circulation is behind the building, so that is no longer seen from Union Hill Road. The building, the pedestrian plaza, and landscaping would be seen in front. The road and access way to the site is an impermeable surface, which does not allow the water to recharge the aquifer in the critical area. Therefore, the applicant is proposing that all the rainwater from the roof would be put back into the aquifer to create no net loss of water. Also, green roofs, solar panels and possibly solar water heaters have been proposed depending on best and highest use.

There will be an amenity space at the top of the project. The materials include glass, metal, and a hardy panel of fiber cement to provide different colors and textures throughout the building. Some balconies will be glass and metal. The others will be metal only. The original color scheme for this project will include browns and yellows, but other colors could be considered.

Landscape architect Rick Heier next spoke on behalf of the applicant. He said the site has three swaths through it. The first swath is where the building is developed, which is a fill area. There is a swath of blackberries that is 10 to 30 feet wide which is six to eight feet tall. The third swath is the creek itself and the flood plain, which have existing native vegetation. The understory along the river has some amazing growths of snowberry that are six feet high or higher in some areas. The landscaping comes in two parts. One part is to eliminate the blackberries encroaching into the existing native material into the flood plain. Native vegetation would be replaced in that area, and the landscaping would look like the Microsoft projects nearby. Designating the wetland area with the standard signage, the applicant would also provide a cedar rail fence to separate the building area from the native planting area. In some of the "islands" that pop out on the site, picnic tables would be placed. A rain garden is in development for the stormwater detention area to create a no-loss situation with regard to the water.

The developed building area would have a plaza with moveable chairs. There would be planters designating the entries, including the stairway and the main entrance elevator core. Coming out from the plaza, there would be a slope going down to the Union Hill Road, to be covered with evergreen ground cover. Street trees would be planted in it as well as a swath of ornamental grass, perhaps bloodgrass, for color. The applicant is trying to develop more landscaping at the entrance, as well. On the roof, a terraced development has been proposed. Green roofs would drain into planters, which would define different areas for the tenants of the building. There would be views from the roof of Bear Creek. The roof terrace has been developed with different seating areas and game tables. The center area would be left open to provide views. Green roofs would be intermixed with a conventional metal roof. On the north side of the roof, some solar panels have been proposed.

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD MEMBERS:**

##### Mr. Krueger:

- Asked about the landscaping, and wanted to know if the sidewalk along Union Hill Road is an existing, attached sidewalk. He noted that getting rid of the blackberries was a great idea, but said very few people would enjoy this aside from the residents on the first level.
- Mr. Krueger hoped to see more development along Union Hill to make the project friendlier. He noted that Union Hill has a lot of truck traffic. From a pedestrian standpoint, he wanted to see a landscape buffer between the pedestrian walkways and Union Hill Road.
- Mr. Krueger pointed out that the road in front of Gold's Gym stares right at this project, and he would encourage more pedestrian use to make it friendlier.
- The applicant said the plaza would be a public space because there is retail on the lower level. He said it would be difficult to bring the walkway into the site due to stormwater detention vaults. The site also slopes up to the walkway with a 25% grade.

- The applicant said that creating a better connection for the walkway would be challenging. Mr. Krueger encouraged better pedestrian access to the site.
- The applicant said the retail spaces would be doctor's offices, most likely, rather than storefronts. One of the corner sites could be a coffee shop. The applicant noted that to the north of the creek, there will be an easement dedicated for a future trail that would go through the Bear Creek neighborhood.
- Ms. Johnson agreed that there was such a trail plan in place, and said an easement was required on the north side of the creek to connect through to the Keller Farm site.
- Mr. Krueger said he was well aware of the constraints on the site, and he appreciated the applicant's work in this regard. He said the color scheme provided was rather dark. The applicant said other options for color were under consideration, and she wanted color to make a difference.
- Mr. Krueger said the color will be important for views along Union Hill Road, and he liked the idea of exploring a different palette. He said the site has plenty of modulation. He had a problem with the brown color and would like some brighter, warmer tones. He noted that there were a lot of windows on the site, and he hoped for some insight from other Board members on this project.

Mr. Nichols:

- Said the buffer line would create some challenges, and admitted that circulation for the sidewalk off of Union Hill Road would be challenging as well. He said the site would probably not attract too many pedestrians off the site into the retail area. However, it is most likely people would drive to the retail spaces, if they are doctor's offices.
- The applicant said the sidewalk will be widened to eight feet, but she is not sure if some tree boxes can be put into the sidewalk area to break up the massing of concrete.
- Mr. Nichols confirmed that the applicant would be reducing the three balconies that impinged on the buffer area.
- On the exterior of the building, Mr. Nichols would like to see more information about the texture of the materials and what sort of detailing might be used with the hardy plank siding.
- Mr. Nichols asked about the windows. The applicant said they would all be operable. Ms. Johnson noted that more background information would be going out to the DRB about the older permutations of this project, which would need to be reviewed more fully.
- Mr. Nichols asked about the roof and the plan to keep people back from the edge of the roof. The applicant said some railings would be provided. The roofs themselves act as a block in some areas. The applicant said a railing plus a parapet would be used in one part of the roof. Mr. Nichols wanted to make sure that was clear at the next meeting on this project.
- Mr. Nichols asked about stormwater treatment on the site. The applicant said the roof water would be piped into a rain garden on the north side of the project. Ms. Johnson noted the water would be going underneath the driveway on the north and into an infiltration pond in the buffer zone.
- The applicant said the plaza would have permeable pavers. The water detention vault is for overflow for all the other water, and that would be located under the plaza.
- Mr. Nichols wanted to make sure the green roof would not turn into an unattractive weed patch. He wanted to make sure those plants would be suitable, appropriate, and sustainable in the long term.
- The applicant said sedges and grasses would be used, and possibly some wildflowers or bulbs. Mr. Nichols noted that wildflowers do not always work out on green roofs.

Mr. Waggoner:

- Said he understood why the building had been pushed toward the road, modifying the original effect. To him, however, the design of the building seemed the same, with a huge gesture of six-story high curved walls. That gesture seems to highlight two small doors at the ground level, but there is no way to get to them.
- Mr. Waggoner said a visitor to this site would have to take a driveway in at opposite ends of the complex, drive around the back, and then come around the front. He believed most people would enter from the ends of the building, and the ends of the building really downplay the access points into the complex.

- He was curious as to why, with the revised circulation plan, there was not more acknowledgement of people coming in through the side entries. He believed the entry statement might even confuse people who are new to the site as to where they might pull over, for example.
- He hoped the entrance statement could be refocused towards the ends of the building. He suggested investigating whether a curb lane drop-off would be possible. He was concerned about seeing a lot of space dedicated to a use that people might not be able to get to and actually use.
- Mr. Waggoner asked about the swath of circulation space down the middle of the roof, and what the surface of that would be. The applicant said the design has not gone too far in that spot, but some work will be done to make that an engaging space.
- Mr. Waggoner said a lot of projects, currently, allow for a connection between the tenants and the planted matter on the green roof. He said a P-Patch might even be a good idea, and the applicant noted that she had seen such items incorporated into projects before.
- Ms. Johnson noted that there would be about 750 square feet of roof space if wood frame construction was used, which would reduce the amount of space seen in the current renderings.
- Mr. Waggoner agreed with Mr. Krueger that there was an overabundance of landscaping on the creek side of the project versus the street side. Mr. Waggoner asked about the markings on the drawings that showed utility sites, and if there was a retaining wall going around some transformers on the site.
- The applicant said there were some city electrical boxes on the site and a U-shaped retaining wall.
- Mr. Waggoner asked the applicant to consider turning the screening of these boxes around the other way, in light of the pedestrian traffic that would be coming by that area. Ms. Johnson said some landscaping could be put in to screen the front of the utilities along Union Hill.
- Mr. Waggoner noted that some of the renderings from 2008 show some different window frame colors, and he would like to see lighter colors provided. Using color, the applicant could break up the massing of the structure, as well.
- Mr. Waggoner added that the staff comment on the heavy use of cement fiber panel was well taken. He would support more of a variety of textures and shapes if other materials were not used.

Mr. Palmquist:

- Confirmed that there was a 30-foot setback along the front of the project site along Union Hill Road. He said that this project seems to be like a Downtown development on a major road. However, in this case, there is a 30-foot setback, and the project seems lost to him, in a way.
- Mr. Palmquist added that the project is long and linear, which addresses the street front, which the project really has no physical relation to because of the setback. He would have liked to have seen the site broken up into more buildings.
- Mr. Palmquist said another recent project near this site had similar problems, in that it was a massive building with few fenestration changes. He appreciated the use of color to break up the massing, but did not believe that would help as much as a radical change in building format.
- He noted that the retail tenants would probably want parking outside their front door, not in the parking around the back of the site. He said it would be tough to coax people to park behind the retail site and then walk through the building. He said separating the buildings might help in this regard.
- The applicant said two parking spots would need to be provided per 1,000 square feet, so ten spots would be required. The west side of the building would include twelve spaces, which would be used only for commercial uses.
- Mr. Palmquist asked how far it was from that commercial parking on the west to the retail on the east. The applicant said it would be about 50 feet or less. The applicant admitted that something could be developed further to invite people in and through the building.
- Mr. Palmquist said the building and its architecture does not really fit the zoning, especially in looking at the windows. He would encourage different types of windows to break up the massing.
- He asked the applicant to look at some special roof forms to establish a different hierarchy for the vertical circulation of the roof area. Varying the roof heights would be a good idea, as well.
- Mr. Palmquist wanted the applicant to look at the overall concept of having the building fit the site it is on and its zoning. He said the concept of the building needs to be revisited, quite drastically.
- The applicant said that since 2008, she has been guided in the direction presented at this meeting with regard to design. She did not know what to say when, four years later, all of a sudden, a different direction was recommended.

Mr. Meade:

- Noted that Mr. Palmquist was not on the Board in 2008. Mr. Meade was on the Board at that point, and asked to see the old and new versions of the project.
- Ms. Johnson noted that in 2008, this project was still in the pre-application stages. No approval was given at that time. The 2008 application expired and the 2012 application, technically, is brand-new.
- The applicant said the main thing she has been working on is a new color scheme, in that she is trying to build on what has already been presented.
- Mr. Meade said the comments from his fellow Board members were very valid. He said it would be a challenge, perhaps insurmountable, to get people into the retail spaces. He said there was a lot in the way of someone trying to get the retail space, and he did not know if the current plan would work.
- Mr. Meade said more modulation needed to happen with the upper portion of the building to bring more excitement to it. He agreed with Mr. Palmquist that this building seemed out of place, and the function of it seemed out of place in this zone because the building is surrounded by commercial office buildings and light industrial uses.
- Ms. Johnson noted there is an Aegis medical facility to the west and some vacant parcels to the east. Across the street is a gym. Mr. Meade said this building was an odd fit, but he understood what the applicant was doing.
- Mr. Meade said the applicant should listen to the idea of separating the mass with color. More vertical modulation and more play with the window design and patterns should be considered. Even the retail space could use a color break to provide better definition.
- Mr. Meade echoed Mr. Palmquist's concept of an open-air connection to the back parking to help drive people from the back to the front, perhaps on the main floor. He suggested that the landscaping would radiate out from the building to focus attention where it should be, perhaps using formal shapes to push people towards the focal points of the building.
- Mr. Meade said the color scheme needed some work. He said the green, blue, and yellow scheme looks good, and urged the applicant to take some risks with color to create a unique look for the building.
- The applicant said some metal would be mixed in with the hardy panel materials. The curved part of the structure would be metal. Mr. Meade suggested creating a rhythm with each color, perhaps using an 18-inch by 8-foot strip, for example, to create patterns of massing and colors.
- Mr. Meade said more drama could happen in the roof form to spread the wings of the building and create some excitement, especially with the view from the street. He asked the applicant to come back with new colors and details on the materials.
- Mr. Krueger noted that other than Mr. Meade, everyone else on the Board is new to the project. He appreciated what was brought before, but noted that building design and the desires of the Redmond City Council regarding that design have changed over the past four years. He said the current DRB is trying to reflect those changes.
- Mr. Krueger recommended the applicant should look at the new development in Anderson Park and some of the development near this proposed project for ideas. He said the DRB is trying to change some things from what was approved in the past.
- Mr. Krueger said that he was confused with some of the renderings presented. The applicant apologized and said some renderings she wanted to include were not given to the DRB members in their packets before this meeting.
- Mr. Meade asked the applicant to wow the DRB at the next meeting, such that this project would really draw some attention off Union Hill Road. He said the applicant has some good opportunities for more layers of appeal to this site.
- The DRB and the applicant thanked each other for their time.

**DISCUSSION**

Mr. Fischer noted that Ms. McDonald would no longer be a member of the Design Review Board. She has had a lot of travel for work and cannot keep a commitment to the DRB. Also, a few days before this meeting, Ms. Sirois said she would be stepping down from the DRB by the end of the year. Mr. Fischer said the two Board positions would be held open through the end of August, and the hope is to have one or both of the positions filled by the end of October or early November. Mr. Fischer asked the DRB members to advise staff if they know any viable candidates for these positions. Mr. Krueger said Mr. Fischer should hear from a lot of people, in that there is a lot of building activity in Redmond.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION MADE BY MR. NICHOLS AND SECONDED BY MR. PALMQUIST TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:52 P.M. MOTION PASSES (5-0).**

**September 20, 2012**  
**MINUTES APPROVED ON**

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**RECORDING SECRETARY**