

Downtown Code Design Review Committee

Meeting Minutes

August 5, 2021

Members Present: Porter, Hastings, Dickson, Lustig, Mosley, Oldham

Staff Present: Hammer

Others Present: Cate Pham (Legal), Andy VanPelt, Jay Silverman, Kim Hawkins, Beth Ostrowski, Brad Slayden

Location: 800 2nd Avenue South, Development Services Center Conference Room

I. APPROVAL OF THE 3/4/2021 DTC DRC MINUTES

Hastings moved and Mosley seconded the motion to approve the March 4, 2021 meeting minutes (6-0-0).

III. CASES FOR REVIEW

1) Circle South Residential

2021DTC-016-001

514 and 522 8th Avenue South and 701 Drexel Street

Staff Reviewer: Eric Hammer

Staff Recommendation: Approve with conditions and defer without all conditions

APPLICANT REQUEST

A request for A.) approval of modifying the step-back and B.) recommendation for overall height modification to the Planning Commission for property located at 514 and 522 8th Avenue South and 701 Drexel Street (0.41 acres), and within the Lafayette subdistrict of the DTC.

A. DTC MODIFICATION REQUEST SUMMARY

1. Step-back

- Required: 15-foot minimum step-back is required for buildings 7 stories or greater along public streets between the 4th and 7th stories.
- Proposed: 5-foot step-back for 75 feet of Drexel Street frontage, significant step-back provided at corner of Drexel Street and 8th Avenue South.

B. OVERALL HEIGHT MODIFICATION REQUEST SUMMARY

2. Overall Height

- 8 stories – Maximum Height permitted for Lafayette subdistrict general
- 11 stories – Maximum Height with provisions made through Bonus Height Program
- 19 stories – Proposed Height as part of Overall Height Modification



Figure 1: View from Drexel & 8th Avenue



Figure 2: View of Drexel & Alley Façades



Figure 3: Site Plan with Program

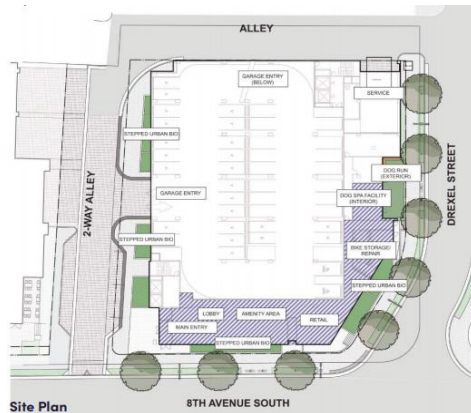


Figure 4: Landscape Plan



Figure 5: East Elevation



Figure 6: North Elevation

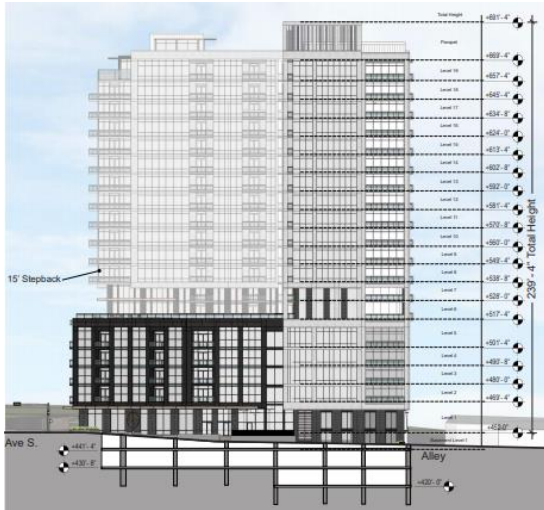


Figure 7: Drexel Street Elevation

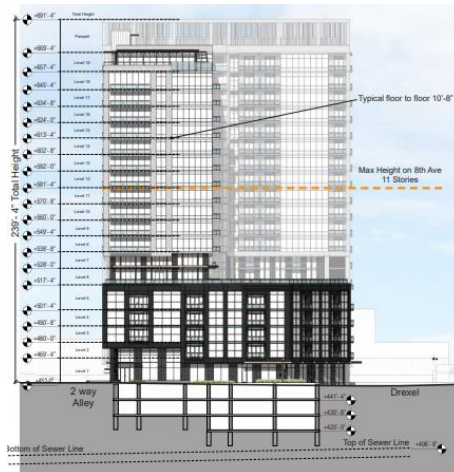


Figure 8: 8th Avenue Elevation

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Circle South Residential project proposes a 19-story residential building consisting of 261 units, ground-level retail space, as well as underground and lined parking for a total of 336 parking spaces. This project is south of the approved 30-story office tower that is part of the overall Circle South development site.

PLAN DETAILS

Circle South Residential is located northeast of the intersection of 8th Avenue South (primary street) and Drexel Street (tertiary street). Primary vehicular access is taken from Alley 86 and Alley 139. Alley 139 has been proposed as being a two-way enhanced alley with sidewalks by both this project and the Circle South office project. Pedestrian access to the lobby and ground floor retail is primarily from 8th Avenue frontage. Drexel Street frontage, as a tertiary street, includes bicycle storage and repair as well as a dog run. Service and loading will occur from the alleys.

The project proposes to improve neighborhood-level mobility by realigning Drexel Street (as shown in Figure 9) with Cannery Row through the corner of the Circle South property in addition to dedicating right-of-way to meet the Major and Collector Street Plan and improve alley function. The centerlines of Drexel Street and Cannery Row are currently misaligned by approximately 80 feet.

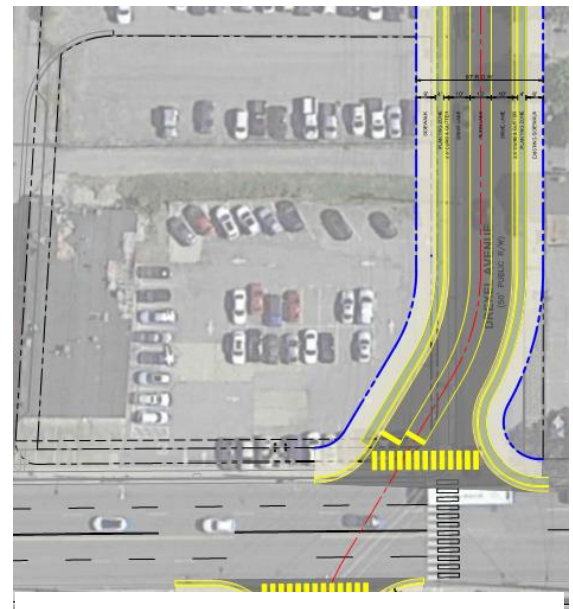


Figure 9: Drexel Realignment

A. DTC MODIFICATIONS ANALYSIS

Drexel Street Step-backs

The DTC requires buildings in the Lafayette subdistrict, that are greater than 7 stories, to have a 15-foot step-back at some point between the 4th and 7th story. The project proposes a 5-foot step-back on the 5th story for 75 feet of Drexel Street frontage and proposes the remainder of that frontage have a much larger step-back provided at corner of Drexel Street and 8th Avenue South, as shown in Figure 1.

The intent of a step-back is to allow light and air to reach the street for the benefit of pedestrians and to avoid a canyon effect. Step-backs are most important for narrow streets, as increased

proximity of buildings on the other side of the right-of-way has a greater potential to create a canyon effect.

Staff recognizes that alternatives to the step-back standard that preserve the intent may be appropriate in lieu of a 15-foot step-back on street frontages. In this case, the building steps back 5 feet for 75 feet of the Drexel Street frontage, but the massing of the 5th to the 19th stories pulls back from the street to allow light and air to reach the street. This meets the general intent of the standard and staff recommends approval of this modification.

B. OVERALL HEIGHT MODIFICATION ANALYSIS

The process for an Overall Height Modification is outlined in the DTC as follows:

1. The Executive Director of the Planning Department shall determine whether the development has made reasonable efforts to pursue all appropriate bonuses available in the Bonus Height Program.
2. The applicant shall hold a community meeting providing notices to all property owners within 300 feet.
3. The Planning Commission shall review the modification request and may grant additional height for exceptional design, including but not limited to unique architecture, exceptionally strong streetscape, and improvement of the project's relationship to surrounding properties.

Bonus Height Program

A Determination Letter, signed by the Executive Director of the Planning Department, is attached to this staff report and states the development has made reasonable efforts to use all appropriate bonuses available in the Bonus Height Program. The project proposes use of Pervious Surfaces, Upper-Level Garage Liners, and Underground Parking to fully utilize all appropriate bonuses.

Community Meeting

The applicant held a community meeting on Wednesday, July 21, 2021 at 6:00 PM at 424 Church St., Suite 2100 and sent notices to all property owners within 300 feet. Planning staff attended to observe the community meeting, but no members of the public came to the meeting. Several support letters have been received by staff both before and after the community meeting.

Exceptional Design

The project significantly improves the relationship of this site to surrounding properties by re-aligning Drexel Street to enhance connectivity. As the SoBro and Lafayette subdistricts continue to redevelop, connectivity improvements, and strong streetscapes are critical to ensure that Downtown continues to develop an interconnected multi-modal transportation network. The project also proposes to bury overhead utility lines on both Drexel and 8th Avenue to create a stronger streetscape that properly addresses 8th Avenue South as a significant connection through Downtown.

The project has placed all parking underground to the extent practicable, as a large sewer line runs approximately 50 feet below the surface of the earth, with the remaining parking fully lined with a residential liner on both Drexel Street and 8th Avenue South. The project has fully clad all façades with durable materials that present high-quality façades to the pedestrian realm.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The project promotes enhanced neighborhood connectivity and addresses the public realm with quality materials and site design. Staff recommends approval of the modification to the step-back and the overall height modification with the following conditions and deferral without all conditions:

1. All bonus height actions identified in this application, including any that require a deed or restrictive covenant, must be approved prior to building permit approval.
2. The applicant shall coordinate with NDOT and WeGo Transit on future mobility needs on 8th Avenue South.
3. Final design of the sidewalks adjacent to the enhanced alley shall use protective devices, such as bollards, to distinguish between pedestrian and vehicular areas at garage access points.
4. Overhead lines along this property's 8th Avenue South and Drexel Street frontages shall be buried.
5. The proposed residential use shall not be converted to a short-term rental use.
6. Approval of this overall height modification shall be reconsidered by the Planning Commission if the realignment of Drexel Street is not achieved.

Lustig moved and Oldham seconded the motion to approve the modification request and recommend that the Planning Commission approve the overall height modification with staff conditions. (6-0-0)

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED by the Downtown Code Design Review Committee that case 1) Circle South Residential is approved with a recommendation of approval of the overall height modification to the Planning Commission. (6-0-0)

V) Adjournment