



**Request**

**DTC Modifications &  
Overall Height Modification**

**Project Name**

**Voorhees Residential Development – Tower 2**

**Council District**

19 – O’Connell

**Requested by**

Ryan Terrell, ESa

**Staff Reviewer**

Islas

**Staff Recommendation**

*Approve with conditions and defer without all conditions*

**APPLICANT REQUEST**

A request for A.) approval of modifying the step-back, floor-to-floor maximum height, and MCSP standards of the DTC and B.) recommendation for overall height modification to the Planning Commission for property located at 0 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and 701 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South (0.85 acres), and within the Gulch South subdistrict of the DTC.

**A. DTC MODIFICATION REQUEST SUMMARY**

1. Step-back

- Required: 15-foot minimum step-back is required for buildings 8 stories or greater along public streets between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> stories.
- Proposed: Eliminate the step-back requirements due to the termination of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South at the railroad line, adjacent to the property.

2. Floor-to-Floor Maximum Height

- Required: 25 feet for first two floors, 18 feet for other floors, 25 feet for top floor for buildings greater than five stories.
- Proposed: Height of the third floor to be 27’-3” for liner unit to fully screen garage.

3. MCSP standards

- Required: 4-foot wide green zone and 8-foot wide pedestrian zone along the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South frontage.
- Proposed: Eliminate the green zone requirement and provide a 6.7’ wide pedestrian zone due to the termination of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South at the railroad line, adjacent to the property.

**B. OVERALL HEIGHT MODIFICATION REQUEST SUMMARY**

4. Overall Height

- 10 stories – Maximum Height permitted for Gulch South subdistrict general
- 16 stories – Maximum Height with provisions made through Bonus Height Program
- 20 stories – Proposed Height as part of Overall Height Modification



# Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 3/4/2021



Figure 1: View from near the intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Division Street



Figure 2: South Elevation



# Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 3/4/2021



Figure 3: North Elevation



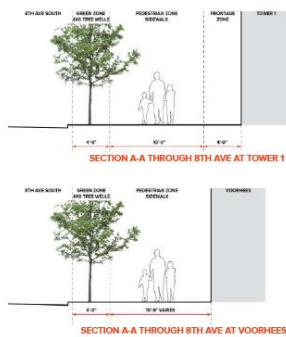
Figure 4: West Elevation (left) and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South Elevation / East Elevation (right)



## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 3/4/2021

### VOORHEES MASTER PLAN

1. ACTIVATED ALLEY WITH OUTDOOR DINING
  2. ELEVATED PLAZA
  3. ELEVATOR FOR ACCESS TO PLAZA AND ALLEY
  4. COVERED PASEO WITH RETAIL ACTIVATION
  5. SIGNAGE ELEMENT TO ESTABLISH DISTRICT
  6. RIDE SHARE DROP OFF
  7. SHARED BACK OF HOUSE AREA
- L. LOBBY ENTRY  
R. RETAIL ENTRY  
T. TENANT ENTRY



MANUEL ZEITLIN ARCHITECTS  
Hawkins Partners, Inc.

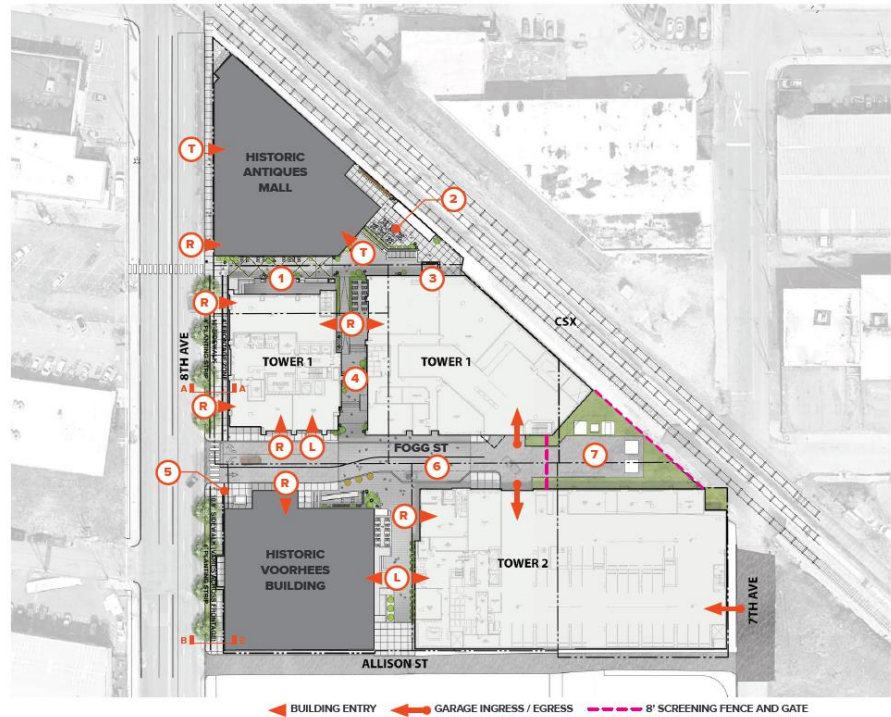


Figure 5: Voorhees Master Plan

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Voorhees Master Plan proposes a 20-story residential building consisting of approximately 328 apartment units, ground-level retail space, office space, and both underground and structured parking for a total of 395 vehicular parking spaces. This building is referred to as Tower 2.

The proposals for Voorhees Tower 2 and Tower 1 along with the renovations of the Historic Antiques Mall and Historic Voorhees Building are intended to create a unique master plan site. Retail activation and outdoor dining at the base of each building, along with a covered walkway through Tower 1, allows for an engaging pedestrian experience.

### PLAN DETAILS

Voorhees Tower 2 is located north of the intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Division Street. Tower 2's only frontage is on a portion of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, a tertiary street per the DTC, that terminates at the CSX railroad lines adjacent to the property. Due to this, the eastern façade is generally thought of as the back of the building. Tower 2's primary vehicular entrance is off Fogg Street, which was abandoned in 2019. There is another vehicular entrance off 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. The building's primary pedestrian entrances are on Fogg Street and the pedestrian space between the Historic Voorhees Building and Tower 2. The southern façade fronts Allison Street – which is categorized as an alley by the DTC. Service and loading occur from Fogg Street. Pick-up and drop-off will occur within an internal circulation pattern.



## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 3/4/2021

### A. DTC MODIFICATIONS ANALYSIS

#### 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South Step-backs

The DTC requires buildings in the Gulch South subdistrict, that are greater than 8 stories, to have a 15-foot step-back at some point between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> story. Voorhees Tower 2 proposes to eliminate the step-back requirements due to the termination of 7th Avenue South adjacent to the property.

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.

The termination of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, and the adjacent CSX railroad lines combine to allow for more light and air to reach the street level. In addition, the termination of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South at the railroad lines will limit the pedestrian activity along this street.

#### Floor-to-Floor Maximum Heights

The DTC requires the maximum height of an individual story, above the second story, to not exceed 18 feet in height. The intent of this is to establish reasonable floor-to-floor heights, while preserving proportionality. Without reasonable limits to the height of each floor, unpredictable outcomes could occur that are contrary to the intent of height limitations. In this case, the third floor is being proposed with a height of 27'-3" for the liner unit to fully screen the parking garage.

Staff finds that the proposed height of the third floor is not enough to negatively affect the proportions of the building. Achieving an upper-level garage liner is a worthy trade-off for the increased height of the floor. In addition, there have been reasonable efforts made on the exterior of the building to visually break up the height of this floor and match it with the other liner unit floors.

#### MCSP Standards

The DTC requires properties to make improvements to the sidewalk corridor according to the Major and Collector Street Plan (MCSP). The MCSP calls for 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, adjacent to the property, to provide a 4-foot wide green zone and an 8-foot wide pedestrian zone. The intent of this is to provide a wide enough sidewalk for pedestrians to pass each other, and a buffered space between those pedestrians and vehicular traffic. The proposed modification is to eliminate the required green zone and provide a 6.7-foot wide sidewalk due to the termination of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South adjacent to the property.

When these MCSP standards were put in place, 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South still bridged over the CSX railroad lines and was a direct connection between Lafayette Street and Division Street. With the bridge demolished and the connection lost, it is reasonable to expect less vehicular and pedestrian traffic at this location. For these reasons, staff is in support of the proposed modification to the MCSP standards.



## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 3/4/2021

### **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 Historic Building Preservation bonus is being used to transfer unused entitlements from the Historic Antiques Mall and the Historic Voorhees Building to Voorhees Tower 2. Additional bonuses being utilized include Public Parking, Pervious Surfaces, and Upper Level Garage Liner and Underground Parking.

#### Community Meeting

The applicant held a virtual community meeting on Friday, February 26, 2020 at 4:30 P.M. and sent notices to properties within 300 feet. With no community members present at the start of the meeting, the applicant recorded the planned presentation and shared a copy with Planning staff.

#### Exceptional Design

The architecture of Tower 2 provides a contemporary interpretation of the industrial character established by the Historic Voorhees Building in the form of materials and façade articulation and division. The strategic shifting of the massing creates a unique yet controlled architectural language that terminates with a dynamic roofline. Additionally, Tower 2's podium relates to the overall massing of the Historic Voorhees Building to create a common scale.

The Voorhees Master Plan provides pedestrian-only walkways between Tower 2 and the Historic Voorhees Building, between Tower 1 and the Historic Antiques Mall and through the middle of Tower 1. Together, with the sidewalks along Fogg Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, a campus-like pedestrian atmosphere has been designed. Pedestrians would be able to use these walkways to access various retail and lobby entries for each of the four buildings associated with the Master Plan. Ground-level and upper-level garage liners, space for outdoor dining, and street trees and landscaping throughout the Master Plan site contribute to a vibrant and active streetscape.

The applicant has also proposed an 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South mid-block crosswalk that would connect pedestrians to and from the Voorhees site. This connection is currently being discussed with Metro Public Works to assess the final configuration.



## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 3/4/2021



**Figure 6: Common scale between podiums and Historic Voorhees Building**



**Figure 7: View from intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Fogg Street showing an active streetscape with Tower 2 in background**



## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 3/4/2021

### Supplemental Policy Considerations

In addition to these considerations, this property is part of a supplemental policy (09-T6-DN-GS-Division Street) that was put in place after the construction of the Division Street Bridge. Supplemental Policy is put in place within a Community Plan when areas need more specific guidance than is included in the Community Character Manual. It reads as follows:

*Properties along the Division Street Extension may be considered for high-rise building height (20 stories and taller) in exchange for public benefits provided by the development, including, but not limited to, affordable and workforce housing, the Downtown Code's Bonus Height Program, modification processes, or rezoning to a Specific Plan. Building design should also result in a unique architecture that seeks to improve the public realm and city skyline.*

The construction of the bridge, which improved mobility throughout the Gulch South and Pie Town neighborhoods, transformed this section of Division from a dead end into a major mobility corridor. The Voorhees Tower 2 project is maximizing the DTC bonuses available to the site and proposes using the overall height modification process to achieve a height (20 stories) that is mentioned specifically within the supplemental policy as acceptable for this site.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The project offers unique qualities and architectural expression in its site design, building massing, and overall aesthetic and staff is recommending approval of the modifications requested.

Staff recommends approval of the overall height modification with the following conditions and deferral without all conditions:

1. All bonus height actions identified in this application, including those that require a deed or restrictive covenant, must be approved prior to building permit approval.
2. The applicant shall coordinate with Metro Public Works on the proposed 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South mid-block crosswalk.
3. All overhead lines along the master plan site's 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South frontage shall be buried.
4. Both the Historic Antiques Mall and the Historic Voorhees Building must be designated as Historic Landmark Zoning Overlays prior to building permit approval.
5. Approval of this Overall Height Modification shall be reconsidered by the Planning Commission if either the Historic Antiques Mall or the Historic Voorhees Building are not able to achieve or maintain Historic Landmark Overlay status.