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# CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

## COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

9611 SE 36TH STREET | MERCER ISLAND, WA 98040

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## STAFF REPORT

### DESIGN COMMISSION STUDY SESSION

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<b>Project No:</b>	DSR22-014
<b>Description:</b>	A Study Session with the Design Commission to discuss a proposal to construct a new 10-unit apartment building.
<b>Applicant/ Owner:</b>	Kelly Hallstrom (Medici Architects) / 2900 Development LLC
<b>Site Address:</b>	2900 78th Ave SE, Mercer Island WA 98040 Identified by King County Assessor tax parcel number: 531510-1219
<b>Zoning District</b>	Town Center (TC), TC-4 Subarea
<b>Staff Contact:</b>	Ryan Harriman, EMPA, AICP – Planning Manager
<b>Exhibits:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Project Narrative</li><li>2. Plan Set</li><li>3. Building Study Session Comments</li></ol>

#### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

On December 13, 2022, the applicant applied for a study session with the Design Commission to review a proposal for a 10-unit residential apartment building located at 2900 78th Avenue SE. Applicants for Design Commission Design Review are required to take part in a study session with the Design Commission prior to public hearing pursuant to MICC 19.15.220(C)(2)(a); this study session fulfills this requirement.

On July 26, 2022, the Applicant submitted a complete site development permit application, 2207-281, which the City subsequently determined vests the application to the design and development regulations in place at that time.

The subject property is located 2900 78th Ave SE, in the Town Center zone. The neighboring properties to the north, south, and east are also within the Town Center zone and the TC-4 subarea. The intersection of SE 29th Street and 78th Avenue SE is located to the west of the subject property.

The subject property is developed with a commercial building, formerly Baskin Robbins. Neighboring development includes a senior living facility to the east, multi-story mixed use building to the north, and a parking lot for a financial institution to the south.

The Applicant will need to submit a formal design review application for proposed development, which will require approval by the Design Commission prior to issuance of any construction permits. Following completion of this study session and receipt of an application for design review, an open record public hearing in front of the Design Commission will be scheduled pursuant to MICC 19.15.220(C)(2).

#### **II. STAFF ANALYSIS AND CRITERIA FOR REVIEW**

**A. MICC 19.11.015 - Town Center subareas.**

The subject property is located within TC-4 subarea which allows a broad of land uses and building up to four stories in height. The proposed development is four stories and does not exceed the maximum height of 51-feet. Pursuant to MICC 19.11.015(B)(2), the purpose of the TC-4 subarea is to be a transition between the taller buildings in the TC-5 subarea and the lower structures in the TC-3 and TCMF-3 subareas. A broad mix of land uses is allowed. Buildings may be up to four stories in height.

**B. MICC 19.11.020 - Land uses.**

Pursuant to MICC 19.11.020, the proposed development is listed as a permitted use. On July 26, 2022, the Applicant applied for a site development permit, 2207-281. The application vests the proposed development to the regulations in place at the time the application. The application is vested to the former version of Chapter 19.11 MICC, which did not require commercial development to be located on the first floor of a proposed development.

**C. MICC 19.11.030 - Bulk regulations.**

- Base Building Height Allowed: 27 Feet  
proposed: 51-feet
- Based Building Stories Allowed: 2  
proposed: 4 stories
- Max Allowable Building Height: 51 Feet  
proposed: 51-feet
- Max Allowable Building Stories: 4  
proposed: 4 stories
- Ground Floor Adjacent to Streets: 15 Feet  
proposed: 15-foot ground floor level along 78th Ave SE
- Setback From Property Lines: No Minimum  
proposed: North - 0-feet/ East – 0-feet / South – 12-feet / West – 15-feet from face of curb
- Required Upper Story Setback: Meets average daylight plane standards as described in subsection (A)7

**D. MICC 19.11.040 - Affordable housing.**

The incentives and regulations offered in MICC 19.11.040 are used by the City as one means of meeting its commitment to encourage housing affordable to all economic groups, and to meet its regional share of affordable housing requirements. The purpose of MICC 19.11.040 is to: (1) implement through regulations the responsibility of the city under state law to provide for housing opportunities for all economic segments of the community, (2) help address the shortage of housing in the city for persons of moderate-income households, (3) promote development of affordable housing that would not otherwise be built in the city, and (4) offer incentives to encourage construction of affordable housing units in Town Center.

To qualify for the addition two stories that is allowed within the TC-4 subarea, the Applicant proposes to provide affordable housing that is equal to 10 percent of the total units in the development. The total number of units proposed is 10, which means that 1 (10%) of those units will be affordable. As the proposed development moves forward and agreement between the city and owner will be established per MICC 19.11.040.F.

**E. MICC 19.11.050 - Green building standards.**

Pursuant to MICC 19.11.050, any major new construction shall meet the LEED Gold standard. Projects that are primarily residential (at least 50 percent of the gross floor area is composed of residential uses) may

instead meet the Built Green 4 Star standard. The applicant shall provide proof of LEED or Built Green certification within 180 days of issuance of a final certificate of occupancy, or such later date as may be allowed by the code official for good cause, by submitting a report analyzing the extent credits were earned toward such rating. Failure to submit a timely report regarding LEED or Built Green ratings by the date required is a violation of this Code.

**F. MICC 19.11.060 - Site design.**

The Applicant proposes to incorporate three minor site features into the proposed development. These features include:

- Water fountain within the public open space
- Bike rack on the public sidewalk near the walkway to the building entrance
- Clock located on the building above the public open space will be incorporated into the facade and become a piece of art."

Since this proposed development exceeds three stories in height, at least one of the major site features is required. Due to the small size of the lot, it is not feasible to provide a Through-block connection so this project is proposing to incorporate a public open space that meets the requirements of MICC 19.11.040(D). The public open space shall be an informal gathering area for not only residents, but for anyone passing by. The proposed public open space is 465 SF which is 3.2 percent of the proposed GFA (minimum requirement is 3 percent), and the width is 20 feet which extends from the north property line to the driveway.

The proposed public open space incorporates these design elements into the design:

- It is located at the same level as the sidewalk, will serve as a focal point, and is integrated with the pedestrian connection between the building and the public right of way.
- It includes amenities such as 8 linear feet of seating, a water fountain, landscape lighting, landscaping, a green wall, and decorative paving.
- Pedestrian oriented frontage is provided on the west (ROW) and the south (building entry) edges of the open space.
- 25 percent of the open space is landscaped with groundcover and shrubs.
- Apart from a small awning above the entry door, the public open space is open to the sky.
- The public open space will be always available to the public.

**G. MICC 19.11.070 - Greenery and outdoor spaces.**

**B.1 - Landscaped area requirement**

The landscaped surfaces shall equal at least 25 percent of the development site. This site is 7,200 SF so at least 1,800 SF (25 percent) shall be landscaped. Because of the small site, a combination of ground level planting, green walls, and a green roof will be utilized to meet this requirement.

- Ground Level Planting: The available space is very limited. The public open space and the planter strip south of the driveway combine for a total of 250 SF of available space for planting of shrubs and ground cover.

- Green Wall: A green wall will be incorporated into the public open space along the north property line that will cover up the blank wall of the adjacent property. This will be approximately 226 SF, which at a rate of 75 percent, 169.5 SF will count towards the landscape requirement.

- Green Roof: This will be the largest portion of landscaping on site. There will be approximately 3,250 SF of sedum trays on the roof, which 1,625 SF will count towards the requirement.

These elements combine for a total of 2,044.5 SF in landscaped area, or 28.4% of the site.

**B.2 - Landscaping standards**

All new plantings shall be selected from a city approved list. Per the landscape plans, all new plantings shall meet the City of Mercer Island's installation standards and plans. And all new planting areas shall be irrigated with an automatic irrigation system.

#### **H. MICC 19.11.080 - Screening.**

As required per code, the solid waste enclosure will be screened around the perimeter, concealed on the top, and will have self-closing doors. The proposed walls of the enclosure will be comprised of CMU blocks for durability and will have a roof and fascia that correspond to the color palette of the main building. The height of the enclosure will be approximately 10-feet. Self-closing doors will be provided as a man-door on the parking garage side and a double door that can be opened from the loading zone side.

#### **I. MICC 19.11.090 - Lighting.**

Lighting standards are contained in MICC 19.11.090. Lighting should be designed to be pedestrian scale, LED or low wattage, shielded, and integrated into the overall design. The proposed design meets the standards in this section by including LED lighting will be provided at all building entrances, within the parking garage, as landscape lighting, and at all private deck spaces.

#### **J. MICC 19.11.100 - Building design.**

##### **B.1 – Fenestration**

In the TC-4 along 78th Ave SE, it is required that at least 75 percent of the length of the ground floor façade between the height of 2-feet and 7-feet shall be comprised of windows and doors with views of retail, office, or lobby spaces. Due to the 60-foot width of the street frontage, easement, loading zone and garage access requirements that must fit within this area, fenestration in this area is very limited. As proposed, the building width at the garage level is 46-feet-6-inches and the width of the windows at the lobby (only conditioned spaced at the ground floor) is 13-feet. In addition, the secure garage entrance will have a 20-foot wide roll-up, open grille security door that will all additional transparency at the ground floor level. The total width of transparency at this level is 70 percent. The remainder of this ground floor facade is comprised of structural components and an exit passageway door.

##### **B.2 - Street-facing façade elements**

Per 19.11.100.B.2, new construction requires at least (7) façade elements as described in this section or as approved by the design commission. This project is proposing:

- 1) A combination of Trespa Lumen panels that highlight the building massing over the public open space and will change appearance as they absorb the light differently throughout the day.
- 2) Clerestory windows above the curtainwall of the lobby
- 3) Recessed balconies for individual residential units.
- 4) Accent material to highlight the recessed balconies.
- 5) Artistic clock that will be integrated into the design of the facade above the public open space.
- 6) Slanted structural columns that support the cantilevered upper floors.
- 7) Powder coated steel sheets that create the perimeter of the raised gravel bed along the north property line turn downward at the front corner of the facade and will blend seamlessly with color coordinated exit passageway door, so it won't detract from the overall design.

##### **B.3 - Major façade modulation**

The street-facing façade is modulated into two major vertical massing. The cantilevered massing that stacks on all upper floors is 27-feet wide. The second major massing is recessed 28-feet from the face of the cantilevered mass and features a mixture of materials that highlight this form as a distinct massing that sits on top of the lobby structure. This massing also features a parapet roofline whereas the cantilevered massing shows a flat roof with overhangs.

**At least (3) minor façade modulations shall be incorporated in the design of the building. Some of these minor modulations include:**

- 1) Recessed balconies for each residential unit.
- 2) Bumpouts are highlighted by a change in material.
- 3) Fenestration patterns break up the opaque massing.

**K. MICC 19.11.110 - Materials and color.**

The proposed color palette was chosen to not detract from the surrounding elements. The main materials are white aluminum and gray Trespa panels, the vertical form above the public open space is accented with Trespa's Lumen panels with an oblique finish. This is a combination of a matte and gloss finish that will reflect the light differently as the sun moves across the sky.

On the portion of the massing that is more obscured from public view on the north and east elevations, the main material is comprised of fiber cement panels to match the color of the gray Trespa panels. These panels are then accented with black infill panels to help break up the massing of the blank wall which has limited window opening due to its proximity to the property line.

The recessed elevator shaft and private balcony spaces use a v-groove style fiber cement siding in Urbane Bronze that complements the other materials.

At the ground floor level, the parking garage is constructed out of concrete which is used as an architectural accent at the garage entrance and is used to separate the parking garage use from the lobby/residential use.

**L. MICC 19.11.120 - Street standards.**

The ROW improvements along 78th Ave SE shall include widening the public sidewalk to 15 feet. This measurement is from the face of curb to the back of sidewalk. This frontage shall also follow the Mercer Island Town Center Streetscape Manual and incorporate design elements such as city approved street lights, street sign, and bike rack. Existing street trees are located on both sides of the property, but none will be added due to the 60-foot width of the property, and it's required access points.

**M. MICC 19.11.130 - Parking, vehicular and pedestrian circulation.**

Parking standards are established in MICC 19.11.130. The minimum number of required parking stalls for residential use is 1 to 1.4 per unit. All parking for this project will be located in an at-grade, open parking garage below the proposed residential units. The configuration of this garage allows for a total of 11 parking stalls, which includes one van accessible stall. Will the proposed 10 units, this is 1.1 stalls per unit. The proposed parking garage conforms to the standards set forth in Appendix A which includes standard stalls having dimensions of 9-feet x 18.5-feet, compact stalls with dimensions of 8.5-feet x16-feet, and a two-way drive aisle with a width of 24-feet.

Due to the compact nature of the site and so all required dimensions can be met, this project is proposing an increase of compact stalls above the allowed 50 percent. Out of a total of 11 off-street parking stalls, the Applicant proposes seven or 63 percent of these stalls be compact.

The required off-street loading zone is accessed from 78th Ave SE and has a separate curb cut at the south end of the property. From the back of the sidewalk, the loading zone has a depth of 40-feet-10-inches, a width of 13-feet and has a vertical clearance of 34-feet-8-inches. These dimensions have been discussed with the City and have been approved by Recology.

**III. RECOMMENDATION**

There is no recommended motion at this time, as this is a Design Commission study session.