



STAFF REPORT

DESIGN COMMISSION STUDY SESSION DSR24-012

Project No:	DSR24-012
Description:	A Study Session with the Design Commission to discuss a proposal to construct a new building.
Applicant/ Owner:	Randy Gross / Covenant Living Communities and Services 5700 Old Orchard Road Skokie, IL 60077 Email: regross@covliving.org Phone: 847-302-3976
Site Address:	9150 Fortuna Dr, Mercer Island WA 98040 King County Assessor tax parcel numbers: 4139300225, 4139300230, 0724059016, 1402850050
Zoning:	Multi-Family, MF-3
Staff Contact:	Ryan Harriman, EMPA, AICP – Planning Manager
Exhibits:	1. Application 2. Drawings

I. INTRODUCTION:

On May 23, 2024, the Applicant applied for a study session with the Design Commission to review a new common building, which includes on-site dining venues, resident activities, administration and marketing offices as well as all the facilities and maintenance-related spaces. The proposed development also includes a new multi-level structured under-building parking deck to replace the current impacted existing parking that will be displaced because of the new building and provides the required new parking to support 16 new Independent Living residences and additional visitors to the Commons Building. The residences are planned to be distributed over the upper floors and terrace level. The proposed development is located at 9150 Fortuna Drive within the Multi-Family (MF-3) zone.

The primary functions of the proposed Commons Building include all on-site dining venues, resident activities, administration & marketing offices as well as all the facilities and maintenance-related spaces. The proposed development also includes a new multi-level structured under-building parking deck to replace the current impacted existing parking that will be displaced as a result of the new building and provides the required new parking to support the new Independent Living residences and additional visitors to the Commons Building. The project scope includes 16 new Independent Living residences as part of the construction which are planned to be distributed over the upper floors and terrace level.

The purpose of the study session is for the applicant to interact with the Design Commission and receive recommendations. The applicant's main review points are the allowed building height and the materials. The remaining items will be managed through a possible second study session or at formal application.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS AND CRITERIA FOR REVIEW

Building Height limit.

- a. No building shall exceed 36 feet or three stories in height, whichever is less, except appurtenances may extend to a maximum of five feet above the height allowed for the main structure.
- b. Building height for buildings within the MF-3 zone shall be calculated using the method described in MICC 19.11.030(A)(3).

Staff Analysis: It appears the proposed development may be consistent with MICC 19.11.030(A)(3); however, the Design Commission will want to review the plans to determine if the proposed development is consistent with the height requirements.

A. Chapter 19.12 MICC – Design Standards for Zones Outside Town Center

Chapter 19.12 MICC establishes design standards for regulated improvements in all zones established by MICC 19.01.040, except Town Center. These standards are in addition to any other standards that may be applicable to development in the zone in which the development occurs.

Design Vision:

- **Site and Context.** Non-Town Center areas are largely characterized by residential settings that are heavily vegetated, topographically diverse and enhanced with short and long-range views that are often territorial in nature. The design of new and remodeled structures should respond to this strong environmental context. Site design should maintain the natural character of the island and preserve vegetation concentrations, topography and the view opportunities that make Mercer Island special. Additional information will be needed in the formal application to demonstrate compliance with site and context requirements. View opportunities for the subject property will be maintained and may increase.

Staff Analysis: The proposed development is on a sloped site that contains an existing building, that will be removed and replaced. The subject property is designed to maintain the natural character of the island and preserve vegetation concentrations, topography and the view opportunities that make Mercer Island special. A portion of the proposed development is located within the shoreline environment and will require shoreline permitting.

- **Building Design.** Development of new and remodeled structures should conserve Mercer Island's special environmental characteristics, such as steep slopes, watercourses, and large concentrations of mature trees. Buildings shall be designed to be architecturally compatible with other structures in the neighborhood with respect to human scale, form and massing, and relationship to natural site features. High quality and durable materials, complementary colors, texture, and architectural detail should be incorporated into the design. Use of materials such as natural wood and stone, and design elements such as large building overhangs and window exposure to natural light, are encouraged.

Staff Analysis: The proposed development conserves Mercer Island's special environmental characteristics, the building is designed to be architecturally compatible with other structures in the neighborhood with respect to human scale, form and massing, and relationship to natural site features, and the proposed development utilizes high quality and durable materials, complementary colors, texture, and architectural detail should be incorporated into the design. The proposed development blends the new building into the site as much as possible. The Applicant intends on incorporating a stone base to ground the new structure to the sloped site.

The Applicant's goal is to visually lighten the overall building mass by incorporating expanses of glazing at many of the resident activity spaces throughout the Commons levels and at all resident living rooms on the upper and terrace levels, incorporating lap siding, trim, and residential-style windows to reinforce a residential appearance overall.

- Landscaping and amenities. Landscaping should reflect the natural wooded character of Mercer Island and provide visual separation between different land uses. Amenities such as street trees, plantings, and other landscape design elements, including fountains or water features, and art features should be integrated into new and remodeled structures and their sites.

Staff Analysis: A refined landscape plan will be required for the formal application. There are no art features shown in the conceptual design plans. It should be noted that the site plan shows landscaping on properties to the north and to the west. Landscaping requirements will need to be met on-site.

Site features and context.

MICC 19.12.020 contains the standards for site features and context.

Staff Analysis: The Applicant shall provide a code compliance matrix analysis at the time of formal application to demonstrate how the proposed development is consistent with the provisions of MICC 19.12.020 and Chapter 19.13 MICC.

Building design and visual interest.

MICC 19.12.030 contains standards for building design and visual interest. The purpose of the standards is to:

- ensure high quality materials and finishes are used to bring a visually interesting experience to the streetscape.
- ensure that building design is based on a strong, unified, coherent, and aesthetically pleasing architectural concept.
- not restrict the design to a particular style.
- ensure that new buildings are appropriately designed for the site, maintain human scale, and enhance the architectural character of the neighborhood.
- ensure buildings are detailed, provide visual interest, do not have blank walls and that large buildings are modulated and articulated to reduce their apparent mass and scale.
- ensure high quality and durable buildings which will help to maintain and protect property values.

The following standards are applicable to the proposed development:

Scale, form and mass. Scale, form, massing, building proportions, spacing of windows and doorways, roof silhouette, facade orientations, and style of architecture shall have a unified character and, as to commercial, regulated residential and regulated public facilities, recognize pedestrian needs.

- Scale. Building scale should be proportional to other adjacent buildings, the street edge and, as to commercial, regulated residential and regulated public facilities, to the pedestrian environment.
- Form and mass. Building forms should not present visual mass or bulk impacts that are out of proportion to adjacent structures, or that appear from the public way or surrounding properties as having unmodulated visual bulk.

Building facades—Visual interest.

- Facade modulation. Building facade modulation shall break up the overall bulk and mass of the exterior of buildings and structures. Such modulation should always be addressed on the horizontal plane and the vertical plane. Large or massive buildings should integrate features along their facades that are visible from the public right-of-way, pedestrian routes and nearby structures to reduce the apparent building mass and achieve an architectural scale consonant with other nearby structures.
- Modulation guidelines.
 - Horizontal building facade modulation should occur at no less than every 50 feet of wall length. Forms of both vertical and horizontal building modulation may include but are not limited to: facade indentations and extrusions; actual building separation; connecting atriums, courtyards and plazas; variable roof forms and overhangs; and decks and balconies.
 - Building facades visible from public ways and public spaces should be stepped back or projected forward at intervals to provide a minimum of 40 percent overall facade modulation.
- Ground level facades. Blank walls at the ground level that may be visible from the public view should be avoided. Ground level facades should create visual interest by utilizing features such as windows, wall articulation, arcades, trellises or other plant features.
- Fenestration. Fenestration should be integrated in the overall building design and should provide variety in facade treatment.
- Horizontal variation and emphasis. Building facades should be made more visually interesting through the use of reveals, medallions, belt courses, decorative tile work, clerestory windows, or other design features. The scale of the detail should reflect the scale of the building.
- Signs. Building design should allow space for a wall sign, consistent with the provisions of MICC 19.12.080, Signs, if it is anticipated that a wall sign will be used.

Building articulation. Design shall articulate building facades by use of variations of color, materials or patterns, or arrangement of facade elements that are proportional to the scale of the building. Architectural details that are used to articulate the structure may include reveals, battens, and other three-dimensional details that create shadow lines and break up the flat surfaces of the facade.

- Tripartite articulation. Tripartite building articulation (building top, middle, and base) should be used to create human scale and architectural interest.
- Fenestration. Fenestration should be used in facades visible from public ways and public spaces visible from public ways for architectural interest and human scale. Windows should be articulated with treatments such as mullions or recesses and complementary articulation around doorways and balconies should be used.
- Architectural elements. The mass of long or large-scale buildings should be made more visually interesting by incorporating architectural elements, such as arcades, balconies, bay windows, dormers, and/or columns.
- Upper story setback. Upper stories should be set back to reduce the apparent bulk of a building and promote human scale. When buildings are adjacent to single-family residential dwellings, upper story setbacks shall be provided from property lines.

Materials and color.

- Durable building exteriors. Building exteriors should be constructed from high quality and durable materials that will weather well and need minimal maintenance.
- Consistency and continuity of design. Materials and colors generally should be used with consistency on all sides of a building.
- Material and color variation. Color and materials should highlight architectural elements such as doors, windows, fascias, cornices, lintels, sills and changes in building planes. Variations in materials

and colors should generally be limited to what is required for contrast or to accentuate architectural features.

- Concrete walls. Concrete walls should be architecturally treated. The enhancement may include textured concrete such as exposed aggregate, sand blasting, stamping or color coating.
- Bright colors. Bright colors should be used only for trim and accents. Bright colors may be approved if the use is consistent with the building design and other design requirements. Fluorescent colors are prohibited.

Building entrances.

- Architectural features and design. Special design attention should be given to the primary building entrance(s). A primary entrance should be consistent with overall building design, but made visually distinct from the rest of the building facade through architectural features. Examples include recessed entrances, entrances which roof forms that protrude from the building facade, and decorative awnings, canopies, porte-cocheres, and covered walkways.
- Entrance connections. The primary entrance to a building should be easy to recognize and should be visible from the public way and/or physically connected to the public way with walkways. Landscaping should reinforce the importance of the entrance as a gathering place and create visual and physical connections to other portions of the site and to vehicular and pedestrian access points.

Rooflines.

- Roofline variation, interest, and detail. Roofline variation, interest, and detail shall be used to reduce perceived building height and mass and increase compatibility with smaller scale and/or residential development. Roofline variation, interest and detail may be achieved through use of roofline features such as dormers, stepped roofs, and gables that reinforce a modulation or articulation interval, incorporation of a variety of vertical dimensions, such as multiplaned and intersecting rooflines, or flat-roofed designs that include architectural details such as cornices and decorative facings.
- Roofline variation, numeric standard. Roof line variation shall occur on all multifamily structures with roof lines which exceed 50 feet in length, and on all commercial, office or public structures which exceed 70 feet in length. Roof line variation shall be achieved using one or more of the following methods:
 - Vertical off-set ridge or cornice line;
 - Horizontal off-set ridge or cornice line;
 - Variations of roof pitch between 5:12 and 12:12; or
 - Any other approved technique which achieves the intent of this section.

Additional standards for buildings containing residential units. Buildings containing residential units should incorporate the following additional design elements to make them residential in character:

- Bay windows, dormers, patios or decks;
- Base articulation such as plinths; or
- Other techniques approved by the design commission which make the building residential in character.

Corporate design. Building and site design for chain or franchise businesses should use customized components consistent with the objectives and standards of this chapter. Specific icons or trademarks of a company may be used, but the overall design of the building and site must represent a development compatible with the neighborhood including its colors, materials, textures and treatment of design.

All-weather features. All-weather features at the sidewalk, courtyard or public gathering space areas of commercial and regulated public facilities, such as awnings, canopies, covered walkways, trellises, or covered patios, should be provided to make spending time outdoors feasible in all seasons.

Staff Analysis: The various floor plates of the building are tiered back from the water to create outdoor terrace opportunities while also lessening the visual impact of the overall structure on site. The portion of the new building that in essence sits atop the former/current footprint of the commons or “lodge” building is intended to remain a two-story structure and support many of the Dining & Wellness program spaces. The taller portions of the building, primarily where the new residences occur on the upper levels are set back away from the water and designed as a single-loaded plan to assure each of the new residences is focused on the water views. The additional single-story wing of residences at the terrace level is intended to be set into the slope whereas it would be exposed as a single-story at the water side but merged into the grade so that the impact to the existing to remain apartments on site would not be compromised. Roof terraces and areas to be treated as “green roof” would blend into the surrounding landscape and walk system to lessen the footprint visually.

Staff Analysis: The Applicant lists the following exterior materials to be include (but not be limited to):

- Regional stone veneer
- Stucco accents
- Cementitious lap siding
- Accent plank cladding in wood tones
- Some exposed beams at feature locations
- Storefront glazing in commons & resident living rooms
- Some spandrel glazing at multi-story glazing floor transitions
- Operable punched windows at residences
- Metal coping/cladding at parapets, roof projections & eyebrows
- Railings primarily metal with some glass rail accents
- Decorative lighting at all primary access points
- Green roof/sedum tray system at specific locations

Staff Analysis: The Applicant shall provide a code compliance matrix analysis at the time of formal application to demonstrate how the proposed development is consistent with the provisions of MICC 19.12.030.

Landscape design and outdoor spaces.

MICC 19.12.040 contains standards for landscape design and outdoor spaces.

Staff Analysis: The standards listed in MICC 19.12.040 are very specific and require a high degree of design. The proposed development shall be designed to be consistent with the provisions of MICC 19.12.040 and the provisions of Chapter 19.13 MICC.

Staff Analysis: The proposed development application does not include a landscape design and outdoor spaces plan. The landscape design and outdoor spaces plan Vehicular and pedestrian circulation shall be consistent with MICC 19.12.040 and shall be reviewed during the formal design review process or through a second study session.

Staff Analysis: The Applicant shall provide a code compliance matrix analysis at the time of formal application to demonstrate how the proposed development is consistent with the provisions of MICC 19.12.040.

Vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

MICC 19.12.050 contains standards for vehicular and pedestrian circulation. The purpose of this section is to create an attractive street edge and unified streetscape, to encourage pedestrian activity in commercial areas, stimulate business, maintain adequate public safety, and create a sense of community, to provide for safe and efficient parking and loading areas while minimizing their visual and noise impacts, and to provide safe and efficient pedestrian connections within and between projects and the public way to enhance safety and circulation.

Staff Analysis: The proposed development application does not include a vehicular and pedestrian circulation plan. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation shall be consistent with MICC 19.12.050 and shall be reviewed during the formal design review process or through a second study session.

Screening of service and mechanical areas.

MICC 19.12.060 contains standards for screening of service and mechanical areas. The purpose of this section is to ensure that building and site appurtenances are properly integrated into the design concept, to properly screen mechanical equipment to reduce visual impacts, and to ensure service and truck loading areas, utility structures, and elevators are screened from public view in such a manner that they are not visible from public ways or residential areas.

Staff Analysis: The proposed development application does not include a screening plan. Screening of service and mechanical areas shall be consistent with MICC 19.12.060. Screening of service and mechanical areas shall be reviewed during the formal design review process or through a second study session.

Lighting.

Lighting standards are listed in MICC 19.12.070.

Staff Analysis: The proposed development application does not include a lighting plan. All lighting must be consistent with MICC 19.12.070. Lighting shall be reviewed during the formal design review process or through a second study session.

Signs.

Sign standards are contained in MICC 19.12.080(B).

Staff Analysis: The proposed development does not include signage. All signage will be reviewed during the formal design review process or through a second study session. All signs shall be consistent with MICC 19.12.080.

III. RECOMMENDATION

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