

Alternative Design Review

97 Cumberland Avenue

Design Review by Caitlin Cameron, Jean Fraser, and Alex Jaegerman

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The applicant requested an Alternative Design Review under the R-6 Infill Development Design Principles & Standards for the 5-unit residential project at 97 Cumberland Avenue. Under the Alternative Design Review the following must be met:

1) *The proposed design is consistent with all of the Principle Statements.*

- a. Overall Context: The building contributes to and is compatible with the industrial and commercial character of Washington Avenue and the residential character of Cumberland Avenue by employing a scale and form that mediates. See #3 below.
- b. Massing: The massing on Cumberland Avenue reflects and reinforces the width and height of the surrounding residential buildings found in a two-block radius.
- c. Orientation to the Street: A sense of the public realm of the sidewalk is maintained through unimpeded visual connection between the building and the street and an emphasized front and side entry. Privacy for the building's residents is maintained through a front yard setback and a raised ground floor creating a transition space.
- d. Proportion and Scale: The project maintains the proportions and scale found in the surrounding buildings with a three-story façade. Front and side entries are covered and provide human-scale elements. The front façade is further broken up into two forms, the projecting form nearest the street is one-story tall.
- e. Balance: The façade composition is balanced employing local symmetries with an appropriate and pleasing proportion of window openings to solid façade.
- f. Articulation: The building design is successful in creating a visually interesting and well-composed façade on Cumberland Avenue as well as towards Washington Avenue with the use of covered porches, window types, emphasized entries, and detailing such as green screen and window reveals.
- g. Materials: Although the project uses a material unique to the context, the design reviewers found the material to be harmonious in color, texture, and authenticity with the neighborhood material palette which tends towards red brick industrial/commercial buildings and brick-based and clapboard-sided residential. The red finish of the metal compliments the depth, texture, and color of brick while the use of planks provides a rhythm on the façade similar to clapboards.

2) *The majority of the Standards within each Principle are met.*

- The majority of Standards within each Principle are met.
- On the topic of massing, the roof form of the proposal is unique to the neighborhood and deviates from two standards to do with roof forms and roof pitch. However, four of the six standards within that principle were met and therefore the deviation in roof

forms is allowed by the Alternative Design Review. In this case, the roof forms proposed are integral to the function of the solar array.

- On the topic of articulation, this project does not use the same type of detailing found in the context (pronounced cornices, railings, eaves and rakes), however, the design does meet the intent of the standards according to its own aesthetic language incorporating articulation with window reveals, cohesive window types, porches/decks, and an emphasized main entry; the result maintains a visual cohesion.
- On the topic of materials, the proposed exterior material is a metal panel cladding in a rust-red finish. While the material is unique to this neighborhood, the reviewers felt the color, texture, and use of the proposed material is harmonious with the surrounding material palette. The standards call for the materials to be harmonious, not identical, and to be used in an authentic way.

3) *The guiding principle for new construction under the alternative design review is to be compatible with the surrounding buildings in a two-block radius in terms of size, scale, materials, and siting, as well as the general character of the established neighborhood, thus Standards A-1 through A-3 shall be met.*

- a. Scale and Form: The project must mediate between the scale and form of the residential buildings (mostly two and three-story single family with gable roofs and triple-decker with flat roofs) as well as the industrial and commercial scale and forms of Washington Avenue. The Cumberland Avenue façade maintains the width and height of the surrounding residential buildings. The façade visible from Washington Avenue is broader and in keeping with the larger scale of that corridor.
- b. Composition of Principal Facades: The principle façade on Cumberland Avenue keeps the local symmetry of the main entry similar to the houses surrounding it with a covered porch. Where this project differs from its neighbors is the further setback of the full height of the building.
- c. Relationship to the Street: The rhythm, spacing, and orientation of the Cumberland Avenue façade is derived from its context and meets the standard. The building sits facing the street with a small front yard setback and a building width consistent with the neighboring residential buildings. On the North side of Cumberland Avenue the neighboring houses sit square to the street while the houses across the street are parallel to the street. The project reflects both of these relationships to the street by creating a ground floor façade parallel to the street while the rest of the building mass set back and is square with the neighboring houses.

4) *The design plan is prepared by an architect registered in the State of Maine.*

- This requirement has been met.