

Planning and Urban Development Department

Planning Division



Subject: R-6 Small Infill Design Review – 30 Merrill Street

Written by: Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer

Date of Review: Wednesday, August 7, 2016

A design review according to the *City of Portland Design Manual* Standards was performed for the proposed new construction of a multi-family dwelling at 30 Merrill Street. The review was performed by Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer, Nell Donaldson, Planner, and Shukria Wiar, Planner, all within the Planning Division of the Department of Planning & Urban Development. The project was reviewed against the *R-6 Small Infill Development Design Principles & Standards* (Appendix 7 of the Design Manual).

Findings of the Design Review:

The proposed design **does not pass** all of the criteria – please refer to comments below. The applicant may either revise the design according to the review comments and resubmit or appeal the decision of the design review to the Planning Board.

Design Review Comments (*red text denotes principles or standards that are not met*):

Principle A Overall Context – **Not Met** – see below.

- **A-1 Scale and Form:** The building type proposed is similar to a double-triple with an additional unit on the 4th floor. Double-triples can be found in the surrounding context, **however, the scale and form of those buildings are mitigated with the use of mansard or other similar roof forms on the third floor, pronounced and overhang cornice lines, bay windows, recessed entries with canopies. Of these formal elements, the project only employs a canopy at the entrance without any other form manipulation to make the proposal contextual.**
- **A-2 Composition of Principal Facades:** The composition of the street-facing facades is consistent with context in terms of using symmetrical bays (two or three bays) that are oriented to the street. **The rhythm, size, and proportion of windows are not consistent with the residential context.**
- **A-3 Relationship to the Street:** The building placement is consistent with the spacing of the residential fabric – slightly setback from sidewalk to allow for stoops and provide some privacy.

Principle B Massing – **Not Met** – Buildings in the neighborhood with similar massing and proportion (double-triples) that are wider at the street use changes in massing, like the roof form, to mitigate the scale and provide a pedestrian-friendly, visually interesting street presence.

- *B-1 Massing:* The mass of this building is very boxy and simple without the typical tools employed to create a visually interesting, human-scaled residential building. The 7th unit on the fourth floor is not set back and adds to the impression of scale at the street. To become contextual, the building massing needs to be revised (stepback at 4th floor, offsets, bays, etc.).
- *B-2 Roof Forms:* The proposed 7th unit on the top floor creates an awkward “roof form” – the top unit should be stepped back from the principal façade so that the flat roof form of the primary building mass is dominant.
- *B-4 Roof Pitch:* The roofs are monopitch/ flat roofs.
- *B-5 Façade Articulation:* The project employs two of the required articulation elements – covered entry, balconies.
- *B-6 Garages:* Not applicable.

Principle C Orientation to the Street – Met – The project is oriented to the street with a street-facing door.

- *C-1 Entrances:* The entry is street-facing and emphasized with a canopy.
- *C-2 Visual Privacy:* Visual privacy is adequately addressed; ground floor windows are higher than 48” above adjoining sidewalk grade; the ground floor is adequately raised above sidewalk grade appropriate for private residential buildings with living space on the ground floor (at least 24” is required by the standard).
- *C-3 Transition Spaces:* The project uses a canopy at the entrance, the building is set back with planters.

Principle D Proportion and Scale – Met – The façade elements are proportionate and scaled to the overall building.

- *D-1 Windows:* The majority of windows are rectangular and have vertical proportion; window proportion is not a proportion found in the context, however.
- *D-2 Fenestration:* The project appears to meet the 12% fenestration requirement and appropriately scaled to the massing of the building.
- *D-3 Porches:* Not applicable

Principle E Balance – Met – The building façade composition creates a sense of balance with good use of overall and local symmetry and articulation of façade materials.

- *E-1 Window and Door Height:* The majority of window and door head heights align along a common horizontal datum.
- *E-2 Window and Door Alignment:* The majority of windows shall stack so that centerlines of windows are in vertical alignment.
- *E-3 Symmetricality:* Primary window compositions are arranged symmetrically around discernable vertical axes.

Principle F Articulation – Met – Based on the information given, it appears the project employs visually interesting and well composed facades.

- *F-1 Articulation:* Trim and balcony details will create shadow lines on front façade.
- *F-2 Window Types:* One window type at street.
- *F-3 Visual Cohesion:* The visual cohesion of the façade is good.
- *F-4 Delineation between Floors:* The floors are delineated by fenestration patterns.
- *F-5 Porches, etc.:* The canopy is well integrated into the overall design.

- *F-6 Main Entries:* The main entry is emphasized with prominent placement facing the street, the use of a canopy.
- *F-7 Articulation Elements:* It appears the cornice meets 4" requirement; No eaves or rakes in the design; the trim details are not clear; there are no offsets in the principal façades.

Principle G Materials – Not Met – The material choices are well-placed but the use of metal siding further pushes the building design out of compatibility with the predominant character of the neighborhood.

- *G-1 Materials:* The residential context is predominantly clapboards with occasional shingle or brick. **Metal siding, in combination with the very contemporary façade design, is not considered harmonious with the predominant character of the neighborhood. With a contemporary façade design, massing, and details, the material choices should be more traditional to the neighborhood in order to introduce elements of compatibility with the streetscape.**
- *G-2 Material and Façade Design:* The materials are appropriately placed according to their nature.
- *G-3 Chimneys:* Not applicable.
- *G-4 Window Types:* One window type.
- *G-5 Patios and Plazas:* Not applicable.