

Planning and Urban Development Department

Planning Division



Subject: IOZ Design Review – 22 Bramhall (Maine Medical)
Written by: Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer
Date of Review: Thursday, October 4, 2018

This memo summarizes the applicable design guidelines and staff review for the project at 22 Bramhall Street – Congress Street Medical Building. This project is reviewed according to the adopted IOZ IDP and Regulatory Framework standards.

The new hospital building will replace the existing parking structure at Congress and Gilman streets and occupies a predominant, gateway view of the MMC campus from the St. John Street approach to the city on Congress Street.

Design Review Comments (*questions/comments and unmet guidelines in red*):

IDP Design Guidelines

1. New buildings will be designed to contribute to the campus vision and organizational goals identified in the Master Facility Plan and the Transportation Plan, and best practice design standards for healthcare.

The applicant sought preliminary staff guidance on the design approach for the building and plaza areas prior to submitting this Site Plan application. The resulting design provides a strong architectural statement at a prominent corner and fulfills the goals of the IOZ for a building that conveys a gateway campus edge with a character and material palette that is cohesive with the campus.

The stated MMC vision includes integrating inside and outside – achieved here through the high level of fenestration, the entry under the building overhang, the atrium that connects to the street and the sky, the green roof, as well as a “50 year palette” that selects materials based on cues from nature to create timeless environment. This vision includes Sky, Sea, and Land as concepts for material/color selection. The white metal panel and large curtain wall system intend to evoke the “sky” – light, recessive, neutral. The white material was also selected to tie into the existing metal panel as well as meet goal of a cohesive campus design seen in the other recently approved Phase I projects.

2. The overall composition and experience of the campus will be considered for cohesive identity from approaches along Congress Street and I-295.

The overall building height, as observed in the long-view renderings, is not very visible from most long distances. A future addition on top of this building will be more impactful on the long views of the campus. This proposed building is seen most immediately in the context of the red brick buildings already on campus. This building is decidedly contemporary and has a different character from the existing brick buildings – that being said, they are not found to be

incompatible and the understanding is that this and future buildings are being used to define a new vision and character for Maine Health. From Congress Street, the metal screens on the neighboring garage have some visual cohesion with its lighter, grey material, vertical articulation elements.

Approval of the East Tower design was based on an understanding that it would be visually cohesive with this Congress Street building. This proposal is consistent with the character presented in that past review. The material palette and fenestration patterns, the high transparency and bringing the outside in are intended to be a cohesive element throughout the campus and also serve the goal of best practice for healthcare in terms of internal organization and quality of spaces. Given the large scale of the building and its prominence on the corner and Congress Street, staff review this project as defining the character for the campus moving forward.

3. Building entrances will be oriented toward, located adjacent to, accessible from, a sidewalk in a public right-of-way to create a pedestrian-oriented environment.

There are two entrances for this building – a staff entrance at the corner of Gilman and Congress streets, and the more public hospital entrance for vehicles and visitors mid-block on Congress Street. For the Gilman entrance, this is turned to Gilman to signify that it is a secondary/staff entrance and not the primary entrance to the building. It is emphasized with a recess and glazing and is directly accessible from the street and where the shuttle pick-up/drop-off will be. The primary entrance, while oriented to Congress Street, is combined with a vehicular drop-off and is deeply recessed from the street. The grade change of the site and Congress Street provide additional challenges to the accessibility of this entrance – the entry floor is at the higher grade than at the Gilman corner. The design attempts to bring legibility and emphasis to this main entrance through the massing, orientation of fenestration, the building overhang, the large atrium, and lighting. The landscape elements and signage are also intended to direct visitors to this entrance including a direct stair from lower Congress up to this level. Staff suggest there may be additional revision needed to improve the pedestrian safety and access in this design.

4. Building designs will relate to and be compatible with the existing, or – in areas of change – planned character of residential and commercial neighbors. Design elements and characteristics to consider include:

- *Building placement and relationship to the street*
- *Overall massing and scale*
- *Roof forms*
- *Proportion, directional expression, and composition of facades*
- *Rhythm of solids to voids*
- *Rhythm and proportion of openings*
- *Rhythm of entries and projections*
- *Relationship of materials, texture, and color*

The institutional use is anomalous within the streetscape and neighborhood – it is therefore appropriate for the building to convey this use and have a contemporary expression while at least being compatible, not replicating, the mixed-use and residential character of the surrounding streetscapes. The buildings on the MMC campus are larger in length and height than the surrounding context – scaling elements and sensitive relationships to the street are important for this interface with neighboring residential and low-rise mixed-use buildings.

The project sits at the corner of Gilman and Congress streets and must therefore mediate between those two contexts. Gilman is a quieter street that becomes predominantly residential on one side. This has traditionally been and continues to be a “B” street, especially given the grade change, with less active uses and façade treatments. The proposal appropriately places the active staff entrance at the corner and maintains the street wall but the building edge is a solid, inactive wall. There is some activity, visual interest, and liveliness brought through the upper floors. The building adequately conveys this as a side elevation and places emphasis on its Congress Street orientation as the main street.

The approach on Congress Street is the most critical and the building placement, massing, and overall character are successful in creating a gateway experience that is appropriately orient to Congress Street, indicates the entrances, and provides visual interest. The material palette, massing, fenestration patterns, and overall design character convey the institutional use, expresses its time, and achieve the goals of holding the corner, creating urban street walls, and setting up a gateway experience while allowing for the space at the ground level to mitigate and transition the scale impacts of this long building.

5. Façade materials of buildings will be of high quality, and contribute to an attractive public realm.

The materials are of high quality – stone veneer, metal panel, glass – and contribute overall to the public realm. The material palette is used in a way that alleviates the scale and length of the building, providing visual interest and activity while also conveying the nature of the uses inside. The palette is definitively contemporary and appropriate to the institutional use and sets itself apart from the existing context of predominantly mixed-use and residential buildings.

*6. The design process will **consider long views** of new buildings including roofs and associated structures to minimize visual impacts and **provide visual interest**. Rooftop appurtenances will be either screened from view or integrated into the building design, and will not be visible from adjacent streets, Western Promenade, or the Congress Street approach (helipad excluded).*

Staff find the building has little visibility from long views into the city. It is not anticipated this phase of the building will be readily visible from the Western Prom. The approach on Congress Street is the most critical and the building placement, massing, and overall character are successful in creating a gateway experience that is appropriately orient to Congress Street, indicates the entrances, and provides visual interest. The long façade on Congress Street is made visually interesting with the fenestration pattern, massing, and “layering” of the floors and material palette.

Some rooftop mechanicals are housed in an area setback to the interior of the lot and are adequately integrated into the building forms. **However, there are some small rooftop appurtenances are not included in the rendered images** – there will be some stacks that poke

through this roof. From the ground level, these will not be visible. But it is important to consider that the roof as perceived from above will not be as flat and clean as shown. There is also a green roof section of the building, but again, its height and position mean it will not be viewed from many places. The building is low and difficult to perceive from the long views – a future phase addition is also intended above this building.

7. Vibrant, contributing and sustainable active ground floors will be provided to add activity and a sense of place to the priority node identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The site is at a corner with two street facades but also has significant grade changes meaning there are essentially two floors of the building that meet the street. The building also programmatically requires a whole basement level be dedicated to housing mechanical uses. These grade changes and the mechanical uses on the lower ground level of Gilman and a portion of Congress Street make it challenging to create active uses at the lower street level. See comments in Guideline 8.

The upper Congress Street ground floor is much more active because it houses the vehicular entrance to the visitors garage, vehicular drop off for the hospital and the primary hospital entrance.

8. In areas where the occurrence of limited blank facades along public rights-of-way are unavoidable due to changes in topography or building use requirements, the following strategies will be used to mitigate visual impact:

- *providing elements of visual interest along any blank walls facing public streets, and,*
- *working with the City of Portland to ensure adequate lighting of public sidewalks to create a safe pedestrian experience.*

The lower level (mechanical floor) includes some blank facades. Proposed strategies to alleviate this condition include the staff entrance at the corner, the windows into the circulation area, the open, landscaped plaza, and the highly fenestrated upper floors. Some visual interest at the Gilman Street interface will come from a textured material, the recessed entrance. **More information is requested regarding the lighting scheme on the building, street, and site. Currently, the plans appears to rely on building lighting from the upper floors to light Gilman frontage – further discussion is needed on this item.**

When it comes to the inactive level facing Congress Street, the proposed strategy includes three windows into the circulation space, the plaza space, landscape buffers between the sidewalk and the blank wall, and again, some seaming and texture in the material. Staff are generally satisfied with this approach given the constraints thought the City Arborist has yet to weigh in on the plant selection.

9. Any parking structure within the IOZ will . . . : Not applicable

Building Relationship to Public Street

1. Urban Main Street (Congress Street)

MMC buildings abutting Congress St will be designed to:

- *Provide urban-levels of density*
- *Create an urban street wall that provides a sense of enclosure to the public realm*
- *Have their primary orientation towards Congress Street*

- *Activate the public sidewalk with building entrances, lobbies, etc.*
- *To the extent possible, given programmatic needs, provide visual interest and ensure pedestrian safety with views into and out of the building along the public sidewalk*
- *To the extent possible, given programmatic needs, provide space for community-oriented uses such as services or retail that can be shared between MMC users, neighbors, and the broader Portland community*
- *Support the existence of neighborhood amenities such as restaurants and other retail uses providing services to local residents and employees both during the day and evening hours.*

The building's primary orientation is towards Congress Street. The new building is closer to the street than the existing condition, and while still setback from the property line, a strong street wall is created that is angled to create an appropriate gateway orientation to those entering the city but also allows space for a ground floor public plaza interface and buffer given the height of the building. The building is activated by the primary entrance and atrium/lobby on Congress Street. The staff entrance at the corner provides some level of activity while remaining deferential to the more public and visible entrance mid-block. That entrance is further emphasized with the fenestration, recess, lighting, and direct stairway. Where program precludes active uses and visibility, the landscape plaza provides a public amenity between the sidewalk and the building. The landscape design is intended to soften and mitigate the absence of active uses within this portion of the building. The massing of the building provides an overhang and sense of enclosure.

3. Local Residential Street (Gilman Street)

The building design appropriately places the staff entrance and shuttle pick-up/drop off at the Congress Street commercial corner. As the building turns up the street, it becomes less active – the building interface is a minimal building wall and the sidewalk ends into landscape area. This is similar to the existing condition and provides an appropriate transition to the more private, residential portion of the street – the activity, high levels of fenestration, and lighting are most appropriate close to the Congress Street commercial corridor.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

MMC will incorporate the following design strategies that have been demonstrated to deter crime:

- *Providing a clean and aesthetically pleasing campus environment that is designed with vandal-resistant materials*
- *Providing clear and properly-sized signs in safe locations to ensure safe wayfinding*
- *Ensuring that paths from transit stops, bike storage areas, and parking areas to main pedestrian entrances are well-lit, with clear sight lines*
- *Designing street-level elevations to minimize potential hideouts*
- *To the extent possible, given clinical program demands, providing views in and out of building ground floors populated by users to serve as “eyes on the street”*
- *Generating foot traffic on public sidewalks with pedestrian entrances*

The mechanical uses on the ground level of Gilman and a portion of Congress Street create some CPTED challenges because active ground floor uses are not possible here to generate foot traffic or provide views in and out of this level. Proposed strategies to alleviate this condition include the staff entrance at the corner, the windows into the circulation area, the open, lit plaza, and the highly fenestrated upper floors, as well as the transit shelter. These components,

while not as active as commercial space, will provide some activity and “eyes on the street” in the absence of very active ground floor uses. The shuttle pick up/drop off will also be on Gilman Street, creating additional activity.

The upper level of Congress Street is much more active/public with a lobby and includes high levels of fenestration and lighting – staff are do not have CPTED concerns in this location.

More information is needed regarding the site lighting and ground level building interface, especially on Gilman. It is important to provide adequate lighting and sight lines on Gilman given the inactive nature of the ground floor and that the street character is smaller and residential.

Mitigating Impacts Through Design

Minimizing Shadow Impacts - Shadow impacts were evaluated as part of the IDP process. The proposed project is shorter but also closer to the street than the existing garage. The impacts as shown in the IDP figures 5.17 through 5.20 show that **additional shadow is created on the street year round and also for one residential building in the winter by this building.**

Context-Sensitive Lighting Design – Site lighting is proposed to be a combination of building lighting and landscape strip lighting under the planter walls. The applicant provided renderings of the building at night to reflect the character of that building lighting – the lighting does put emphasis on the main entrance and large atrium space while downplaying the staff entrance.

More information for the sign and landscape lighting, photometrics is requested.

Mitigating Wind Impact – No information was provided to evaluate this item.

Preserving and Enhancing Viewsheds – The building expansions do not impact Western Promenade viewsheds. This expansion does not significantly increase the visibility of the campus from long views (see application materials). In those few instances where the East Tower and new medical building are visible together, the applicant hopes that the design elements (materials, colors, window patterns) will create campus cohesion. The building’s impact is most significant on Congress Street and the westerly approach. Staff consider this building design and placement to meet the intent of enhancing the viewshed by creating a more significant and active gateway to the campus and Congress Street generally.

Regulatory Framework

(c)1. Mixed Uses: . . . *healthcare facility development fronting onto Congress Street and St. John Street shall activate the public realm, to the extent able, with uses such as service and retail/restaurant, landscaping, active building entrances, pocket parks, etc., on the ground or other publicly accessible level, consistent with the design intent contained in the approved IDP. . .*

The building includes several programmatic needs fronting onto Congress and Gilman streets – the biggest challenge is accommodating the mechanicals that occupy the entire lower level of this building. The program otherwise includes “back of house” staff spaces and the more public hospital spaces. Uses such as retail are not able to be accommodated in this case.

In the IOZ, this portion of Congress Street is identified to include both “Street activation through the location of entrances, windows, etc.” at the corner of Gilman and Congress and “Limited blank facades” (Figure 5.15 Frontage: Types of Activation) mid-block. Gilman Street does not have an activation designation other than at the corner.

The grade and program limit the amount of active frontage on both Gilman and Congress streets. The project meets this standard in the followings ways:

- Entrances: The Gilman Street corner (with the “Street activation” designation) is activated with the employee entrance that is scaled appropriately to the façade and includes transparency. Uphill at a different grade, Congress Street includes the main entrance into the new medical building for both pedestrians and cars. This entrance is emphasized with high levels of fenestration, signage, a direct stair from the plaza area, and building lighting.
- Fenestration – the Gillman/Congress corner includes some fenestration where staff entrance and circulation is taking place. Otherwise, these facades are not able to provide fenestration due to the mechanicals at this level.
- Landscape – Since active uses are not possible at the Gilman/Congress level, enhanced landscape and plaza space is proposed with seating height walls, plantings, lighting, paving pattern, and direct stair to the upper level, more active building entrance.

On Gilman Street, other than the staff entrance at the corner, the façade is blank. The applicant’s design strategy is to treat the ground level as a solid, rock-like foundation with a stone veneer material that has a scale and texture that provides some articulation and visual interest. However, the applicant claims it is not possible, given the mechanical uses and grade changes, to add elements such as doors, windows, or active uses on this façade. The upper floors will be active day and night with staff circulation, offices, and break rooms on this end of the building.

(e) Design: *New buildings within the IOZ shall adhere to the Design Guidelines set forth in Chapter 5: Design of the IDP and the site plan standards of the City of Portland.*

See section above and Planning Board report regarding these referenced standards.

(f) Signs: *. . . a unified campus-wide Signage Plan shall be submitted for review and approval by the Planning Authority. . . . Signs shall be designed in accordance with the campus-wide Signage Plan. All signs shall be designed in proportion and character with building facades and adjacent street typology. All signs shall be coordinated with the building and landscaping design and be constructed of appropriate, permanent, high quality materials and finishes.*

- Campus-wide Signage Plan: The draft campus-wide signage plan is included in this submission. Staff had the following comments:
 - o Signs will not be permitted on properties not owned by MMC – remove the proposed sign on City property at Bramhall Square.
 - o There are concerns about sight line obstructions on several of the signs, including 1.a, CS.2, and EG.1a. Please provide sight line analysis.
 - o There are concerns about the height of some monument signs (ST4.a and ST6.a) shown at 11’0” tall next to sidewalk locations – sight lines and pedestrian scale are factors here.
- Individual Sign Design:
 - o South parking lot signage: Two signs facing the same street are not appropriate, not necessary, and create too much visual clutter – eliminate one of the signs (5.b). Reduce the overall size.
 - o CS.1: What methods of illumination are proposed for this large sign on Congress Street?
 - o EG.1: The layout of this sign differs from the other monument signs on the main campus. Is there a reason for this? Concern is for overall consistency and comprehensiveness.

- Materials and Finishes: The materials and finishes include painted aluminum with either plastic push through letters for monument signs or surface applied vinyl copy for signs attached to the building, fences, or walls. In some cases, the existing steel supports are being re-used or retrofit with stone veneer. These materials and finishes meet the standard. **Staff question the use of stone veneer – a sample or image is requested of what is proposed to understand the character and color of this material.**