

Design commission approves 199-unit South Waterfront apartment building

HOUSING

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

Two new housing projects, both in the South Portland neighborhood, won City approval last month.

The Portland Design Commission (PDC) unanimously approved a six-story, 199 unit apartment building at 0601 S.W. Abernethy St., on a block bounded by Abernethy and Lane streets and Moody and Bond avenues.

The apartment building, by Alamo Manhattan Properties of Dallas, will have 196 underground parking spaces and 1,470 square feet of retail.

It was the project's fourth session before the PDC, including an informal "design advisory" discussion. PDC members had asked for changes in the

entrances, building materials, exterior landscaping and the interior courtyard.

Wade Johns of Alamo Manhattan told the PDC, "This was far more complicated than we thought it would be."

PDC member David Wark replied, "I appreciate your efforts. I was in Houston at its wildest, and I realize this is a cultural shift for y'all." Chair Gwen Millius told Johns, "I hope you feel this has brought value to your project."

Landmarks commission approves row houses for historic Lair Hill district

Four days later, the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission approved the design of the Lair Hill Rowhouses, a five-unit project by Consolidated Land and Cattle of Lake Oswego at 3314 S.W. First Ave. The project was reviewed by the Landmarks Commission because it is part of the South Portland National Historic District.

The project had originally been a single building with five connected units. Largely at the urging of the South Portland Neighborhood Association Land Use Committee, the developer broke it up into two structures of three and two units each.

Consultant Bruce Vincent said, "Collaboratively, we came up with a design that incorporates their advice."

The developers asked for a code adjustment to reduce the side yard setback a required five feet to three. Planner David Skilton said this was in character with Lair Hill, and showed slides of buildings less than a foot apart.



An artist's conception of the Lair Hill rowhouse development. (Photo illustration courtesy of Zack Gillum)

"You could borrow a cup of sugar from your neighbor if your window lined up with hers," Skilton said.

The lot was formerly occupied by a church built in the 19th century and last occupied by Phil Wikeland's Great Northwest Bookstore. It was destroyed by fire in 2010.

South Portland land use chair Jim Gardner told the Landmarks Commission, "We commend the developer for his willingness to work with us. In general we're very pleased."

The group would have preferred one

less unit, he said, "but we understand that the real world is not ideal."

The Commission spent some time debating the developer's plans to use fiberglass windows frames. The district guidelines say that wood frames "should" be used, and some Commission members said they feared they would be setting a precedent.

Commission member Brian Emerick pointed out that the proposed frames are designed to have an historic look and said, "What matters is that this matches the district, not the material."

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