

New 39-unit building planned for corner of 32nd Avenue and Capitol Highway

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

The dust has just about settled at the site of the 70-unit Multnomah Village Apartments and according to neighbors who attended a recent meeting, they couldn't be happier. With parking nightmares, construction noise, and blocked sidewalks and roads, many are glad the end is near. According to property managers, move in dates are right around the corner for retailers and residents.

But another housing development, just a block away, is in the works. Kurt Schultz of SERA Architects presented the preliminary concepts at the Dec. 12 meeting of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association. Developer Tim O'Brien (Urban Assets) was also in

attendance.

The proposed four-story 39-unit apartment building is located at Southwest 32nd Avenue and Capitol Highway. It features ground floor retail space and will rise where the iconic gas station has stood since the 1930s.

Although new zoning changes would allow five-story buildings to be constructed in the area in commercial mixed zones, the developers are keeping it to four stories.

"We're calling this project the Multnomah Station," Schultz said at the meeting.

"We are designing this building in the same streamlined, Art Deco style of the Depression era gas station with the look of a flat iron building with a curved façade."

Schultz unveiled several illustra-



Architect Kurt Schultz describes the plans for a new apartment building at the Multnomah neighborhood meeting in December. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

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tions. He announced that the old gas pump will be saved.

"As for the existing mural of the friendly gas station attendant," Schultz said, "we hope to replicate it in the building lobby."

Schultz assured everyone that any underground fuel tanks will be fully decommissioned after testing has been completed.

Schultz said the Multnomah Station would have one affordable three-bedroom unit. Several members in the room appeared astonished while others seemed confused.

According to Tyler Bump, a senior economic planner for the city, all developers must abide by the inclusionary housing zone code with 20 or more dwelling units in one building.

"A few amendments were made once the ordinance was reviewed by City Council," Bump said. "For the first year only, eight percent of affordable housing must be provided to households between 60 – 80 percent of the area median family income (MFI) which is currently from \$40,380 – \$53,800 a year for a family of three.

"These inclusion rates will start at 15 percent of units at 80 percent MFI and 8 percent of units at 60 percent MFI. The number Mr. Schultz is providing equals three units, or in this

case, three bedrooms. The city prefers larger units to accommodate families and not just for individuals needing affordable housing."

Schultz explained that due to city regulations and because there is access to transit services, onsite parking is not required.

"We wanted on-site parking," Schultz said, "but because of a required landscape buffer, the city said we couldn't install a garage accessed from 32nd Avenue."

The Post contacted the Bureau of Transportation about this issue as well.

"It is not true that PBOT does not support driveway access from Southwest 32nd [Avenue]," wrote John Brady, the communications director. "We support access from 32nd Avenue, but what we can't support, for traffic safety and other reasons, is driveway access less than 25 feet from the corner of Southwest 32nd and Capitol Highway."

According to Thomas Ngo, the public information officer for the Bureau of Development Services, the city is not preventing the developer from providing on-site parking.

"It's actually possible to have parking access at this location if the builders go through a design review," Ngo wrote *The Post*.

"This proposed development is still in the early stages. They haven't even filed for building permits yet."

A design review is the only way a developer would possibly provide parking. But the developers instead have chosen to build to community design standards.

"The city doesn't allow vehicle access from Southwest 32nd Avenue due to a residential buffer in the surrounding area," Ngo said.

"Our street cannot take 39 more cars," said Alisson Meenhen who lives next to the proposed development. "Sunlight will be blocked out from the enormous size of this building. What is discouraging is the scale of these projects.

"This project belongs in the Pearl!" "Can't you make it half the size and two floors?" asked neighbor Murphy Terrell. "We're a quirky two-story village. It's disappointing. You say you want to fit into the neighborhood but you don't. Who else can we contact?"

O'Brien then spoke up and said

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