

Design Review Board Agenda Item Cover Sheet

Meeting Date		Staff Contact
April 5, 2021		Lindsay Kershner
Subject:		
<p>PRE2022-0019: Construction of Millworks Family Housing, a four-story mixed-use building with 83 affordable, one (1) to three (3) bedroom housing units and an 8,300 square foot (sf) childcare center. 56 surface vehicle parking stalls are proposed on the site with access to the parking lot and the site from W. Laurel Street. Additional temporary surface parking is proposed on abutting Port of Bellingham property. The building's floor area is approximately 96,000 sf between the four floors. The proposal also includes installation of street trees and landscaping along W. Laurel Street.</p> <p>Design Review is required because the project is in the Waterfront design review district and the project proponent is requesting four (4) design departures from the design standards.</p>		
Attachments:		
1. Staff Report		
2. Proposal		
3. Plans		
4. Response to design standards		
5. Departure requests		
Legislative or Quasi-judicial		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pre-Application	<input type="checkbox"/> Quasi-judicial	
<input type="checkbox"/> Application	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Only	
<input type="checkbox"/> Work Session		
<input type="checkbox"/> Briefing		
Clearances	Initials	Date
Kathy Bell	Kathy Bell	3/25/2022
Lindsay Kershner	LK	3/25/2022
Previous Board Meeting or Actions:		
None.		
Recommended Action:		
<p>The Design Review Board should conduct a Design Guidance Meeting and give direction that will help the applicant achieve a design that is consistent with the Design Standards. Based on the applicant's conceptual design, the Board shall provide guidance on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How the design standards, guidelines and regulations apply to the proposed project, and 2. Provide guidance on information that should be provided with the design review application. 		

Attachment 1

Design Review Board (DRB): Staff Report

Project File No: PRE2022-0019

Project Location: 100 W. Laurel Street; City Center Neighborhood, Area 6. Waterfront district urban village, Commercial mixed-use area.

Assessor's Parcel No.: 380330008066

Applicant: Colin Morgan- Cross, Mercy Housing Northwest, 6930 Martin Luther King Jr. Way S., Seattle, WA 98118. (206) 602-3481. cmorgan-cross@mercyhousing.org.

Architect: Neil McCarthy, RMC Architects, 1223 Railroad Ave., Bellingham, WA 98225. (360) 676-7733. Neil.m@rmcarchitects.com

City Project

Manager: Lindsay Kershner, Planner II, (360) 778-8369 or lkershner@cob.org

A. PROPOSAL – Attachment 2

Construction of Millworks Family Housing, a four-story mixed-use building with 83 affordable, one (1) to three (3) bedroom housing units and an 8,300 square foot (sf) childcare center. 56 surface vehicle parking stalls are proposed on the site with access to the parking lot and the site from W. Laurel Street. Additional temporary surface parking is proposed on abutting Port of Bellingham property. The building's floor area is approximately 96,000 sf between the four floors. The proposal also includes installation of street trees and landscaping along W. Laurel Street.

Design Review is required because the project is in the Waterfront design review district and the project proponent is requesting four (4) design departures from the design standards.

B. SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposed site is in Area 6 of the City Center neighborhood and is on the northeast corner of Cornwall Avenue and W. Laurel Street (both arterials). The site is generally flat and improved with gravel and a concrete foundation from a demolished building. This is the southern entrance to the Commercial Mixed-use area of the Waterfront District urban village.

The Port of Bellingham has applied to divide the subject site through the specific binding site plan process which will establish the site's boundaries. The site is anticipated to be +/- 87,000 sf (2 acres).

Within the Cornwall Ave. right-of-way, abutting the site, is a steep slope with some mature trees and the Cornwall Ave. bridge. The Port of Bellingham and the City have an agreement to reconstruct the Cornwall Ave. bridge in a later phase of the Waterfront district infrastructure improvements.

Therefore, the developer of the subject site will not be required to construct sidewalks on the north side of Cornwall Ave., as this would require the redevelopment of the Cornwall Ave. bridge. W. Laurel Street, abutting the site, is improved with 12-foot-wide sidewalks and a separated bicycle track. The BNSF railroad is located approximately 95 feet northwest of the site. There is a 20-foot-wide sewer easement on the site abutting Cornwall Ave.

For site boundaries and vicinity map see **Attachment 3**.

C. MEETING PURPOSE

Design review is required because of the proposed construction of a new building in the City Center Design Review district and Old Town urban village. In accordance with BMC 20.25.030(A)(1)(a), the purpose of this meeting is for the DRB to:

- 1) Discuss which design standards are applicable,
- 2) Discuss how the design standards, guidelines and regulations apply to the proposed project,
- 3) Explore alternative design concepts, and
- 4) Provide guidance on information that should be included with the design review application.

Pursuant to BMC 20.25.020 (F)(4), the applicable design provisions the DRB should use when reviewing this proposal are the waterfront district design guidelines and standards (WDDS) in BMC 20.25.080.

D. PROJECT BACKGROUND

A pre-application conference (PRE2021-0099) with city staff was held on October 5, 2021. Staff provided design guidance to the applicants at the conference related to the applicable design standards. This included discussions of building location, pedestrian connections within the site and to the surrounding streets, and building massing, articulation, and ground floor details.

Notice for this public meeting with the DRB was mailed ten days prior to the meeting and at the time of publishing, the city did not receive any comments on the application.

E. LAND USE ANALYSIS

The project will be reviewed against the critical areas ordinance pursuant to Chapter 16.55 BMC, the land use development regulations pursuant to Title 20 BMC, and the land division ordinance pursuant to Title 23 BMC. At this conceptual stage, the applicant has provided enough information to review the proposal for general compliance with applicable development regulations of the municipal code, specifically BMC 20.37.400-.480, but a more thorough review will take place with the design review application.

The applicant is proposing to apply for a parking reduction per BMC 20.37.540(E) with the design review application. A parking reduction is an administrative decision and subject to the DRB's review.

As stated earlier in the report, a proposed lot has not yet been created for the project and a specific binding site plan application has been submitted and will have to be approved by the city prior to design review and building permit approval.

F. DESIGN REVIEW ANALYSIS

The application materials provide an analysis of each applicable standard in **Attachment 4**. Four (4) departures from the standards and guidelines have been requested in **Attachment 5**. The departure criteria are:

1. In response to difficult physical circumstances relating to the size, shape, topography, location or surroundings of the subject property, an alternative solution is required that meets the intent of the requirement to the greatest extent practical, or
2. An alternative design will provide an equal or better solution that:
 - a. Meets the intent of the standard;

- b. Enhances the character and livability of the waterfront;
- c. Enhances the character and environment for pedestrians;
- d. Enhances or protects the character of the neighborhood or vicinity by protecting natural features, historic sites, open space, or other resources; and
- e. Will not have any substantial detrimental effect on nearby properties and the city or the neighborhood.

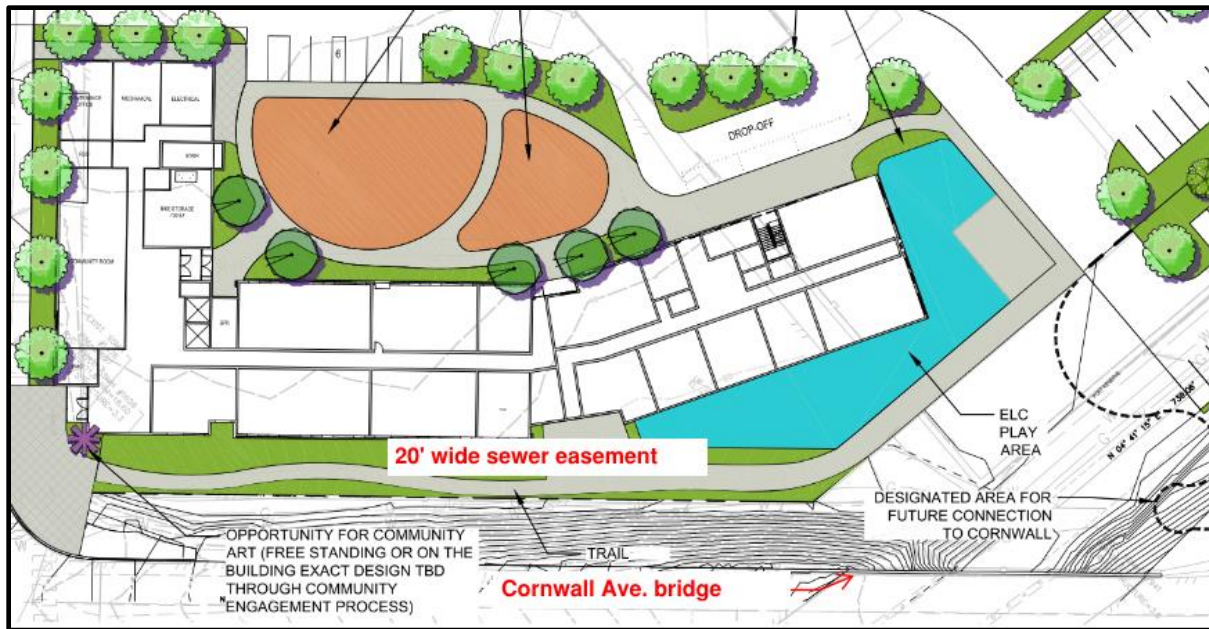
Staff review of the design guidance application materials has determined that except for the requested departures and the additional guidance sought by staff, the proposal generally complies with the applicable Waterfront district design requirements. Staff is seeking the DRB's recommendations on the following:

Departure requests:

The following three (3) requested design departures are a result of the 20-foot-wide sewer main easement on the property that abuts Cornwall Ave., the future Cornwall Ave. bridge and street improvements and the steep slope in Cornwall Ave. abutting the site. See the plans in **Attachment 3** for details.

1. **Orientation to Streets, Parks, and Trails, BMC 20.25.080(C)(1)(a)(ii):** Locate new structures to contribute to a strong "building wall" edge to the street such that they align at the front lot line and build out to the full width of the parcel, to the side lot lines. Although small gaps may occur between some structures, these are the exception. This should not preclude the provision of a wider sidewalk, public space, landscaping, art or outdoor seating.
2. **Orientation to Streets, Parks, and Trails, BMC 20.25.080(C)(1)(a)(iv):** Commercial buildings facing public streets or trails in commercial mixed-use areas shall have entrances from the street or trail every 75 feet, on average.
3. **Pedestrian Connectivity, BMC 20.25.080(C)(1)(g)(ii):** When a development encompasses a site greater than 240 feet wide or deep, incorporate pedestrian access through the site to connect to alleys, streets or neighboring properties. (See Figure 20.25.080(D).)

Staff Comment: Staff requests guidance from the Board as to whether the proposed departures from the building not aligning at the Cornwall Ave. property line, not having entrances onto the street every 75 feet, not providing the pedestrian connectivity through the site to Cornwall Ave. currently, meets departure criteria in BMC 20.25.080(B)(1). Given the complexities associated with the sewer main location, steep slope and Cornwall Avenue's future improvements, staff believes that the proposed location of the building, setback from Cornwall Ave. without access to the street from the site, meets the intent of the requirement to the greatest extent practical, if space is allotted on the property for some future pedestrian access to Cornwall Ave. and the 20-foot easement is used for some outdoor activities.



West Laurel Street departure request:

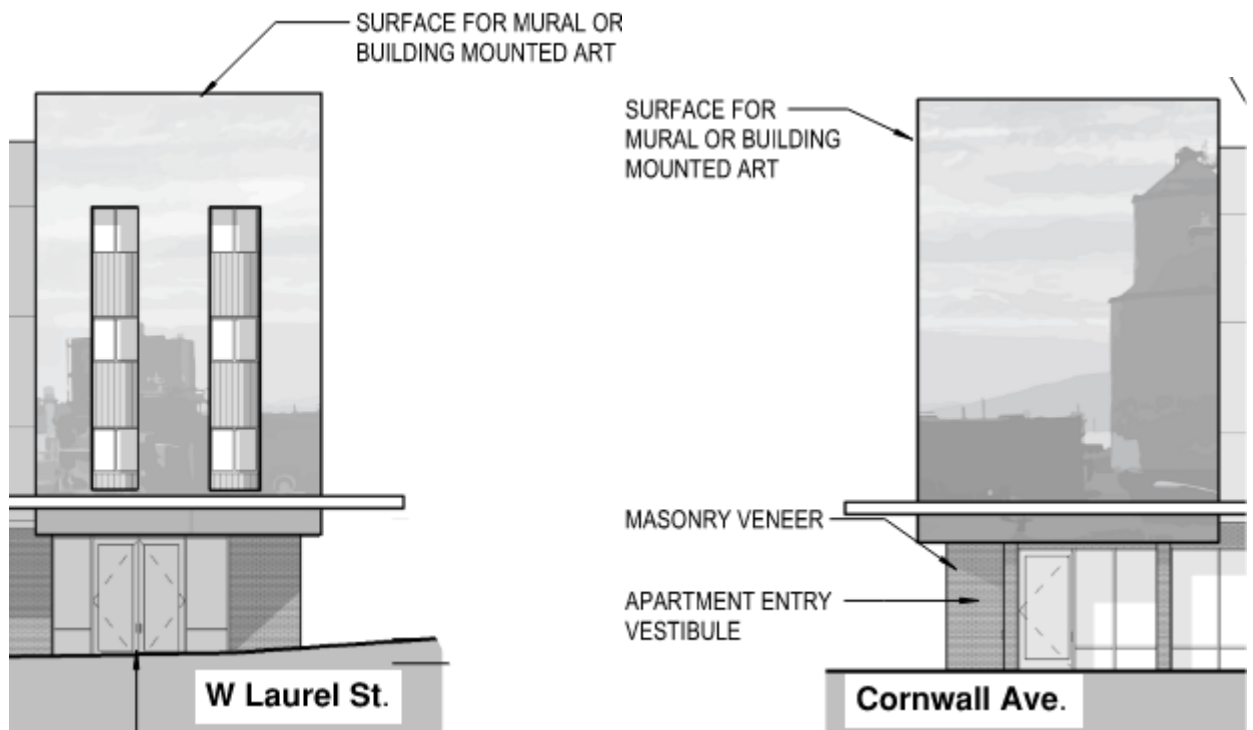
4. **Orientation to Streets, Parks, and Trails, BMC 20.25.080(C)(1)(a)(iv):** Commercial buildings facing public streets or trails in commercial mixed-use areas shall have entrances from the street or trail every 75 feet, on average.

Staff Comment: Staff requests guidance from the Board as to whether an additional entrance to the building is necessary along W. Laurel St. or if the proposed single entrance at the corner of W. Laurel St. and Cornwall Ave. is sufficient and can be found to meet the departure criteria in BMC 20.25.080(B)(2). The intent of the Orientation standard is to, "Reinforce pedestrian activity, orientation to ground floor activities and enhance the liveliness of the street and public spaces through building location and design." The length of the building wall along W. Laurel St. is approximately 140 feet, which establishes the requirement for two entrances. Staff believes that having an emphasized primary entrance at the corner of W. Laurel and Cornwall Ave. provides a strong entrance to the Waterfront district and the building itself. Given the use of the building, the applicant wants to control access to the building and only have one entrance. Staff is seeking guidance from the board on whether another entrance should be provided along W. Laurel St. or if having a single entrance meets the departure criteria.

Design requirements:

1. **Blank Walls, BMC 20.25.080(C)(2)(j)(ii)(A):** Any blank wall within 50 feet of, and visible from, a public street, public park or trail shall be treated with at least one of the following: (A) Artwork, such as bas relief sculpture, mural or similar feature."

Staff Comment: Staff requests guidance from the Board regarding the proposed artwork on the southwest corner of the building. This is the main entrance to the building and, as the architect stated in their response to the design criteria, a gateway to the Waterfront district.



G. CONCLUSION

In summary, staff believes the proposal generally satisfies the intent of the Waterfront district design standards. Although staff is only seeking specific recommendations and guidance from the DRB for those departures and standards discussed above, the DRB should provide input and direction on any other identified issues related to satisfying an applicable design standard.



Mercy Millworks
100 W. Laurel St, Bellingham, WA

Development Objectives Statement

February 22, 2022

Mercy Housing Northwest is planning to build Millworks Family Housing, a new construction family housing community in Bellingham's Waterfront District. The project will include 83 units, ranging from one to three bedrooms, serving low-income individuals and families at 30%, 50%, and 60% of area median income. The project will also include a seven-classroom Early Learning Center to be operated by the YMCA. This project is part of the City and Port of Bellingham's vision to incorporate mixed-income housing in the Waterfront District.

The project is four stories and the ground floor will include the Early Learning Center, a lobby, a community space for resident services programming, and staff offices. Units are located on the ground floor and upper floors. The Early Learning Center will have an outdoor play area. The building will have an entrance to W Laurel St. and entrances facing the internal courtyard. The project includes on site surface parking for a total of 56 stalls and another 56 stalls dedicated to this project but located on the adjacent parcel. The project will meet the State's Evergreen Sustainable Design Standard to increase energy efficiency, create a healthier environment for residents, and increase durability. The location in the Waterfront District will give residents easy walking access to a range of amenities and services, and the site is well connected to the adjacent downtown district.

Mercy plans to start construction by the end of 2022. Construction will take approximately 14 months, to be finished in early spring of 2024.

Vicinity Map Key

Zoning

- City Center
- Waterfront District

Connectivity

- Pedestrian
- Bike
- Train

Vicinity Map

Lignin Parcel, Waterfront District

TO FAIRHAVEN TO WWU CAMPUS TO SAMISH WAY



1 W Laurel Street



2 Cornwall Avenue Bridge



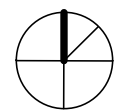
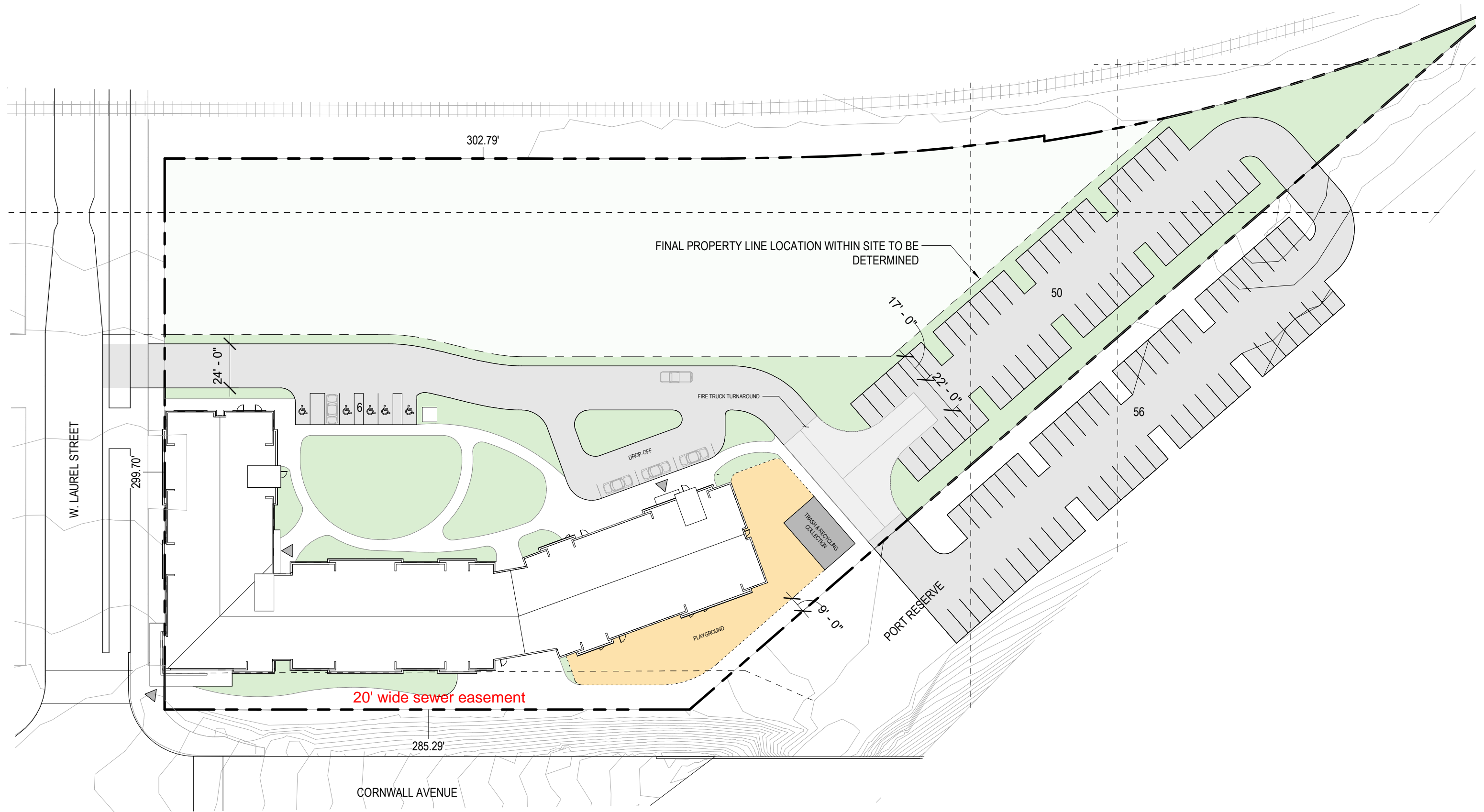
3 W. Chestnut Street Bridge



4 Railroad Avenue

Site Context

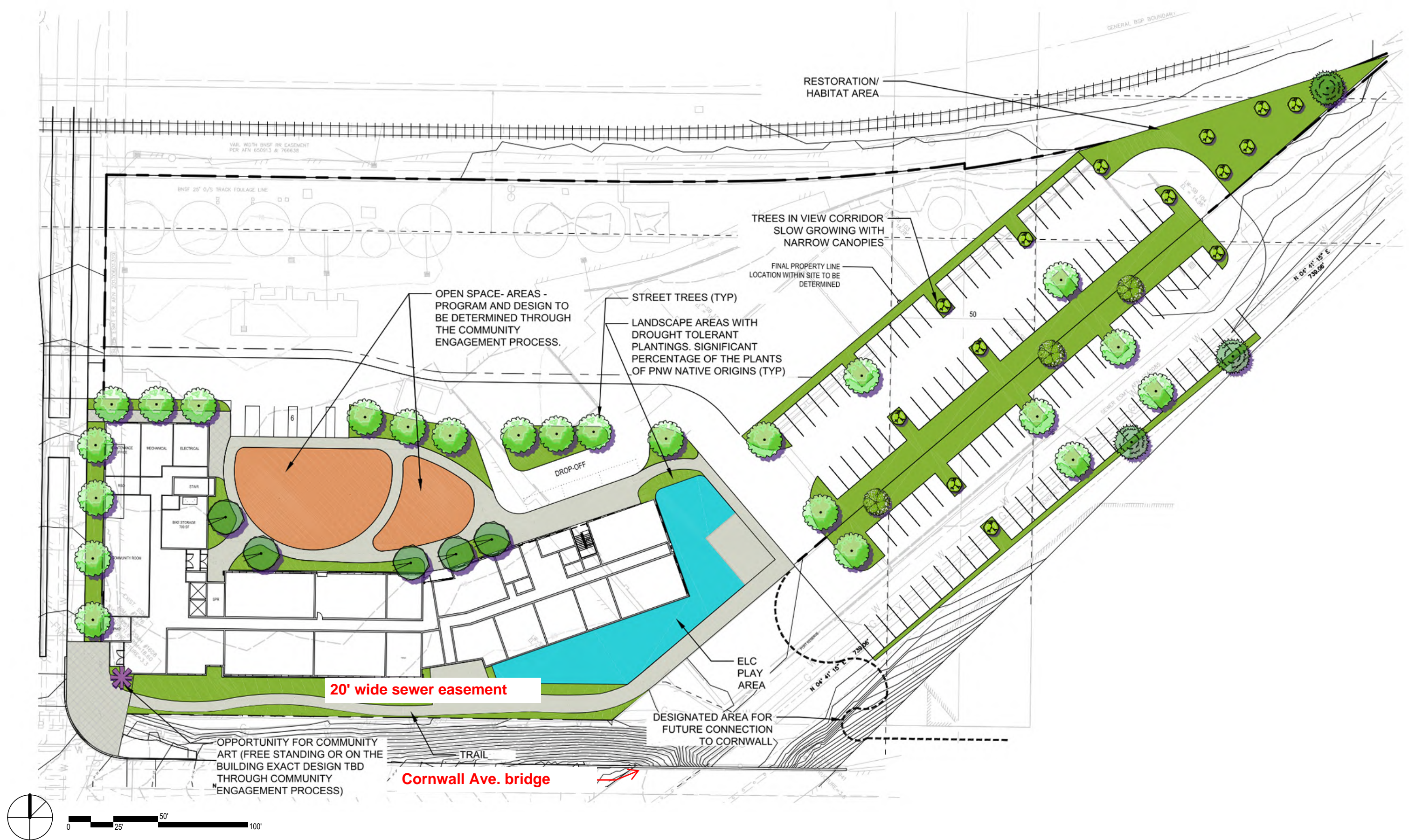
Lignin Parcel, Waterfront District



0 25' 50' 100'

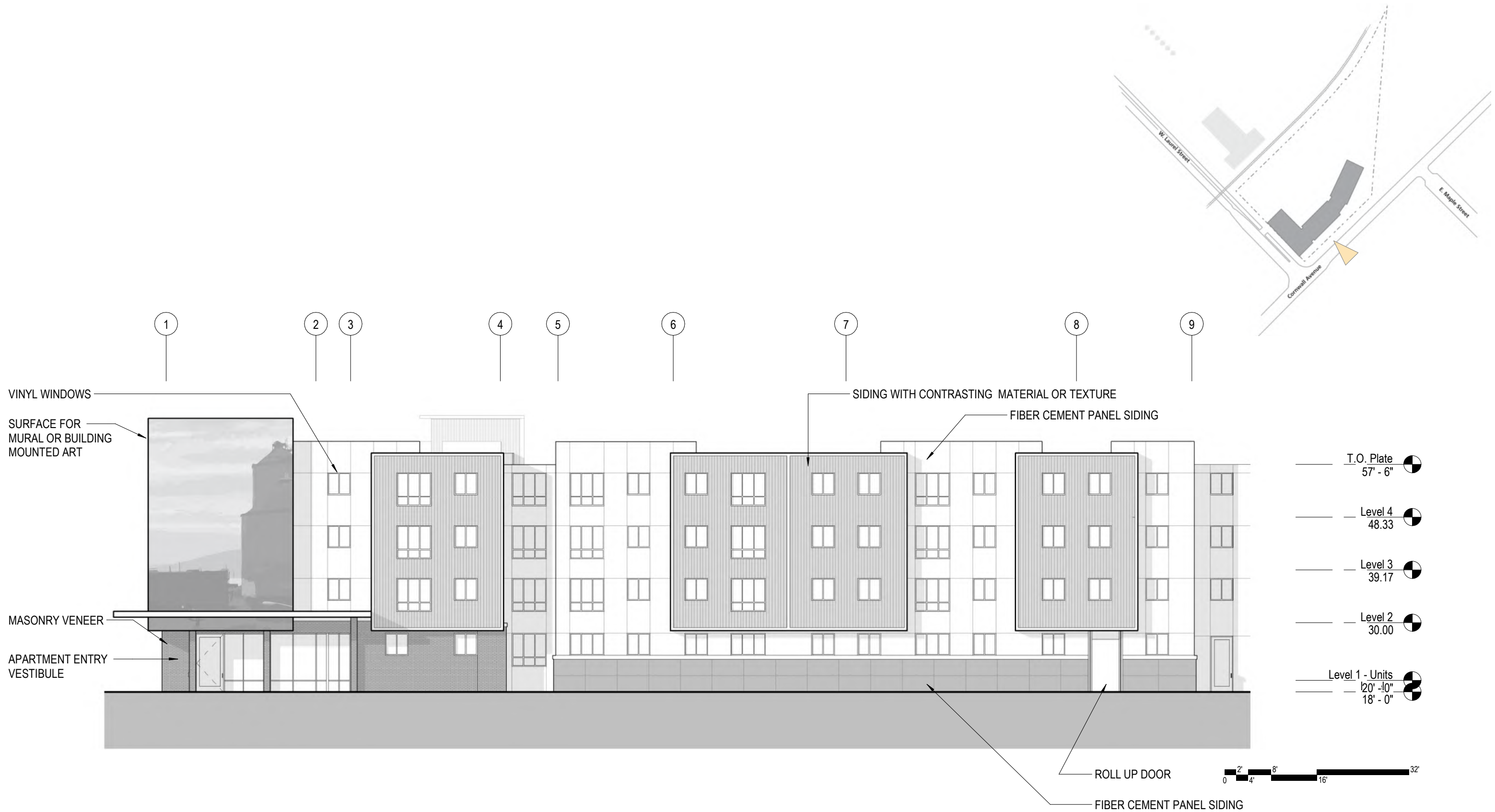
Conceptual Site Plan

Lignin Parcel, Waterfront District



Schematic Landscape & Open Space Plan

Biodesign Studio



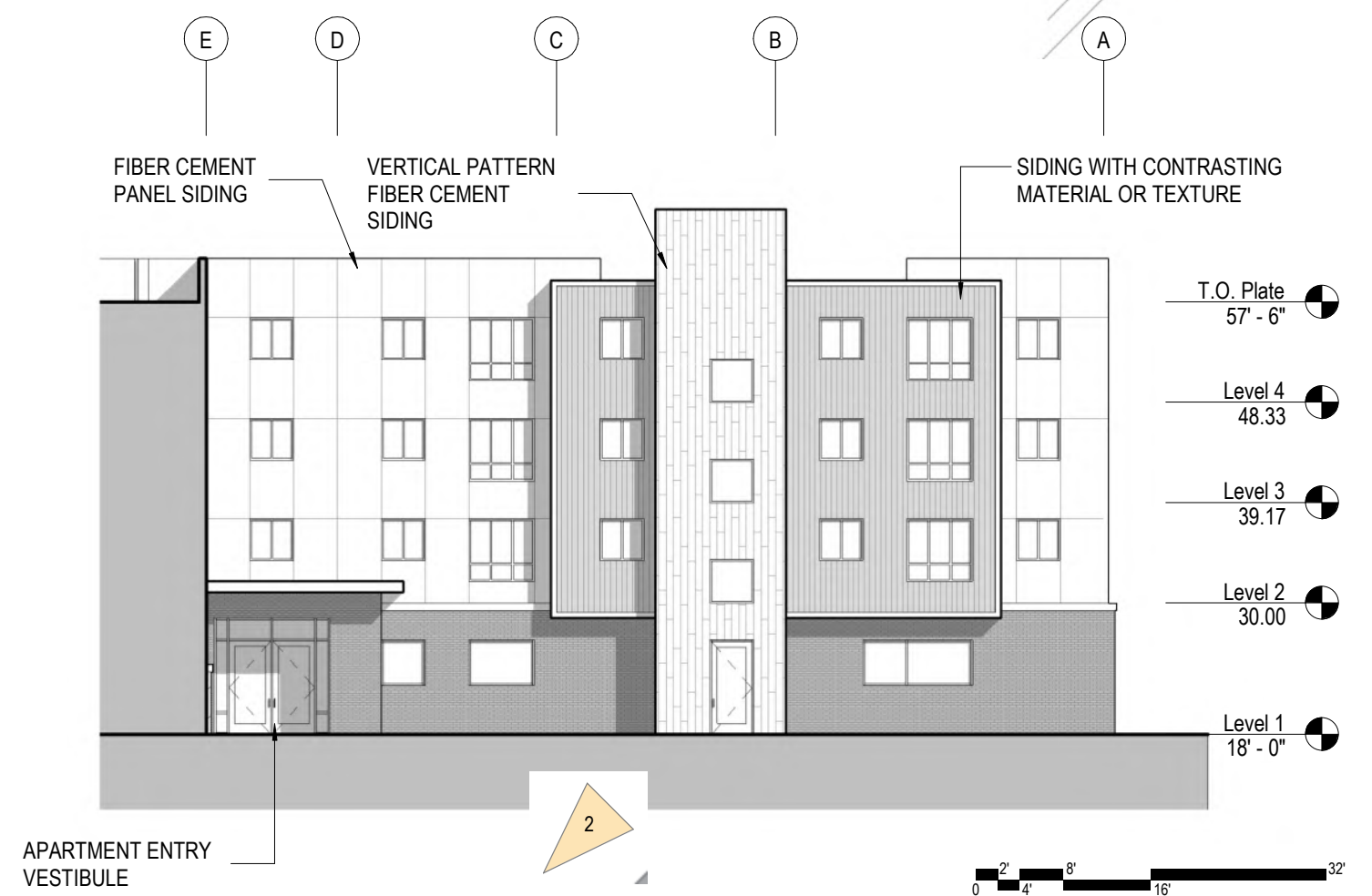
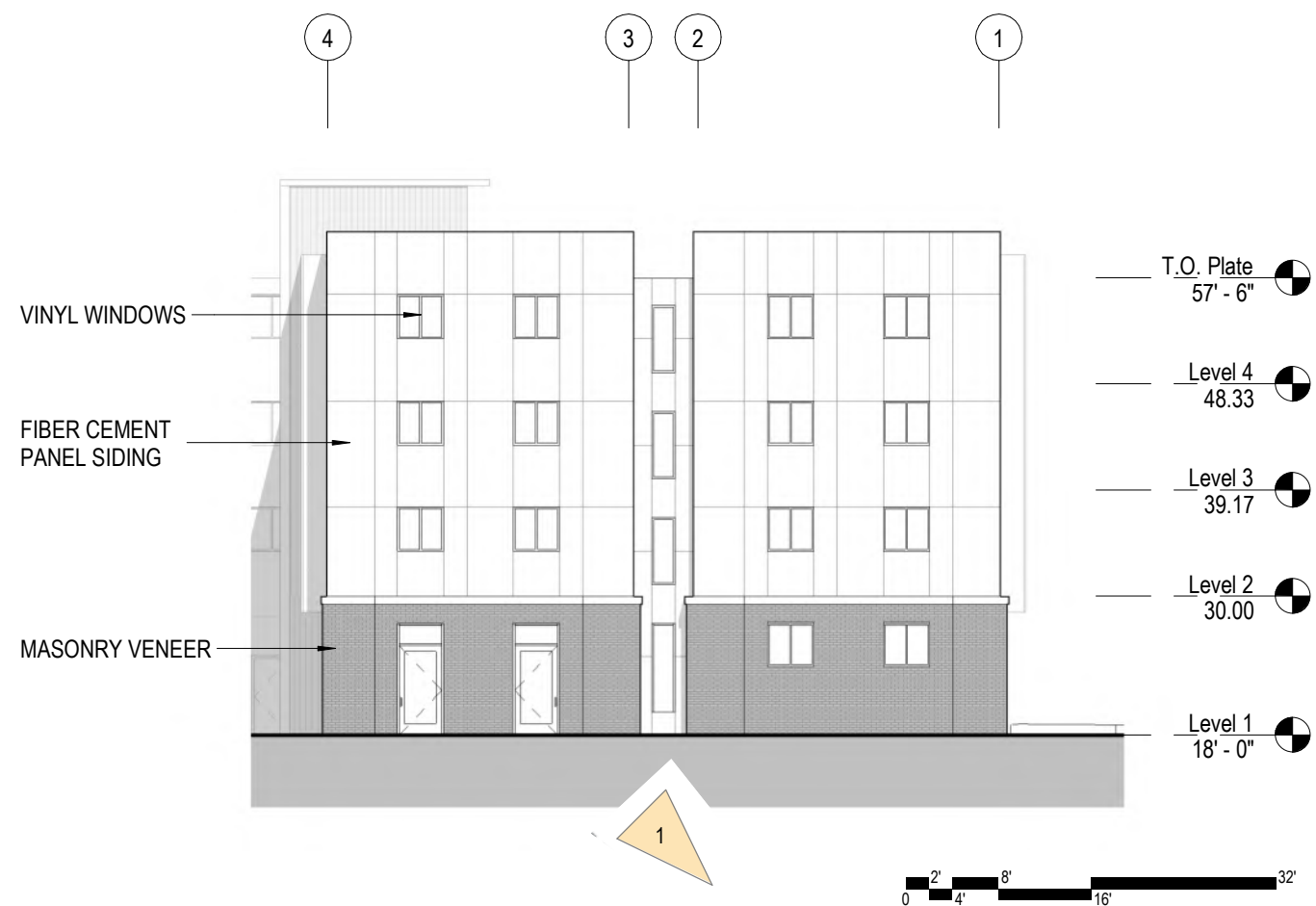
Design Concept

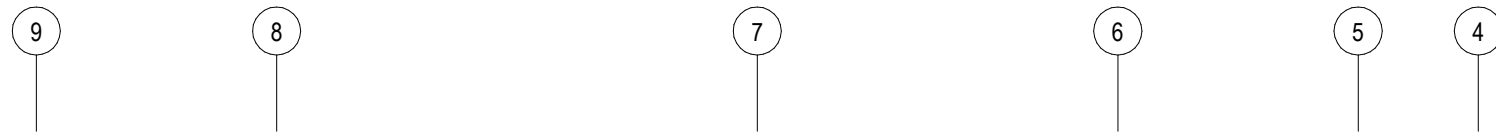
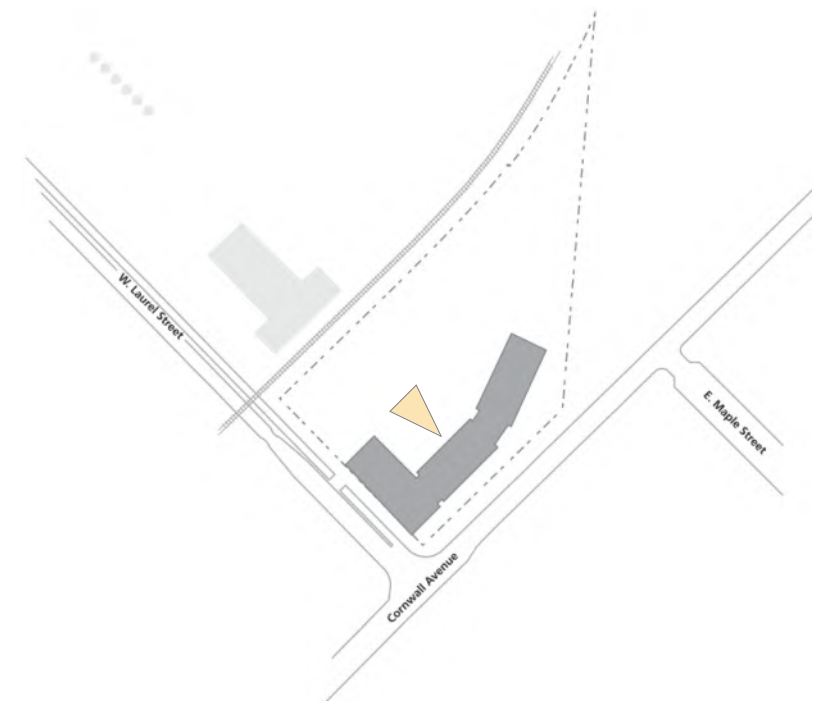
Cornwall Avenue - Art Wall

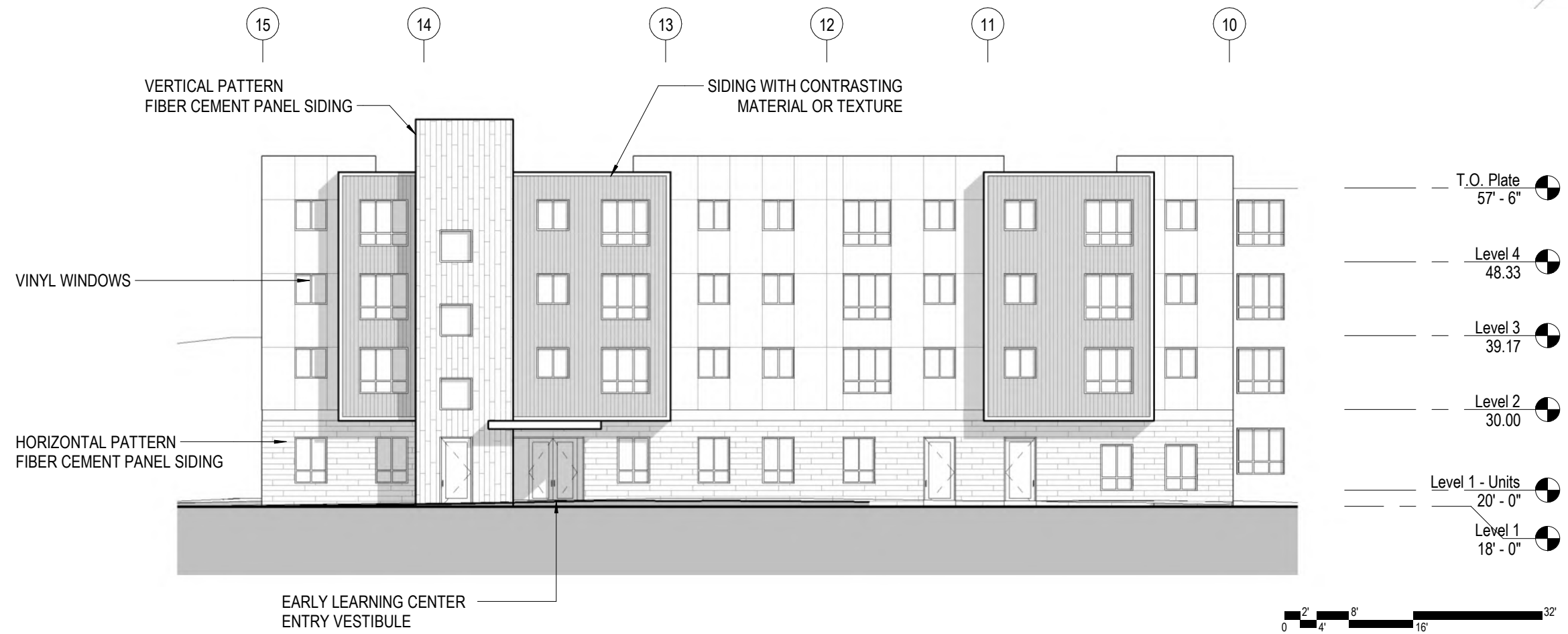
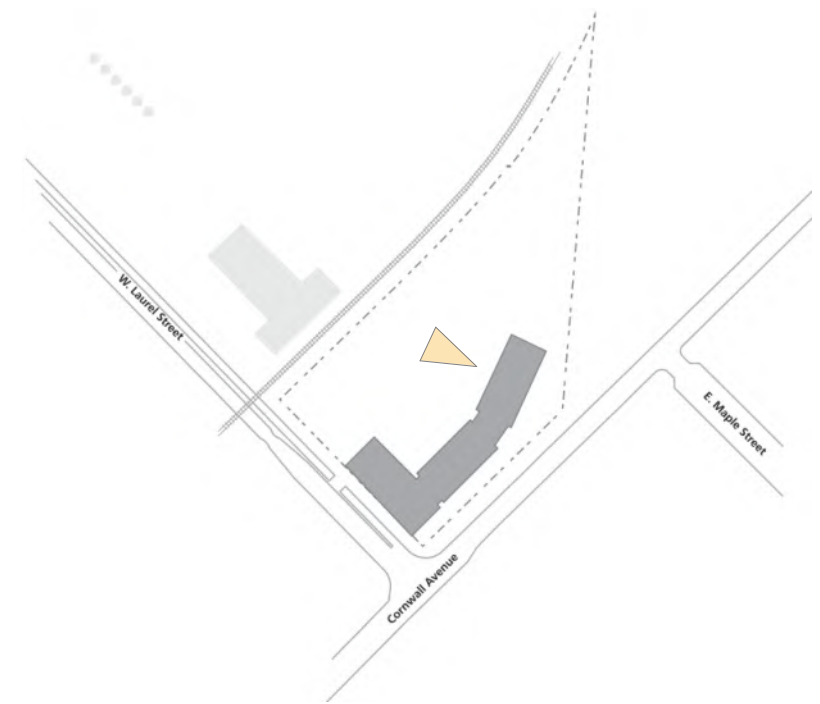


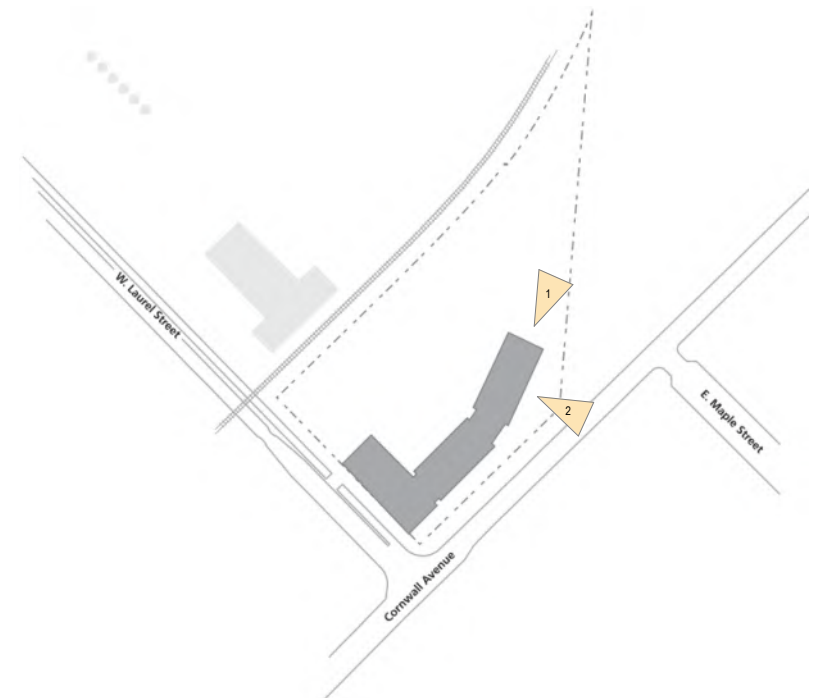
Design Concept

West Laurel Street









Design Concept
ELC Playground

RMC ARCHITECTS



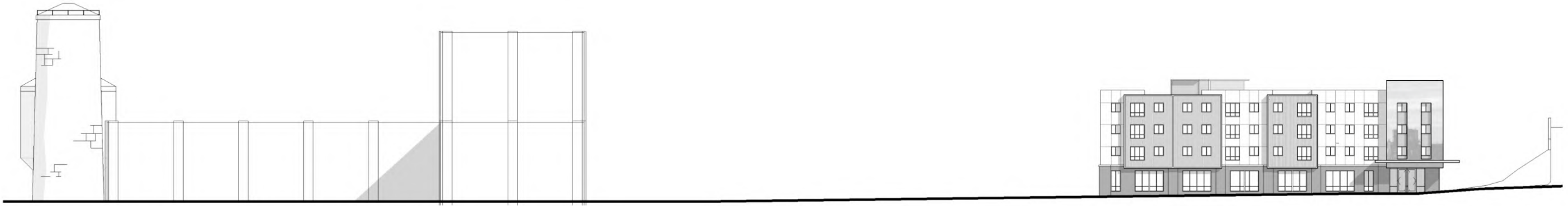
1 - On Site



2 - Cornwall and Laurel

Design Concept

Isometric and Massing Diagrams



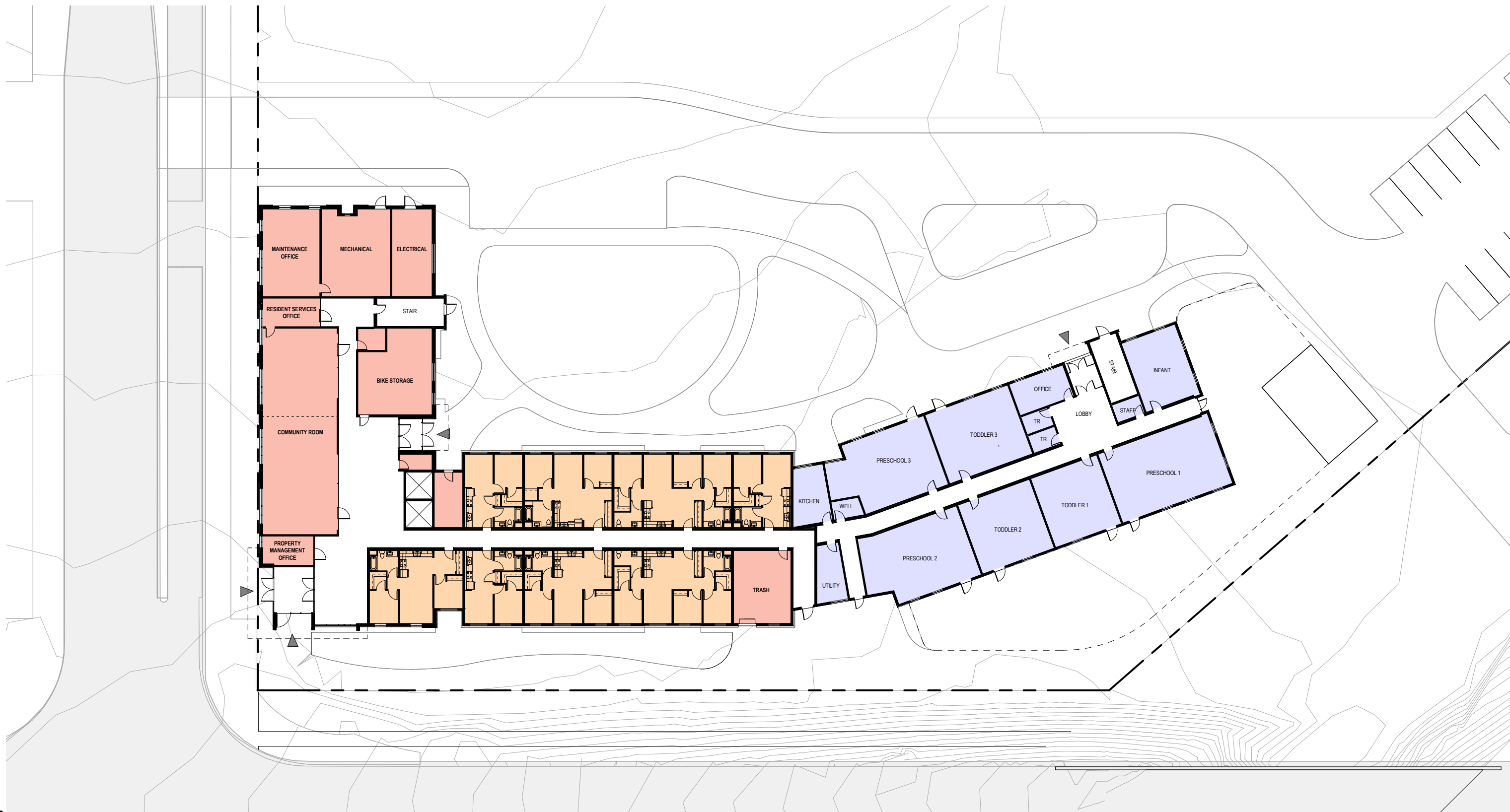
WEST LAUREL STREET



CORNWALL AVENUE

Street Context

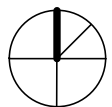
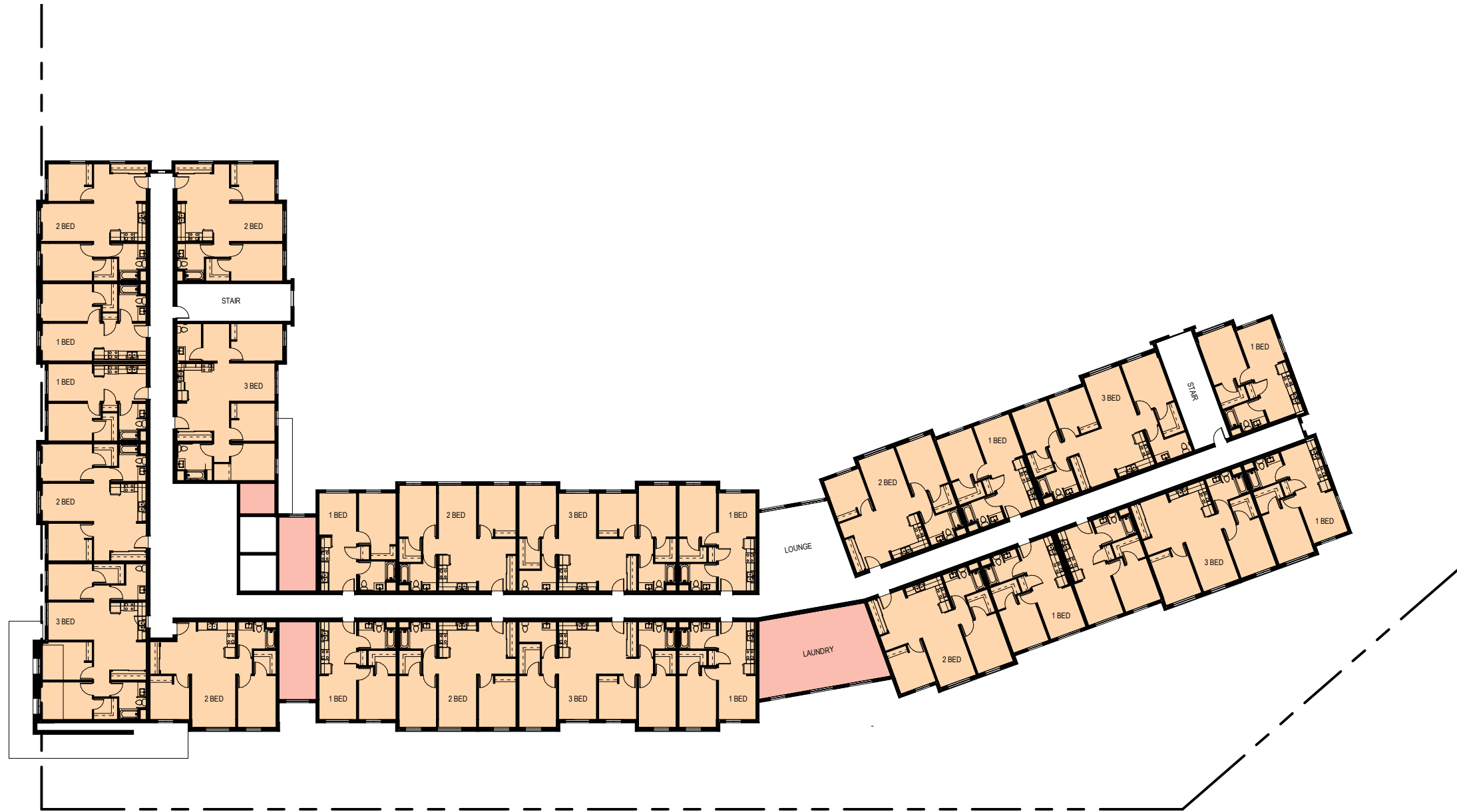
West Laurel Street and Cornwall Avenue



0 4' 8' 16' 32' 64'

Conceptual Floor Plans

Level 1



0 4' 8' 16' 32' 64'

Conceptual Floor Plans

Levels 2 - 4



Mercy Millworks

100 W. Laurel St, Bellingham, WA

Design Guidance Application – Narrative

February 22, 2022

The following is a section by section annotated review of BMC 20.25.080 as it applies to the Mercy Millworks project. The annotations include steps taken to meet the requirements and where necessary, request departures. We'll begin with a design statement then proceed to the annotated review. The annotated review addresses both Site Design Specific Standards and Building Design Specific Standards. Design team responses to the criteria are in blue text.

Design Statement

The question we ask is what is unique about this particular project that will inform the building design. Certainly the waterfront is rich with cues as to how we might proceed. Most obvious is the site's location at the heart of the city and adjacent to the bay. Views (both within the district and from the surrounding bluffs), opportunities to connect to the water, civic identity and a sense of community are all important elements of this district. Another cue is the history of the site, both the recent industrial uses and the pre-colonial nature of the site on the tidelands adjacent to what would be named Whatcom Creek. Socio-economic cues include equitable access to the district and the proposed uses of an early learning center and affordable housing. We also recognize that this is a gateway project due to its location at Laurel and Cornwall. It is one of the earliest projects for the district so it has the responsibility of setting a tone for future projects. All of these cues factor into how we develop a building concept.

1. Site Design.

a. Orientation to Streets, Parks, and Trails.

- i. *Intent.* Reinforce pedestrian activity, orientation to ground floor activities and enhance the liveliness of the street and public spaces through building location and design.
- ii. *Guideline.* Locate new structures to contribute to a strong “building wall” edge to the street such that they align at the front lot line and build out to the full width of the parcel, to the side lot lines. Although small gaps may occur between some structures, these are the exception. This should not preclude the provision of a wider sidewalk, public space, landscaping, art or outdoor seating.

- iii. *Guideline.* Locate the primary building entrance at street level facing a public street. The primary entrance should be more articulated and highlighted (size, material, recessed, lighting) than secondary entrances.
- iv. *Guideline.* Commercial buildings facing public streets or trails in commercial mixed use areas shall have entrances from the street or trail every 75 feet, on average.
- v. *Guideline.* Develop an open space concept in conjunction with the architectural concept to ensure that interior and exterior spaces relate well to each other and their functions are mutually supportive. The following should be considered:
 - (A) Ensure that buildings which directly front on parks and trails interact with facility users.
 - (B) Activate parks and trails with a variety of uses that provide a continuity of experience with focused nodes of activity and destinations that are linked together.
 - (C) Provide interpretive opportunities that incorporate the cultural, historical, economic and environmental history of the site and community into the design of the park.
 - (D) Minimize conflicts with vehicular traffic.
 - (E) Consider the localized effect of sun angles, shading and wind on proposed park facilities and spaces.
- vi. *Guideline.* Site and design project-related open spaces to connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby public open space where appropriate. Look for opportunities to support uses and activities on adjacent properties and/or the sidewalk.

The site layout has been organized such that the building is anchoring Laurel Street and the intersection with Cornwall Avenue, thus emphasizing the building's role as a gateway to the district. The building's relationship to Cornwall is tempered by a sewer easement running parallel to the street plus a sloping Cornwall Avenue as it approaches the bridge to the northeast. Gaps in the primary Laurel Street frontage are limited to a single pedestrian and vehicle access point allowing connections to the interior of the site.

The building entrance will be located along Laurel Street or at the Corner of Laurel and Cornwall. We do not anticipate any secondary entrances due to our requirement to control access to the building. We recognize the guideline suggesting having building entrances along the street every 75' on average and are weighing that option versus locating a stronger entrance at the corner.

Open space is located to the interior of the lot and supports the building functions, both in connections to the community room wing and in providing privacy for the ground floor apartments. We are exploring opportunities to incorporate references to the cultural and environmental history of the site. For example, the design of the open space references the tide lands that preceded the industrial use of the district. Conflicts with vehicular traffic are minimized. Interior open space connects to the street via walkways located along the access road. We are also exploring walk paths around the building starting at a small plaza on the corner of Laurel and Cornwall.

b. *Bay Street Connector.*

Not applicable.

c. *Surface Parking.*

- i. *Intent.* Ensure that surface parking lots are not a dominant element within the waterfront district and minimize the impact of surface parking on the pedestrian environment.
- ii. *Standard.* Parking shall be located to the rear or side of buildings. Surface parking lots shall not be located at intersections nor include more than 120 feet of street frontage along any arterial street (see Figure 20.25.080(B)). Access should be from a local street or alley where feasible.
- iii. *Standard.* Long-term off-street surface parking lots shall not be located adjacent to Granary Avenue or W. Laurel Street. Interim surface parking lots may be permitted along Granary Avenue and W. Laurel Street for up to 10 years on parcels intended for redevelopment.

Parking is strategically located toward the back of the site away from the streets. Its effect on the pedestrian environment is minimal. We are pursuing a strategy of using off-site parking adjacent to our existing parking site.

d. *Drive-Through Facilities.*

Not applicable.

e. *Refuse Enclosures.*

- i. *Intent.* Reduce the impact and view of trash and recycling storage areas.
- ii. *Guideline.* Locate refuse and recycling storage areas to the rear of the site, screened from arterial streets and pedestrian walkways.
- iii. *Standard.* Refuse containment areas shall be placed in a building or enclosed within a structure that is of similar architectural character to the major structures on the site.

Primary refuse and recycling collection occurs within the building. Staff are tasked with moving refuse and recycling to a screened pick up location on collection days. The pick up location is located to the rear of the site and will be constructed to safely screen the collection area with a structure that is compatible with the building.

f. *Rooftop Screening.*

- i. *Intent.* Rooftops and mechanical equipment should not detract from the appearance of the building and should be designed with consideration of the appearance from the adjacent bluff.
- ii. *Standard.* Screen mechanical equipment by extending the parapet walls or other roof forms that are integrated with the architecture of the building to a height that equals or exceeds the height of the mechanical equipment. Utilize rooftop vegetation, screening or roofing materials which minimize glare from rooftops.

Roof top mechanical equipment will be shielded from views by parapets and screened enclosures. The view from the adjacent bluff will be a guiding factor. We anticipate locating a photovoltaic array on the roof. The photovoltaic racks and panels may be used to screen mechanical equipment.

g. *Pedestrian Connectivity.*

- i. *Intent.* Create a network of safe, convenient and attractive off-street linkages for pedestrians.
- ii. *Guideline.* When a development encompasses a site greater than 240 feet wide or deep, incorporate pedestrian access through the site to connect to alleys, streets or neighboring properties. (See Figure 20.25.080(D).)
- iii. *Guideline.* Provide walkways connecting building entrances to adjacent streets, parks and buildings. Locate walkways in active and well-lighted areas visible from adjoining public spaces. (See Figure 20.25.080(E).)
- iv. *Standard.* Pedestrian through-block connections shall include a walkway at least five feet wide and shall be clearly defined by use of material, elevation (six inches raised) or landscaping borders. The space between two buildings adjoining a through-block walkway shall be a minimum of 20 feet, unless a shorter distance is approved through design review.
- v. *Standard.* Pedestrian access shall be provided between the building main entry and the public sidewalk. If walkways cross parking lots or driveways, the walkway shall be separated from the parking area by landscaping or by raised pavement, or, when crossing driving lanes, by a change in pavement texture or material.

The interior pedestrian circulation network is linked to the public way at Laurel Street and potentially at the corner of Laurel and Cornwall. The nature of this site is such that we are landlocked by the Cornwall bridge approach and the Port properties towards the bluff. However we are allowing for future connections from our site to the site between our building and the railroad tracks. We are also allowing for the possibility of connecting to the Port properties toward the bluff if pedestrian infrastructure occurs there in the future.

Guideline ii and Standard iv above suggest providing through-block connections for a site that is greater than 240 feet long. Our site exceeds this length, however the Cornwall bridge approach does not provide a connection point. Our best response is to include a pedestrian path alongside the building running parallel to Cornwall. This may be considered a departure. Please advise.

h. *Site Lighting.*

- i. *Intent.* Provide architectural character and safety and encourage evening activity while minimizing impacts to neighboring properties and the darkness of the night sky.
- ii. *Guideline.* Shielded low intensity lighting should be provided for entries, walkways, parking garage entrances, parking lots, alleys and refuse enclosures.
- iii. *Guideline.* Parking lot lights should generally be no more than 18 feet in height and lower for pedestrian walkways.
- iv. *Guideline.* Lighting should be directed away from the sky, dwellings and neighboring development. The use of LED or low energy use fixtures with cut off shades which meet LEED standards and dark sky criteria is strongly encouraged.
- v. *Guideline.* Light fixtures should contribute to the overall design of the building and may be used to highlight special architectural features.

Site lighting has yet to be designed, however we anticipate using lighting that meets these guidelines. A detailed site lighting plan and photometric plan will be included with our Design Review submittal.

i. *Acoustical Site Planning.*

- i. *Intent.* Employ site planning, design, and building orientation techniques in new residential development to minimize the potential for noise impacts from off-site noise-generating sources such as industrial operations and the railroad.
- ii. *Guideline.* Site residential units at some distance from noise-generating sources, or closer to quieter and less traveled roadways, planned parks and green spaces.
- iii. *Guideline.* Acoustical noise reducing concepts could be incorporated in the architectural design of individual buildings. These concepts could include room arrangement, window

placement, and balcony and courtyard design. For example, placing bedrooms and living rooms in the part of the residential building farthest from the noise source, while placing kitchens and bathrooms closer to the noise source.

iv. *Guideline.* Acoustical construction treatments could be used for various parts of the residential buildings to reduce interior noise impacts. Treatments could include the use of walls, windows, doors, ceilings, and floors that have been treated to reduce sound transmission into a building (the use of dense materials and the use of airspaces within materials are the principal noise-reducing techniques of acoustical construction).

v. *Guideline.* Non-living portions of residential buildings (such as garages, commercial spaces, and recreational facilities) could be placed between the residences and noise-generating sources.

We are taking a proactive approach to the site acoustical conditions for this project. The residential units are located as far away from the train tracks as possible. We've decided to avoid using decks, balconies or stoops to minimize opportunities for noise migration into the units. Building assemblies are being calibrated to outperform the requirements of BMC 20.37.430 I for the Waterfront District Urban Village.

2. Building Design.

a. Building Scale.

i. *Intent.* Establish a building scale consistent with a highly urban downtown context.

ii. *Guideline.* Compose the massing and organize the interior and exterior spaces to create a well-proportioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole.

iii. *Guideline.* Develop a primary facade that is in scale and maintains alignments with surrounding buildings. Although a new building may tower above the surrounding buildings, the first several stories should visually relate to the surrounding context.

iv. *Standards.* (See Figure 20.25.080 (F).)

(A) Minimum building height within 15 feet of the street frontage of arterial streets in the commercial mixed-use subzone is 25 feet.

(B) Buildings within the commercial mixed-use sub-zone should have at least three stories of occupied space in some portion of the building. This standard does not apply to buildings located within parks, view corridors or shoreline jurisdiction.

The overall architectural concept is to echo the industrial scale of historic buildings by embracing the large scale of the development but also break down the scale into manageable blocks. This might be similar to an accumulation of large industrial buildings, each with interventions echoing their distinct programmatic needs. We've landed on three similar sized blocks that interact via two connecting elements – one adjacent to the corner and the second as a knuckle adjacent to the Early Learning Center wing. We've then overlaid the base geometry with interventions, both vertical and horizontal. The base geometry echoes the structural bays of the remaining historic buildings.

The building height within 15 feet of Laurel exceeds the 25' minimum height requirement. The building exceeds the 3 stories of occupied space requirement.

b. *Massing and Articulation.*

- i. *Intent.* Reduce the apparent mass of large buildings to provide visual interest and pedestrian scale.
- ii. *Guideline.* Encourage visually distinct tops by incorporating roof parapets and eaves that vary in height to avoid long, straight lines at the maximum building heights.
- iii. *Guideline.* Buildings with facades longer than 50 feet should be divided into “modules” that are expressed three-dimensionally throughout the building facade. Modules could vary in width and height.
- iv. *Guideline.* Reduce the apparent mass of buildings facing adjacent public spaces by stepping down building height and reducing the area of wall planes.

v. *Standards.*

- (A) Not applicable.
- (B) The street level floor of buildings within commercial mixed-use subzones shall have a minimum floor-to-floor height of 12 feet.
- (C) Not applicable.
- (D) Not applicable.

As noted above, the apparent mass of the large building is reduced by breaking it into three major components and further articulating the facades with vertical and horizontal interventions. Parapet heights vary along the length of the building and long horizontal lines are avoided. The building itself is subdivided into a variety of modules expressed in three dimensions. The street level of the building has a floor to floor meeting or exceeding 12 feet.

c. *Variations on Building Design.*

Not applicable.

d. *Commercial Street Frontage Standard.*

- i. *Intent.* To encourage pedestrian-oriented activity at street level along arterial streets in the downtown waterfront area.
- ii. *Guideline Standard.* The front 20 feet of building space at sidewalk level along Granary Avenue and W. Laurel Street shall be designed for commercial or public uses, including retail, service, office, government, or similar nonresidential uses. Lobbies for residential uses and hotels and parking garage entries are exempt from this provision. Hotel guest rooms, dwelling units and structured parking garages shall not occupy street level building space fronting on Granary Avenue or W. Laurel Street.

We have designated the uses for the front 20 feet of building space at the sidewalk along W Laurel as active, commercial type spaces. We've included offices, the community room and residential lobbies to meet the intent of this guideline standard.

e. *Ground Floor Details.*

- i. *Intent.* Reinforce the character of the streetscape by encouraging the greatest amount of visual interest along the ground level of buildings facing streets.
- ii. *Guideline.* Create a visually distinct base. Ground-floor, street-facing facades of commercial and mixed-use buildings shall incorporate elements such as lighting, medallions, belt courses, plinths for columns, kick plates, projecting sills, tile work, pedestrian scale signs, planter boxes or other vegetation, or other elements that meet the intent.
- iii. *Guideline.* Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming, and open to the general public.
- iv. *Guideline.* Consider setting portions of the building back slightly to create spaces conducive to pedestrian-oriented activities such as vending, resting, sitting, or dining. Further articulate the street level façade to provide an engaging pedestrian experience via open facades (i.e., arcades and shop fronts); multiple building entries; windows that encourage pedestrians to look into the building interior; merchandising display windows; street front open space that features artwork, street furniture and landscaping; and exterior finish materials having texture and pattern, lending themselves to high quality detailing.

The ground floor level of the building is being designed to provide a visually distinct base using masonry – a high quality material having texture and pattern and lending itself to fine grain detail work. The street level uses are active in nature, thus providing visual engagement for pedestrians. The entry portion of the building is recessed to allow street furniture and landscaping and to provide a nice sunny place to sit.

f. *Structured Parking.*

Not applicable.

g. *Building Material.*

- i. *Intent.* Create a vibrant waterfront district through the use of good design and quality materials. The design of architectural features should contribute to create a building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept.
- ii. *Guideline.* Design architectural features that are an integral part of the building.
- iii. *Guideline.* Discourage features that appear to be “tacked on” or artificially thin.
- iv. *Guideline.* Material selection should exhibit high quality, particularly at street level. Examples include stone, brick, tile, concrete, metal, or transparent glass. Residential lap siding should be discouraged or minimized to an accent material.
- v. *Guideline.* Encourage the use of recessed windows that create shadow lines.

The building design strategically integrates building materials to reinforce the architectural concept. Masonry is used at the base of the building and in greater degree at the Laurel St façade. Siding with contrasting material and texture is used at various articulations from the base building both echoing earlier industrial buildings and providing highlights against the base geometry of the building. The base façade material is a cementitious panel system that will be patterned to reference structural bays of the adjacent historic structures. We’ve elected to use 2x8 exterior wall construction to meet energy efficiency requirements. This has the added advantage of allowing recessed windows to provide shadow lines.

h. *Transparency.*

- i. *Intent.* Provide a visual link between business spaces and public sidewalks to create visual interest at the pedestrian level.
- ii. *Standard.* A minimum of 60 percent of the building wall between two feet and seven feet above the sidewalk facing an arterial street in the commercial mixed-use subzone shall be transparent or lightly tinted glazing. Windows into parking garage space shall not qualify. If windows are not appropriate, glass display cases, decorative art (for example, murals or

relief sculpture), significant architectural detailing or wall-covering landscaping may be used. (See Figure 20.25.080(I).)

60 percent of the building wall between 2 feet and seven feet above the Laurel Street sidewalk will be glazed with transparent or lightly tinted glass.

i. *Weather Protection.*

- i. *Intent.* Provide pedestrians rain protection, integrate individual buildings into the streetscape, and define the pedestrian zone.
- ii. *Guideline.* Project applicants are encouraged to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection where commercial uses are located at street level along arterial streets.
- iii. *Guideline.* Weather protection should be located between eight and 12 feet above the walkway but a higher placement may be considered if the width of the protection is increased.

Overhead weather protection is provided via a canopy at the main entrance. Additional weather protection for the sidewalk is not provided due to the landscape buffer between the sidewalk and the property line. Street trees will occur in this buffer.

j. *Blank Walls.*

- i. *Intent.* Provide visual interest and avoid the negative impacts of blank walls.
- ii. *Standard.* A blank wall is a wall or a portion of wall that is either (A) at least 400 square feet in area with a length and a width of at least 10 feet that does not include a window, door, building modulation or other architectural feature or (B) at the ground floor and over six feet in height with a horizontal length greater than 15 feet that does not include a window, pedestrian entry door, building modulation or other architectural feature. Any blank wall within 50 feet of, and visible from, a public street, public park or trail shall be treated with at least one of the following:
 - (A) Artwork, such as bas relief sculpture, mural or similar feature.
 - (B) A landscaping bed containing trees, shrubs and/or vines on a trellis that will cover at least 60 percent of the wall within three years. Landscape beds shall be at least five feet in width, open to the sky and use drought-resistant plants or include irrigation with reclaimed water.
 - (C) Architectural detailing incorporating trims, textures, reveals, contrasting materials, or other special detailing that provides visual interest.

(D) An alternative method of providing visual interest at the pedestrian level approved through design review.

We do not anticipate having any blank walls that need mitigation on this building.

k. *Public Open Spaces.*

Not applicable.

l. *Projections into the Public Right-of-Way.*

i. *Intent.* Provide adequate separation between private residential spaces, such as balconies, and the public walkway in order to make both the private and public spaces comfortable. Projections should not interfere with street amenities such as street trees, lighting or important public views. (Street encroachments are also regulated by the building code and BMC Title [13](#).)

ii. *Standards.* No portion of a building may extend into the street right-of-way except:

(A) Decks and balconies shall not project more than two feet into the right-of-way unless incorporated into a fixed awning at the ground floor level. Other than the preceding, a deck or balcony may not in any case project more than four feet into the right-of-way.

(B) Bay windows and similar architecture features with a horizontal width of not greater than 12 feet that project no more than four feet into the right-of-way from the face of the exterior wall, provided they are separated from like features by at least an equal width, may protrude into the right-of-way.

(C) Columns, cornices, trellises, eaves and similar minor and/or decorative features; provided, that arcades shall not be located in the street right-of-way.

(D) Steps, stoops and similar ground level features provided there is a minimum 12 feet of horizontal clearance to the street curb edge.

(E) Awnings, marquees and signs, subject to compliance with other codes, provided no ground-mounted support structures for these features shall be located in the right-of-way.

We are exploring having building bays extend nominally into the public right of way in select locations all above 12 feet.

m. *Residential Design.*

i. *Intent.* Residential projects should have an active and direct link to the street pedestrian system while maintaining an appropriate transition from public to private space.

ii. *Standards.*

(A) Buildings containing residential uses shall have at least one covered front residential entryway facing a public right-of-way and accessed directly from the adjoining sidewalk.

(B) Open exterior entry/exit balconies that face a right-of-way are prohibited.

(C) Not applicable

(D) Not applicable

(E) When private interior courtyards interface the street edge, use a landscape hedge, ornate fencing, architectural walls, or a combination of the above to carry the wall line at the street edge and define the private space.

The building is residential and will have a covered front residential entryway off the public right-of-way. No exterior entry/exit balconies are anticipated. No private interior courtyards are anticipated.

n. *Decks and Balconies.*

i. *Intent.* When provided, decks and balconies shall be designed as an integral element to a building's architecture.

ii. *Guideline.* Decks and balconies should add visual texture and depth to the facade of a building without dominating the street or pedestrian environment below. They should not appear to be “tacked on” or artificially thin.

Decks and balconies are not provided on this building due to acoustical mitigation concerns.



Mercy Millworks Family Housing
100 W. Laurel St, Bellingham, WA

March 23, 2022

Departure Request from BMC 20.25.080.C.1.a.ii

***Intent.** Reinforce pedestrian activity, orientation to ground floor activities and enhance the liveliness of the street and public spaces through building location and design.*

***Guideline.** Locate new structures to contribute to a strong “building wall” edge to the street such that they align at the front lot line and build out to the full width of the parcel, to the side lot lines. Although small gaps may occur between some structures, these are the exception. This should not preclude the provision of a wider sidewalk, public space, landscaping, art or outdoor seating.*

The proposed project requests departure from this guideline under section BMC 20.25.080.B.1 as it relates to the Cornwall Street frontage. The physical circumstances of the site inhibit the project’s ability to address the intent of the guideline. A 20-foot utility easement exists along the parcel adjacent to Cornwall Avenue which prohibits locating the building closer to the public right-of-way. The intent of the standard is also challenged by the topography of Cornwall Avenue as it approaches the bridge to the northeast, rising above the site from approximately 4 feet to a height of approximately 18 feet at the bridge. This difference in grade limits the potential for pedestrian interaction. In addition, the pedestrian route along Cornwall Avenue occurs on the south side of the street and the width of the bridge is insufficient for pedestrian access on both sides. Due to the utility easement, difference in grade and lack of sidewalk a departure from this requirement is requested.



Departure Request from BMC 20.25.080.C.1.a.iv

***Intent.** Reinforce pedestrian activity, orientation to ground floor activities and enhance the liveliness of the street and public spaces through building location and design.*

***Guideline.** Commercial buildings facing public streets or trails in commercial mixed use areas shall have entrances from the street or trail every 75 feet, on average.*

Cornwall Avenue

The proposed project requests departure from this guideline under section BMC 20.25.080.B.1 as the physical circumstances of the site inhibit the project's ability to address the intent of the guideline. A 20-foot utility easement exists along the parcel adjacent to Cornwall Avenue which prohibits locating the building closer to the public right-of-way. The intent of the standard is also challenged by the topography of Cornwall Avenue as it approaches the bridge to the northeast, rising above the site from approximately 4 feet to a height of approximately 18 feet at the bridge. This difference in grade and absence of pedestrian route makes it impractical to provide an entrance from Cornwall Avenue.

W. Laurel St.

The proposed project requests departure from this guideline under BMC 20.20.080.B.2 and proposes locating the building entrance at the street corner intersection of Cornwall Avenue and W. Laurel Street as an alternative. The proposed arrangement of building entries meets the intent of the standard by reinforcing and focusing pedestrian activity at the street corner, creating an entry plaza with opportunities for art. Placing the entrance from W. Laurel St. at the intersection also provides the most convenient pedestrian connection to Cornwall Ave. while the pedestrian plaza improves the character and livability of the waterfront by activating the area and serving as a gatepost, signifying entry



into the Waterfront district. This enhancement is further reinforced by the presence of art and the opportunity for community engagement and place making where the character and identity of the waterfront can be further expressed. It is our opinion that the proposed arrangement of entries does not cause detrimental effects to the nearby properties or to the city or neighborhood.

Departure Request from BMC 20.25.080.C.1.g.ii

***Intent.** Create a network of safe, convenient and attractive off-street linkages for pedestrians.*

***Guideline.** When a development encompasses a site greater than 240 feet wide or deep, incorporate pedestrian access through the site to connect to alleys, streets or neighboring properties.*

The proposed project requests departure from this guideline under section BMC 20.25.080.B.1 as the physical circumstances of the site inhibit the project's ability to address the intent of the guideline. The proposed development is on a site greater than 240 feet in depth. Due to the proportions of the parcel and circulation needed to access surface parking located and designed in compliance with other design requirements of this section the building extends along the site parallel to Cornwall Ave. The Cornwall bridge approach does not support a through-block connection along this edge. In addition, connections through the site to the waterfront district are cut off by the rail lines running along the northwest edge of the site. The project requests departure to instead provide a pedestrian walkway between the building and the bluff connecting the street corner at W. Laurel St. and Cornwall Avenue to the pedestrian walkways internal to the site, allowing for possibilities of connection at the Port properties to the north and east and to the bluff if pedestrian infrastructure occurs there in the future.

**DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
MEETING DISCUSSION AGENDA
100 W Laurel Street**

Guidance

The applicant addressed the waterfront district design guidelines and standards that are applicable to the proposal and provided responses to each guideline/standard in **Attachment 4**. They also requested four (4) design departures and responded to the departure criteria in **Attachment 5**. Staff requests guidance from the Board on the following departures and design requirement:

Departures related to Cornwall Ave.:

1. **Orientation to Streets, Parks, and Trails, BMC 20.25.080(C)(1)(a)(ii):** Locate new structures to contribute to a strong “building wall” edge to the street such that they align at the front lot line and build out to the full width of the parcel, to the side lot lines. Although small gaps may occur between some structures, these are the exception. This should not preclude the provision of a wider sidewalk, public space, landscaping, art or outdoor seating.
2. **Orientation to Streets, Parks, and Trails, BMC 20.25.080(C)(1)(a)(iv):** Commercial buildings facing public streets or trails in commercial mixed-use areas shall have entrances from the street or trail every 75 feet, on average.
3. **Pedestrian Connectivity, BMC 20.25.080(C)(1)(g)(ii):** When a development encompasses a site greater than 240 feet wide or deep, incorporate pedestrian access through the site to connect to alleys, streets or neighboring properties. (See Figure 20.25.080(D).)

Board Guidance:

West Laurel Street departure request:

4. **Orientation to Streets, Parks, and Trails, BMC 20.25.080(C)(1)(a)(iv):** Commercial buildings facing public streets or trails in commercial mixed-use areas shall have entrances from the street or trail every 75 feet, on average.

Board Guidance:

Design requirements regarding the proposed artwork on the southwest corner of the building:

5. **Blank Walls, BMC 20.25.080(C)(2)(j)(ii)(A):** Any blank wall within 50 feet of, and visible from, a public street, public park or trail shall be treated with at least one of the following:
(A) Artwork, such as bas relief sculpture, mural or similar feature.”

Board Guidance: