



**DESIGN REVIEW NARRATIVE**  
**FOR**

***THE LOFTS @ CAMAS MEADOWS***

**SUBMITTED TO**  
**THE CITY OF CAMAS**

**March, 2015**

## GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

**Applicant:**

**Lofts @ Camas Meadows, LLC**

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**Property Owners:**

**Lofts @ Camas Meadows Phase I LLC**

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**Location:**

**SW & NW ¼ Section 28, NE ¼ of Section 29, T2N, R3E, WM**

**Project Size:**

**4.00 acres**

**Zoning:**

**LI / BP – Light Industrial / Business Park**

**Comprehensive Plan:**

**LI / BP**

**Current Use:**

**Vacant**

**Tax Lot Information:**

**172973-000, 172963-000, 175980-000**

**School District:**

**Evergreen**

**Water District:**

**City of Camas**

**Sewer District:**

**City of Camas**

## Introduction and Project Overview

The Lofts @ Camas Meadows is a proposed 104-unit apartment project to be constructed on four acres on the north side of Camas Meadows Drive overlooking the Camas Meadows Golf Course. The site is located immediately across Camas Meadows Drive from the golf course driving range and approximately 350' northwesterly of the golf course's clubhouse. The site does not have a physical address, but is located on parcel 172973-000 and 175980-000 according to Clark County GIS. The property covers four acres and it is proposed that development will occur in two phases each containing one apartment building. A clubhouse will also be constructed with the initial apartment building.

The property is currently undeveloped and contains a mixture of trees, brush, and grass. The site slopes from southwest to northeast toward the golf course. Site topography is somewhat variable with the overall average slope being about 7-8%. The elevation of the property initially drops fairly quickly away from Camas Meadows Drive with the western end of the Camas Meadows Drive frontage quickly dropping about 8' in elevation at an approximately 15% grade away from the road's sidewalk and the east end of the site making a similar elevation drop at a much more rapid slope that is approaching 50% (2 horizontal:1 vertical). The steeper drop at the east end of the site's frontage is presumably the result of an old driveway approach and parking lot that sits in the southeast corner of the site. This parking lot was constructed for a temporary sales office that formerly sat on the property in association with previous proposed development in the area.

Each of the apartment buildings is proposed to have four stories of apartments and the buildings are configured with parking tucked under the northerly, downslope side of each of the buildings. This tuck under parking is proposed in an effort to better fit the proposed development to the site's sloping topography and to help reduce the overall footprint of the site development. An open air central courtyard is proposed inside the footprint of each of the two buildings as indicated on the architectural renderings submitted in the Design Review package. The buildings will each contain 24 one bedroom and 28 two bedroom apartments.

This narrative and the related submittal documents provided herewith are intended to demonstrate how this project complies with the guidelines identified in the Camas Design Review Manual. The submittal package will show how the project has been designed to accomplish the City's goals associated with their Design Review process. The Design Review process is aimed at ensuring that developments are meaningful, add value, and have a positive impact on the surrounding area and the community. It also is intended to improve the design and site planning process so developments enhance the community's character while also allowing for diversity and creativity. Other goals of the design review process are to promote efficient land use, to provide for integration of the building, landscaping and natural environment, to increase public awareness of design issues and options, and to provide an objective basis for decisions that address visual impacts and the community's growth. The narrative has been organized to follow the outline of the Camas Design Review Manual, addressing each of the applicable principles and guidelines in the order that they are discussed in the manual.

The Design Review application package, submitted in association with this narrative, represents one piece of the City of Camas review process that this project will undergo on its development path. The project will also go through the Site Plan review process, SEPA review, final engineering review, and the building permit process. Additionally, a development agreement is proposed with the City of Camas to establish further development standards that will apply to this project as well as to future development of approximately five additional acres of property immediately northwesterly of the site. The site and the adjacent land to the northwest has been the subject of a previous development agreement known as the Long Drive Agreement as well as an initial modification of that agreement that occurred after the property was acquired by a new developer. The Site Plan application package will be submitted in March, 2015 and it is anticipated that the development agreement review and adoption process with the City of Camas will proceed in April, 2015.

The new development agreement will update development standards that will apply to the apartment property and approximately 4 acres of adjacent land to the northwest compared to those that were proposed in previous development agreements between the City and Long Drive LLC and subsequently in an amendment to the Long Drive agreement that was agreed upon by the City and Vanport Manufacturing. The full extent of changes to the previous development agreements will be addressed in depth through the development agreement work session and hearing process later this year, but a few of the most significant changes are discussed briefly in this narrative.

The changes are proposed to address specific challenges with the Lofts @ Camas Meadows site with regard to topography and are also proposed because of current real estate market conditions. The new development agreement will propose that all residential development in the area covered by the agreement will be located at the Lofts @ Camas Meadows site and that the maximum residential units allowed will be 104. The previous development agreement proposed 130 condominium units in more of a mixed use setting spread across the entire area covered by the development agreement. The changes to the development agreement will benefit the City by reserving more of the total area covered by the development agreement entirely for non-residential use. It will aid the developer by eliminating the previous condition that did not allow for ground-floor residential use, a requirement which the applicant has found not to be in line with current development trends.

The new development agreement will also propose that the front yard parking setback in phase 1 of the apartment site be reduced from 40' to 20'. The 40' building setback will remain over the entire property and the reduced parking setback will only apply to phase 1 of the apartment site. The reduction in front setback will accomplish positive results desired by both the City and the developer while not resulting in any significant negative impact. By reducing the parking setback on the east part of the property, the applicant will be able to offset the front faces of the two apartment buildings by approximately 20', thereby avoiding a concern about massing effects that might occur if the two apartment buildings were both set back the same distance from Camas Meadows Drive. The reduced setback for the east part of the site is also desired in order to address challenges associated with site topography. Because the site drops

relatively steeply away from Camas Meadows Drive, it is somewhat challenging to provide ADA accessible pedestrian connections from the site to Camas Meadows Drive without needing to place massive amounts of fill on the property. By reducing the setback to 20', an accessible route in the area of the proposed clubhouse can be provided between the east apartment building, the clubhouse, and Camas Meadows Drive. In terms of visual impact of the reduced setback on the adjacent road system, the concerns will be addressed by site grading and landscaping. The Phase 1 parking lot will be dropped several feet in elevation below Camas Meadows Drive such that the closest vehicles in the site parking lot will be obscured from view for traffic on Camas Meadows Drive. The impacts of the parking being slightly closer to Camas Meadows Drive will further be mitigated through the plantings between the parking lot and the roadway.

An additional change proposed in the new development agreement will be to eliminate the side yard setback requirement only as it applies between the two lots involved with the apartment site. Since the use of the two lots will be identical, it does not make sense to require a side yard setback between the two phases of the apartment project. To require a side yard setback between the two apartment buildings would result in unnecessary loss of efficiency of use of this property. As mentioned previously, the changes to development standards proposed with the new development agreement will be fully reviewed when the development agreement review process moves forward.

## **Standard Design Principles**

The City of Camas Design Review Manual highlights four standard design principles that apply to all projects required to go through the Design Review process. The first of these is that landscaping shall be done with a purpose. Subsequent sections of this narrative describe how the landscaping has been designed in such a manner as to accomplish a variety of purposes. Those landscaping intents include to break up the mass of the buildings as viewed from Camas Meadows Drive while at the same time not blocking views into the site; providing seasonal color, texture variation, and a mix of deciduous and evergreen plantings; providing landscaping that complements existing landscaping along Camas Meadows Drive; providing screening at boundaries between the site and adjacent properties; and providing native plantings in the area adjacent to the golf course to provide habitat opportunities.

The second standard design principle is to attempt to minimize the removal of significant natural features. The primary natural features of this site are the topography and the trees. Site grading is designed to follow existing topographic patterns to the extent feasible. As mentioned previously, site topography drops fairly quickly to the north toward the golf course. The site grading is proposed to match those existing slopes as much as possible while at the same time avoiding vehicular access slopes that are not consistent with good design practices. In order to better fit site development with existing topography, tuck under parking is proposed on the northerly side of each building. This will reduce the area of the site that must be dedicated to surface parking while also resulting in a building design that better fits with existing site grades.

Because of the nature of the proposed development, it is not feasible to retain the trees on the site. A variety of factors including the height, species, and health of the trees impacts the ability to safely retain existing trees on the property. Additionally, stormwater detention requirements limit the ability to maintain undisturbed areas on the site. In order to offset tree removal from the site, a significant number of new trees are proposed with the site landscaping. A copy of the Tree Evaluation Report prepared by Tree Plans Northwest is included as part of the Design Review application package.

The third design principle is that buildings shall have a “finished” look. Panelized and corrugated siding have been avoided in the design of the buildings. A cultured stone base will be used at the buildings to contribute to the durable, quality finished appearance. Walls, especially those facing Camas Meadows Drive are articulated in many places to avoid massing effects.

The final design principle is that the development shall attempt to incorporate and enhance historic/heritage elements of the site or surrounding area. This principle is discussed specifically later in this narrative. This area has a limited historic element. Up until approximately 25 years ago, the property and surrounding areas were characterized by pasture and forest land. The site architecture and landscaping have been designed to fit in with the current surroundings. Frontage landscaping is designed to complement existing planting patterns along Camas Meadows Drive while plantings adjacent to the golf course focus more on native vegetation. The building uses color patterns and stone base finishes that fit with the natural environment.

## **Standard Design Guidelines**

### ***Landscaping & Screening***

The landscaping and screening for this project consists of the following components and each component has been designed with specific purposes in mind:

- Street frontage along Camas Meadows Drive.
- Parking lot landscaping.
- Screening along the east and west property lines.
- Entry drive landscaping.
- Foundation plantings around buildings.
- Landscaping along the north property line between the parking lot and the golf course.

Landscaping along Camas Meadows Drive has been designed to break up the mass of the buildings without blocking views into the site. Trees are grouped to frame views of the buildings. Shrubs are proposed to screen views into parking lots. Parking lots are also located at a lower elevation than the street, which will help to augment the screening. Plants have been selected to provide seasonal color, texture variation, and a mix of deciduous and evergreen plants. Proposed plantings will complement existing landscaping along the Camas Meadows Drive frontage.

Finger islands have been located in the parking lot and designed with shrubs, trees, and ornamental grasses to break up groups of parking stalls and provide shade.

The side yard setbacks on the east and west boundaries have been designed with trees and shrubs to provide significant screening between the project site and adjacent properties.

Accent plantings have been provided at the driveway intersection with Camas Meadows Drive. The entry drive has also been lined with a double row of ornamental grasses and flowering trees. These plantings will provide an attractive corridor into the site.

Planting areas have been provided along the front of the buildings. These have been designed with a mixture of plants including trees to break up the large building mass. The buildings will be screened with dense plantings along the east and west boundaries of the site. Foundation plantings will also be provided behind the entry drive landscaping. No plantings are proposed on the back of the buildings due to the “tuck under” parking.

There is a section of land between the north parking lots and the golf course that varies in width from 20 feet to 100 feet. This area will contain two storm water detention facilities. Native plantings are proposed in these areas to provide a natural looking buffer between the project and the adjacent golf course. These plantings will complement the existing trees located on the golf course property and provide wildlife habitat. Trees will be grouped to provide small view corridors to the golf course property.

### ***Massing & Setbacks***

To minimize the massing of the stacked housing project the phased buildings have been offset. This not only increases the setback from the Camas Meadows Drive at the Westerly phase II building but also sets intentional view corridors to the project site that use both landscaping and the building form to break up the views. Approaching from the east the phase II building eases into view as you move across the site as it is masked by the first building. As the landscaping matures, the framed views of the building will give you glimpses of the facade and entire site.

### ***Architecture***

The design intent of the buildings is to have a contemporary and durable look and feel. This coincides with a form and material selection which support a high quality construction for this multi-family stacked housing development. The building form has each mass supporting a central circulation courtyard allowing light and air throughout. The cultured stone base contributes a grounded feel to the design and provides a durable finish.

There will be no use of panelized, corrugated or other siding materials typically reserved for roofs. The painted fiber cement plank siding, composite roofing with the cultured

stone base is in line with the local neighborhood construction and colors have been selected to blend into the surrounding context.

No walls or fences will be constructed on the site in an effort to preserve as much of the landscape view corridors as possible. Given the proximity to the golf course and the surrounding trees we wanted to eliminate as many view barriers to the course as possible. No bold colors are proposed on the building with a focus on earth tones to help blend back into the surrounding habitat.

### ***Historic & Heritage Preservation***

This site is not in an area of the City with much apparent history. Based on review of aerial photos dating back to 1955, this site and surrounding properties remained essentially undeveloped until the very end of the 1990's when the Camas Meadows Golf Course was developed. Prior to construction of the golf course, the makeup of the area was dominated by pasture land and trees.

The design of the site's landscaping and the appearance of the buildings has been completed with an effort made to complement and fit in with the setting that has been established by other development in the area including the golf course clubhouse to the West and the commercial buildings to the East.

## **Multi-Family Principles & Guidelines: Stacked Housing**

### ***Design Principles***

The Design Review Manual identifies five design principles applicable to projects containing multi-family structures with stacked housing. The first of those design principles is that all on-site parking areas shall be screened with landscaping and that parking spaces should be clustered in small groups. The landscaping drawings provided as part of the Design Review package demonstrate the screening of the parking that is proposed. In addition to the screening that will be accomplished through plantings, visual screening of the parking closest to Camas Meadows Drive will also occur through the site grading. As shown in the renderings that are provided in the application package, the parking areas will be elevated several feet below Camas Meadows Drive. This will supplement the landscaping to further reduce visual impacts to the public. The parking areas for the site are laid out to have frequent landscape islands. The maximum number of parking spaces proposed between landscape areas is 8 with islands typically provided more frequently.

The second design principle found in the multi-family stacked housing section of the Design Review Manual is that stacked houses abutting or located in single-family residentially zoned areas shall be designed to mitigate size and scape differences. That principle is not pertinent to this site as the adjacent properties are not zoned for single-family residential uses.



The third design principle is that walls shall be articulated to avoid a blank look and to provide a sense of scale. The two phases of the buildings have been offset to stagger the massing of the project. The facade facing Camas Meadows Drive has multiple articulations along its length to break up the massing in conformance with the Design Review Manual.

A fourth stacked housing design principle is that detached garages shall be located to the rear of stacked units so as not to be directly visible from a public street. This project does not propose any garages. However, the tuck-under parking proposed on the northerly side of the buildings complies with the design principle in that it is located on the side of the buildings facing away from Camas Meadows Drive.

The final stacked housing design principle in the Design Review Manual suggests that attached garages shall account for less than 50% of the front face of the structure. The tuck-under parking will be located on the rear of the buildings and will make up far less than 50% of the rear face of the structure.

### ***Design Guidelines***

The below paragraphs sequentially cover the Landscaping & Screening and Circulation & Connections sections of the multi-family stacked housing section of the Design Review Manual. Each of the design guidelines are addressed in terms of how the proposal complies with the guideline or how the intent of the design principles are alternatively satisfied or mitigated for through alternate methods.

### ***Landscaping & Screening***

Proposed landscaping will contain a variety of both native and non-native plants. The landscape area between the north parking lots and the golf course will contain all native plantings. The site contains a number of existing trees; however, all existing trees will be removed as they either pose a hazard or hinder development. New plantings are proposed to help mitigate that impact.

Low voltage landscape lighting is not proposed at this time. Parking lighting will be provided by pole lights and/or wall pack lights on the buildings.

Parking spaces have been clustered into four parking lots that have been further broken up by finger islands. Trees, shrubs, and ornamental grasses are proposed to break up and shade the parking areas.

The landscape area between the north parking lots and the golf course will act as a green belt to separate the proposed multi-family housing from the golf course.

Four layers of vertical landscaping separate the proposed multi-family buildings from the street.

1. There are existing street trees planted on Camas Meadows Drive.

2. Groupings of trees are proposed in the front yard setback between the street right-of-way and the south parking lots.
3. There are two rows of parking lot trees in the south parking lot areas.
4. Trees are proposed in the foundation planting beds along the front of the buildings.

These layers of trees will mitigate the impact of the two large four story buildings that are proposed.

### ***Circulation & Connections***

The site is designed with a singular access point to Camas Meadows Drive that has been located to align with a possible future roadway shown in the Dwyer Creek Master Plan as requested by the City in their pre-application conference comments for the project. It is proposed that the roadway and related detached 10' wide sidewalk on the northerly side of Camas Meadows Drive will remain unchanged. It is our understanding that the widened sidewalk is widely used by residents so narrowing the sidewalk in order to create a more meandering path does not appear to be desirable.

Sidewalks are proposed on both the east and west sides of the site access road from Camas Meadows Drive to the front side of each of the proposed buildings. As recommended in the Design Review Manual, both of these sidewalks will be separated from the site access road by a planter strip. In addition to the sidewalks running along the access road from Camas Meadows Drive to the buildings, a second sidewalk between the site and Camas Meadows Drive will be constructed for each phase of the project. These additional sidewalks are necessary in order to provide an accessible route from each building to Camas Meadows Drive because of site topography.