



Casey + DeChant  
Architects, LLC

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October 14, 2014

Mr. Adonais Clark, Senior Planner  
Department of Planning and Land Services  
Pierce County  
2401 South 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
Tacoma, WA 98409

Re: Silver Creek Apartments  
Applicant's SEPA, Design Standards Narrative

Dear Mr. Clark:

This letter is part of our SEPA Application for the Silver Creek Apartments located on the southwest corner of the intersection of 176<sup>th</sup> Street and Gem Heights Drive. The property to be developed totals 9.11 acres and will consist of 182 apartment units with (21) 2 – 3 story buildings and one common recreation facility with managers unit. Common open spaces with outdoor amenities. Open on-site parking with some free-standing carports and garages.

The statements below are taken from the Pierce County Planning comment letter dated June 27, 2014.

*"The site of the proposed apartment complex lies within Phase 7 of the approved Silver Creek Planned Development District (PDD)/Z48-89. This Master Planned Community (MPC) was approved in 1990 under the 1962 Comprehensive Plan and the Pierce County Zoning Code, Chapter 18.10. The original project included a mixture of single-family residential, commercial and multi-family areas. The entire Silver Creek PDD was subsequently designated MPC by the 1994 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan and classified MPC by the Development Regulations – Zoning. This site was rezoned to Moderate Density Single-Family (MSF) in June of 2004, through the adoption of the South Hill Community Plan. Phase 7 is currently designated for development as a commercial site under the C-3 zone classification of chapter 18.10, Pierce County Zoning Code. The proposed project site is governed by the Silver Creek Master Development Plan, the C-3 zone classification requirements of Chapter 18.10, Pierce County Zoning Code, by Chapter 15.28 Sign Code and by various Hearing Examiner decisions relating to the Silver Creek PDD."*

*"The proposed use is permitted outright on the parcel under the RM zone, and is, therefore, permitted outright in the C-3 zone. No amendment to the approved Master Plan is required."*

The Hearing Examiner's report dated March 25, 2003 includes conclusion item #3:

*3. ".....The director is authorized to review and approve at an administrative level all plans as final specific development plans which meet the requirements of this approval. Prior to approval of a final site specific development plan by the Director, the Examiner will be given a copy of the proposal. The Examiner may elect to request that the Director withhold approval and schedule a public hearing to review the final development plan proposal....."*

As you know, the "South Hill Community Plan Area Design Standards and Guidelines" contained within Chapter 18J.50 were not in effect under the previously approved Phase 7 of the Silver Creek PDD. The

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design process, as recommended by Pierce County planning letter: *“You are strongly encouraged to meet, as close as possible, all current applicable code requirements of Title 18A, Zoning and Title 18J, Design Standards and Guidelines.”*

Below are the individual approval criteria points from Title 18A and Title 18J along with reasons why the development’s design satisfies, as close as possible, each criteria point. The written summary below is included in this letter as an opportunity to explain the intent of this development’s many levels of design thought. The approval criteria presented below are from Title 18A, Zoning and Title 18J, Design Standards and Guidelines and are shown in *light blue text* with applicant responses directly following and shown in standard text.

**18J.15.010 Purpose, Applicability and Exemptions.**

*B. Applicability. The standards contained in this Chapter shall apply Countywide. If there is a conflict between a community plan standard and a countywide standard, the community plan standard shall be followed.*

**Applicant’s response:** Where conflicts occur, the density and dimension tables will be from the “South Hill Use and Density and Dimension Tables Chapter 18A.29” and the design standards and guidelines will be from the “South Hill Community Plan Area Design Standards and Guidelines Chapter 18J.50.”

**18A.29.010 South Hill Urban Zone Classifications Table.**

Use Category & Use Type	Community Center (CC)
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**Applicant’s response:** Multi-Family Housing is permitted outright.

**18A.29.030 B.2-1 South Hill Urban Zone Classifications Table.**

Base Density (du/ac)	15
Maximum Density (du/ac)	20
Setbacks	0’

*Per footnote (1) in 18A.29.030 B.3, “The setback is zero; however, landscape buffer requirements may result in setbacks greater than zero.”*

**Applicant’s response:** The North, East & West property lines are landscaped with 8 foot wide L2 landscape buffers. The South property line, adjacent to the existing single family homes, is landscaped with a 20 foot wide L3 landscape buffer which includes a 4 foot high earth berm. See sheet L101. The buildings are a minimum of 15 feet from property lines except the property line adjacent to the single family homes has an additional setback as required by building height (see below).

Height	60’
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Per footnote (2) in 18A.29.030 B.3, *“Any portion of a multi-family site that abuts an existing single-family residence shall not exceed 25 feet in height for the first 50 feet adjacent to the property boundary. Thereafter, heights may be increased by 1 additional foot for each additional 2 feet of distance from the property boundary.”*

**Applicant’s response:** The apartment buildings adjacent to the single-family boundary have been setback to 62 feet to achieve the necessary additional building height. See building height/Setback exhibit on sheet P2. In addition, a 6 foot high solid cedar fence will be placed on the property line for visual and acoustic impact reduction and for security purposes.

#### 18A.15.020 F Maximum Density.

2. .... *In all other classifications, maximum densities shall be achieved through one of the following methods:*
  - a. *The application of density incentives as allowed in PCC 18A.15.020 G.*

#### 18A.15.020 G Density Incentives.

1. *Urban Centers and Districts Density Incentives.*
  - a. *Urban Open Space. A density incentive of one additional dwelling unit per acre above the base density shall be granted to attain the maximum density in exchange for every 5 percent of the total gross acreage of the project site designated as urban open space.*

**Applicant’s response:** The urban open space definition is *“an area in an urban zone classification which is permanently designated and recorded to remain unimproved in public or private ownership. Urban open space serves as a visual relief in the built environment and may be characterized by undisturbed natural vegetation or areas intended for passive recreation uses.”* 25% of the site has been designated as “urban open space” in undisturbed natural areas which include existing tree stands and passive recreation areas which include open spaces around the site. See Recreation/Open Space plan on sheet P1.

The density incentive result is 5 additional dwelling units per acre above base density of 15, or 20 units/acre. See density increase statistics on sheet P1.

#### 18J.50.040 Site Design.

*Site design objectives and standards are intended to ensure the built environment is integrated with the natural environment and to provide connections, (road, pedestrian, and trail) to the surrounding land uses.*

**Applicant’s response:** The proposed planning provides an accessible pedestrian sidewalk access located adjacent to the two vehicular entries. The main entry sidewalk extends up to the development’s Recreation Building. The location of this sidewalk will encourage passing pedestrians to enter the project site because of the open style of planning in this area and by accompanying development identification signage. The on-site pedestrian sidewalks are designed to be continuous, are interlinked throughout, and provide easily walkable connections between all buildings and common areas and service functions.

##### A. *Mailboxes.*

1. *Design objective – Mailboxes. Provide safe, accessible, and weather-protected mailbox areas.*

a. *Standards.*

- (1) *All mailboxes shall be clustered and lockable consistent with USPS standards and designed in a manner that is complementary with other design elements. Cluster mailboxes shall be constructed of, or faced with, materials and colors similar to the primary structures of the development.*
- (2) *Cluster mailboxes shall have weather protection elements (e.g., roofs or within enclosed buildings).*

**Applicant's response:** The mailbox structure is located between Carriage building 1 and Building #14. All the mailboxes are together in one cluster within a weather protected, open air structure. The mailboxes will comply with current USPS and accessibility standards. The structure will have complimentary colors and trim and provide stone column bases to match the apartment entry columns.

B. *Unified Design Elements for the Meridian Corridor.*

1. *Design objective – Roadway Design and Streetscapes within the Meridian Corridor. Require consistent streetscapes, including street trees, within the Meridian Corridor and adjoining areas.*

a. *Standards for North, Central and South Meridian Corridor Circulation Areas.*

(1) *Roadway Frontage Improvements.*

**Applicant's response:** The existing street frontages of the site along Gem Heights drive and 176<sup>th</sup> Street are currently improved with curb, gutter and sidewalks. The new entry drives leading into the project off of Gem Heights Drive and 176<sup>th</sup> St. will have the county approved driveway approach. The curb, gutter and sidewalks will be repaired as necessary.

(2) *Species of Street Trees Required. The street tree species identified in Table 18J.50.040-1 shall be installed along the specified roadways when installing required landscaping along the frontage of roads for development projects. The species required for street trees along the roadway frontage for a specific development shall not be used elsewhere in the landscaping for that development. These street trees shall be located on private property immediately adjacent to the public right-of-way as illustrated in Figure 18J.50-19A.*

**Applicant's response:** The required street trees along 176<sup>th</sup> Street are noted on the landscape plan sheet L101. The trees are located on the private property adjacent to the public right-of-way.

3. *Design objective – Street Furniture and Lighting Design. As specific unified design shall be utilized for street lighting, street furniture, and similar streetscape improvements provided within the Meridian Corridor.*

a. *Standards.*

(1) *Street lighting, Street furniture, and similar streetscape improvements required pursuant to 18J.50.090 and .100 shall be located on private property and shall be of a specific unified design within the Meridian Corridor as follows:*

- (a) *Internal Street Lighting. Street lighting inside developments in the Meridian Corridor shall have a black powder finish, and be 16 to 24 feet in height.*
- (b) *Light Poles On-Site. On-site light poles and fixtures shall have a black powder finish and be 12 to 16 feet in height.*

**Applicant's response:** There are existing streets lights along 176<sup>th</sup> Street and Gem Heights Drive that will remain. On-Site pole lighting will be 16 feet in height and be black powder coated. Lighting style will comply with Figure 18J.50-19C.

#### **18J.50.080 Building Design and Placement.**

C. *Community Center (CC), Activity Center (AC), Mixed Use District (MUD), and Employment Center (EC).*

1. *Design Objective – Architectural Concept. Architectural style for new construction and additions is not restricted. Rather, the evaluation of the project should be based on the quality of its design and its relationship to its surroundings and should be unique and reflect the desired character of the community. Project designs shall provide a cohesive and consistent visual identity for all buildings and accessory structures in a development while responding to functional characteristics of the project. Architectural gimmicks and fads such as neon outlining and backlit awnings are to be avoided.*

a. *Standards.*

- (1) *All new and remodeled buildings within a multi-building complex shall achieve a unity of design through the use of similar architectural elements, such as roof form, exterior building materials, colors and window style.*
- (2) *Independent storage buildings, parking structures and other accessory structures shall match the principal buildings in form, color and use of materials and detailing.*

b. *Guidelines.*

- (1) *Tenant entrances in a multi-tenant building should be accentuated with similar or complementary design elements such as wall surface materials, window arrangement, color treatment, awnings, and roof forms.*

2. *Design Objective – Architectural Relationships. Provide for visual and functional continuity with adjacent and neighboring commercial, industrial and residential structures that exhibit a level of architectural quality consistent with these design standards and guidelines. The scale of large commercial or industrial structures located adjacent to residential neighborhoods should be reduced, have increased landscape buffers, or incorporate design features that will make the structures more compatible. Architectural elements and details should be used that reduce the perceived size of a building and provide a more human scale. New buildings and additions should be designed to incorporated architectural details consistent with the character of the*

*building. There should be a clear and understandable relationship between the overall massing of the building and its architectural elements.*

**Applicant's response:** The building architectural style is unique, however, complimentary to surrounding developments which provides a consistent character of the community. The use of generous building modulation elements in the form of residential deck stacks and wall offsets along with larger window elements and multiple siding patterns creates variety and a visual interest. Each apartment entry and the Recreation Building entry area are clearly identified by lower roof covering elements that feature accent lighting and enhanced wall finish materials.

a. *Standards.*

- (1) *Each face of a building shall incorporate elements based on the buildings gross square footage that equal or exceed the number of points found in Table 18J.50.080-1 – Points Required for Each Building Face Based on Building Size. Projects shall be required to incorporate any combination of features as provided in Table 18J.50.080-2 – Relating Design and Scale of Building Elements to the Building's Overall Form and Massing.*

**Applicant's response:** Each apartment building is within the 10,000 to 40,000 threshold. Therefore, 5 points are required.

*Element 18J.50.080 C.2.a* - The typical apartment building has a 95 foot wall length on the long side. There are (2) shifts in the façade (min. 4 feet) that total more than 20 percent of the length see sheet P2. **1 point**

*Element 18J.50.080 C.2.b* - No single run of ridge is greater than 50 feet. **1 point**

*Element 18J.50.080 C.2.g* - Canopy or Awning >10 percent of wall length. Entry canopies are greater than 10 percent of façade length. **1 point**

*Element 18J.50.080 C.2.h* – Decorative masonry. The entry canopy structures have stone veneer surrounding the column base and stone veneer encompasses each stairway opening. **1 point**

*Element 18J.50.080 C.2.i* - Pitched roof with fascia. **1 point**

b. *Guidelines.*

- (2) *New projects should be of similar height, dimension, and setback to existing adjacent development that conforms to the design standards and guidelines of this chapter.*
- (3) *Architectural details should be used that are consistent with the architectural character of the overall building and development.*

**Applicant's justification to grant approval:** The proposed residential building elevations and roof forms provide a variety of architectural massing and articulation techniques to reduce the apparent size of the buildings and to distinguish vertical and horizontal dimensions as follows:

- Use of vertical deck stack and wall off-set modulation elements to provide a variety of massing and articulation.
- Use of larger window elements to reduce the apparent size of many wall elements.



- Use of multiple siding patterns that highlight both vertical and horizontal orientated wall elements and selective use of stone look accents to highlight the building entries.
- Use of horizontal façade trim bands at different floor levels to articulate many wall plains by identifying individual floor levels.
- Use of different colors on each siding type to further highlight both vertical and horizontal orientated wall elements.
- Use of multiple gable elements to provide a defined building top.
- Use of defining single story building entry roofs that highlight each entry creating a smaller pedestrian scale to this area.

Please refer to the submitted building elevations on sheet P2.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this SEPA Application and Design Standards Narrative and supporting documentation; please don't hesitate contacting me or any other member of the design and development team with any questions or requests.

Sincerely,



Casey + DeChant Architects LLC  
Larry DeChant, Architect

