

**DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION
MINUTES
710 E Mullan Avenue, City Hall Conference Room #6
Thursday May 22, 2025
12:00 pm**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Tom Messina, Chairman
Jef Lemmon
Denise Lundy
Jon Ingalls
Kevin Jester

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tami Stroud, Associate Planner
Traci Clark, Administrative Assistant
Hilary Patterson, Community Planning Director

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Michael Periera, Vice Chair

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Messina at 12:00 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion by Commissioner Lundy, seconded by Commissioner Jester, to approve the minutes of the Design Review Commission meeting on March 27, 2025. Motion Carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Ms. Stroud made the following statements:

- Ms. Patterson will be doing a presentation after the hearing regarding the Downtown Regulations & Design Guidelines Working Group efforts.
- No Design Review applications have come in for the month of June.

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

None.

PUBLIC HEARING: *ITEMS BELOW ARE CONSIDERED TO BE ACTION ITEMS.**

1. Applicant: Blue Fern Management LLC
 Location: 207, 211, 213 E. Garden Ave.
 Request: Request for the first meeting with the Design Review Commission for a proposed 15-unit townhome project called 207 Garden Townhomes with three (3) buildings on three (3) combined lots totaling 0.5 acres. The proposed project will be consolidated into one (1) legal lot. (DR-2-25)

Presented by Tami Stroud, Associated Planner

Ms. Stroud provided the following statements:

Should the Design Review Commission approve the design for a proposed 15-unit townhome project at 207, 211, and 213 E. Garden Avenue either with or without conditions, or direct modifications to the project's design and require a second meeting.

A Project Review Meeting with staff was held on **January 16, 2025**. During the meeting, staff discussed the proposed project with the project development team and provided code requirements pertaining to the Downtown Overlay North District (DO-N) and items that needed to be addressed.

On **March 1, 2025**, staff met with Scott Rosenstock, consultant with Blue Fern Management LLC, for the Initial Meeting with Staff to review the DRC application submittal. Staff discussed the items below in order to schedule the First Meeting with the Design Review Commission.

The following design guidelines and standards were reviewed.

DOWNTOWN OVERLAY NORTHSIDE (DO-N) DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS:

- General Landscaping
- ~~Screening of Parking Lots~~
- Screening of Trash/Service Areas
- Lighting Intensity
- Screening of Rooftop Mechanical Equipment
- Width and Spacing of Curb Cuts
- ~~Parking Lot Landscape~~
- Location of Parking
- Grand Scale Trees
- Identity Elements
- Fences Next to Sidewalks
- ~~Walls Next to Sidewalks~~
- Curbside Planting Strips
- Unique Historic Features
- Entrances
- Orientation to the Street
- Massing: Base/middle/top
- Treatment of Blank Walls
- ~~Accessory Buildings~~
- Integration of Signs with Architecture
- Creative/Individuality of Signs
- Setbacks Adjacent to Single Family
- Minimum/Maximum Setbacks

Ms. Stroud noted that the applicant has not requested any design departures.

Ms. Stroud indicated that the applicant has submitted a request for FAR bonuses for the proposed project related to Common Courtyard or Green (0.2 FAR). The project is below the allowable floor area ratio (FAR) as provided in M.C. § 17.05.685(A). The maximum allowed FAR in the DO-N zoning district is 2.0. The project requires an FAR of 1.09. The applicant has requested development bonuses – Common Courtyard or Green:(0.2) The project qualifies for a total allowable FAR of 1.09 (with a base of 1.0 and 0.2 in bonuses). Ms. Stroud noted that the Planning Director has reviewed and recommended approval of the applicants FAR bonus requests for the 15-unit townhome project and has determined that they are in the best interest of the community and meet the intent of the code.

Ms. Stroud noted the action alternatives. The DRC should grant the application on item DR-2-25, a request by Blue Fern Management LLC for design review approval for a proposed 15-townhome units located at 207, 211 and 213 E. Garen Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, with or without conditions, or determine that the project with benefit from and additional DRC meeting to review project changes in response to the first DRC meeting if it is deemed necessary based on all the circumstances.

Ms. Stroud clarified that the Planning Department is proposing one condition:

1. The proposed design shall be substantially similar the DRC approval of item DR-2-25.

Ms. Stroud concluded with her presentation.

Chairman Messina asked about the applicant receiving the FAR bonuses. How does that relate to what they did to receive the bonus?

Ms. Stroud replied they met the requirement for the percentage of the code and the residents would get the green space because of the vegetation between the space of the two buildings along with the bench and the lighting. The FAR bonus allows the applicant additional square footage to add to the buildings.

Commissioner Ingalls stated since two of the buildings have access from off of the alley, will they be improving the alley?

The applicant Mr. Scott Rosenstock replied, yes the alley will be paved.

Public testimony opened:

Alex Clohesey introduced himself as the architect for Blue Fern. He stated the Garden Townhomes is a proposal to construct 15 townhome style units on three parcels. This site has multi-family surroundings and single-family residential homes. He also noted that Blue Fern's Wallace Townhome project is on Wallace Avenue and 2nd Street. This parcel is vacant. This will be newly graded with the retaining wall removed.

Commissioner Lundy asked about the property to the east. Will it be raised to the level of the retaining wall, or will that wall be taken out as well?

Mr. Clohesey replied there are three existing walls that are built into that retaining wall. Those will be removed and then the parcels re-graded. We will be rebuilding the stairwells. They will come up from Garden Avenue frontage. On the eastern property line that is shared with one of the walkways, there will be some reworking, and a new fence will be installed with new landscaping.

Mr. Clohesey continued with his presentation. The overall site has R-17 zoning and falls within the Downtown Overlay Northside (DO-N) district and as such they are subject to the regulations of the Coeur d'Alene Infill Development standards. There will be three townhome buildings. Each building will have five (5) individual units. The access points for building one and the front entry points will be facing 2nd Street. The front door for Unit #5 will face Garden Street. The access for vehicles will be three curb cuts along 2nd Street. The proposed trash site location will be located just to the north of Building 3 in the alley out of the view. All the trees will be removed and replaced. There will be a 45 feet height limit. The parking requirement is 1.5 stalls per 2-bedroom unit and 2 stalls per 3-bedroom unit. The requirement is 25.5 parking stalls, and they will be providing 30 parking stalls. There is double the required setback amount along the eastern property line. This will provide for a better experience along the property line. There will be some landscaping screening for our own on property and the neighbors for more separation and privacy.

Commissioner Ingalls stated that you talk about the setbacks and the design element but also the setback from the residential use to the east. Your narrative talks about a single-family residence to the

east, but technically this is a multi-family complex.

Mr. Clohesey replied it is a two-story structure next door, and their design is to be respectful to the neighbors.

Commissioner Ingalls stated he would like to applaud the effort with respect to that step back. This does not apply to the Design Review Commission because it is a multifamily unit next door.

Mr. Clohesey continued with his presentation regarding the landscaping, which will have shrubs along the fence line and the trash enclosure. The courtyard space will be the focal point will be a green oasis in the middle of the development. There are existing utilities from the alley. Stormwater design will be routed to dry wells. During the winter months there will be some snow removal for the drive aisle. The site will be graded down so the buildings will not be so high up. They will keep the overhead power lines as well. The units will have private outdoor space in the form of decks.

Chairman Messina stated he likes to overall design, and on Garden Avenue on the side of the building he likes the different types of materials and the use of belly bands on the tall wall of the three buildings. Is there any way you can do something to break up the blank wall, maybe similar to what you do around the front doors such as a shed roof in lieu of the belly band? Maybe pieces of lumber on the side so you are not looking at a blank wall? Garden Avenue is more visible to folks, so it should not look like a blank wall.

Mr. Clohesey replied, a good element that he could look at is on the rear side of the buildings. They do have some bracket details on the lower roofs. He will see what he can add to break up the walls.

Chairman Messina stated he would like something to break up the look of the wall, so you are not looking at a tall 44-foot wall.

Mr. Clohesey agreed with Chairman Messina, and he will work more with the design of the wall. He continued with his presentation regarding the materials and the color pallet. They will be using wood tones, lap siding, fiber cement, and board and batten siding. The colors will be neutral and blend in with the neighborhood. The FAR bonus will have a common courtyard space. The common courtyard shall be for the use of the residents and is located between Buildings 1 and 2. The front unit entries to Building 2 is accessed via the courtyard. Pedestrian scale lighting is proposed along the walking path and a bench is proposed in the center of the courtyard space. There will be stairs coming up from the sidewalk to the courtyard and it will be very inviting.

Commissioner Lemmon asked Mr. Stroud if there was a definition of a courtyard in the Infill standards.

Ms. Stroud replied there is a percentage of plantings and gardening material.

Commissioner Lemmon replied that this rendering does not seem to show a courtyard. He feels this is not a courtyard and there is no real usable space here for anyone. It is nice with the plantings. But this needs to be more of a yard, a place for people to enjoy, otherwise people will just walk to their units. People will not want to meet and have a conversation. Right now, there is just landscaping, sidewalk and one bench. As a committee giving you bonuses for it, we need to decide if this is a bonus.

Ms. Stroud replied that a courtyard is defined in the bonuses in the guidelines. The applicant did provide what was asked of them.

Chairman Messina stated we have been struggling with this guideline.

Commissioner Jester stated he would not define this as a courtyard but as a buffer zone. He does not think this will get us in trouble with the FAR bonus.

Commissioner Ingalls stated that Ms. Patterson, Community Planning Developer, will come in later and

talk about the work that the commission has done and what codes we are trying to work on some of these definitions. Maybe make some changes for the future. This project maybe needs two benches in this area to make it feel and function more like a courtyard.

Commissioner Lundy stated the bonuses are really to enhance the neighborhood for the public and the massing here with the landscaping and the planting will benefit the public more. The view corridor from Garden Avenue will be better for the neighborhood.

Mr. Clohesey stated we took the landscaping and leaned into that given the overall density into the site. We tried to provide nice view corridors for the public.

Chairman Messina stated he feels the public will not be using the one bench. It's between the two buildings and up the stairs. The applicant is using what our code states to get this bonus.

Commissioner Lundy commented that the landscape benefits the public more than the bench that the residents won't use.

Chairman Messina agreed. He suggested during the findings that a commissioner could make some suggestions for the courtyard.

Mr. Clohesey continued with his presentation. The landscaping will be drought tolerant, with shrubs and perennials. There will be screening of the parking lots and screening of the trash services. This will be far away from any buildings and people and will have landscaping for privacy. There will be horizontal cedar board fencing.

Commissioner Lemmon asked about what product will be used between the property lines. Will the fence also be cedar?

Mr. Clohesey replied yes, the fence will be cedar along the property line.

Mr. Clohesey stated there will be lighting along the walkways for the entryways and on every unit. There will be no rooftop mechanical equipment. They plan to use heat pump condensers for the heating of the units, and these will be placed on the 2nd story decks. Blue Fern has discovered a new product that you put over the condensers that cover up the mini split made by Air Deco. Parking areas will be in the garage. The grand scale trees will be removed and will be replaced, which has been approved by the Urban Forester. Each entrance to the units will be prominent, there will be front porch side lights, pots and planters with flowers. The massing of the building will have sloping roof lines will have dormers in the attic creating a cap to the building form.

Commissioner Lundy asked if the pots were going to be built in.

Mr. Clohesey replied he does not know if they would be a built-in feature or movable feature.

Ms. Stroud replied she appreciated the question because this was brought up with a different project. The applicant had said this was a feature in a presentation and when staff went out to inspect during the final inspection they were not there.

Commissioner Ingalls commented during the findings we could add condition regarding the courtyard space. He agrees with Commissioner Lemmon. He would like a second bench added, making it more usable space. He would like to add conditions 2 and 3. He would like to trust staff to review the submittal to make sure it meets the conditions.

Chairman Messina stated he would like to add some kind of roof canopy with more of a timber look to break up the blank walls as another condition.

Commissioner Lundy commented that it is up to the developer to put something in the courtyard space that the residents like, but she would not want more grass or concrete. She thinks it is more of a benefit to the public to have the native plants and landscaping. She also suggested that they consider using black vinyl windows if they intend to have a black trim around the windows. It looks chunky when you have white vinyl windows and black trim.

Commissioner Jester stated he agrees with Commissioner Lundy that he likes more softscape for the courtyard area. He appreciates the addition of the timber but when you look at the dormers those seemed forced. He thinks the dormers stand on their own.

Applicant Rebuttal:

None.

Public testimony closed:

None.

Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Lundy stated she appreciates the cedar fence as opposed to vinyl. The plant choices are great. She read the public comment that came in and she understands the struggle of the increased density, but the question is more if the project meets the zoning code and needs of the city. She thinks the floor area ratio bonus meets the code and the answer is yes. The Planning Director has agreed. For the public, having the building 2,000 sq feet bigger is going to be negligible. It is going to be 45 feet tall but having the extra plants and the buffering will offset that increase and the increased vegetation will be positive for the public.

Commissioner Ingalls motioned to approve the design with two additional conditions related to the courtyard and addressing the blank wall.

Motion by Commissioner Ingalls, seconded by Commissioner Lemmon, to approve Item DR-2-25 with additional conditions. Motion carried.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Lundy	Voted Aye
Commissioner Jester	Voted Aye
Commissioner Lemmon	Voted Aye
Chairman Messina	Voted Aye
Commissioner Ingalls	Voted Aye

Motion was approved by a 5 to 0 vote.

Commissioner Periera was absent and there is a vacant seat on the commission.

PRESENTATION:

1. Downtown Regulations & Design Guidelines Working Group Update

Presentation by Hilary Patterson, Community Planning Director

Ms. Patterson made the following statements:

Scope of Work:

The City Council directed staff to evaluate and recommend updates to the Downtown Core and Downtown Infill (DO-E and DO-N) Development Standards and Design Guidelines in response to community feedback.

- Incorporate Historic Preservation Perspective
- Evaluate development potential of Downtown
- Evaluate current code and impacts to infrastructure/traffic
- Evaluate possible alternatives for Height and FAR
- Evaluate FAR Bonuses
- Evaluate other communities' standards and guidelines
- Stakeholder Engagement, Public Outreach & Communication

Ms. Patterson stated the working group members have discussed looking at the Downtown Overlay areas too. There are multiply underlying zoning districts, which makes it very complicated for staff and designers. For example, when you have an Overlay on top of underlying zoning in places, there are inherent conflicts. One of the things that has been discussed with the working group is to simplify the codes and maybe by making standalone zoning districts and getting rid of the conflicts. The working group started a year ago in May and they have had 16 meetings. Ms. Patterson has checked in with the City Council twice regarding the progress of the working group.

Ms. Patterson shared feedback from the City Council:

- Consider View Corridors and Shadows
- Supportive of having a Historic Core with limited heights
- Keep main streets more historic in nature
- Address Parking
- Review FAR Bonuses more stringently
- Incorporate Public Safety – such a fire/rescue if we continue the height of 220 feet
- Modeling to evaluate towers, traffic and parking
- Supportive of working with University of Idaho Architecture program

Ms. Patterson shared an update about efforts to partner with the University of Idaho's (UofI) Architecture program. She noted that unfortunately the City and UofI came to an impasse related to the agreement. We are parting ways with them and will be doing the work in-house with staff and the working group.

She outlined the efforts to-date:

- Reviewed existing Development Standards, Design Guidelines & historic documents
- Outlined Desired Scenarios for Modeling
- Conversations with U of I about assistance with modeling and design guidelines
- Traffic Scoping Meeting with KMPO
- Reviewed Development Standards for possible changes
- FAR Bonuses
- Reviewed Design Guidelines (CDA and other comparable communities)
- Discussed making overlay districts into zoning districts
- Outdoor Lighting Considerations
- Reviewed other Codes & Guidelines
- Evaluated Tower Heights and Locations with in-house modeling
- Comparative Analysis of small lakeside communities and historic downtowns

She shared the Working Group's Initial Recommendations:

- Prospective Tower Heights:
 - Limit to 45' on Front, Sherman and Lakeside Avenues west of 8th St.
 - Limit to 110' on Coeur d'Alene Avenue west of 6th St.
 - No additional 220' towers in Downtown
- Remove Vehicular-Oriented Streets to focus on pedestrian-friendly design

- Address vehicular access, circulation and loading zones
- Preserve and Incorporate Historic Design concepts
- Ground Floor Design to support retail uses
- Address Outdoor Lighting
- Add more teeth for DRC
- Modify FAR Bonuses
- Invite Residential Advocates to Stakeholder Discussions
- Consider options for towners outside of Downtown Core

Ms. Patterson outlined the Summary of City Council Feedback from April 2025:

- Supportive of Working Group's recommendations
- Preserve downtown character, evaluate building heights, focus on pedestrian-friendly designs, and enhance downtown appeal
- Avoid the construction of large, block-like buildings
- No need to evaluate one-way streets
- Urgency with gathering public input – host meetings to collect feedback on specific aspects and ensure development aligns with community desires
- Involve modeling to visualize options for the community to allow for informed public input
- Involve all stakeholders, including property owners

She shared the Next Steps & Identified Priorities:

- Research the history of zoning/height in Downtown
- Develop a project webpage outlining the Working Group's efforts, list of members, history of zoning/height, presentations to City Council, etc.
- Work with community partners to share information and next steps
- Begin updating the design guidelines based on input from the Working Group
- Evaluate feasibility of bringing the design guidelines amendments in advance of code amendments
- In-house modeling to evaluate the building heights in Downtown and building spacing
- Create a list of stakeholders
- Stakeholder involvement – charrette style meetings to address key items related to possible code amendments and design guidelines and get their feedback.

Chairman Messina asked how did the height limits of 110 feet and 220 feet ever get chosen?

Ms. Patterson replied there is an intern working in the Planning Department who is focusing on this project. He is compiling the history of zoning and height limits in downtown. We will have a webpage with all the information. The downtown originally had C-34 zoning and there were no height restrictions for commercial or residential, similar to the C-17 zoning today. If you are outside of the Downtown, there is no height limit if you are 51% or more commercial. At the time, the city leaders realized they should probably have a height limit for downtown. The resort is approximately 220 feet tall, which is how that number was selected. The code allows you to get up to 220 feet with architectural projections if you can get all your FAR bonuses. The working group has seen the additional modeling of what could happen under the current code. They would like to limit the number of towers, location and height to preserve the historic nature and to not have a wall of towers on Front Avenue. The initial recommendation from the working group is to have a 45-foot limit on Front, Sherman and Lakeside and allow additional towers to go up to 110 feet on Coeur d'Alene Avenue west of 6th Street. The initial recommendation is no additional 220-foot towers in the Downtown. This will still need to be vetted. The working group has not met with the stakeholders and developers yet. This is still "a work in progress." There could be a suggestion to have workforce housing to get the FAR bonus that could be deed restricted in order to get additional heights. This is still preliminary.

Chairman Messina asked about increasing the setbacks as well. Also are you using the old buildings as a good point of reference for the height requirement? He would not like to go higher than any of the old

buildings now; he thinks those are around 45 feet.

Ms. Patterson replied, the working group has not gotten into that level of detail yet. The current code has a provision that if you build taller than 45 feet, you would have to start stepping the building back. This would be a consideration that we would want. There was some conversation during the last working group meeting with some concerns regarding the more north of Sherman that towers go, it would push into residential areas. There is a stair stepped approach that allows heights to taper up and then back down as it gets closer to residential areas, or looking at increased tower spacing, such as 80-foot spacing. But these need to be studied. Historical concepts and design have played a role in the past, along with pedestrian- and vehicular-oriented streets with the curb cuts. In the future we just want pedestrian-oriented streets. The working group would like to have more teeth for the Design Review Commission. The challenge with the FAR bonuses for the workforce housing is that no one has ever used them. The working group would like to make that more achievable and desirable. They have talked about having a bonus if the workforce housing is outside the downtown area but within the city limits and a bigger bonus if they can incorporate the workforce housing within the Downtown area. Other bonuses that have been discussed are public parking, public restrooms and Indoor public space. The working group has been looking at other communities' design guidelines. They like Kalispell, Montana's design guidelines that reflect the historical nature but allow modern design to happen.

Commissioner Lemmon asked if anyone else in the community has had any feed back besides council regarding the height?

Ms. Patterson stated a couple of property members from the Downtown owners reached out and stated they support the idea of less towers, but one property owner did comment that they had wanted to have a tower on their property. She did let them know they would have stakeholder meetings and input down the road.

Commissioner Lundy stated she would like to see the towers in the future consider view corridors. Otherwise, there will not be a view of the lake or of McEuen Park.

Commissioner Ingalls stated the modeling will help get a feel of how this will look downtown with the views and the shadowing.

Ms. Patterson concluded with her presentation

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Lemmon, seconded by Commissioner Lundy, to adjourn the meeting.
Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:24 p.m.

Prepared by Traci Clark, Administrative Assistant