

Project Description / Narrative

Alder Plaza / xxxx Fourth Avenue, Ferndale, WA

This project is proposed to be considered for the downtown catalyst incentive program as passed by City Council (18.48). The purpose and intent of this program is to “promote the development of significant mixed-use buildings within the downtown core, for the purpose of catalyzing further development and redevelopment within the area”. ***This project exceeds all the minimum requirements of the catalyst program and includes other unique features that enhance the downtown core and support existing businesses.***

18.48.010 Purpose and intent.

A. The City of Ferndale seeks to establish a time-limited incentive for the purpose of promoting the development of significant mixed-use buildings within the downtown core, for the purpose of catalyzing further development and redevelopment within the area.

B. Up to three projects which meet the minimum requirements of this program, including minimum thresholds for size, number of residential units, architectural design, parking configuration, and a four-element scoring system, shall be eligible for a waiver of all City fees.

C. The intent of the catalyst incentive is to restore and enhance Ferndale’s downtown core, and encourage key goals for development downtown, by:

1. Diversifying residential housing options with an emphasis on increasing the numbers of condominium units within the downtown core; ***22-24 one and two bedroom units***
2. Promoting development adjacent to Main Street and downtown park areas; ***This project is approximately 150 feet south of Main Street and is close proximity to Riverwalk Park as well as Pioneer Park, Star Park, Vanderyacht Park, Hovander Park, Conoco Phillips Fields, Ferndale Boys and Girls Club as well as the Nooksack River.***
3. Increased public space; ***There will be additional public space for murals on the exterior of the building.***
4. Encouraging redevelopment of nonconforming or underdeveloped sites; ***This project demonstrates that even an odd shaped (nonconforming) vacant corner lot can be developed with creativity and an efficient use of space.***
5. Increasing art in the public space; ***There will be art viewable from public space.***
6. Supporting the assemblage of small lots that cannot be efficiently redeveloped on an individual basis; ***This project proposes using a lot line adjustment to achieve a better building envelope.***
7. Recognizing the long-term efficiencies and durability of green building techniques achieved through LEED certification. ***This project will meet or exceed LEED gold standards.***

Alder Plaza meets most of the catalyst program key goals.

18.48.020 Downtown catalyst criteria.

A. The City of Ferndale shall waive all administrative, impact, and connection fees for up to three development projects that meet all the following criteria. The development project must consist of:

1. A minimum of three stories. ***Five stories from Fourth Ave & Alder.***
2. A minimum of 15 residential dwelling units. ***22-24 residential units proposed.***
3. A minimum of 5,000 square feet of first floor commercial area. ***9,160 square feet proposed.***
4. New construction (existing buildings are not eligible for the incentive program). ***All new construction proposed.***
5. All required on-site parking shall be placed within the footprint of the building and/or on private property behind the building, with no off-street parking credits for residential uses. In addition, on-site parking shall be screened or placed within a structure to obscure visibility from a public park. ***At least the minimum on-site parking for residential Parking garage below the structure.***
6. Architecture complies with Downtown Architectural and Site Design Standards (Chapter 18.47 FMC), in the judgment of the Zoning Administrator. ***See elevations shown and final approval by City staff.***
7. Projects maximizing the goals established by FMC 18.48.010, as well as FMC 18.48.070, which are listed below:
 - a. Public benefit.
 - b. Architectural design.
 - c. Site design.
 - d. Catalyst effectiveness.

The catalyst program represents a broad public purpose that will benefit the Ferndale community, intended to restore and enhance Ferndale's downtown core.

18.48.070 Scoring categories.

A. The Catalyst Review Committee shall evaluate eligible projects based on the four categories described below. In evaluating projects, committee members shall seek to identify points based on the general compliance with the category itself; there is not a specific number of points that must be provided for compliance or noncompliance with any one element described in the category.

Points shall be based on the following scale: 0 = no attempt, 3 = moderate attempt at one category aspect, 5 = moderate attempts at two category aspects, 7 = good attempt at two aspects or excellent attempt at one category aspect, 10 = good attempt at three or more aspects and/or excellent attempt at one or more aspects.

1. Public Benefit. In what manner does the development directly benefit the public? The Committee may consider public benefits derived from the land use or types of land use proposed, the density of the development, and any amenities that are enhanced or made available to the public as a result of the development. Examples of public benefit could include, but are not limited to: inclusion of affordable housing units; expansion or incorporation of recreation areas; public gathering areas, whether as part of a business or as a designated open space; publicly viewable art. ***This project adds commercial space and***

residential units to the downtown core, it is high density to comply with zoning and comprehensive plan goals. It will include publicly viewable art as well.

2. Architectural Design. Does the development reflect design details or include architectural concepts that are compatible with the vision for the downtown core? Or, does the design of the buildings create an unwelcoming impression that may tend to limit further development in the surrounding area? Examples of desired architectural design include but are not limited to: development which incorporates tasteful, unique, and iconic elements; development which includes low impact or energy-efficient design; development which expands and enhances the City's skyline. ***This project is at the west end of the downtown core. It will be highly visible from City Hall, and is designed to be attractive to business and residents alike. It will be a great example of what the downtown core could look like in the future, act as a catalyst and help support existing downtown core businesses. It is transformative in taking an existing 12,000 square foot vacant site and converting it to over 9160 square feet of commercial and adding 22-24 residences for a total of over 36,000 square feet. As designed, this project efficiently reduces storm water requirements as all of the roof water (including a rooftop garden) and grassy areas create clean runoff. The architectural design takes advantage of the Mount Baker view and southern exposure. This project will meet or exceed LEED gold standards.***

3. Site Design. Has the applicant arranged the development site in a manner that effectively takes advantage of public space, including adjacent public or private rights-of-way? Or, does the site limit interaction with the general public? Examples of desired site design could include but are not limited to: orientation to the Nooksack River, Mount Baker, and the southern sun; engagement with the adjacent street; full use of the subject property; on-site parking in excess of minimum City requirements, integration of stormwater requirements with site design, and other elements.

This site effectively takes advantage its close proximity to City Hall, the Post Office and the rest of the downtown core. It encourages walking downtown to support local businesses. It is oriented toward Mount Baker, and the southern sun; engagement with Fourth Avenue and Alder Street; the site plan shows full use of the property and on-site parking in excess of minimum City requirements, stormwater requirements are met with site design (clean roof and yard water).

4. Catalyst Effectiveness. If developed, is there a reasonable expectation that given favorable market and growth conditions, this project would have a direct positive impact on the surrounding area, as measured by additional development, increased investment in existing buildings or businesses, etc.? Examples of catalyst effectiveness could include but are not limited to: development on or in close proximity to Main Street and the traditional downtown core; the redevelopment of properties that have remained vacant or underdeveloped for a prolonged period of time; development of properties in close proximity to other catalyst projects or emerging areas; removal of nonconforming buildings or uses; consolidation of small properties; expansion or extension of infrastructure that may support future development; inclusion of condominiumized housing units. ***This project meets several of the above examples of effectiveness: it should have a direct positive impact on neighboring businesses by bringing in more residents as well as additional professional office space. This should directly support restaurants, gas stations and grocery stores etc.***

B. Staff shall award automatic bonus points for the following key goals, with no grading or judgment:

1. All residential units available for purchase (condominiumized) – 10 points. ***Possible, but need to work out the legal side.***

2. Fronting Main Street or public park – Five points. ***Close, the property to the south may become a public park.***

3. Art viewable from the public space – Five points. ***Art murals will be viewable from Fourth Avenue and Alder Street***

Examples: mural, large artistic sign, sculpture, artistic elements in the facade, sculpture/bike rack, sculpture/planter, water feature or fountain, etc. Artistic elements at the ground level shall be a minimum of six feet in height or length. Artistic elements in the facade shall be at least 10 square feet in size, which can include a combination of more than one element. Murals shall be a minimum of 100 square feet. All art shall be privately maintained, and shall be subject to enforcement for failure to adequately and perpetually maintain the element.

4. Public space – Five points. ***None proposed***

Examples: courtyard, plaza, or landscaped open space with a minimum of 100 square feet, public parking equal to at least 10 percent more than the sum of the total required residential parking and any additional mixed use or commercial parking required by code.

5. Redevelopment of a site with existing improvements – Five points. ***This site is vacant land but as proposed using a Lot Line Adjustment the adjoining property to the east is improved.***

6. Assemblage of smaller sites – Five points. ***This project assembles one lot and a portion of another lot into one project.***

7. LEED Gold or higher – Five points. (Ord. 2095 § 1 (Exh. 1), 2019) ***This project will meet or exceed LEED gold standards.***