

**DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS  
OF THE  
SOUTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

**Meeting Date: July 23, 2009  
Report Date: July 27, 2009**

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**Project Number:** 3004482

**Address:** 4532 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave SW

**Applicant:** Neal Thompson, RogerNewell Architects, for  
David Lau, Golden Crest LLC, developer

**Board members present:** Christie Coxley, Chair  
Joseph Hurley  
Robin Murphy  
Norma Tompkins

**Board member absent:** Brandon Nicholson

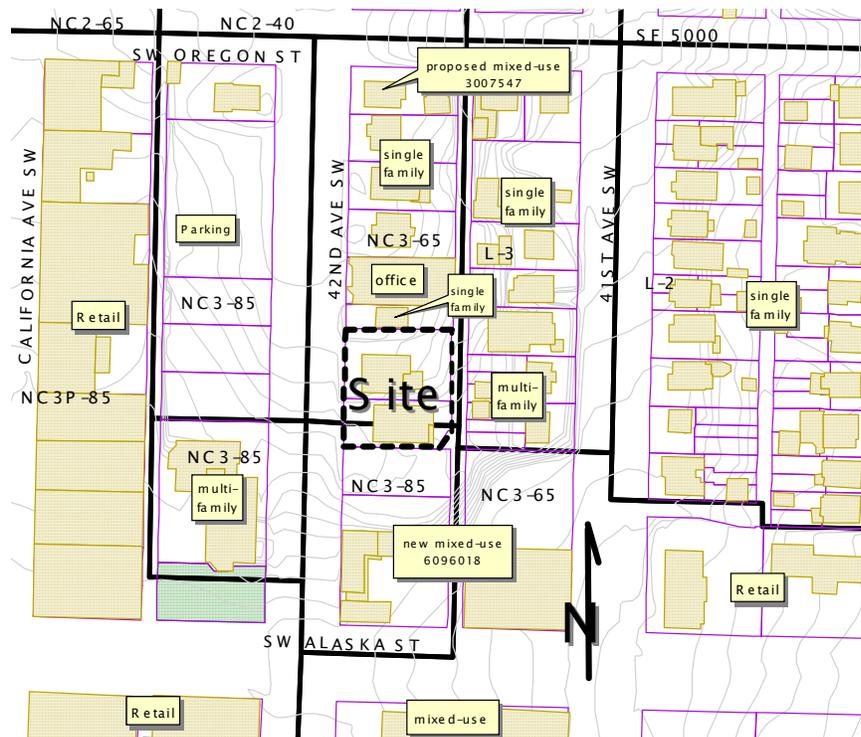
**DPD staff present:** Michael Dorcy, Land Use Planner

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**SITE & VICINITY**

The site is located on two mid-block parcels located on the east side of 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave SW, between SW Alaska St and SW Oregon St. The site is approximately 14,375 square feet in size and slopes slightly from the northwest to southeast.

The subject property is split zoned Neighborhood Commercial with two different height limits. The north portion of the site has a 65-foot height limit (NC3-



*For illustrative purposes only*

65). The south portion of the site has an 85-foot height limit (NC3-85). The NC3-65 zone continues to the north and picks up again to the southeast. The NC3-85 zone continues south, west, and northwest of the site. A Lowrise Multi-family 3 (L3) zone is located to the east across the alley from the site. The area slopes downhill to the south and east.

The site is currently vacant and was previously occupied by a vacant older three-story house and a two story mid-century duplex (now demolished). Adjacent development includes a small scale single family residence to the north, a medical dental building beyond that, and additional single family residences beyond that. East across the alley are newer townhouses. A mixed-use residential and commercial building (currently under construction) is located immediately to the south, across the east/west oriented alley. An eight story apartment building and a large surface parking lot are located to the west across 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave SW.

The architecture of adjacent buildings varies based on age and type of structure. Nearby single family development is primarily in wood, with some vinyl or metal siding, and some masonry. The large multi-family building across the street is painted concrete and cinderblock. The medical/dental building is a combination of wood siding and masonry. Newer development nearby includes hardi panel/plank and brick. There is no one predominant style of development. Most single family houses and duplexes are two-story 1920's – 1940's style. Newer townhouses are three stories with a modern craftsman style finish. Commercial development reflects a large variety of styles, depending on age. Several large new mixed-use projects are either under construction or in permit review within a block of the subject property.

The area is pedestrian-oriented and located near the center of the West Seattle Junction area (SW Alaska St and California Ave SW). Sidewalks and street trees are located on all nearby street fronts. Parking is predominantly on-street, with the exception of the large surface parking lot across 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave SW from the subject property. Most garages are accessed from the alleys located between blocks. The subject property is located on a site that has an alley at both the east and south property lines.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal includes demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of one mixed-use residential and office building. Approximately 54 parking stalls would be located in an underground two-level parking structure. 3,085 square feet of commercial space would be located at the street level with 35 apartments above.

## **PREVIOUS DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEETINGS**

At the Early Design Guidance meeting held on April 13, 2006 and after visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, the Design Review Board members provided siting and design guidance and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*" and "*West Seattle Junction Urban Village Design Guidelines*" of highest priority for this project:

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the applicant submitted for a Master Use Permit. On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the Southwest Design Review Board convened for a Recommendation meeting. At that meeting the Board recommended that the applicant address unresolved design issues and return for a second Recommendation meeting. Among those issues were: the need to minimize the front (west) setback and push the building mass to the west; bring the commercial street frontage up to the west property line and provide overhead weather protection; provide each storefront and the residential entry with an individual entry directly accessible from the sidewalk.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009, the applicant again appeared before the Board at a regularly scheduled meeting and presented design responses to the earlier preliminary recommendation meeting. These responses included: pushing the proposed massing and storefronts to the west property line; lowering the window sills of the storefronts and raising the overhead canopies in order to increase the impression of the visual height of the commercial spaces.

After deliberation, the Board recommended that the project be again returned to the Board and that the proposed design should undergo further design development to address the following issues:

- The proposed sidewalk/planting design at the street level should be consistent with proposed projects to the north and south along 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave SW
- At least one of the garage entries, and the access to trash/services should be located at the south façade, adjacent to the east-west alley at the south facade
- The commercial spaces should be emphasized by changing the ‘heavy’ appearance of the opaque overhead weather protection, providing maximum glazed storefront windows, providing articulation of the façade at the street level, and through the use of material and color to emphasize the storefront and visually integrate the upper and lower levels of the building
- The residential entry should be modified to provide an inviting and distinct entry, visually separate from the appearance of the commercial entries.

### **FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING, JULY 23, 2009**

Neal Thompson of Roger Newell of Roger H. Newell Architects gave the presentation, highlighting the proposed modifications that resulted from the April 2, 2009 recommendation meeting. He addressed each of the above listed issues from the previous recommendation meeting and noted changes in the design that would locate a garage entry and access to trash services off the alley along the south façade. The commercial spaces were marked with discrete overhead awnings as was the residential entry, only with the residential entry overhead awning set higher than the other two. The window openings into the commercial spaces had been extended vertically both at the top and by lowering the level of the bottom sill. There were fewer columns at the base and six of the remaining columns were now aligned with the edges of bays that begin at the third level of the east façade. The first two stories were clad in brick which extended a substantial distance along both the north and south facades. The brick facing extended up to the fourth level between the bays on the west face of the building in response to

the Board's earlier request to provide a more pronounced integration of the base and the upper portions of the structure.

Mr. Thompson explained that, although he had worked at the challenge, the north tenant space still included a step down to the office floor from the exterior walkway to accommodate the 13' height requirement. He noted that the overall height of the residential floors earlier had been reduced in order to respond to the Board's directive to reduce the bulk of the structure along the northern edge of the structure and that there was no more give if the floor of the commercial space were to be raised to meet the grade of the sidewalk and still allow for sufficient interior height to the commercial space.

Samples of materials intended for use were shown to the Board. These included metal and hardi plank siding for the residential portion of the structure and brick and "prairie stone" cladding that would be utilized on the two-story base and the portions of the west façade extending up two further stories between the extruded bays.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Following a brief period when the Board directed clarifying questions to the applicant, the Board solicited comments from the public in attendance. Nine members of the public signed the Sign-In Sheet provided for the meeting and five directed comments to the Board. The following comments were offered:

- The non-uniform depths of the balconies shown in earlier versions of the west façade made for a more-playful expression and the design would benefit from their return;
- The entire structure is "massive, just massive"... "does it have to be that massive?" It provides no transition to other residential structures within the neighborhood.
- The sidewalk along 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW needs to be wider.
- Commercial space should not require visitors to step down into an entry. The entry should be level with the sidewalk and is still an issue.
- Appreciate trash and vehicle entries moved to south side.
- Make the rooftop mechanical stuff gray so as to be less visible from other properties in the vicinity.
- It is vital that an irrigation plan be included in the landscaping plan.

### **DEPARTURES**

No departures were requested by the applicant.

### **BOARD DELIBERATIONS**

In general, the Board responded favorably to those changes that had been made since the last recommendation meeting, especially: providing the entries from the alley along the ground-level south façade; the greater integration of the lower and upper stories by moving and reducing the

number of columns and aligning these with the upper bays; the integration of the lower and upper portions of the structure on the west façade by extending the brick facing up to the fourth level between the bays; the changes to the awnings on the west façade which more clearly differentiated the commercial storefronts and distinguished the residential entry.

There was some discussion regarding the issue raised during the public comment period about a loss in playfulness within the appearance of the west façade now that the balconies were showing a uniform depth. It was noted that changes in the columns and alignment with the protruding upper bays had introduced a new sense of verticality in the overall composition and a simplicity of impression that was in itself compelling and a bit at odds with the earlier playfulness. The Board's final estimation was that the evenness of the balconies was the articulation that best fit within the overall design.

Another point of discussion was the alignment of the northern-most commercial space with the sidewalk. The Board concluded that stepping down to the floor level within the entry was an acceptable, common urban solution to a challenging problem. The Board suggested that the disjunction in vertical planes might even provide a opportunity for creativity for the occupier of the space.

The Board members recommendations summarized below were based on the information shown and discussed at the July 23, 2009 meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the Design Review Board members recommended approval of the design with the following recommended minor changes.

- An irrigation plan should be integrated within the landscape plan,
- The sidewalk along 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW should be widened to 8 feet by extending it along the building side 2 feet into the proposed landscaping along the building's front.
- The proposed design should be modified by raising the level of the "prairie stone" cladding at the base of the columns and enlivening the brick work at the top of the commercial windows by means of a soldier course or corbel or some other attractive and distinctive treatment.