



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
D.M. Sugimura, Director

***RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD 1 NORTHWEST¹***

Project Number: 3006019
Address: 3926 Aurora Avenue North
Applicant: Brenda Barnes, Project Manager,
Clark Design Group, PLLC
Kauri Investment, LTD, Property Owner
Meeting Date: January 28, 2008
Report Date: March 6, 2008
Board Members Present: Guy Peckman, Chair
Mark Brands
Joseph Giampietro
Bill Singer
Board Members Absent: Elizabetha Stachisin-Moura
Staff Members Present: Bradley Wilburn, Land Use Planner

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Site Description

The development site is a corner lot occupying a total area of approximately 36,167 square feet, in the northwestern edge of the Fremont/Wallingford neighborhood. The site is rectangular in shape with street frontages on North 40th Street to the north, and Aurora Avenue North to the west; located in a Commercial One zone, with a height limit of 40 feet (C1-40). A 16 foot wide paved alley abuts the site to the east. The site is also located within the Fremont Hub Urban Village.

The site will combine three separate parcels of land into one development site. All three parcels are currently development with commercial uses, with two containing motel use, and the third an abandon restaurant use. The existing five structures are older buildings, ranging in height between one to three-stories. The development site is modestly landscaped with vegetation concentrated along the north, west and south perimeters. The site slopes modestly downward from its northwest



¹ The project development site is located within the Northeast Board's jurisdiction but was transferred to the Northwest Board, due in part to the capacity levels.

corner to the southeast, approximately 16 feet over a distance of 335 feet, with slight bowl-like depressions within the site. The development site occupies a significant portion of the west half a block that fronts upon North 40th Street to north, Aurora Avenue North to the west, and North 39th Street to the south. The remaining south part of the block front is developed with modest-sized residential use; a two-story residential building with front yard orientation towards 39th Street.

All street rights-of-way are fully developed streets with asphalt roadway; curbs, sidewalks and gutters. Aurora Avenue (State Highway 99) is a primary arterial, with 39th and 40th serving as collector streets abutting the subject block. A concrete center divider within Aurora precludes vehicles from making a left hand turn long Aurora. The site is served by Metro bus routes within the Aurora right-of-way. Aurora Avenue connects the surrounding residential neighborhoods to commercial centers as far north as Everett and to Downtown Seattle to the south.

The site is not located in any identified or designated Environmentally Critical Area (ECA), but is located in Fremont Hub Urban Village.

Area Development

The immediate area is dominated by a mix of older residential buildings, including single family and multifamily structures from one to three-stories in height, and a limited number of commercial activity including office and warehouse uses. The area is currently undergoing a transformation as new in-fill development increases in the Aurora Avenue corridor. The most dominating characteristic in this area is Aurora Avenue itself, part of the State Highway system (Highway 99), that conveys automobiles swiftly along its north south axis. A pedestrian bridge, connecting the west and east, crosses over Aurora in the 4100 block.

To the east across the abutting alley centerline, the zone changes to Multifamily Lowrise Three (L3) which allows a maximum one unit per 800 square feet of lot area. Within the L3 zone are a number of three-story multifamily structures with surface parking stalls access off the alley. Buffering the L3 zone from a less dense Single Family 5,000 zone (SF 5000) further east is a narrow band of L2 zoning which allows a maximum one unit per 1,200 square feet of lot area. The multifamily lowrise zones appear to be underdeveloped with the number of single family structures in the area. This vast residential area feels spacious due in part to the number of trees spotted throughout and the siting of structures on individual lots. The subject lot is located in a moderately sized C1-40 zone that extends south to North 38th and north to 42nd within a half block to the west and east from Aurora Avenue.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant, Kauri Investments, LTD, proposes to construct a building containing residential and commercial uses. The proposal requires demolition of existing buildings to make way for the redevelopment of the subject lot. The proposal will take advantage of the site's unique geometry and territorial views to the east. The building will extend four-stories above street grade to support a number of programs including; live-work, and residential (apartment styled) uses. The building will be oriented east and west, opening up to and the activating abutting streets; Aurora Avenue North and North 40th Street.

The building layout occupies the entire development site with the building mass broken into two components along Aurora, and into three components to the east; adjacent to the multifamily zone across the alley. The building will establish a strong street presence scaled to neighboring

properties, using modulation and spatial separation to visually to reduce the building's mass. The Aurora Avenue façade will be modulated both vertically and horizontally to help scale down the building's 320 foot length. At street level storefront windows, entries doors are proposed adjacent to Aurora to visually activate the street. The main pedestrian entry will be at the corner of Aurora and N 40th Street. On the upper levels a single loaded residential corridor is set behind the west exterior wall to provide a buffer from the heavy traveled aurora Avenue. All upper level residential units will have outdoor views. Set between three building wings along the structure's east façade are the residential amenity areas elevated above the alley on the building's concrete base. Rich landscaping is proposed around the site's perimeter to create greater comfort for pedestrians within the right-of-way. Due in part to the high level of vehicle activity within Aurora Avenue and site topography, parking access is proposed in two locations off the alley. The area around the parking garage will feature perimeter landscaping to enhance the development site, and reduce adverse visual impacts upon adjacent properties. Special emphases will be directed towards providing an attractive and inviting pedestrian oriented experience within all rights-of-way.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE:

An Early Design Guidance (EDG) meeting was held on January 22, 2007. At the meeting, the Board identified the following adopted Guidelines to be of highest priority:

- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility
- A-4 Human Activity
- A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites
- A-10 Corner Lots
- B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale
- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency
- C-3 Human Scale
- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials
- D-1 Pedestrian Open Space and Entrances
- D-2 Blank Walls
- D-8 Treatment of Alleys
- D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions
- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site

Public Comments:

During the Early Design Guidance Meeting the public expressed general concern of the building's scale along Aurora Avenue. In particular, one public member stated that the height of the proposed building would have adverse impacts on views to the east. Additionally, the proposed design is not pleasing to the eyes as viewed from Aurora. It is important that the development fits into the neighborhood character. Concerns of the structure's impact upon abutting properties to the south were addressed with a request to set back the south façade approximately 10 feet from the south property line. In addition, a setback from the north property line may be advisable as well. Due to the traffic noise in the area, for some residents, the courtyard will be an important haven, and as such, must be designed with that in mind. One individual voiced concern that rental units are becoming scarcer, and inquired if the owners are proposing condos or apartments. The applicant responded by stating they did not know at this time. The Board took into **consideration public comments to inform their analysis and design guidance.**

Board Guidance:

Overall, the Board felt that the preferred alternative was well conceived and represented quality design. Ensuring a well proportioned scale at the development site is a critical factor to successfully integrate the project into the existing neighborhood fabric. The design team should incorporate as many design elements as necessary to scale the building down along Aurora utilizing modulation measures; and create quality open space into the proposal including, increasing light into the proposed interior courtyards. The Board feels that the 320 foot long development site will have a significant street presence that must be designed with care and thought. The design team should incorporate design elements as necessary to create quality infill development; utilizing building materials and massing sensitive to adjacent zones. The Board wants the developer to activate the streetscape wherever possible and scale the design to integrate itself into an area that has unique characteristics including the 320 foot long street frontage along Aurora, L3 zone to the east, and site topography.

The previously stated design guidelines were all chosen by the Board to be high priority. The Board wants the developer to engage the streetscape wherever possible and scale the design to integrate itself into area at a site with a 320 foot street frontage along Aurora Avenue and a 114 foot frontage along North 40th Street.

Refer to the MUP file for complete copies of the EDG document.

RECOMMENDATION MEETING:

The applicant applied for Master Use Permit on November 5, 2007. The Board reconvened on January 28, 2008, in the Library, at Ballard High School in order to review the applicant's response to previous priority guidelines and guidance and to make recommendations to DPD regarding the design of the project and the requested design departures. Four of the five Board Members were present.

Design Review Response:

Brenda Barnes, Project Architect, opened with an overview of the project's history and then proceeded to address site context analysis and design objectives. Two other members of the design team made presentations covering landscaping concept and specific design elements. Where possible, an emphasis would be placed on increasing opportunities to provide quality green elements (screening walls, shrubbery, etc.) and outdoor spaces for social interaction and allowing natural light into courtyard areas. Building communities through design; by creating a sense of place set within an existing neighborhood context that both is responsive to the needs of tenants as well as neighbors is one design intent of the proposal. A number of changes have been made in response to comments from the Board and public, including rescaling the massing along Aurora Avenue to establish a presence and reconfiguring pedestrian access. The design team used computer generated presentation boards, and 11 x 17 colored packets to describe the design response.

Updated Design Presentation:

Since the Early Design Guidance Meeting held on January 22, 2007, there have been a number of refinements that have affected the size and configuration of the proposed development. These include:

Building Mass: The preferred scheme introduced during the EDG meeting depicted a monolithic building's mass along Aurora Avenue. The revised plan softens the upper level along Aurora Avenue by providing two distinct fenestration patterns upon the two building masses. To further break down the scale along the 320 frontage the proposed structure modulates horizontally and vertically. At street level the façade is setback from the right-of-way to create a more engaging pedestrian experience. This design decreases the building's mass as viewed from the west, north, and south, while strengthening it's presence along Aurora Avenue and the North 40th streetscape, without dominating the corner.

Corner: In response to Board guidelines, the primary residential entry has been located adjacent to the corner of Aurora and 40th Street. The entry level establishes a strong presence at the corner with stair leading down to the entry plaza that sits below street grade. On-grade stairs are proposed from both street frontages into this area. Landscaping and structural detailing have been added to make the area more visually stimulating. The amount of trees and shrubbery has been increased to provide adequate framing in and around the entry.

Design Departures:

The applicant is currently requesting four departures from Land Use Code development standards – Transparency SMC 23.47A.005.B.2, Height & depth of non-residential space SMC 23.47A.005.B.3, Street-level use requirement (N. 40th Street) SMC 23.47A.005.D, and Residential street-level requirement (N. 40th Street) SMC 23.47A.005.D.2

Board Comments and Questions:

The Board inquired about the design and layout of the structure at grade in relationship to property lines. Of particular interest was setback of the structure along the south property line where an existing structure is located nearby. The applicant stated that no setbacks were required but the owner is providing a seven foot horizontal separation from the south property line. The Board followed up this line of inquiry with questions surrounding adjacency of residential uses. The closet residential uses are located across the alley to the east. The Board noted that perimeter green screening elements along Aurora and framing the courtyard area to accommodate privacy/separation lacked detail. The location and height of the screening walls was not readily apparent. The applicant assured the Board that the green screening wall would provide the necessary buffer from traffic related impacts within Aurora and visual calming elements adjacent to the alley. The Board asked for an explanation of how green walls and other plants were employed to meet the Green Factor ratio. The applicant walked through the open space program of the common and private spaces, green screens.

The Board next directed their attention to façade design and materials. A number of questions focused on design material that incorporated both modernists and traditional styles. The applicant stated the idea driving the design was to reinterpret traditional design through a

modernist lens. Metal siding would be employed away from the residential zone to be more sympathetic architectural vernacular of commercial zones. The Board felt the color of the finished exterior siding and street-level transparency needed additional clarification. Along the Aurora Avenue frontage, which steps down from the sidewalk grade at the south half of the development site, appeared to create visual barriers to engage pedestrians at street-level, especially behind the green screening walls. The applicant stated that the proposed design needed several development departures, and then proceeded to provide more detail with regards to color, texture, and spatial application of finished materials. The Board finished up this line of inquiry with a request to provide a full counting of departure requests.

Within the right-of-way, along Aurora, there appeared to be parking available in front of the development site. The applicant acknowledged that there is restricted parking during commuting hours otherwise space is available within Aurora. Next, the Board directed their attention to access location and internal parking layout. Parking access is proposed off the alley through two garage door entries. The applicant responded stating they too shared the Board's concern for more effective screening and security along the alley was warranted. The area of the plants to flourish along the alley was a concern that needed additional attention.

Lastly, the Board wanted to know what, if any, consideration of lighting has been studied thus far. The applicant is still exploring types of wall sconces with down lighting, and lighting underneath overhangs. Overall, the Board acknowledged its satisfaction with how the design team addressed the bulk and scale. In particular, from the Aurora frontage the modernist styled building represented an invigorated addition to the neighborhood that would benefit from its composition.

Public Comment:

A member from the neighborhood thanked the applicants for a design that would be a positive addition to the neighborhood. Another member from the public inquired if there would be a security gate for the external staircase (adjacent to Aurora Avenue). Another comment was in favor of the proposal, especially the upper level windows along Aurora, was an improvement from the previous meeting.

Board Discussion and Recommendations:

Board members acknowledged appreciation of developer's design response to build a structure occupying approximately 320 feet of street frontage, along a heavily traveled right-of-way. The Board liked the design team's response to the guideline priorities set on January 22, 2007. Discussion ensued among the Board, including support of requested departures, exterior cladding, landscaping, and resolution of the 40th Street frontage. The revised building mass along Aurora Avenue spatially opened up the sidewalk experience, with vertical and horizontal modulation to scale the proposed structure down to make the street experience for pedestrians more engaging. The pedestrian stairway, central portion of building, leading up to the upper level seems unresolved – its connection to the sidewalk system is undefined. In addition, the common entry way abruptly terminates at the south half of the proposed building fronting Aurora. Therefore, the Board recommends installing steps to connect the central portion of the building to the lower level (south area), between the building and sidewalk to better serve on-site pedestrian mobility. Additionally, the metal green screen does not appear to serve a useful

function at the south half, abutting Aurora, and should be removed. If possible, another entry point into the pedestrian pathway along Aurora should be provided to accommodate an additional access point. The design and layout of the primary pedestrian is an appropriate response that the Board supports. Except for the North 40th Street frontage, the selected colors and materials are great for the design objective and location. The Board was satisfied with the juxtaposition of solid and transparent surfaces on exterior walls.

Except for the pedestrian plaza area, the North 40th Street elevation appears out of character for a street with a strong residential feel. The siting and layout of the ground floor units needs further development in order to better engage the streetscape. Additionally, the vinyl siding attached to the 40th Street façade needs to be made of durable high quality materials that befit lower density residential structures. It would be more appropriate if the ground level residential units open directly onto 40th Street with the primary entry. Therefore, the Board recommends that the ground floor units have a distinctive residential look, with their primary entries adjacent to 40th Avenue to activate the adjacent right-of-way. The façade siding should be made of quality materials employing different materials to help ground the structure. Parapets above should provide greater vertical articulation to invoke a stronger residential feel. If designed correctly, the north facade should strengthen its ties to the lower residential zone to the east.

The applicant has created dynamic and lively facade surfaces with few lapses upon the facades. The concern is the pedestrian environment where the departures have been requested. The Board recommends a more rigorous design solution to the placement or design of the green screen wall adjacent to Aurora and the alley. To visually open up the street-level frontage the green screens should be removed at the building's south half adjacent to Aurora. The green screen abutting the alley should be designed to allow robust plant growth. The architect should work with DPD on the details for improvements to the proposal as identified above.

The four Board members present recommended that the design should be approved with Board recommendations to be worked out with DPD. The four Board members also recommend approval of all the requested departures as stated in the departure matrix.

The following departures were requested and recommended for approval at the January 28, 2008 Recommendation meeting:

<i>Development Standard</i>	<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Comment/Ratio nal BY Architect</i>	<i><u>Board Recommendation</u></i>
<i>I. Nonresidential street level Transparency SMC 23.47A.005.B.2</i>	<i>Sixty (60) percent of the street facing façade between two (2) feet and eight (8) feet above the sidewalk shall be transparent. Required 192 feet</i>	<i>49% or 156.8 feet.</i>	<i>Due in part to topographic conditions at the site.</i>	<i>▪ Approved (Design Guidelines: A-2, A-4, B-1, C-4, D-1 & D- 2)</i>

<p>2. Height & depth of non-residential space SMC <i>23.47A.005.B.3a</i></p>	<p><i>Nonresidential uses must extend an average of at least 30 feet and a minimum of 15 feet in depth from the street-level street-facing facade.</i></p>	<p><i>Average 23 feet 10 inches and minimum depth of 19 feet.</i></p>	<p><i>Increased building setback along Aurora to accommodate request from DR Board open up the pedestrian experience along a heavily traveled right-of-way.</i></p>	<p><i>Approve (Design Guidelines: A-2, C-2, C-3, D-1, & E-2).</i></p>
<p>3. Street-level use requirement (N. 40th Street) SMC <i>23.47A.005.D</i></p>	<p><i>Residential street-level requirements. Residential uses may be limited to 20% of the street-level street facing façade under section 23.47.005. Required 22.41 maximum.</i></p>	<p><i>67% or 75.09 feet.</i></p>	<p><i>The North 40th Street frontage transitions to a lower scale multifamily zone. Residential uses are a more appropriate fit along the north property line.</i></p>	<p>▪ <i>Approved (Design Guidelines: A-4, B-1, C-3, C-4, D-1 & D-12)</i></p>
<p>4. Residential street-level requirement (N. 40th Street) SMC <i>23.47A.005.D.2</i></p>	<p><i>Residential street-level requirements. Either the first floor of the structure at or above grade shall be at least four (4) feet above sidewalk grade or the street-level façade shall be set back at least ten feet from the sidewalk.</i></p>	<p><i>At grade & no setback.</i></p>	<p><i>Due in part to the on-site sloping conditions opening up residential entries would adversely impact design integrity.</i></p>	<p>▪ <i>Approved (Design Guidelines: A-4, B-1, C-3, C-4, D-1 & D-12)</i></p>

Summary of Board Recommendations:

The Board acknowledged appreciation of the design response to a development site that will have a significant impact in the immediate area. The following recommendations were approved by the four Board members present as conditions of the approval.

- Install steps to connect the central portion of the building to the lower level (south area), between the building and sidewalk to better serve on-site pedestrian mobility.
- The ground floor units have a distinctive residential look, with their primary entries adjacent to 40th Avenue to activate the adjacent right-of-way. The façade siding should be made of quality materials employing different materials to help ground the structure. Parapets above should provide greater vertical articulation to invoke a stronger residential feel.
- If possible, another entry point into the pedestrian pathway along Aurora should be provided to accommodate an additional access point in the south half of the lot.
- A more rigorous design solution to the placement or design of the green screen wall adjacent to Aurora and the alley is needed. To visually open up the street-level frontage the green screen should be removed at the building’s south half adjacent to Aurora. The green screen abutting the alley should be designed to allow robust plant growth.