

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE PRIORITIES  
OF THE  
QUEEN ANNE / MAGNOLIA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Project Number /Address:     **3006267- 2429 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N**

Date of Meeting:               **September 19, 2007**

Applicant:                      **Andrew Miller for Westward Development**

Architect:                      **John Trieger of JT Architecture**

Landscape Architect:         **Ray Robinson**

Board members present:      **Bill Vandeventer**  
                                      **Maria Barrientos**  
                                      **Matt Roewe**  
                                      **Patrick Doherty (Board Chair)**

Board members absent:      **John Rose Jr.**

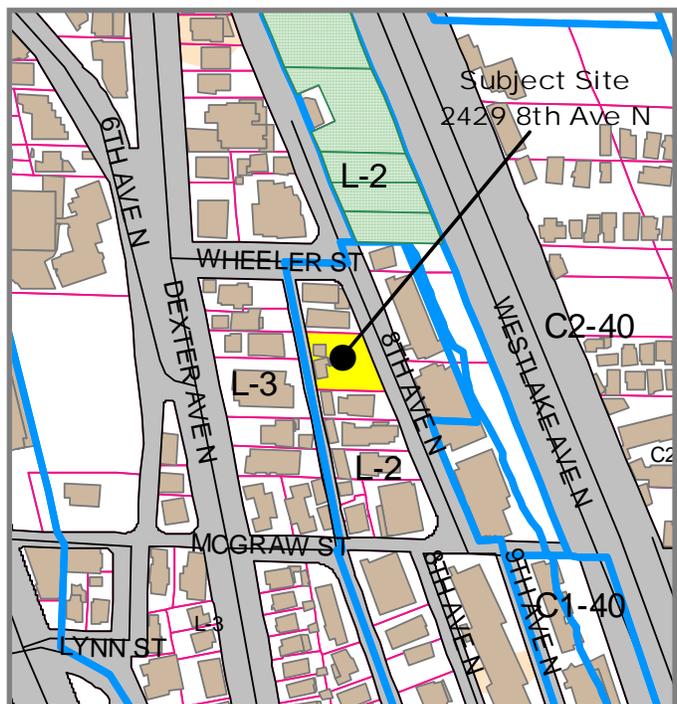
Land Use Planner present:    **Lucas DeHerrera**

Design Guidelines:            **[Citywide Design Review Guidelines for Commercial and Multifamily Buildings](#) (linked electronically)**

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND PROPOSAL:**

The approximately 11,230 square foot site is located in the northwest area of Seattle and is zoned Lowrise Two (L2) with a twenty-five foot base height limit. The site lies on the east down slope of Queen Anne Hill between Aurora Ave N to the west and Lake Union to the east. 103 lineal ft. of street frontage (8<sup>th</sup> Ave N) abuts the site on the east property line, the only street access to the site. Alley access from Waverly Pl N, a named alley, exists from the west property line. The block the site is located



within is bound by Wheeler St to the north, McGraw St to the south, Dexter Ave N to the west and 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N to the east.

In close proximity zoning is comprised of three zones, Commercial-Two with a forty-foot height limit (C2-40) to the east of the Westlake Ave N, C1-40 zoning south of McGraw St between 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N and Westlake Ave N, Lowrise Two (L2) on the east half of the subject block and across 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N extending southward along 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N with L3 zoning along both sides of Dexter Ave N to the north and south. See the vicinity map above.

The site slopes heavily from west (high grade) to the east (low grade), approximately 36°. Development in the vicinity consists of small and large scale apartment and condo buildings. Views to the east are provided from the site to Lake Union.

## **PROPOSAL**

Two four-unit townhouse structures are proposed with parking under each townhouse unit, four of the units are proposed with two parking spaces. The project includes removal of the existing one story single family residence and the accessory garage.

## **ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION AND PROPOSAL EDG MEETING**

The architect presented the neighborhood context noting zoning, existing structures and uses surrounding the site. Photo montages from the east and west alley (Waverly Pl N) views and along 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N were presented to provide the architectural context in the immediate vicinity. A prominent feature the property provides is view east towards Lake Union. A sun diagram was presented showing winter and summer exposures to the site.

The architect provided site photos looking at the site from the street, south, east and northwest vantage points to get a feel for the site's character. Inspiring design images reflect modern architecture with strong windows and modern designs and materials. An arborist was hired by the applicant to analyze the trees on-site and it was stated that no trees are significant or exceptional by City standards. The steep slope on site is situated in a location that will likely require an Environmentally Critical Areas Exception pursuant to SMC 25.09.300.

Townhouse units are the structure type desired to be constructed by the applicant. As a result the applicant provided three alternatives, all townhouse designs. All three alternatives are for eight townhouse units in two structures, each with different access locations and parking for vehicles and with slight massing differences.

### **Alternative A,**

Access is proposed from the alley for all units and a total of 12 parking spaces are provided. This design houses all vehicles in or under the western structure. The townhouse structures step with the non-rectilinear shape of the site with each unit providing a modulation and break in the façade. Rear yard setback, interior setback and open space location are departures requested for this alternative.

Alternative B,

Dual vehicle access is proposed from the alley and from 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N via one curbcut to a common mostly underground parking area under the eastern four-unit townhouse structure. This alternative provides 12 on-site vehicles. The eastern townhouse structure along 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N is designed as a solid wall with no modulation, while both the interior and the west façade of the western structure provide a modulations (stepping) similar to Alternative A. The applicant stated this alternative is prohibitive due to excavation costs. Access from the alley and street, rear yard setback, interior setback and open space location are departures requested for this alternative.

Alternative C (preferred)

This design also proposes dual vehicle access from the alley and from 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N. This design does not include a common underground parking area, but rather two curbcuts to individual garages off of 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N. This alternative also provides 12 on-site vehicles. This design provides modulation similar to Alternative A. Access from the alley and street, proximity between curbcuts, width of curbcuts, rear yard setback, interior setback and open space location are departures requested for this alternative.

**BOARD CLARIFYING QUESTIONS/COMMENTS EDG MEETING**

The Board had the following comments and questions for the proponent:

- The Board questioned the validity of the requested interior setback departure. *The proponent sited market sized floor area dimensions for townhomes.* Use of bay windows was suggested.
- Adherence to guideline A-5 (Respect for Adjacent Sites) was questioned, the applicant was asked to respond. *The applicant stated that access stairs along the north and south properties are proposed to match those on the southern property.*
- The envelope of the building and how it fits into the context of the surrounding development is important.
- Use of bays and decks was questioned by The Board, further development of these details will be important as the design progresses.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were approximately nine public attendees at the early design guidance (EDG) meeting and six comments were provided:

- Compliance with the maximum allowed height of the structures at the northwest corner of the site was questioned.
- There does not appear to be a connection between the alley and center setback spacing between the two structures.
- View analysis should be provided using large scale section drawings (east/west) to gain a better feel of how the structures will fit into the surroundings.
- Birds and other animals use the site; it is sanctuary that should be saved.
- The locations of trees in relation to required setbacks on site were questioned.
- Parking in the area and along 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N is a major issue.

## **BOARD DELIBERATIONS**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponent, the Northwest Design Review Board provided initial siting and design guidance for the property. The Queen Anne / Magnolia Design Review Board 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*" of highest priority to this project.

## **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

### **A Site Planning**

#### **A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics**

*The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.*

#### **A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street**

*Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.*

#### **A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites**

*Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.*

#### **A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street**

*For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.*

#### **A-7 Residential Open Space**

*Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.*

#### **A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access**

*Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.*

### **Guidance**

Views to the east should be maximized and the design of the structures needs to reflect the sloping nature of the site.

The relationship of the proposal to the surrounding structures needs to be analyzed in regard to massing and parking access impacts, considering the requested departures related to setbacks and access from 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N. The rear setback departure is not supported by The Board (3 of 4) at this time, but more information needs to be provided. The applicant must show what the code compliant mass of the structure would be if no rear setback departure were proposed, against the preferred structure's mass with the proposed rear setback departure (section drawing from Dexter Ave N to Westlake Ave N). The uphill structures and their floor levels need to be shown in these massing studies. The Board was supportive (4 of 4) of moving the structure towards 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N, as close as 5', to respect the adjacent sites as opposed to allowing a rear setback departure. (A-1 and A-5)

The design for the front façade needs to be reworked; the proposed two curbcut preferred design would dominate the front façade and is not supported by the Board (3 of 4). The Board showed support (4 of 4) for a dual vehicle access scheme with access from both the alley and an underground parking area, only if the underground garage were to be accessed by only one minimized curbcut. (A-3, A-6 and A-8)

The Board is supportive (4 of 4) of the locating the proposed open space on the roof considering the site's location and views. In light of this departure request, The Board requested that roof-top projections (parapets, stair/elevator penthouses, landscaping, etc.) be minimized above the base height limit to reduce view blockage considering the increased activity the roof top open spaces would generate. The Board recommended use of hatches to minimize roof projections. (A-7)

## **C Architectural Elements and Materials**

### **C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency**

*Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural context.*

### **C-3 Human Scale**

*The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.*

### **C-4 Exterior Finish Materials**

*Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.*

### **C-5 Structured Parking Entrances**

*The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.*

#### Guidance

The design examples presented by the proponent are supported by the Board as an architectural direction to take the project. Neighboring structures have some elements of interest but overall felt the project should set a new standard for the future of the area. (C-2)

Pedestrian access locations and design of unit entries are of high importance in creating a good human scale for the units, especially for units accessed via the alley. Having one curbcut from the street would also allow visible entrances from the street rather than having garages along the street front and internal pedestrian access from garages only. (C-3)

Upon MUP submittal, the applicant should provide full color drawings, with material call outs, a materials board and a perspective drawing or drawings to give The Board a feel for the proposal. (C-4)

The Board cited the C-5 guideline emphasizing that the Board does not support two curbcuts from 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N, while providing one curbcut would be entertainable. Treatment of blank walls

along the front façade of any parking structure needs to be addressed with landscaping, detailing and architectural features. (C-5)

## **D Pedestrian Environment**

### **D-1 Pedestrian Open Space and Entrances**

*Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian oriented open spaces should be considered*

### **D-2 Blank Walls**

*Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.*

### **D-3 Retaining Walls**

*Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where high retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscape.*

### **D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures**

*The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.*

### **D-7 Personal Safety and Security**

*Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.*

#### **Guidance**

Considering the site's grade and proposed vehicle access, the principal pedestrian entries to the townhomes will be a challenge but the design should have connections to the street and or alley. The roof open spaces and related departure are supported by the Board, but projections need to be minimized above the base height limit to reduce view blockage from surrounding properties. Projections between the structures should be minimized to reduce the looming effect over the internal ground level open space area. (D-1)

Retaining walls apart of any parking structure along 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N if proposed, need to be minimized and design features need to be used to lessen their prominence. (D-2, D-3 and D-5)

No specific guidance was given beyond the guidance language. (D-7)

## **E Landscaping**

### **E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites**

*Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.*

**E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site**

*Landscaping including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.*

**E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions**

*The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.*

Guidance

Neighboring sites provide queues and should be mimicked for landscaping along the street front and existing front berms along 8<sup>th</sup> Ave N. Landscaping needs to be provided to shield blank walls of any proposed parking structures or retaining walls. Plantings and programming of the center pedestrian open space court is important to the space's success, care should be taken to provide well designed landscaping and open space. (E1, E-2 and E-3)

**NEXT STEPS FOR INTERIM EDG MEETING**

The applicant has requested an interim EDG meeting to refine the design and gain further guidance from the Board. Using the design guidance above the architect should develop the next iteration of the design response. The following items summarize what should be provided to the planner and be prepared for presentation at the interim EDG meeting. See guidance above for applicable details.

- Provide to the planner a written response to the cited Design Review guidelines and guidance above. Please send the planner the electronic version of the narrative design response via email.
  - Provide an updated design packet for the planner's review, more will be requested near the meeting date.
  - For the updated design response packet, provide a proposed section (east/west) from Dexter Ave N to Westlake Ave N showing existing structures adjacent to the proposal.
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