

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE PRIORITIES
OF THE
NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Meeting Date: August 6, 2007

Project Number: 3006480

Address: 8511 15th Avenue NE

Applicant: Brian Runberg for Prescott Development LLC

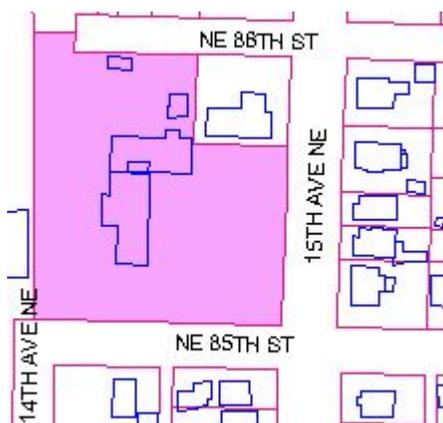
**Board Members Present: Susan Eastman Jensen
Craig Parsons
Tom Nelson
Tricia Reisenauer**

Absent: Shawna Sherman

DPD Staff Present: Scott Kemp, Land Use Planner

BACKGROUND & VICINITY INFORMATION:

The applicant has applied for Design Review to develop a mostly rectangular-shaped site in the Maple Leaf neighborhood with a clustered, ground-related, multi-family residential development.



The 71,182 sf site is located at 8511 15th Ave NE in the Maple Leaf neighborhood. It abuts the Maple Leaf reservoir to the west. It currently houses the offices of the Camp Fire USA Puget Sound Council in a building located roughly in the middle of the site, with more than 22,000 square feet of paved surface to the west of it and a large number of established conifers to the east. The topography slopes down from the northwest corner to the southeast, a total of 22 feet change of grade—from 412' to 434'—over 600 feet. The steepest grade is found adjacent to the sidewalk in the southwest corner of the site where the grade changes 8 feet over only 20 feet. The east side of the site adjacent to 15th Avenue is currently used

informally by the neighbors as a picnic area and dog walk. This public access also sometimes leads to unsafe and illegal activities after hours.

The site is zoned L-2 (Lowrise 2). The site is surrounded on three sides by single family residences in an SF-5000 zone. On the south side of 86th Street there is a one-and-a-half story office building on the same block at the proposal site with the same L-2 zoning.. Across 86th

Street to the north is a two-story multifamily triplex on the corner at 15th Ave. N.E. which is also zoned L-2.

The Maple Leaf Reservoir is located directly to the west of the site. The water tower is visible from a large part of the neighborhood. The reservoir is slated to be covered and converted to recreational uses by 2010. Until then, the area is surrounded by a chain link security fence. To the south of the reservoir is the Maple Leaf Playground, which includes playing fields, picnic areas, play equipment, and accessory structures.

Vehicle traffic is concentrated along 15th Avenue NE, an arterial that serves as a link between commercial areas to the south and residential neighborhoods to the north. Traffic tends to move quickly along 15th because there are no traffic signals for many blocks. The intersection of 15th Avenue NE and NE 86th Street has limited sight lines to the north and south.

15th Avenue has one lane of traffic going each direction and parallel parking on either side except in bus zones. There are sidewalks on both sides of 15th Avenue and 85th Street, but none on 86th adjacent to the site. Several bus lines travel along 15th, and there is a bus stop located on the site itself.

There is no commercial development along this portion of 15th Ave NE. The nearest amenities are along Lake City Way to the south and east and along Roosevelt to the west.

SECOND EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING

At this second Early Design Guidance Meeting the applicants offered additional designs created in response to the early design guidance offered at the first EDG meeting on May 23, 2007.

The preferred site plan shown would allow for 49 units, an underground parking garage and parking within street facing units, no surface parking and preservation of more than 50% of the wooded area in the eastern area of the site. Parking for 55 vehicles is proposed. Three of the four potentially exceptional trees on the site are preserved under this plan. The northern driveway into underground parking garage was eliminated leaving one on the south side accessing from N.E. 85th St.

The proponents also showed an alternative site plan which preserved all of the wooded area on the east, as requested by the Board at the first EDG meeting. In this scheme the unit count was 30; a 25% reduction. They indicated that this reduction would make the project economically unfeasible and further indicated that several others developers had passed on the site.

Driveways to garages in individual residential units along both N.E. 85th St. and N.E. 86th St. had in many cases been combined into pairs. The number of driveways crossing the sidewalk on N.E. 85th St. was reduced from seven to five and on N.E. 86th there remain three driveways with an increase in units facing the street from four to six.

Units facing streets continue to have both front porches and driveways into garages. A traditional, craftsman style architecture was indicated as the likely design parti.

Three Development Standard Departures are requested. They are:

1. Setbacks based on cottage housing guidelines
 - Front setback = 10 feet (15' or average of surrounding required)
 - Rear setback = 10 feet (20' or 25% of lot depth required)
 - Side setback = 5 feet (7-10 feet required)
 - 6 feet between interior facades (10' required)
2. Driveway to underground garage = 16 feet (20 feet required).
3. Curbcuts
 - 5 curbcuts on 85th Ave. (4 allowed)
 - 3 curbcuts on 84th (2 allowed)

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Approximately 20-30 members of the public attended the Early Design Guidance meeting. Public comments included:

Losing the 36 inch Douglas Fir is not acceptable.

Progress has been made towards saving trees, but, it is not enough.

The owner of the office building at the northeast corner of the block asked that the pedestrian path in that area be relocated to preserve mature vegetation there including trees and salal.

The proponents assertion that housing structures at the southeast corner of the site would adequately shield trees further north and west newly exposed to winds due to the removal of trees for construction was disputed. The new houses would not be tall enough to shield the trees adequately.

Public access to the site has not resulted in an unusual level of criminal activity on the site.

The absence of perimeter fencing or gating shown on current plans should be implemented in the completed project.

The new park space at the reservoir site will lead to increased pedestrian traffic along N.E. 85th St. which should be a consideration in deciding on departure requests for the number of driveways on the street.

Placing most of the traffic from the proposed development onto N.E. 85th St. is a traffic and pedestrian safety concern.

Pathways on the site would be helpful and beneficial to all in the area if they were open to the public.

All of the trees in the grove should be kept. The impact of the proposal to place residential structures at the southeast corner is better reflected in the graphic shown by the commenter than those shown in the applicant's presentation.

Forty units are too many. It is out of character with the neighborhood and the result of a “zoning of convenience placed on the site as it allowed the Waldo Hospital to be a conforming use.

A property owner on 16th Ave. N.E. did not get written notice of the proposal or of the meeting, feels he should have and is upset.

The proposal would have negative impacts on existing infrastructure such as drainage and it is shocking there is not talk about preparing an EIS for the proposal.

Given the added auto and pedestrian traffic expected past the site there should be consideration of requiring a new signal at N.E. 85th St. and 15th Ave. N.E.

The possibility that the alley in the block to the south will be used by residents in the proposal as a route to south is a concern.

Departures to allow additional curb cuts along sidewalks would not be consistent with the existing neighborhood character. Similarly, setback departures do not result in a development which is consistent with the surrounding context.

Across the street to the south there are two houses. Proposed on the north side are nine houses.

The proposed density is much higher than that of the surrounding neighborhood.

Pictures of what good and bad cottage development look like were presented.

There should be differences in materials and architectural expression between buildings within the site.

The proposed setbacks around the perimeters are very even and should be varied.

The setbacks along the future park are sought to be reduced but should be increased.

The parking garage should be doubled in size in order to avoid spill over parking on to surrounding streets.

The two proposed structures at the southeast corner should be removed to preserve the wooded area and keep it connected to that corner.

Drop off and pick up for both the new park and the proposal would likely occur on N.E. 85th St. causing congestion.

Water pressure in the area is not good and adding more taps might make it worse.

The building design should be restrained; and not look like a theme park as many new structures do. They tend to mimic past styles and construction styles; failing to successfully accomplish the objective of creating authentic architecture. They should also not look “cookie cutter” like in their appearance, but have distinguishing differences in expression.

This are not good example of cottage housing development. The individual units are too large and the spaces between are too small.

Houses on the corner would need to be dug into existing grade eight feet. This would cause a good deal of disturbance of and harm to trees sought to be preserved.

The best course would be for the Board to reiterate the guidelines espoused at the first meeting and tell the applicants to try again.

The chlorine injection and storage facility for the reservoir is adjacent to the proposal site and presents a serious health hazard in the event of a leak of chlorine gas.

DESIGN GUIDANCE:

The Board offered the following further guidance for the early design phase of the project application.

1. Preserve more trees at the southeast corner of the site. The appearance of the “woods” needs to be maintained all the way down to the corner. This area might benefit from the addition of new trees and other landscape consistent with the “woods” look. A setback from the corner of approximately 50 feet would be necessary to accomplish this objective.
2. Incorporate setback variation and architectural measures to vary the appearance of the building from the reservoir/park site.
3. Work some more on interior setbacks to eliminate or lessen the occurrence of or impacts of 6' setbacks between two story structures with accompanying dark spaces with limited utility.
4. 4. Provide more vehicle and pedestrian traffic information related to N.E. 85th St. and the safety of pedestrians using that sidewalk to access the park. This information will help to inform the Board’s recommendation in regard to the requested departure to increase the allowed number of curb cuts along N.E. 85th St.
5. Respond better to the neighborhood edges along 85th and 86th. Specifically, provide a greater variety of building massings to reflect the neighborhood context.
6. Consider bringing at least some of the perimeter units down closer to ground level for better interaction at the street level (perhaps a bigger garage to lessen the number of units with garages along the streets?).
7. Vary the setbacks from the street to lessen visual impact of buildings in totality
8. Increase views into the project's interior from the neighborhood (and vice versa).
9. Consider creating a variety of building massings throughout the site. Specifically - avoid proposing a 'standard' 2+ story unit (some with day-lit basements), and instead utilize the techniques shown in the “inspired images.” Introduce 1.5 story elements/units with low roof lines and dormers.

This is the best way to mitigate the closeness of the units. Otherwise, there is risk some pretty unfriendly canyons between these buildings. Bring porches closer to ground level where possible to encourage interaction between the occupants.

Next Steps: The Board invited the project proponents back for another EDG meeting to consider site planning issues before making their MUP application.