

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NORTHWEST
SEATTLE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
TO DPD DIRECTOR**

December 17, 2007

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3006540

Address: 5501 15th Ave. N.W.

Applicant: Freiheit & Ho Architects for Rhapsody Partners

**Board Members Present: Elizabetha Stacishin-Moura
Bill Singer
Joseph Giampietro
Guy Peckham
Mark Brands**

Board Member Absent: none

DPD Representative: Scott Kemp

BACKGROUND:

The project was the subject of one Early Design Guidance meeting on March 22, 2007 at which time the Board gave Early Design Guidance for the project. Following the meeting, the applicant applied for a Master Use Permit, which is currently under review. The applicant provided Board members with floor and elevation plans, landscape plans, and samples of materials that will be used to construct the mixed-use project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Market Street Landing is a proposed mixed-use building located at the northwest corner of NW Market Street and 15th Ave. NW. The project site is split zoned, with the eastern one-third zoned C1-65, and the western two-thirds zoned NC3-85. The site rises approximately 12 feet from west to east.

The proposed project will require demolition of the three existing structures on the site. These consist of a 1-story concrete and wood restaurant, a 1-story CMU and wood retail store, and a 2-story wood house. The proposed building will cover the entire property. The easterly third of the project will be five stories and approximately 55 feet tall. The westerly two-thirds of the project will be eight stories and approximately 84 feet tall. The project will include retail uses and residential units with parking for each use provided on-site. These will be 30,912 S.F. of retail space located on the ground level (including 15,979 S.F. proposed as a drug store). Above this, occupying floors 2 through 8 would be approximately 254,704 S.F. of residential condominium units, for a total of 266 units. These units vary in size from approximately 480 S.F. to 2,300 S.F. Parking for this project would be provided in structured parking at grade level and in a 3-level underground parking garage. 435 total parking stalls are proposed. 35 spaces would be designated for retail use at grade level. The grade level parking area would be accessed by a right-in, right-out access from NW Market Street, as well an access from NW 56th Street. A second access point from NW 56th Street would provide a ramp down to below grade parking, which will be used by both residential tenants and retail users. From the originally proposed project presented at the Early Design Guidance meeting, the applicant has reduced the number of curb cuts to three from four, and has connected all of the parking areas for better circulation. Loading for the project is proposed to be on NW 56th Street at two “indented” off-street curb areas.

The design for the building gives a slightly contemporary, urban feel. The building includes a strong base, with more vertical expression in the bays. Proposed materials would include pre-cast concrete materials and older “used” looking brick at the base, to add emphasis and interest at the pedestrian level. In the upper levels, wood-resin panels and stucco-like materials would be used. Residential decks would be steel-framed with concrete.

Landscaping surrounding the project would emphasize safety and improve the current pedestrian experience. The applicant proposes new street trees in large planter cutouts, with enhanced paving between the planting strips. Two “cutouts” to the building on NW 56th Street would be planted with tall, narrow evergreen plants, with evergreen groundcover to reduce the “blank wall” effect. Similar schemes would occur on both 15th Avenue and Market Street. In the lobby area, planter pots would be provided.

The residential terrace would include a traditional rooftop garden with deeper built-in planters 18” deep for trees and other drought-tolerant plant species. A southern facing water feature would also be provided, as well as a pea patch, a BBQ, and a dog area.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was received. Questions and comments included:

- Location and circulation of the off-street loading area on NW 56th Street is worrisome, as is adding more traffic to 56th.
- Driveway sight triangles are extremely important in this highly pedestrian area.
- Design and landscape for non-auto transport. Landscape for bus stops. Add bicycle amenities.
- The corner reading as a gateway to the Ballard community, with a stronger corner element and less residential nature; should have more of a commercial feel to it. It should be unique, not cookie-cutter. Should be a “fun” building, as Ballard is a “fun” area.
- The building should use more brick farther up the building (Hjarata brings it up three stories), and should include modulation as it looks too “heavy”.
- The sidewalk treatment should be enhanced for pedestrians; should provide wider sidewalks, and should provide a feeling of safety on 15th. The bus stop is in a bad place and should be moved. Should make sure pedestrians can be easily seen at driveways.
- Would like to see the building pursue a LEED status. Innovative energy solutions would be a plus.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, drawings and model showing the proposal, the Design Review Board members offered further comments, but no recommendation to the DPD Director.

Board members praised the project team for the improvements in the project design since it was last presented and agreed that the project was heading in the right direction. It was commented that the retail spaces added to the N.W. 56th street frontage were an improvement, and that the circulation within the parking levels has been greatly improved as well. The fact that all parking levels were connected and vehicles no longer needed to leave the building and enter at a different drive to access another parking level addressed most of the previous on-site parking issues. The majority of the recommendations and discussions of the board revolved around the massing, scale, and circulation through and around the project.

Board Deliberations

The retail spaces added to the N.W. 56th street frontage is a very good improvement. They provide an intervening use between internal parking areas and the sidewalk.

Circulation between parking levels has been improved greatly so that all parking levels are connected and vehicles no longer need to leave the building and enter at a different drive to access another parking level.

Treatment of the building corner needs further work to successfully fill its iconic, gateway niche. The Board suggested using a recessed entry, a unique canopy design, and a differentiation in material at the location. The Board also suggested creating a “Ballard” architectural context—not necessarily Scandinavian, but “fun.”

Height, bulk and scale of the large building continues to be a problem along N.W. 56th St. where the expression is of one building for the entire length of the site. The three building appearance encouraged by the Board at EDG has been dropped. While the “C” shaped building opening to the south is successful viewed from the south, from the north it continues to need architectural treatment of the basic form to lessen the appearance of height, bulk and scale.

The current architecture seems to be too fine grained; too busy. It is suggested that the expression be simplified, both in colors used and in surface movements. The building should be unified, not in building form, but in architectural expression. A particular mass might still be expressed differently from another one while maintaining unifying elements. The building on 15th was going to have and still could have a different identity. The corners would benefit with a “cap.” The other building caps look a bit separated from one another, lacking in unity. The use of balconies throughout the project gives it a distinctly residential appearance where a more commercial one may be appropriate in some areas.

Canopies need to be deep, 6 to 8 feet, and fairly low, 10 to 14 feet, to be effective overhead weather protectors. The nearly continuous nature of the canopy protection shown is endorsed. Shelter for each of the two bus stops should be incorporated into the canopy system so that there is no need for METRO bus shelters.

Requested Departures:

1. Waiver of on-site loading dock. The Board indicated a willingness to recommend such a waiver provided the loading arrangement for the users of the proposed building has been thought out and shown to the Board in a manner which appears to work.
2. Elimination of sight triangles. The Board expressed a willingness to recommend departure from the standard for the driveway at the northwest corner of the site in order to preserve as much frontage for commercial use as possible and position the driveway next to the property line. Similar departures for other driveways are not favored by the Board.
3. Allowance of vehicle access from N.W. Market St. and N.W. 56th St. and not 15th Ave. N.W. Code access is code required off 15th as the street with least commercial frontage. Here 15th a poor choice as heavily trafficked and there can be long queues from the Market St. intersection, it would need to be right

in and right out only, and the access on 15th would be the least safe of the alternatives. The Board favors a departure to allow the three access points shown at the meeting.