



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning & Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Project Number: 3006773
Address: 6010 Phinney Avenue North
Applicant: Todd Kilburn, Kilburn Architects, LLC

Date of Meeting: October 8, 2007
Date of Report: November 1, 2007

**NW Design Board
Members Present:** Elizabeta Stachisin, Board Chair
Joe Giampietro
Guy Peckham
Mark Brands
Bill Singer

DPD Staff Present: Catherine McCoy, Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

The subject site is located in Seattle's Greenwood/Phinney neighborhood, on the southeast corner of the intersection of Phinney Avenue North and North 61st Street. The property is a square shaped lot, 10,000 square feet in area, and is currently developed with a single story commercial building, a small storage building, and asphalt surface parking for six vehicles.

The site itself is virtually flat, however, the Phinney Avenue North corridor rests on a natural ridgeline that extends from the Fremont



neighborhood south of the site to Greenwood near North 85th Street. East of the site is Green Lake, and west are views of Ballard and the Puget Sound.

The site is zoned neighborhood commercial with a height limit of 40 feet (NC2-40). This zoning designation extends approximately two blocks north and south of the site along the Phinney Ridge corridor. To the east and west of the site the zoning changes abruptly to single family with a minimum lot area of 5,000 square feet (SF5000).

The surrounding area includes a mix of structures and uses including single and multi-family residential, and retail and office commercial. At present, uses on-site include The Daily Planet (antiques), Val's Café, Chef Liao Asian Garden, and the Phinney Ridge Cleaners.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project proposal is for demolition of the existing structures and construction of a four-story commercial and residential structure with below-grade parking. The design concept includes approximately 2,350 square feet of ground level commercial space, 22 residential units in a variety of styles from townhouse to studio units, and on-site parking for 28 vehicles. Vehicle access to the site is proposed from Phinney Avenue North.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

The project proponent described the site location, influences on the current design, and general context of the surrounding area, including topography of the site, architectural design treatments along Phinney Avenue North, and traffic networks in the vicinity.

Three design options were presented by the applicant. All of the options include a four-story mixed commercial and residential structure with below-grade parking. The first proposal, Scheme One, presents access to the site (parking garage entrance) from North 61st Street, which is the east-west residential collector street north of the subject site. The applicant stated that, with regard to the garage entry, the intent is to pull traffic and access away from the corner intersection.

In Scheme One, the structure design includes commercial uses at-grade along the entire length of street frontage along Phinney Avenue North, wrapping the corner, and extending along North 61st Street. This design includes two residential units on the main level, in the southeast corner of the site, with an additional three levels of residential units above.

In Scheme Two, the project shows access to the site and garage from Phinney Avenue North in the southwest corner of the lot. The proposal includes four residential units on the main level facing the east property line, and an upper level setback along the single family zone immediately east of the subject site. The commercial space is oriented primarily along Phinney Avenue North. The main lobby for residential uses is located mid-lot along North 61st Street.

The applicant noted that part of the design program includes expanding the pedestrian experience along both Phinney Avenue North and North 61st Street; both sidewalks are wide

and will allow additional landscaping and street trees. At present there is no landscaping along either sidewalk.

Scheme Three includes access to the site from Phinney Avenue North, similar to Scheme Two. The commercial space has primary frontage along Phinney Avenue North and wraps around the corner onto North 61st Street. The main lobby for residential uses is north of the parking access in the southwest corner of the site. Four two-story residential units face the single family zone to the east, again with a setback of approximately 15 feet.

The applicant explained that the corner will be modest in character, with “softened” architectural elements. The intent is to use high quality materials, such as brick and plenty of glass for the residential spaces, along with traditional materials in use along Phinney Avenue North.

BOARD CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, WITH ANSWERS

The Board had the following questions and clarifying comments, with responses from the applicant in *italics*:

- Scheme Two shows a setback from the residential units along the single family zone of 15 feet – is that regardless of whether a garage or a unit will be there?
 - *Yes, there is an SMC code requirement of a 15 foot setback above 13 feet in height along single family zone edges. (DPD staff note: see SMC 23.47A.014 B.3.a)*
- You could move the garage entrance closer (west) to Phinney Avenue North, in Scheme One, which would reduce the amount of commercial space along North 61st Street, but would reduce the impact of a blank wall/garage on the single family residences to the east. Have you considered this?
 - *Yes. However, we felt that this would minimize the ability to develop the corner, and reduces the availability of on-street parking along North 61st Street.*
- In Scheme One you’re showing decks in the 15 foot setback – is this allowed per code?
 - *This is actually the lid of the garage below, which will be open space. (DPD staff note: decks and balconies with open railings may extend into the required setback, but are not permitted within five (5) feet of a lot in a residential zone, SMC 23.47A.014 E.1a)*
- In Scheme One, the number of parking spaces is shown to be 24 spaces. Is this the minimum needed per code?
 - *Yes, this is the minimum.*
- Does your design include parking allotted for the commercial uses?
 - *The preferred scheme, Scheme Three, includes on-street parking for commercial uses.*
- Please elaborate on the massing and bulk of the three schemes. How much does each scheme approach the property lines? What are the setbacks along each façade?
 - *(Lengthy discussion) The at-grade levels would touch each of the four property lines, except for the residential units in the southeast corner of the lot in Scheme One. The proposal includes an upper level residential setback of 15 feet on the east side of the structure, and additional setbacks with top stories.*

- Are you requesting any departures?
 - *At this time, no.*
- In Scheme Two, a significant portion of the façade along Phinney Avenue North does not appear to have openings. Would you review the transparency requirements, per code, for me?
 - *This area/space along Phinney Avenue North will be further developed. The intent is to not have blank spaces along street frontages. (DPD staff note: 60 percent of the street-facing façade between two (2) feet and eight (8) feet above the sidewalk shall be transparent, SMC 23.47A.008 B.2.a).*
- From a design perspective, do you have a preference for one street or the other for primary residential entry (Phinney Avenue North or North 61st Street)?
 - *Our preference is to activate Phinney Avenue North rather than North 61st Street. The residential entry would work well off either street and we want a separate entry for residential uses, but we would like to maintain the entrance from Phinney Avenue North.*
- Please clarify the proposed design treatment for the east façade.
 - *The plan is to soften the edges, include trellising, and landscaping. There is a two foot grade change along this edge, which would effect the garages.*
- How deep is the parking garage entrance from Phinney Avenue North?
 - *The height is 13 feet above grade with a 7 foot clearance. The sidewalk along Phinney Avenue North is 12 feet wide, and is 17 feet wide along North 61st Street.*

PUBLIC COMMENT

Fourteen (14) members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were offered:

- Several members of the public expressed a preference for the garage entrance to be on Phinney Avenue North, similar to the Roycroft building directly across Phinney Avenue North.
- Along the subject property's east property line there is a row of Cedar trees and an Ash tree, all approximately 6-9 feet in height. Several members of the public stressed that the trees should be retained and protected during demolition, and through construction.
- Interest in seeing design studies and details that protect the privacy and mitigate impacts from the height, bulk, and scale of the building along the east property line.
- Interest in seeing adequate parking for the commercial uses. At present, there is little availability of on-street parking for retail shoppers. (DPD staff note: *parking requirements will depend on the type of commercial use per space, i.e., eating and drinking establishment, 1:250 sq. ft., office 1:1,000 sq. ft., sales and service 1:500 sq. ft.*)
- When the Roycroft building was being built in August, 2003, an arsonist set fire to the building and was nearly successful in burning the structure to the ground. Interest in seeing security on-site during construction, such as night security, or fencing around the construction zone.
- Preference for the architectural design of the structure to more closely resemble the surrounding architectural style of the bungalow and craftsman single family residences.

- Interest in seeing the corner of the building designed in a way that is inviting, safe, and interesting, which includes the landscaping and open space program.
- The transition between the properties will need thorough consideration; view obstruction will need to be taken into consideration and minimized to the fullest extent possible.
- Concern that if the parking garage access is to be located on Phinney Avenue North, as the preferred option proposes, no additional curbcuts should be added to the streetscape.
- Preference to see, in the design concept, more consideration given to upper level setbacks along Phinney Avenue North. The proposed design does not take into account the real character of the Phinney neighborhood, rather seems to be striving for more of a “Belltown” style.
- There should be a solar study that includes the bus stop areas, which tend to be heavily shaded when taller structures are developed.

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the project proponents, the Northwest Design Review Board members provided the following 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*” of highest priority to this project, [Design Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings](#).

Summary of Board Guidance

The Northwest Design Review Board unanimously agreed that the applicant should move forward to the Recommendation stage of Design Review, with particular attention paid to the following important guidelines and guidance:

1. **The design needs to create a good transition from commercial to single family zoned properties along the east lot line.** This will be a particularly important issue to address in the next iteration of project design. The residential units along the east property line should be above, rather than at, the (same) level as the single family residential uses to the east. The design should take more steps than shown in the EDG packet to further ease the transition above the ground level, facing the structures to the east. The bulk of the structure massing should be further directed towards Phinney Avenue North, and should “to the fullest extent possible” mitigate and relieve the “very harsh” scale conditions between the two distinct zones. ***B-1: Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility.***
2. **Parking garage access should be from North 61st Street, rather than Phinney Avenue North.** The Board was unanimous in this guidance. The curbcut should stay on the northeast corner of the lot, along North 61st Street. Phinney Avenue North should be designed as a pedestrian, retail oriented, street with no curbcuts. ***A-8: Parking and Vehicle Access.***

A. Site Planning

- A-2 **Streetscape Compatibility** – The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.
- A-3 **Entrances Visible from the Street** – Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.
- A-4 **Human Activity** – New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on 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-8 **Parking and Vehicle Access** – Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.
- A-10 **Corner Lots** – Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

The Board encouraged the applicant to reconsider the project concept with greater emphasis on street level design that supports pedestrian activity along both Phinney Avenue North and North 61st Street. The goal is to ensure that the corner is developed in a way that recognizes the need for pedestrian safety, comfort, protection from natural elements, and interest in the structure and (potential) use. The corner should also enhance and support vibrant retail-oriented street level activity; such as currently exists in the immediate vicinity.

The relationship of the proposed structure to the adjacent and lower residential zoned property is a major issue for this site. The design of the structure and its massing should be placed, as much as possible, along Phinney Avenue North, and stepped back along the east property line to minimize not only bulk and scale issues along the single family zone, but to minimize shadow impacts on the adjacent structures and public areas (see Summary of Board Guidance, item no. 1).

The Board stated that Phinney Avenue North is not a suitable location for a curbcut and garage access onto the site. The applicant should show options for placing the garage entrance at some point along N 61st Street, as in Scheme One (see Summary of Board Guidance, item no. 2).

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

- B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility – Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less-intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.**

The project should develop alternative massing and setback schemes to clearly show how the design will create a good Height, Bulk and Scale relationship to the east. See Summary of Board Guidance, item no. 1 (above). At the next stage of design review, the applicant should present solar studies with shadow diagrams of the site and surrounding area.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

- C-1 Architectural Context – New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.**
- 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, element and details to achieve a good human scale.**
- 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.**

Board members stated that the types and quality of architectural elements and materials is particularly important in mixed-use structures. The Board wants to see conscious attention to design details and massing that clearly makes a good transition from commercial to residential use. This will go a long way in easing public concerns that the design of the structure is “too modern” for the Phinney neighborhood.

The Board wants to see the design maintain the current character that exists along Phinney Avenue North as much as possible. This includes strong consideration for masonry materials at the ground level along both street frontages.

The Board agreed that vehicular access to the site should be visually minimized and cause as little disruption to pedestrian circulation around the site as possible. And as such, the Board stated that they would be inclined to grant a departure request that minimized such elements as driveway and curbcut width, and sight triangle standards that fall below normal code requirements.

D. Pedestrian Environment

- D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces 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 space should be considered.**
- D-2 Blank 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 receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.**
- 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-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas – Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.**
- D-11 Commercial Transparency – Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank wall should be avoided.**

The applicant should avoid blank surfaces along both street frontages, and the south façade. Where unavoidable they should be treated with landscaping (i.e., trellising); material texturing; employing small setbacks, indentations, form-board patterns, or other means of breaking up the wall; or adding special lighting or overhead treatments.

Commercial and residential entryways should be sufficiently lighted, present safe and secure areas, and offer protection from inclement weather. The residential entry should be pronounced and clearly defined, distinct from commercial entryways. Strong consideration should be given to street level pedestrian-scaled signage, lighting, and street furniture. Commercial spaces should be transparent and open to direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring in the interior of a building. The applicant should show, in the updated design concept, maintaining the viability of the smaller retail spaces pattern along Phinney Avenue North. Continuous overhead weather protection should be provided adjacent to all sidewalk areas.

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.

The Board looks forward to reviewing a high-quality, well programmed and well landscaped residential amenity and right-of-way design. The design of the east side of the structure should be softened with setbacks and landscaping, and the Board wants the applicant to give strong consideration to the protection and retention of the existing vegetation to help mitigate adjacent privacy.

→ The applicant should address all design priorities, and Board guidance, during the next stages of design review.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting no departures were requested or required.

NEXT STEPS:

MUP Application:

1. Submit application for Master Use Permit (MUP) application. Please contact Catherine McCoy when you have scheduled your MUP intake appointment at the [Applicant Services Center](#);
2. Please include a written response to the guidance provided in this report, and as per CAM 238, Attachment B. [CAM 238](#);
3. Plan on embedding 11x17 colored and shadowed elevations, landscape and right-of-way improvement plans into the **front** of the MUP plan set (4 per sheet). Label the Design Review sheets “DR-1”, “DR-2”, etc.;
4. Provide graphic demonstrations, including 3-D colored graphics, drawings, or models to demonstrate the design response to the priority guidelines and guidance – clearly call out measures taken to address B-1;
5. Provide detailed elevations, plans, and sketches of the entire site (north, south, east, west), including street and upper level uses - include 3-D graphics or models that include single family zoned areas.

Recommendation Meeting:

1. Provide colored building sections and elevations that show the proposed development in context with adjacent structures (include street level, or ground level in the case of the east façade, and upper level facades);
2. Provide graphic details of the corner design, include street and upper levels;
3. Provide graphic details of the courtyard area along the east property line;
4. Provide comparative site-off-site section drawings to depict relationship to single family zone to the east;
5. Provide colored landscaping plans indicating size, species, and placement of all vegetation, as well as any special treatment (sidewalks or otherwise). Include 5% required residential amenity areas (SMC 23.47A.024), and green factor requirements and calculations (SMC 23.47A.016). Show ground level perspectives of landscaping options (planting strip and landscaping along Phinney Avenue North and North 61st Street);
6. Provide plans and elevations detailing proposed trash, recycling, utility areas, and screening methods;
7. Provide a color and materials board;
8. Include a proposed signage plan (general type of signage, areas of proposed signage, and any signage conditions);
9. Show lighting options (location and manufacturer cut sheets), areas of transparency, landscaping, any proposed special paving, and continuous overhead weather protection;
10. Provide detailed solar and shadow studies - include two days of the year, Spring Equinox (March) and Autumn Equinox (September), at four times during each day - of the site related to height, bulk, and scale issues.

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