



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

D.M. Sugimura, Director

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

Meeting Date: October 23, 2007

Report Date: October 30, 2007

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3007584

Address: 9031 Valdez Avenue South

Applicant: Grace Kim of Schemata Workshop for Stephen Fast

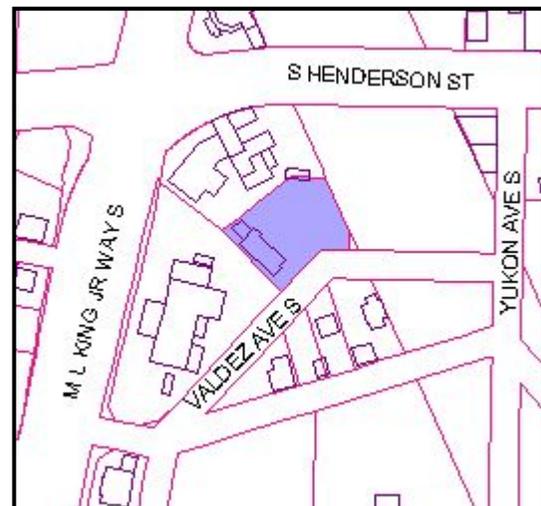
Board members present: Ann Beeman (Chair)
Robert A. Mohn
Steve Sindiong
Michele Wang
John Woodworth

Board members absent: None

Land Use Planner present: Marti Stave

SITE AND VICINITY

The proposed project is located on Valdez Avenue South between Martin Luther King Way South and Yukon Avenue South in the Rainier Beach neighborhood. There is currently a residential structure located on the 16,820 square foot project site. The irregularly shaped site is relatively flat on the western 2/3 of the site which is elevated 5 feet above the street level and then slopes down approximately eight to ten feet to the east. The eastern edge of the site abuts the 200-foot wide Seattle City Light transmission line corridor which is the location of the Chief Sealth Trail. The zoning is Neighborhood Commercial 3 with a 40 foot height limit (NC3-40). To the west and north of the site are two



properties also zoned NC30-40 but with a Pedestrian overlay (NC3P-40). The Henderson Street station of Link Light Rail is located just west of the site on Martin Luther King Way South at South Henderson Street which locates the site in the Station Area Overlay District. Across Valdez Avenue South the zoning is Single Family 5000 (SF5000) and the block is developed with older single family homes. The transmission line corridor is also zoned SF5000.

There is a large furrier warehouse located on the adjacent property to the west that fronts on Martin Luther King Way and small retail establishments on the property to the north that fronts on South Henderson.

PROPOSAL

The applicant is proposing 21 townhomes surrounding a central courtyard. Though parking is not required because of the location in the Henderson Light Rail Station Overlay, the applicant is proposing 14-21 parking spaces. The applicant is also considering one or two Live/Work units at the street level.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Three alternative design schemes were presented. While all of the townhome designs are somewhat similar the site layout is different in each option. All options presented show five or six units facing Valdez Avenue South with elevated entries accessed from the sidewalk. The applicants are considering Live/Work for two of the street-facing units in which case these entries would not be elevated.

Option 1 consists of four buildings – two with four units; one with six units; and one with seven units. This option would provide parking for 13 vehicles. The majority of the open space would be adjacent to the drive aisles. No departures would be sought with this option.

Option 2 consists of five buildings – one with two units; two with three units; one with six units and one with seven units. Parking would be provided within eight of the units. This option features a single drive aisle for the units with parking and a landscaped courtyard with direct access from 11 of the units. Four of the units would have entries facing the transmission line corridor.

Option 3 (preferred option) consists of three buildings arranged around the perimeter of the site and facing a circular drive aisle and central landscaped courtyard. This option provides parking for 12 vehicles with the structures. Options 1 and 2 require a departure from the setback where the property abuts the transmission line corridor.

Landscaping would feature pervious pavers, rain gardens, and other green strategies. The style of the buildings is proposed to be contemporary with large overhangs. Materials proposed are wood, some cementitious materials and large windows. As there are no setbacks required on the sides abutting the commercial zones most of the glazing would be toward the interior of the site and toward the east transmission line corridor.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Six members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Would not like to see the emphasis inward as in some of the options. Would like to have a friendly pedestrian experience.
- There is a lot of foot traffic on Valdez Avenue South; it is often dangerous because of speeding cars; we were hoping for sidewalks.
- Concerned that as there is not parking proposed for all units, there will be overflow parking on the neighborhood streets.
- Option 3 feels like a cul-de-sac. Would rather have “eyes on the street”.
- Generally excited by the project as a good addition to the neighborhood.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, the Design Review Board members provided the siting and design guidance described below. The 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-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-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.

- The Board preferred Option 2 instead of the preferred Option 3. However, they would like the applicants to explore splitting the six-unit east building to bring Units 19, 20, and 21 closer to the street. This would allow a pass-through for those in the rear units and give the

front units more street presence. It would also allow more light into the long, narrow alley-like drive aisle.

- As this is a project that will set the tone for other redevelopment, the Board preferred the smaller blocks of units in Options 1 and 2.
- The Board expressed concern about the depicted depth of the overhangs, especially for the street facing units, possibly causing excessive shadowing of the entries.
- The Board agreed that the street facing units in Options 1 and 2 would provide the desirable “eyes-on- the-street”. They would be willing to entertain an additional departure to allow the residential entries to be located lower than the code-required four feet above sidewalk grade which they consider to be more appropriate for busy commercial streets.
- The Board also prefers the open space concept in Option 2 as the more usable and inviting. This option also shows the eastern-most units facing onto the transmission line corridor which could be thought of as open space as well.

B *Height, Bulk and Scale*

B-1 **Height, Bulk and Scale**

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.

- In general, the Board feels that the development offers a good transition to surrounding development. As it is located across from single family development, the applicant should consider shifting the upper levels of the street-facing units away from the street.
- The Board again expressed a preference for Option 2 but with the eastern block of units split to bring Units 19, 20 and 21 forward to the street level allowing a connection to the Chief Sealth trail. This would break up the large building mass and allow windows in the upper levels to be offset giving the units more privacy. Terracing levels 2-4 to the east instead of over the alley would also allow more building separation (from units 10-15) and provide more light to the alleyway. The Board would entertain a departure from the building setback requirement at the east property line to allow for this.

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 concept.*
- *Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building.*

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.

- The Board would like to see the individual townhomes distinguished from one another by the use of pattern, color and texture.
- The Board looks forward to seeing the detailed proposal for balconies and other architectural details in the next iteration.
- In general, the Board liked the images presented that displayed contemporary designs with natural wood and glazing dominating (page 12 of the EDG packet).

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-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-7 Pedestrian Safety

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

D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions

For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and be visually interesting for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops, and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

- The location and screening of dumpsters and service areas is of high priority to the Board and they look forward to seeing how this is addressed in the next design iteration.
- The Board again agreed that Option 2 provides the only usable open space.
- The applicant should consider ways to create a desirable vehicle access design. The Board prefers a single, narrower curb cut rather than a 2-way access.

E Landscaping

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or site

Landscaping, including living plants, special pavement, 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.

- The Board is looking forward to a design that will incorporate the Green factor requirement in a sensitive and sustainable way.

DEPARTURES FROM DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Departure Summary Table

REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	APPLICANT'S JUSTIFICATION	BOARD RECOMMENDATION
Side Setback (SMC23.47A.014B2a) 10' setback required for portions of structure above 13' adjacent to residential zone.	No setback above 13'	Residential zone adjacent to subject site is owned by Seattle City Light and is 200' wide transmission line corridor.	The Board will continue to entertain these departures based on how well the design responds to the Design Guidelines noted.
Street level requirements (SMC23.47A.008D2) First floor level must be 4' above sidewalk grade or street level façade must be set back 10'.	First floor lower than 4' above sidewalk grade and less than 10' from sidewalk.	Project is located across from single family neighborhood where raised entries may not be appropriate.	The Board will continue to entertain these departures based on how well the design responds to the Design Guidelines noted

NEXT STEPS

Using the design guidance above the architect should develop the next iteration of the design response. The following items summarize what should be included in the submittal materials for MUP application and recommendation meeting. See guidance above for applicable details.

- 4 sets of MUP plans, 5 copies of the filled out SEPA checklist, 2 copies of the draft recommendation packet (more will be requested prior to the meeting), owner authorization form, financial responsibility form, site plan (8.5"-11") for SEPA large sign (see Director's Rule 29-2006).

- Provide a written response to the Design Review guidelines and guidance above at MUP submittal (see Attachment B of CAM 238). Please send the planner the electronic version of the narrative design response via email.
- Provide the topographic survey in the recommendation packet.
- Provide detailed large scale street level vignettes for the street level along Valdez Avenue South to illustrate the streetscape experience. A pedestrian level vignette of the site interior should also be provided.
- Provide a full color rendering of the buildings looking northwest from the SCL transmission line corridor.
- Provide a full color and materials board with tangible samples at the recommendation meeting. Also, provide some pictures of the material applications in built projects.
- Provide full color shadowed elevations in the MUP plans (N-S-E-W) with material callouts.
- A conceptual plan for lighting design should be presented at the next meeting.
- Provide a large scale full color landscape plan in the MUP plans.
- Provide larger scale site plans at the recommendation meeting.
- Please call the Planner (Marti Stave 206 684-0239) when you have made your MUP intake appointment.

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