



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
D.M. Sugimura, Director

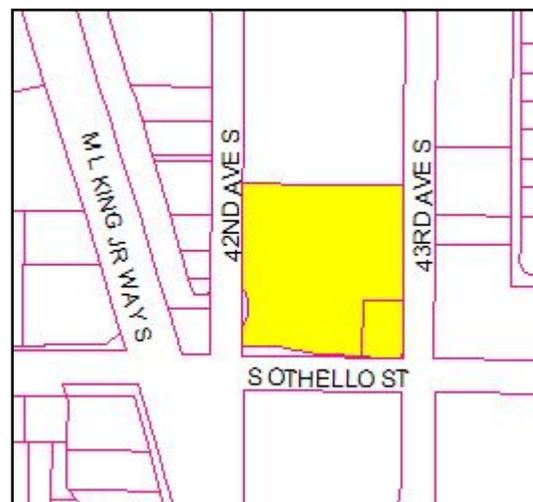
***RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD - SOUTHEAST AREA #4***

Project Number: 3007649
Address: 4200 South Othello Street
Applicant: Michael Hlastala, Owner, Othello Partners
Brad Hinthorne, Architect, Ruffcorn Mott
Hinthorne Stine
Meeting Date: March 24, 2009
Report Date: April 16, 2009
Board Members Present: Michele Wang, Chair
Brett Conway
Robert A. Mohn
Board Members Absent: John Woodworth
Steve Sindiong
Staff Members Present: Bradley Wilburn, Land Use Planner

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Site Description

The development site combines two parcels of land to establish a total land area of approximately 81,281 square feet, in the Rainier Valley area of south Seattle. The site is zoned Neighborhood Commercial Three Pedestrian zone with a height limit of 65 feet (NC3P-65). The site occupies the south half of a city block, with street frontage along 42nd Avenue South to the west, South Othello Street to the south, and 43rd Avenue South to the east. The subject site is also located within the MLK at Holly Street Residential Urban Village, Othello Neighborhood Design Guideline area, Othello Station Overlay District, and the South Seattle Reinvestment Area. Additionally, the site is not located in a designated Environmentally Critical Area (ECA).



The site is currently developed with one commercial building, surrounded by a hard surface parking, and three-story apartment building located at the corner of Othello and 43rd Avenue.

The site is nearly flat with subtle slopes near the middle and along the east property line. The streets abutting the site are fully developed rights-of-way with asphalt roadways; curbs, sidewalks and gutters. South Othello Street is an arterial with heavy traffic volumes. Access to the development site is limited due in part to 42nd Avenue terminating just north of Othello.

Area Development

A significant addition to the area is the Sound Transit light rail line situated within the Martin Luther King Jr. Way South right-of-way. The “Othello Station” will be located approximately 200 feet from the site’s southwest corner. Along the MLK corridor construction activity has been robust, that has significantly impacted a neighborhood in transition. To the west, Holly Park Phase III has helped to transform the area and stimulate economic growth. On either side of MLK, commercial development dominates the area with a mix of retail, restaurant, office, and institutional uses. Across South Othello Street to the south, the applicant has simultaneously proposed to development a similarly scaled 95,672 square foot development site. The two reviews are running concurrently. Zoning in the area includes Multifamily and Single family zones outside the commercially zoned corridor along MLK. To the east across 43rd Avenue a narrow Multifamily Lowrise Two (L-2) zone buffers an expansive Single family 5,000 (SF 5000) zone. This area is defined by spacious open spaces and moderate sized homes. Othello Playfield, a Seattle City Park is located one block south across 43rd Avenue. Abutting the site to the north is a religious institution, Miracle Temple of God. A large stand of mature trees provides a visual buffer between the two development sites.

Proposal Description

The applicant, Othello Partners, proposes to construct a six-story building containing commercial and residential uses. The proposal requires demolition of the two existing buildings to accommodate new construction of a mixed use building, containing five floors of residential use above ground floor retail use. The proposal will take advantage of the site’s unique location and connection to transit centers. The development site will be located across the street from the Sound Transit Othello Light Rail Station, scheduled to open in July of 2009. A Metro Bus stop serves the development site as well. The proposed building will occupy the entire 81,308 square foot development site, with 370 residential units and approximately 17,698 square feet of nonresidential uses, and it is anticipated to have a significant impact in the immediate area. The design program includes opening up and activating the abutting streets; 42nd Avenue South, South Othello Street and 43rd Avenue South.

The building layout and mass is scaled into components to be more reflective of the character of each street frontage, and allow phasing if needed. The design intent is to establish a strong street presence scaled to neighboring properties, using modulation and spatial separation to visually enliven the area. The west elevation design takes cues from the adjacent block front, right-of-way width, and anticipated street experience due to its proximity to the proposed transit station. The Othello façade will follow the curve of the right-of-way as it widens towards 42nd Avenue, creating a stronger vertical articulation as the building steps away to visually opening up the street experience. Near mid-block along South Othello, steps leading up the courtyard deck on an second level terrace will provide opportunities for both public and private to socially engage. The stair concept evokes the feeling of the “Spanish Steps” in Rome, but on a smaller scale.

Additionally, the proposed massing seeks a synergetic connection to the Othello South Campus site. To the east, abutting 43rd Street, the façade will be modulated both horizontally and vertically to be sympathetic to the lower residential density L-2 zone across the street. Portions of the ground level will feature townhouse styled frontages more in keeping with a residential scale. Access to an underground parking garage for 372 vehicles is proposed in two locations; 42nd and 43rd Avenue South. At street level pedestrian entries will be placed along street fronts to activate the entire block front.

Landscaping is proposed in and around the subject site to augment an emphasis on quality design. Within the right-of-way perimeter landscaping will provide a robust frame to enhance the development site. Special emphases will be directed towards providing attractive and inviting pedestrian oriented experiences through landscaping within the courtyard and roof decks. The primary common residential amenity courtyard will be accessible to the public through a landscaped staircase from South Othello Street. A gate will be installed to control accessibility in during the evening hours.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE:

An Early Design Guidance (EDG) meeting was held on September 11, 2007. At the meeting, the Board identified the following adopted Guidelines to be of highest priority:

- A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics***
- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility***
- A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street***
- A-4 Human Activity***
- A-5 Respect for Adjacent sites***
- A-6 Transition between Residence and Street***
- A-7 Residential Open Space***
- A-10 Corner Lots***
- B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale***
- C-1 Architectural Context***
- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency***
- C-3 Human Scale***
- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials***
- D-1 Pedestrian Open Space and Entrances***
- D-7 Personal Safety and Security***
- D-9 Commercial Signage***
- D-10 Commercial Lighting***
- D-11 Commercial Transparency***
- D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions***
- E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites***
- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site***
- O-2 Northeast and Southeast Corners of Martin Luther King Jr. Way South and***

Public Comments:

During the Early Design Guidance Meeting the public generally expressed support of a modernist styled building in the neighborhood, another sign that revitalization is occurring in the community. In particular, the proposed building should provide modulations to better scale the building to the neighborhood (i.e., New Holly). Portion of the building should be limited to four

stories in height, especially adjacent to the multifamily zone. Incorporate quality design and materials that are more familiar with the residential uses along the facades adjacent to the multifamily zone. Having social and economic diversity in mind as you develop your residential program is critical to maintaining the area's diversity; ideally one bedroom and studio apartments would be more appropriate for the neighborhood. In addition, access to residential units should be visible from the streets. A good pedestrian streetscape experience is a serious goal along all street frontages - how the building steps back, use of glazing and green walls, etc. should be taken seriously as the design moves forward. Parking is already a problem in the area and with the scale of the proposal, parking demand should be met on-site. Vehicles cutting through the church parking lot just north of the development site could be disruptive due in part to the limited access to 42nd Avenue. Lastly, a public member asked if the two projects (Othello North and South Campus) would be built at the same time. *The design team responded that they did not know, but felt it was unlikely.* The Board took into **consideration public comments to inform their analysis and design guidance.**

Board Guidance:

Ensuring a well proportioned scale at the development site is a critical factor to successfully integrate the project into the existing neighborhood fabric that is in transition. The design team should incorporate as many design elements as necessary to scale the building down along all street frontages utilizing modulation measures for a unified building mass that meets the specific needs of each streetscape. In addition, creating quality open space that provides adequate natural light to penetrate into the proposed interior courtyard is important to activate the space. The Board feels that there should be more synergy between the two (Othello North & South) upper level courtyards, at present there is limited engagement between the two. The Board instructed the design team to incorporate comments from both projects where applicable as they move into MUP. The two proposals could influence future development in the area and the applicant should remain mindful of this potentiality. The design team should incorporate design elements as necessary to create quality infill development; utilizing building materials and massing sensitive to adjacent zones and uses. The Sound Transit light rail station design should inform the development. Parking at grade must be designed with the highest level of effort to minimize visual presence.

These design guidelines were all chosen by the Board to be of high priority. The Board wants the developer to engage the streetscape wherever possible and scale the design to integrate itself into the area at a site with three street frontages, totaling approximately 781 linear feet.

(For complete copy of the EDG document refer to the MUP file or DR Web page; www.seattle.gov/dpd/.design_review_program//project_review/reports.)

RECOMMENDATION MEETING:

The applicant applied for Master Use Permit on January 7, 2009. The Board reconvened on March 24, 2009, in the Multipurpose Room, at Rainier Community Center in order to review the applicant's response to previous priority guidelines, and guidance and to make recommendations to DPD regarding the design of the project and the requested design departures. Three of the five Board Members were present.

Developer's Presentation:

Mike Hlastala, project co-owner, opened the presentation to acknowledge community involvement to help guide this proposal to its final design resolution. Brad Hinthorne, project architect, provided an overview of the project's history and then proceeded to address site context analysis and design objectives. Eric Mott presented specific design elements, with Karen Keyes addressing the landscaping concept and plan. Where possible an emphasis would be placed on increasing opportunities to provide quality green elements (screening walls, plants, shrubbery, etc.) and outdoor spaces for social interactions. The intent of the proposal is to strengthen the neighborhood through design; by creating a sense of place set within an existing neighborhood context that is both responsive to tenants and neighbors needs. A number of changes have been made in response to comments from the Board and public, including rescaling the massing along the street fronts to establish a stronger street presence, and reconfiguration of pedestrian and vehicle access points. The design team used a 3-D model, power point, and 11 x 17 colored packets to describe the design response.

Updated Design:

Since the Early Design Guidance Meeting held on September 11, 2007, there have been a number of refinements that have affected the size and configuration of the proposed development. These include:

Building Mass: The preferred scheme introduced during the EDG meeting, has been sculpted to take advantage of opportunities afforded to a site with three distinct street fronts. From the street-level to roof line, the proposal now has a stronger articulated presence which firmly holds the corners to help establish a sense of place. The building's mass has been molded into distinct sections to be more compatible with the character of the adjacent uses and zones. This design decreases the building's mass as viewed from adjacent properties, especially where it's most critical, across from a lower residential density zone, while strengthening its presence along the west and north elevations. The revised plan depicts a six-story building mass scaled to break the upper level in readable components which serves to establish its human scale. The upper level modulation and fenestration patterns break down the building's scale. At street level the sidewalk experience provides opportunities for visual interaction and social engagement. Continuous overhead weather protection occurs along Othello and wraps around both street corners, to help frame the street level experience. The building's Othello frontage is broken into two masses by a large stair plaza separating the two masses, leading up to a common courtyard available for public use during daytime hours. The steps are wide enough to afford opportunities for people to gather and socially interact.

Parking: In response to Board guidelines, access and layout to the parking garage has been located in a fashion to minimize visual intrusion upon adjacent residential uses and the street systems. Access to parking levels are proposed in two locations; 42nd and 43rd Avenues to split out traffic impacts and visually respond to the streetscape with architectural detailing to minimize visual impacts. Decorative gates have been added to make the street experience more pedestrian friendly and visually appealing.

Corner Lots: A design objective to be respectful and responsive to adjacent uses at the southwest and southeast corners has found full visual expression. The southwest corner adjacent

to the light rail station incorporates building forms, color, transparency, and landscaping that is appropriate for an active commercial zone. The proposed building will visually stimulate without overwhelming the neighborhood's commercial zone vernacular. At the southeast corner, the building form is more reflective of the lower density zones further to the east. The revised plan depicts a thoughtful approach with modulation, fenestration, and decks evoking a multifamily experience above the commercial level. Additionally, the two corners take into consideration its gateway location and connections to the "Othello South Campus" to deliver a quality product to the existing neighborhood fabric.

Design Departures:

The applicant is currently requesting two departures from Land Use Code development standards – Residential Street-level requirement SMC 23.47A.008.D.2 and Parking Location and Access SMC 23.47A.032.A.1.c.

Board Comments and Questions:

The Board inquired about the design and program areas of the structure at grade in relationship to property lines. One Board member inquired if the southeast corner's façade was modulated at the upper level. It was not readily apparent from the presentation that there was a change in the wall plane. The applicant stated there would be a three to five foot deep modulation. As viewed along 43rd Avenue the relationship between the sidewalk and townhome entries appeared to compromise privacy. The Board wanted to know the logic and design intention behind the shallow setback. The applicant explained the rationale for the spacing and landscaping along the townhouse frontage. In order to create an appropriately-scaled pedestrian and residential environment the units were placed in close proximity to the sidewalk. Residential entries along 43rd seemed understated and the Board wanted to know why. In response, the applicant said the frontage sought to find the appropriate design response to neighboring uses which included single family, multifamily, and religious uses. With the potential phasing of the project, trash and recycling pick-up could adversely affect the pedestrian street experience. The Board wanted to know how they intended to address this concern. The applicant stated that the trash and recycle bins would be stored within the structure and pushed out to an "alley-like" space on pick-up days. Overall, the Board acknowledged its satisfaction with how the design team addressed the bulk and scale.

As was the case at "Othello South" the Board wanted to know if a gate would be installed at the top of the "Spanish Steps." The applicant responded by stating they intended to place a transparent gate at the top, that would be accessible only to tenants after hours. The Board followed up this response by asking if the applicant considered orienting the "Spanish Steps" toward Othello Park across the southeast corner. The applicant did consider a corner design but was compelled to follow Board guidance from the previous EDG meeting.

The Board wanted and was provided an explanation why the necessity to provide two vehicle access points, triggering a departure from development standards.

The west frontage presented different design challenges due to its proximity to the Othello Light Rail Transit Station and adjacency to existing buildings in the commercial zone. The upper level

design across from the station is an appropriate design response to the previously stated guidelines, but further north along the block front, the upper level seems unresolved and the Board wanted an explanation. The applicant stated that the design took into consideration existing and potential impacts of development across from a more commercially oriented block. The applicant stated that the final design scheme sought to float the upper level above a well grounded base, with lighter materiality and a fenestration to conceptually shift mass off 42nd Avenue.

Lastly, the Board wanted to be walked through the upper level courtyard plant detail. The applicant provided an explanation that satisfied the assembled group.

Public Comment:

A member from the neighborhood thanked the applicants for a design that would be a positive addition to the neighborhood, signaling out the 43rd Avenue frontage as being an appropriate fit for the adjacent residential zone. One speaker shared his feeling that he felt that the southwest corner was too acute an angle at the corner of 42nd and South Othello; and would like the Board to soften the corner for pedestrians rounding the corner. One member from the public wanted to see a grocery store occupy the street level retail space, if possible. Another stated their support of the proposed design as a whole but was concerned if the project would be phased over time. What assurances would be made to stop a form of urban blight, partially completed projects that pay no attention to visual impacts upon surrounding properties? The applicant responded that they wanted to be good neighbors, and have every intention utilize measures including landscaping, material finishes, etc. to maintain their high design integrity as viewed both within and from outside the development site. For one public member, the proposed townhouse-like frontage along 43rd Avenue seemed too modern and would like to see a more residential feel and motif. One commenter expressed a desire to see zip cars provided at the development site to reduce the number of owner occupied vehicles at the site.

Board Discussion and Recommendations:

Generally, the Board liked the design team's response to guideline priorities set on September 11, 2007, with a design that is complementary to the previously approved "Othello South Campus." Discussion ensued among the Board, including support of the requested departures, exterior cladding, townhouse-like frontage, landscaping, two primary pedestrian entries, and roof deck. The building mass along the three street frontages successfully breaks down the scale through modulation, fenestration and selection of colors on the upper level. The townhomes spatial separation between the sidewalk and front entry lacks adequate safeguards to protect privacy. Some resolution is needed, including a landscape buffer set between the façade and sidewalk edge is needed. A three to four foot landscaped buffer planted with shrubbery will afford the minimum relief to obtain defensible private space for each ground related unit.

The two roof decks at the southwest and southeast corners appear to have no relationship to the lower level courtyard. There is no reason why a stronger design connection could not be made in the overall design composition. The lower courtyard has a more organic design element that should be replicated on the upper level decks. The Board felt that the vegetation scheme should relate to the lower level courtyard, as well. In addition, pedestrian pathways on the roof should be more relaxed, less rigid in its design form. The two primary residential entries are

underwhelming, lacking a visual punctuation to celebrate the entries. The Board will leave it up to the design team and planner to find the appropriate design solution to provide visual interest in support of previously stated design guidelines.

The exterior wall along the west façade, north of the main residential entry needs further refinement. The upper level fenestration and allocation of its color palette appear incongruous to the base. A re-examination and/or distribution of paint colors and windows may help to give the façade greater verticality and relationship to its base. The design team is directed find a solution to provide a coherent design composition on the upper level with stronger relationship to its base.

As depicted the Board was unable to read how the overhead canopies would function. The Board commented that they wanted a better integration of the overhead weather protection design with the upper and lower façade design. Attention to human scale is needed due to the scale of the overall project. Were possible seek to provide a better relationship at street level to the pedestrian experience by having breaks along continuous planes.

The Board was comfortable with granting the two requested departures for alterations in the Residential Street-level and Parking Location and Access requirements. The Board took into consideration the intent of the Development Standards but was convinced in approving the departures that the proposal is a better product and would be a welcome addition to the neighborhood. As long as the proposal remained consistent with what was presented, with refinements to be worked out with a DPD planner, the Board fully supported the departure requests. The design has done an admirable job of integrating architectural details, open space design with robust plantings that has truly enhanced the building and site. Therefore, the Board recommends approval of requested departures with refinements noted to be worked out with DPD.

The following departure was requested and recommended for approval at the March 24, 2009 Recommendation meeting:

<i>Development Standard</i>	<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Comment/Ratio nal BY Architect</i>	<i><u>Board Recommendation</u></i>
<i>1. Residential Street-level Requirement SMC 23.47A.008.D</i>	<i>Residential street-level requirement. Either the first floor of the structure at or above grade shall be at least 4 feet above sidewalk grade or the street-level façade shall be set back at least 10 feet from the sidewalk.</i>	<i>First set at floor 1.5 feet above sidewalk grade.</i>	<i>Due in part to the siting of the two-story townhouse-like façade to stepping toward the street the upper level to create a more dynamic residential scale.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Approved (Design Guidelines:, A-2, A-3, A-6, C-2, C-3, C-4, D-1, D-7, D-12 & E-2)</i> <i>Condition: Provide 3 to 4 foot landscaped buffer between the facade and sidewalk</i>

<p>2. Parking Location and Access. SMC 23.47A.032.A.1.c.</p>	<p><i>If the lot does not abut an improved alley and abuts two or more streets, access to parking must be from the street with the fewest lineal feet of commercially zoned frontage.</i></p>	<p><i>Two access one from 42nd (longest lineal frontage) the other from 43rd (east lineal frontage) Avenues.</i></p>	<p><i>To protect the pedestrian nature of South Othello and reduce traffic impacts at the 43rd and Othello intersection.</i></p>	<p>▪ <i>Approved (Design Guidelines: A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, C-2, D-7 & E-1, O-2)</i></p>
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Summary of Board Recommendations:

The Board stated their appreciation of the design response to a development site that will have a significant impact in the immediate area. The following recommendations were approved by the three Board members present as conditions of the approval.

1. In order to establish a more secure street experience along 43rd Avenue for the ground related units, a three to four foot deep landscaped buffer planted with shrubbery will be required to afford the minimum relief to obtain defensible private space for each unit.
2. At the roof top deck level landscape scheme shall seek greater relationship to the lower level courtyard. In addition, pedestrian pathways should be more relaxed, less rigid in its design form.
3. The two primary residential entries shall establish stronger visual interest for pedestrians through a more dynamic approach to materiality.
4. The design team is should develop a coherent design composition solution on the upper level's west façade with a stronger relationship to the base.
5. The design should provide better relationship at street level to the pedestrian experience by having breaks along continuous wall planes.
6. The overhead canopies should be integrated better into the storefronts and upper façade design.

The architect should work with DPD on the details for improvements to the proposal as identified above.