



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

D.M. Sugimura, Director

**FINAL RECOMMENDATION
OF THE
NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Meeting Date: June 16, 2008

Report Date: June 23, 2008

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3007936

Address: 13716 Lake City Way NE

Applicant: John Parsaie of Morgan Design Group for Steve Smith

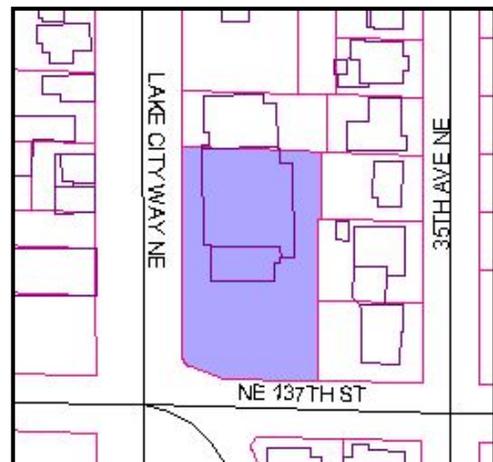
Board members present: Craig Parsons (Chair)
Thomas Nelson
Shawna Sherman
Susan Jensen

Board members absent: Tricia Reisenhauer

Land Use Planner present: Marti Stave

SITE AND VICINITY

The proposed project is located at the northeast corner of Lake City Way Northeast and Northeast 137th Street in the Lake City neighborhood. The 33,825 square foot site is currently vacant. The north portion of the site slopes gently to east approximately twelve feet while the south portion of the site is relatively flat and rises sharply approximately 16 feet at the east edge. The zoning is Commercial 1 with a 65 foot height limit (C1-65) as are the blocks to the south on both sides of Lake City Way NE. The block to the north changes to C1-40. Directly abutting the site to the east the zoning is Lowrise One (L-1).



Lake City Way in this area is characterized by a mix of mostly small auto-oriented businesses. Many businesses on

both sides of the street display “for sale” signs indicating a re-development trend. The site directly to the north of the subject project is a small auto-repair business. The site to the north of that is the subject of a future multifamily proposal.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes a 65-foot high, mixed-use building with approximately 4,696 square feet of commercial space at street level and residential units above. There will be 152 residential units and parking for 120 vehicles at and below grade. Access will be from Lake City Way NE rather than NE 137th because of intersection controls at Lake city Way NE and NE 137th that prevent right or left hand turns eastbound onto NE 137th. There will be one egress point at Northeast 137th. This project will be for low-income seniors.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE: JANUARY 28, 2008

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include ground level commercial retail with 5 levels of residential units above, parking located both at (behind the commercial use) and below grade. Access to the trash collection area would be via Northeast 137th Street.

Concept 1 shows a large mass with a large plaza at the southwest corner, a small internal courtyard on the second level at the north end of the building. This concept features extensive modulation and overhanging balconies on Lake City Way. Concept 2 is similar to the first with the large plaza at the southwest corner, expansive roof gardens and a small internal courtyard. No balconies are featured in the design. Concept 3 (the preferred concept) features two large second-level courtyards, landscaped rooftop open space and some units with private balconies. Several community rooms are provided on levels two and six. There is a minimum 10 foot setback at the north elevation and the applicant proposes stepping back the upper levels at the east elevation adjacent to the lower density residential zone.

Materials and color palette have yet to be chosen. The overall building form shows the façade up to street level, large corner plaza and the main residential entry at the corner. Green factor requirement would be met by extensive landscaping at street level and on upper level courtyards and rooftop.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

- Concerned about the impact of the project on tenants in building located adjacent to the north.
- Question about access to parking.
- Question about treatment and stability of steep slope at the rear of the property.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

The architect presented the updated design that includes a strong two-story base; stepping back at the rear property line to respect adjacent neighbors; varied glazing patterns to help reduce bulk; and further setback at the street to minimize the “canyon effect” on Lake City Way. Overhead weather protection has been updated to a more urban design and the corner plaza design has been enhanced with seating and water feature. Parking layout and circulation has been redesigned and the number of spaces has been reduced. To view the design proposal, go to www.seattle.gov/designreview. Click on “Project Reviews”, then “Archives” and enter the project number.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Looking forward to having the building completed; will add to the neighborhood; like the materials and color scheme
- Questions about vehicle circulation; ingress and egress
- Questions about the bus stop (it will remain in its present location on Lake City Way)
- Questions about building height in relation to neighbors on 35th Ave. NE to the east.

PRIORITIES

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*” and the *North District/Lake City Way Guidelines* of highest priority to this project. The Board discussion and recommendations represented in bold text following the priority guidelines form the EDG meeting.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

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-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-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.

A-10 Corner Lots

Buildings on corner lots should be oriented towards the public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

- The Board would like the applicant to consider reducing the building massing along the Lake City Way façade in keeping with the Lake City Neighborhood Guidelines that seek to reduce the “canyon effect” along this corridor.
- As this is a corner site the Board feels that there is an opportunity for the building to present a prominent corner gesture. The Board directed the applicant to the Design Guidelines for examples of corner treatments.
- The residential entry at the corner needs to be clearly distinguished as a residential entry with maximum transparency and visibility to the outside for seniors waiting for rides or transit. The current design showing the entry beneath overhanging upper levels does not interact well with the corner plaza. Outside seating and overhead weather protection should be considered.
- The Board would like to see more detailed sections that show the relationship to the Lowrise zone to the east with clear indications of screening and landscaping that reduces the impact on these neighbors.
- The Board would like the building to exhibit massing and use of materials that convey a sense of permanence that this area of Lake City Way currently lacks.
- The Board agreed that there is generous residential open space however some of the second-level open courtyard space should provide more privacy and noise (from Lake City Way traffic) screening. Sun and wind protection should be provided for the rooftop garden areas. Connecting interior community rooms would be desirable.
- The parking at grade level as proposed within the building is inefficiently laid out and may even be dangerous for maneuvering for seniors. The Board directed the applicant to revise the parking plan at grade level.

At the Recommendation meeting the architect presented a design that has responded to the Board’s earlier guidance with respect to the massing along Lake City Way. The building is now pulled back from the street level with only two of the bays overhanging the sidewalk. With both vertical and horizontal modulation the effect of the mass of the building is reduced. The Board was pleased to see the enhanced design of the corner plaza and residential entry showing more transparency and outdoor seating areas, additional landscaping and a water feature.

The Board was particularly pleased with quality of the residential open space including the third level terraces, which include both private and public areas, and the roof deck which includes overhead weather canopies, pea patch garden areas and a dog run.

The Board was also pleased to see that the building was further stepped back at the rear setback providing additional design consideration for the neighbors to the east.

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.

- The Board supported the preferred Concept 3 with it’s generous supply of indoor and outdoor community open space. However, the board feels that the mass of the building should be presented in sections with differing materials and massing and a common vocabulary that ties them together. Horizontal lines should be limited as they emphasize the bulk of the building. See above comments also regarding stepping back at upper levels to reduce “canyon effect” along Lake City Way.

The Board complimented the architect on his response to the guidance with respect to breaking the mass of building. However, they feel that the variation in materials on the bays at the front façade creates an effect that is too busy. They would like to have the bays exhibit a common vocabulary. They would like the architect to give further attention to the exterior details (windows, material and colors) that will more fully integrate the building façade. The Board also responded favorably to the additional stepping back of the rear façade.

The Board expressed concern that the west and south-facing units will be very hot in the summer months and would like the architect to explore designs for shading of these unit if at all possible.

Condition #1: Explore designs for shading of west and south facing units as long as it can successfully be integrated with the design of the building.

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 commercial base as presented appears disconnected from the residential housing above. A strong two story base, even though there are residential uses on the second level, along with creative use of materials and window types contribute to reducing the apparent bulk of the building.
- Other options for overhead weather protection should be explored that are more appropriate to the design and uses proposed.
- It appears that there is a masonry base proposed and the Board encouraged this to be further explored. The Board cautioned that if architectural concrete is proposed that it be used in an appropriate way and texture be included.

The Board liked the two-story brick base that gives the building design a more substantial look. Though the Board had cautioned against a banding effect between the brick base and upper floors the Board now feels that some stronger demarcation between the brick and cementitious material transition is needed. The Board would like the architect to explore options including corbels, etc. that will create shadow lines and clearly demonstrate the change in materials.

Condition #2: The architect should explore the use of fenestration, materials and color to refine the detail of the street façade to give it a more integrated design with a common vocabulary.

Condition #3: The transition between the brick base to the upper levels should be better defined through the use of materials and techniques such as corbelling brick.

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

Buildings should avoid large blank walls. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security

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

D-9 Commercial Signage

Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.

D-10 Commercial Lighting

Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts evening hours.

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 walls should be avoided.

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 Board liked the large plaza at the corner but feels that it would benefit from expert advise of a landscape architect for creative ideas that would provide a sense of protection to those using the plaza, including seating, lighting and some type of landscape and/or architectural barriers.
- The Board suggested the use of landscaping to reduce the impact of blank walls on the north and south facades. They also directed the applicant to pay close attention to the proportion of windows to solid walls.
- See comments above regarding visibility and lighting for residential entry as it relates to personal safety and security.
- The Board looks forward to proposals for commercial signage and exterior lighting.
- The Board would like to see some strategic breaks in the long residential corridors either with the use of windows or glass doors to allow natural light in and to afford a sense of security.

The updated design includes larger windows reducing the proportion of solid walls. However, the Board would like the architect to explore the use of materials and/or colors in conveying an appearance of connecting windows making the fenestration appear greater than it is. The Board was pleased with updated design of the corner plaza and the more transparent residential entry. The Board liked the proposed signage designs (freestanding lettering atop the overheard weather protection) but suggested that lettering contrast adequately with the building materials (or possibly be lighted) in order to be visible from the street.

See Condition #2 above.

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.

- The Board encouraged the applicant to include large scale trees in the landscape design for the streetscape. They are looking forward to a design that will incorporate the Green factor in a sensitive and sustainable way.

The Board applauded the generous use of landscaping which is more than double the Green Factor requirement. They liked the landscaping at the corner plaza, on the terraces and the roof garden. They did suggest, however, that more seating opportunities should be provided at the street level. The Board also wishes to see a harder edge (as opposed to grasses, etc.) for the landscaping at the street edge which would give a better sense of safety from the traffic on Lake City Way.

Condition #4: Provide additional seating opportunities at street level.

Condition #5: Provide landscaping elements at the street level that give a better sense of safety to residents of the building. Consider harder-edged shrubbery instead of the soft grasses.

DEPARTURES FROM DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Departure Summary Table

REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	APPLICANT'S JUSTIFICATION	BOARD RECOMMENDATION
Parking location and access (SMC23.47A.0321c) Access to parking must be from the street with the fewest lineal feet of commercially zoned frontage.	Request access to parking from Lake City Way NE. One egress point is proposed on NE 137 th .	Intersection controls prevent access to NE 137 th from Lake City Way NE.	The Board agreed that the only feasible access is from Lake City Way and unanimously grants this departure.
Street level development standards (SMC23.47A.008D) Residential uses are limited to 20% of the street level street facing façade.	Residential use exceeds 20% of street level street facing façade at NE 137 th .	Because of grade change, auto egress and trash enclosure, the residential lobby will exceed the 20% requirement.	Because there is no alley access, the Board agreed that building services must be located along this façade along with the residential entry. They unanimously agreed to grant this departure.

The Board recommended the following conditions to be resolved administratively with DPD Staff prior to issuance of a MUP permit:

Condition #1: Explore designs for shading of west and south facing units as long as it can successfully be integrated with the design of the building.

Condition #2: The architect should explore the use of fenestration, materials and color to refine the detail of the street façade to give it a more integrated design with a common vocabulary.

Condition #3: The transition between the brick base to the upper levels should be better defined through the use of materials.

Condition #4: Provide additional seating opportunities at street level.

Condition #5: Provide landscaping elements at the street level that give a better sense of safety to residents of the building. Consider harder-edged shrubbery instead of the soft grasses.

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