



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: February 23, 2009

Report Date: March 5, 2009

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3008515

Address: 13730 Lake City Way NE

Applicant: John Parsaie of Morgan Design Group for Steve Smith

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

Board members absent: None

Land Use Planner present: Marti Stave

SITE AND VICINITY

The proposed project is located on Lake City Way Northeast mid-block between Northeast 137th and Northeast 140th Street in the Lake City neighborhood. The 28,950 square foot site currently contain a two-story retail/commercial building with at-grade parking. The site slopes from the property on the east approximately eighteen feet to the street at Lake City Way NE. 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 south of the subject project is a small auto-repair business. The site to the south of that is the subject of a future multifamily proposal.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a six story, mixed-use building with approximately 3,500 square feet of retail at street level, approximately 160 residential units above and parking for 69 vehicles at and below grade. Access will be from Lake City Way NE. This project will be for low-income seniors.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE: APRIL 7, 2008

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include approximately 3,500 square feet of ground level commercial/retail with 5 – 6 levels of residential units above, parking located behind the commercial use partially below grade. Vehicle access would be from Lake City Way NE at the north end of the building.

Concept 1 shows a large donut-shaped mass with an interior courtyard on the second level in the center of the building. This concept features extensive modulation and a large rooftop open space area. There would be a prominent residential entry at the southwest corner of the site.

Concept 2 is a U-shaped mass with a 2nd level open courtyard facing west and open space at the rooftop. Entry is at the southwest corner and the building is modulated at the front (west) façade.

Concept 3 (the preferred concept) features is also a U-shaped mass with a 2nd level courtyard facing west and rooftop open space. The design concept shows terracing of the two upper residential floors. The building would be setback two feet more than required at the east property line adjacent to the Lowrise One (L1) zone and stepped back even further at the top three levels.

The overall building form shows the façade up to street level, with the street level set back 6 feet from the property line in order to provide adequate space for sidewalk and street trees. Green factor requirement would be met by extensive landscaping at street level and on upper level courtyards and rooftop. Materials and color palette have yet to be chosen.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

- Concerned about the bulk of the building and the impacts on views of the neighbors to the east.
- Question about how far the building would be from the rear (east) property line.
- Concern that there are too many SHA (Senior Housing Authority) projects in the Lake City Neighborhood.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

The applicant applied for a Master Use Permit on October 3, 2008. At the Recommendation Meeting, the architect presented the updated design. In response the Board’s guidance, the Residential entry has been enlarged; the trash area has been relocated; the exterior staircase has been eliminated; the upper floors have been pulled back and are no longer overhanging the base; and the second floor outdoor plaza has been moved back away from the street. The roofline has been changed to better distinguish the building from the related project just to the south at the corner of NE 137th and Lake City Way NE. The applicant chose not to include corner windows because of the relatively high cost of such windows.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Three members of the public attended the meeting and one person had questions about the Design Review process.

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 are presented in **bold text** following the priority guidelines from the EDG meeting.

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-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.

- The Board would like to see more neighborly connection to the adjacent Lowrise One zone to the east. The preferred scheme maximizes the building height adjacent to those properties even though the upper three floors are stepped back. There was discussion about shifting the mass toward the front of the building, however, the cost in terms of amenity areas and living spaces of shifting the height to the front is does not warrant such a change in design.
- The residential entry needs to be clearly distinguished with a visible identity of it's own and the board would like to see a design where the entry area is setback creating a courtyard space for those waiting for transit for other pick-up. Outside seating and overhead weather protection should be provided.
- The Board agreed that the second-level open courtyard space should provide good privacy and noise screening from Lake City Way traffic. Bringing the base up to the second level and incorporating colonnades at the outdoor courtyards, for example, would go a long way to provide noise mitigation. Good sun and wind protection should also be provided for the rooftop garden areas.

At the Recommendation Meeting, the Board was generally pleased with the response to the guidance. They liked the street level façade with the 2-story brick base and the generous amount of residential amenity area. The main residential entry is relocated to the center of the building and set back from the street to provide a small plaza and seating area. Overhead weather protection extends the length of the building from the garage entrance southward. The Board recommended that the overhead weather protection be provide over the entry door north of the garage entrance to provide visual continuity.

Recommendation #1: Extend overhead weather protection to the doorway north of the garage entrance.

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 generally supported the preferred Concept 3 but were disappointed that there was only one “viable” scheme.
- The Board observed that the preferred scheme pushed the mass of the building to the rear of the site exacerbating the impact on the lower density L1 zone to the east. The Board was in favor of the terracing on the front façade but disliked the lower levels overhanging the sidewalk.
- The Board observed that the base was out of proportion to the height of the building. The next design iteration should show a stronger base and better transition from base to upper levels.

- The commercial base as presented appears disconnected from the residential housing above. A strong two story base should be provided, even though there are residential uses on the second level. The design should employ varied use of materials and window types to contribute to reducing the apparent bulk and height of the building.

At the Recommendation Meeting the Board was please with updated design that shows the 2-story brick base with a better transition to the upper levels. They felt strongly that the north, east, and south elevations appeared monotonous and recommended that these facades be broken up with subtle changes in materials. They also recommended the use of taller landscaping to soften the appearance of the north and south concrete base.

Recommendation #2: Work with DPD staff to refine the material and color choices for the north, east and south facades.

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 encouraged the proposed use of masonry and would like to see its use expanded.
- The Board would like to see this building distinctly different from the project to the south. The applicant should explore alternative massing, use of materials, texture and color, and fenestration to create a design that has an identity clearly different from the one to the south. The applicant should also show a design that uses corner windows as a way to reduce the apparent mass of the building.
- The applicant should also explore the size and rhythm of windows and the possible use of spandrels (or the appearance of spandrels) to break up the mass of the building.
- The Board would like to see the use of higher quality materials on the street-facing and rear facades.

The Board was pleased with the 2-story brick base and wanted assurance that the brick would extend around to north and south facades. The Board discussion was split regarding the two different roof forms on the west (front) façade. Some believed the roof forms should be level or

at least symmetrical while others had no opinion. They were also uncomfortable with location of the garage entrance which appeared disconnected from the mass of the building. They recommended pulling the garage entrance to the south so that it is under the main mass of the building. They also recommended that the garage door be transparent.

The Board also felt strongly about the design of the interior corner units on the upper floors that appear to be getting little natural light. The Board expressed a willingness to consider a further departure if the central units could be pulled back such that windows of the corner units would get more light exposure. The Board directed the architect to work with DPD staff to find an appropriate design solution.

Recommendation #3: Work with DPD staff to redesign the garage entrance so that it is more in alignment with the main mass of the building. Ensure that the garage door will be transparent.

Recommendation #4: Work with DPD staff to redesign interior corner units on the upper floors to allow more light penetration into the units. The Board is willing to consider an additional departure from the upper level setback requirement in order to accomplish this.

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 **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-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 thinks that landscaping should be used 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.
- The Board would like the applicant to address issues of personal safety and security at the stairway on the south facade.
- The Board looks forward to conceptual proposals for commercial signage and exterior lighting with specific examples shown.
- The Board recommended moving the trash enclosure inside the garage and not at the street.

At the Recommendation Meeting, the Board directed the applicant to be creative in using materials to break up the north, east and south facades (see above). The use of Boston Ivy was suggested as a softening agent for the concrete walls on these facades. They were pleased to see the elimination of the proposed exterior stairway on the south façade. The trash enclosure has been moved to entirely within the garage and an additional staging area added near the entrance for pickup days.

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.

DEPARTURES FROM DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Departure Summary Table

REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	APPLICANT'S JUSTIFICATION	BOARD RECOMMENDATION
Street level development standards (SMC23.47A.008D2) Residential uses are limited to 20% of the street level street facing façade.	Residential use exceeds 20% of street level street facing façade at Lake City Way NE. Increase to 41% .	Because there is only the one street-facing façade, entries (auto, commercial and residential) must be located here.	The 5 Board members unanimously voted to grant this departure as reasonable for non-habitable residential uses.

Setback Requirements (SMC 23.47A.008D2) Residential street level uses must be at least 4 feet above the sidewalk or at least 10 feet from the sidewalk.	Request reduction in setback (10' to 7' 5") for entrance to residential stair tower.	Entrance doors to residential stair towers should not be recessed such that someone may hide from view.	The 5 Board members voted unanimously to grant this departure noting the personal safety and security aspects .
Setback Requirements (SMC 23.47A.014) Portions of structures above 40' in height need setback of 15' plus 2' for every 10' additional height above 40'.	Request 3'6" reduction in setback above 40' for 16 % of the east facing façade.	In response to the Board direction to set back upper levels from street façade. One unit on each of 3 floors will protrude 3' 6" into the allowable upper level setback.	The 5 Board members unanimously voted to grant this departure. They also suggested a further departure for an additional portion of this façade to allow redesign of the interior corner units (see recommendations).

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

Recommendation #1: Extend overhead weather protection to the doorway north of the garage entrance.

Recommendation #2: Work with DPD staff to refine the material and color choices for the north, east and south facades.

Recommendation #3: Work with DPD staff to redesign the garage entrance so that it is more in alignment with the main mass of the building. Ensure that the garage door will be transparent.

Recommendation #4: Work with DPD staff to redesign interior corner units to allow more light penetration into the units. The Board is willing to consider an additional departure from the upper level setback requirement in order to accomplish this.