

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE
of
THE WEST SEATTLE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

October 23, 2008

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3008612

Address: 4106 Delridge Way SW

Applicant: James Barker, architect, for Trevor Simpson, developer

Board Members Present: David Foster
Joseph Hurley

Board Members Absent: Deb Barker
Jeff McCord
Christie Coxley

Staff Member Present: Michael Dorcy

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project site consists of two lots that lie on a fairly steep and wooded hillside on the east side of Delridge Way SW, bounded on the north by the unopened right-of-way of SW Dakota Street and extending 125 feet to the south. The lots are approximately 95 feet in depth. North of the site, and across the undeveloped SW Dakota Street right-of-way is a vacant lot and just to the north of that there is a lot developed with a residential 4-plex. The lot directly south of the site is undeveloped and immediately south of that lot there is a residential triplex.

The site is zoned NC1- 40 and sits within a ribbon of similarly zoned lots running along the east side of Delridge Way SW and stretching north from the site. Zoning in the immediate vicinity to the north, south, and west is LDT Multifamily zoning. The zoning to the east is Single Family 5000 (SF-5000). Zoning north of Southwest Dakota Street is commercial, including C1/65' (Commercial 1, with a structure height limit of 65 feet) and NC1/40' (Neighborhood Commercial 1, with a structure height limit of 40 feet). The immediate area is developed with single family homes, single family homes converted to multi-family use, and multi-family structures, with an office building in the block across Southwest Dakota Street to the northwest

and a community center and school structures in the blocks to the south across Southwest Genesee Street. This proposal site has been designated an environmentally critical area due to landslide-prone conditions and the presence of steep slopes of 40% average slope or greater.

The immediate development site was subject to a rezone request and re-mapped from LDT to NC1-40 in 2007 (see MUP #3003780 and CF#307721).

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The intended development, as explained by the developer and architect, will provide a mixed-use development containing underground parking, retail street level uses along Delridge Way SW and 3-stories of residential units above the street-level retail uses.

Three conceptual plans were presented to the Board. Each showed a one-story plinth that essentially filled the site, with retail spaces along the sidewalk and parking spaces behind. Above the plinth, and pulled slightly away from the front and rear, Option A presented a four-story figure eight with two light wells located centrally in the east-west direction. Option B added small indentations, or added “courts” at the north and south ends of the figure eight building. Option C was shown the four stories above the plinth configured as a cursive “Y,” allowing for light courts at the south end as in scheme B and another open to the west, instead of enclosed in both A and B. The long leg of the “Y” aligned with the front facade of the lower plinth then receded slightly in four steps as in angled north and east.

Each of the proposed schemes agreed at the first level, with the mass of the structure pulled to Delridge Way SW, pulled slightly back from the sidewalk to allow for widening. Commercial space was provided facing onto Delridge on either side of a central pedestrian residential entrance, with enclosed parking behind. Vehicles were to access the parking via an east-west driveway located within the SW Dakota Street right-of-way.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Five members of the public signed in as parties of record at the Early Design Guidance public meeting. Two individuals commented on the heavy traffic that Delridge Way experiences in the morning and evening in particular and the fact that the existing narrow sidewalk posed problems of pedestrian safety. One member of the public noted that the development provided for an opportunity to create a pocket park in the unopened SW Dakota Street right-of-way. Two members of the public noted that each of the proposed schemes were lacking in spirit and that they could take inspiration from a “spirited building” recently constructed “in the Northwest style” and located at Delridge Way SW and SW Andover St. The suggested it as an example of a well-designed building, well-

integrated into the neighborhood and one that might set a precedent and example for new development in the neighborhood.

PRIORITIES

The Board chair noted at the outset of the Board's deliberations that the Board would have found it more desirable to have a presentation of more distinctive schemes. He expressed concern that the three so-called "options" were not that different from one another. He suggested that the site deserved more extensive variations on how it might be developed and suggested that there might be other "better" ways than had been explored or presented. It was suggested that the preferred option ought to be shown against a more substantial array of variations for comparison's sake and to provide the Board with a real base for their guidance and direction.

Nevertheless, after visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents and hearing the comments of the few members of the public in attendance, the Design Review Board Members present provided the siting and design guidance described below 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.

In making their presentation, the design team identified these guidelines in the Citywide (A-1, A-4, A-10, C-2, C-4, D-12 and E-3) as applicable and being of the highest priority for the project.

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.

The three massing alternatives showed portions of the street-level commercial spaces held back from the sidewalk. Portions of the upper-level residential massing was also withheld from the street in each of the presented schemes. The Board was in agreement that pulling portions of the building back at sidewalk level gave an opportunity for an expanded sidewalk and enhanced pedestrian experience. The erosion of the upper façade was less clearly desirable. The applicant was encouraged to develop both a street-level and upper façade that would maintain a strong sense of balance (both compositionally and conceptually).

A-4 Human Activity New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street

This was identified by the Board as being of highest importance for the success of the project, in particular as it dealt with the design of the driveway and how the driveway could best interface with the retail at the north end of the building.

A-10 Corner Lots

The applicant should not lose sight of the fact that this is a corner lot with design possibilities opened up by the SW Dakota Street right-of-way and the opportunities of layering a wrap-around retail, outdoor space, landscaping and walkway between the driveway and 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.

In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its façade walls.

The Board noted the public comments and the example offered of a “good” neighborhood compatible design some distance to the north of the site. The Board also noted that a mixed-used building at this location did not need sloped, residential roofs. They were deemed “undesirable” by the Board.

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.

Architectural materials and details should be integrated within a building whose concept is appropriate for the site and its surroundings as well as its programmatic uses.

The Board was not prescriptive regarding materials, but noted that they would be looking for high quality, well detailed materials, carefully chosen with an eye for color. Under this guideline the Board also noted that a setback to allow for sidewalk widening was most desirable, but they did not think that a landscaping strip between the sidewalk and building was appropriate for this site.

D: Pedestrian Environment

D-11 Residential Entries and Transitions

...the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and be visually interesting for pedestrians.

Each of the three massing alternatives had shown a centrally located residential entry, merely indicated by a break in the retail frontage. The Board requested that the location of the residential entry should be carefully studied and that they would be expecting to see an entry that was designed with a careful attention to detail.

E. Landscaping

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 indicated that the applicant would be expected to present a good and convincing architectural argument for including landscaping along the street-level façade of the proposed structure.

DEPARTURES

The proponents indicated they would be making departure requests to provide less than the Cod-required setback from the rear property line abutting the single-family zoned lots to the east of the site and not to provide a triangular 15-foot setback from the residentially zoned lot immediately to the south.

The Board noted that in general departures that were requested most obviously benefit the developer. It is the Board's responsibility to insist upon a high quality building for the neighborhood in return. This translates most directly into a quality design and the quality and execution of façade materials. Architectural materials and details should be integrated within a building whose concept is appropriate for the site and its surroundings as well as its intended program.

STAFF COMMENTS

It was the recommendation and expectation of the Design Review Board that the project be returned to the Board for a second Early Design Guidance meeting. This recommendation was primarily based upon the Board's judgment that the applicant had not provided a range of differences between proposed schemes sufficient to convey a careful exploration and analysis of the physical site and vicinity. Because of this, the Board argued, it was handicapped in its obligations to clearly identify the Guidelines and to give precise guidance for the project to proceed to MUP application at that time.

Normally DPD would defer to the Board and schedule a second Early Design Guidance meeting for this development proposal. Details, however, within the Planned Use and Development Agreement (PUDA) between the applicant and City of Seattle City Council, negotiated at the time of the rezone which enables this project, requires that a MUP application be submitted by the applicant imminently. The Department will allow the applicant to proceed with design development and Master Use Permit application and return to the Board for a Recommendation Meeting. The design proposed at that time should be in keeping with the Guidelines noted above as being of highest priority for the project. In addition, the presentation by the applicant should address specific concerns raised by the Board as included in these notes. It is understood, however, that the actual design development of the proposed structure may be at a level more malleable than might normally be expected at the Recommendation meeting.

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