



City of Seattle
Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning & Development
Diane M. Sugimura, Director

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

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: **3008621**
Address: **4351 15th Avenue South**
Applicant: **Brandon Skinner for HdIT Colaborative, LLC**

Date of Meeting: **March 11, 2008**
Date of Report: **March 27, 2008**

Board Members Present: **Ann Beeman** (*Board Chair*)
Rob Mohn
Steve Sindiong (*Meeting Chair*)
Michele Wang

Board Members Absent: **John Woodworth**

DPD Staff Present: **Catherine McCoy, Land Use Planner**

SITE AND VICINITY:

The subject site is a 14,400 square foot rectangular parcel located at the intersection of 15th Avenue South, South Columbian Way, and South Oregon Street, in southeast Seattle's Beacon Hill neighborhood. The site is in the midst of a small NC1-40 zone (Neighborhood Commercial with a height limit of forty feet), entirely surrounded by single family zoning (SF 5000).

A vacant single story brick façade structure, built in 1946 and most recently a grocery store, occupies the north half of the site; the remainder is developed with a surface parking lot. Immediately west of the site is an improved 16 foot wide asphalt alley.



Abutting the existing structure to the north is a commercial building with similar dates of construction and architectural style. Uses surrounding the site include a mix of single and two story retail and multifamily residential structures.

This is a prominent intersection resting atop a topographic ridgeline and offering views of Mount Rainier, the City of Seattle, and the Olympic Mountain Range to the west. Area landmarks include the Asa Mercer Middle School and the Veteran’s Affairs (VA) Hospital east of the site, Jefferson Park and Golf Course north/northeast of the site, and MacPherson’s Fruit and Produce Stand southwest of the site. West of the site and for an extended distance to Interstate 5 (I5), is a well established Post WWII-era single family residential neighborhood with predominantly one and two-story craftsman, bungalow, and “Seattle Box House” structures.

The site itself is relatively flat, rising 6 feet in elevation from northwest to southeast. The site is not within a neighborhood design guideline area, nor is it within an environmentally critical area (ECA). South Columbian Way is an 80 foot wide principal arterial; 15th Avenue South is an 80 foot wide minor arterial; and South Oregon Street is a 60 foot wide residential access street.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project proposal includes demolition of the existing building and construction of a four story commercial and residential structure with two levels of covered parking. The proposed development includes the following:

- First level - approximately 6,000 square feet of ground-level commercial space abutting 15th Avenue South and wrapping around the corner along South Oregon Street, parking, and residential lobby;
- One half level of alley accessed parking;
- Three stories of approximately 30 market rate residential units above the ground-level commercial space;
- Total enclosed off-street parking for approximately 45 vehicles;
- Two vehicle access points are proposed: one off South Oregon, the other off the alley immediately west of the site.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

The applicant focused the presentation on one scheme, the preferred option, supplying information pertaining to the alternative massing options (Schemes 2 and 3) during the Board clarifying questions and comments period.

All three options include an L-shaped 4 story structure consisting of 3 stories of residential uses with approximately 30 units above 6,000 square feet of ground level commercial space. Two tiers of parking are proposed at and below-grade, accessed from South Oregon Street and the alley. The Residential entry is from South Oregon Street.

The basic configuration, overall massing, and vehicular access is the same for all three options. The primary differences include slight modifications to the residential entry and parking access point along the South Oregon Street façade, slight variations of the corner design, and variations in the location of

the upper level amenity area. The applicants described this corner lot as an important and prominent site and noted that the intent of the preferred massing option, Scheme 1, is to 1) protect the single family edge by shifting the building mass to 15th Avenue South and placing the open space along the single family-facing portion of the site, 2) focus commercial uses along 15th Avenue South and wrap these street level uses around the corner to carry further along the south-facing façade.

BOARD CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, WITH ANSWERS

The Board had the following questions and clarifying comments, with responses *in italics* provided by the applicant:

- Are there departure requests at this time?
 - *There are none at this time (for the preferred option). **Staff Note:** A zoning review of the project proposal has not been conducted at this time, however it is very likely that there will be a need for a departure for parking location and access off South Oregon Street (see Requested Departures, Table 1). The applicant and DPD staff will work to clarify this item.*
- Please elaborate on the details of the wall adjacent to the alley. What is the height of the wall and what is the design concept for the alley façade?
 - *The wall along the alley will be primarily at the 13 foot level. Above the wall there will be an exposed open space area set back and strongly vegetated.*
- Board member Wang expressed disappointment that the applicants did not discuss their other massing options for the benefit of the Board and the public in attendance, and to build a story for how the preferred design developed.
 - *The applicant went into more detail with regard to development of the other massing options and how they arrived at the preferred alternative, which is to protect the single family edge and keep commercial uses along 15th Avenue South and wrapped around the corner onto South Oregon Street.*
- Board member Beeman asked if the applicant had considered options/models for locating all parking access off the alley. The Board feels showing alternative parking access points is important for a better understanding of the overall concept.
 - *There are challenges inherent in placing parking access entirely off the alley because of added costs in ramping parking down. Also, it reduces the viability of having functional commercial space and negatively affects the internal plan for the commercial floor space. The applicants stated, however, that the option of eliminating the parking access from South Oregon and adding a stronger street level residential and commercial presence along South Oregon Street would be further evaluated.*
- All three of the options present one L-shaped design rotated at different angles. Did you consider other massing options?
 - *Yes. And we kept coming back to the preferred option, because it offered more open space for the users, and it maximizes the number of units with a view towards the Olympic Mountains and the City. (The applicant circulated a copy of the EDG packet to the audience.)*

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 30 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. Residents focused their concerns on ensuring that “decent” commercial space is provided along both street frontages; ensuring that respect is given to the residential users south and west of the site; and ensuring that traffic and parking impacts generated from the development are thoughtfully considered and mitigated.

- Will the units be apartments or condominiums? What will the configuration of units be - studio, one bedroom, two bedroom? Has there been consideration given to affordable, low-income units?
 - *Whether the units will be apartments or condominiums has, as yet, been undecided. Right now, we’re planning on six studio units, nine one bedroom-one bathroom units, and 15 two bedroom-two bathroom units, for a total of 30 units. The size of the units will range from 500 square feet to 1100 square feet. All of the units will be market rate housing.*
- Will all of the parking for the commercial space be provided on the street?
 - *Our goal is to have the parking access entry for commercial uses on the street side (South Oregon Street).*
- Is the EDG packet information available on a/the website?
 - *Yes. The website is:*
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp
- Please clarify project parking design - one level, two levels...?
 - *Parking is proposed to be split into two levels, with the majority of the parking above grade and enclosed. Total parking spaces will be 45 spaces. The commercial code requirement is for 5 spaces.*
- A member from the public, focused on the potential for parking problems, provided a brief history of uses on the site, including most recently a grocery store. At one time a church was in use on the site, he stated, which created an enormous amount of parking problems.
- Several residents agreed that there is a distinct need to attract good, lively retail at the street level, and the way to do that is to provide good off-street parking. One individual said that the applicants will need more than five spots if there are to be two retail spaces.
- You only show one massing concept that “works”. Why only one?
 - *Three alternatives are presented in the EDG packet and are available for review online (see weblink above). This preferred scheme “works”. The intent is to maximize building mass in an NC 1-40 zone, load the massing away from the alley and the single family zone adding the feel of another backyard. We looked at U-shaped and T-shaped massing options and feel that the current proposal does the best job. The impact of the proposed mass is not much different from what exists now.*
- This is a “landmark site” with the principal approach along South Columbian Way. Your program design is similar to others found in Ballard, Queen Anne, and Lake City; please come up with something different, unique, special – not boring – for this site. Find the opportunity in this site. And, please, *no* vinyl siding. Take cues from the surrounding community when it comes time for building materials and colors.

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES

The Southeast Design Review Board has visited the site, considered the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, heard public comment, and have 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. For a list of all Seattle *Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings* referenced below, visit DPD’s online Design Review Program.¹

The applicant should address all design priorities and Board guidance below during the next stages of design review.

“Hot Button Issues” are items specifically addressed by the Design Review Board at the EDG meeting, and are considered design items of top importance for the design of this proposal (aka, design priorities). Presented below are those items the Board identified as priority “hot button issues”, along with specific guidelines that apply to, and support, the Board’s direction.

Present alternatives/studies of the corner building design

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 intersection, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

A-4 Human Activity

New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

A-10 Corner Lots

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

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

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. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

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

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.

¹ Applicant’s toolbox: Design Guidelines

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Applicant_s_Toolbox/Design_Guidelines/default.asp.

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-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.

This is a prominent corner site, one that catches the attention of motorists and pedestrians from all aspects of the intersection; from the southeast along South Columbian Way, from the north and south along 15th Avenue South, and from the east and west along South Oregon Street. The Board, and members of the public, feel that this corner represents a “landmark” for the area, an important center of energy that needs to be managed and balanced in a way that is not overpowering for the low-density commercial zone (NC1-40), and that respects the adjacent single family zone (SF 5000).

The Board feels that the current corner design concept is not appropriate for the site and should develop a stronger connection with the distinct character of the neighborhood, which as members of the public stated “is not like Ballard, Queen Anne, or Lake City”. The Board suggested creating a design that “celebrates” the corner and creates an “activity zone”. The design should be compatible with, and should respond to, the surrounding neighborhood character.

For the next phase of the Design Review process, the applicant should present new options/studies for corner design of the site. The Board looks forward to seeing options that encourage activity and community interest at the street level; that does not over-power the corner, but rather ties in well with the other corners of the intersection, such as with MacPherson’s Fruit and Produce Stand to the southeast. The design at the street level should include sufficient lighting as to make the corner safe and inviting, should include overhead weather protection (along both street fronts), and should incorporate treatment options such as special pavement materials, plantings, street furniture, etc. The design should include quality materials, as is the case with much of the older residential and commercial development in the Beacon Hill neighborhood. The Board strongly recommends using brick masonry.

The corner should be prominent; the structure should provide distinct, albeit cohesive elements – strong commercial base, middle, top elements – both horizontally and vertically. Additionally, the site includes one corner with two distinct street edges. Fifteenth Avenue South is retail and commercially oriented, while South Oregon Street offers a gateway into the residential zone to the west. Each street level should include design options applicable to uses along the street; the building should not have to include one symmetrical corner treatment.

Present alternatives for parking and vehicle access

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access

Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances

The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security

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

Board members are not satisfied with the single design option of parking access points to the site, which are presented the same in each of the three alternatives; along South Oregon Street and along the alley west of the site. The Board feels that since there is an alley available, and since the site is large enough and relatively flat, the applicant should present a design option(s) that proposes all access to the site from the alley. Not only is this a direct code requirement, albeit departable, but also addresses pedestrian safety along the right-of-way and increases the potential for enhancing the residential entry.

The above item ties in with another issue the Board has with the design at the street level along South Oregon Street, which is that the proposed residential entry off South Oregon Street appears to be a “cavernous dark zone”. The residential entry should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street and should be safely separated from any vehicular entrance. As one Board member stated, the residential entries should “pop” out and should not be adversely impacted by a parking access door or entryway.

Improve the alley façade treatment

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 intersection, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

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.

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

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. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a

step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

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.

D-2 Blank Walls

Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security

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

The Board would like to see options for treatment of the alley façade. Currently, the proposed design concept presents a solid blank mass. The Board would like to see the applicants continue exploring design concepts for the alley wall, which would go a long way in alleviating scale impacts on the single family zone to the west, and would add to pedestrian and motorist safety and security along the alley. Several options should be considered, such as a green wall, textured wall, articulated wall, color-treated wall, public art (as one member of the public added), light wells – employing multiple creative variations on texture, materials, and lighting.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

Certain departures from Land Use Code requirements may be permitted as part of the design review process. Departures may be allowed if an applicant demonstrates that a requested departure would result in a development which better meets the intent of the adopted design guidelines (SMC 23.41.012). The applicant is requesting the following Land Use Code departures:

Table 1 Requested Departures

<i>Land Use Code Standard</i>	<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Rationale for Request</i>	<i>DPD Guidance</i>
<p>Parking location and access, SMC 23.47A.032</p> <p><i>Access to parking must be from the alley if the alley is improved to the standards of 23.53.030C.</i></p>	<p>Requests two points of vehicular parking access: South Oregon Street, and the alley abutting the site to the west.</p>	<p>Parking solely off the alley reduces the viability of having functional commercial space(s); effects the internal plan for commercial floor space; adds significantly to the overall cost(s) of the project.</p>	<p>DPD staff will continue to consider this request contingent upon the response to these design guidelines.</p>

NEXT STEPS/STAFF COMMENTS

MUP Application:

1. Submit application for Master Use Permit (MUP) application. **Please** contact Catherine McCoy (catherine.mccoy@seattle.gov or 206-684-0543) when you have scheduled your MUP intake appointment;
2. Please include a written response to the guidance provided in this EDG (see **CAM 238**, available at <http://www.seattle.gov/dclu/publications/cam/cam238.pdf>);
3. Plan on embedding in the MUP plan set 11x17 colored and shadowed elevations, and landscape and right-of-way improvement plans into the front of the MUP plan set (4 per sheet). Label sheets “DR-1”, “DR-2”, etc.;
4. Provide graphic demonstrations, including 3 dimensional colored graphics, sketches, studies, etc., to demonstrate the design response to the guidance;
5. Show green factor calculations pursuant to SMC 23.47A.016;
6. Show details of the solid waste storage area including dimensions, foot print, etc.;
7. Include a survey stamped and signed by a Washington State licensed surveyor;
8. Provide this Planner with the following information, which will be forwarded to the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON) for their review regarding potential landmark designation of the existing structure (see **Appendix A**);
9. Contact the City Urban Forester, Bill Ames at SDOT (684-5693), to begin discussion of street trees plantings along South Oregon Street and 15th Avenue South.

Recommendation Meeting:

1. Provide building sections and elevations that show the proposed development in context with adjacent structures, **north, south, east, west**;
2. Provide detailed elevations, plans, drawings of the treatment of the streetscape(s) along all three public rights-of-way at street-level: 15th Avenue South, South Oregon Street, and the abutting alley (include in the graphics adjacent buildings for optimum context);
3. Provide a separate, large scale, well programmed, landscaping plan indicating size, species, and placement of vegetation, open space area(s), planting strips, green factor calculations, public amenity areas if appropriate, etc.;
4. Provide colors and materials board(s) to this DPD Planner, including manufacturer cut sheets;
5. Provide a lighting plan (include location and type of lighting)
6. Please submit a conceptual signage plan (general type of signage, areas of proposed signage, and any signage conditions);

Catherine McCoy
Land Use Planner
Department of Planning & Development

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APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER A STRUCTURE APPEARS TO MEET ANY OF THE CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION (2- TO 3-PAGE RESPONSE ANTICIPATED):

Physical Description: Provide a physical description of both the interior and exterior of the structure(s).

Architect or Builder: Provide information about the architect/builder; i.e., regarding education, career, other works in Seattle. If other structures were built in Seattle, indicate whether they remain and their location.

Statement of Significance: Current and past uses and owners of the structure(s). The role these uses and/or owners played in the community, city, state or nation.

Photographs: Clear exterior photos of all elevations of the building; interior photos of major or significant spaces; available historic photos; neighborhood context photos.

Bibliography of sources