



City of Seattle
Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning & Development
D.M. Sugimura, Director

**FINAL DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE
SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: **3008621**

Address: **4351 15th Avenue South**

Applicant: **Brandon Skinner, H+dIT Collaborative, LLC**

Meeting Date: **July 22, 2008**
Report Date: **September 15, 2008**

Board members present: **Brett Conway
Rob Mohn
Steve Sindiong – Acting Board Chair
Michelle Wang**

Board member(s) absent: **John Woodworth – Board Chair**

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. 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 development program 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;
- Three stories of approximately 30 market rate residential units above ground-level commercial space;
- Enclosed off-street parking for approximately 60 vehicles;
- Two vehicle access points are proposed: one from South Oregon Street, the other from the alley immediately west of the site.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE: March 11, 2008
--

The Early Design Guidance (EDG) meeting was held on March 11, 2008 at the Rainier Cultural Arts Center. On that date the project proponents presented 3 design options, members from the general public weighed in on the design alternatives offered, and the Southeast Area Design Review Board (Area 4) identified design priorities for the applicants to focus on during the next stages of design development. The siting and design guidelines enumerated by the Southeast Design Review Board are from the City of Seattle's *Design Review Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*, [Design Review Program](#).

A copy of the EDG report and the EDG design packet are available for viewing as posted on the City of Seattle Design Review Program website, [Design Review Program](#), and in the Master Use Permit (MUP) file, which is available for review at DPD's Public Resource Center (PRC), 700 Fifth Ave, Suite 2000 ([PRC](#)).

SUMMARY OF EDG BOARD ISSUES AND PUBLIC COMMENT

EDG Board Issues

1. Present alternatives/studies of the corner building design

- Create a prominent, albeit not overpowering, corner design that celebrates the corner and creates an activity zone. The design should be compatible with, and should respond to, the surrounding neighborhood character, and should create interest at the street level.
- The design should also include sufficient lighting, should include overhead weather protection, and should incorporate special treatments such as special pavement materials, plantings, and street furniture.
- The materials should be of high quality, such as brick masonry.
- Each street level design should include options applicable to uses along the street.

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics
 A-4 Human Activity
 A-10 Corner Lots
 B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility
 C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency
 C-3 Human Scale

C-4 Exterior Finish Materials
 D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances
 D-9 Commercial Signage
 D-10 Commercial Lighting
 D-11 Commercial Transparency

2. Present alternatives for parking and vehicle access

- Present a design option that proposes all points of access from the alley.
- Additionally, the residential access point along South Oregon Street should be clearly identifiable, visible from the street, and safely separated from any/all vehicular access.

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access
 C-5 Structured Parking Entrances

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures
 D-7 Personal Safety and Security

3. Improve the alley façade treatment

- The alley façade should not appear as a solid blank mass, but should present a safe, secure zone for single family residents to the west, for community members at-large, and for on-site users. Options include a green screen/wall, textured wall, articulated wall, color-treated wall, public art, etc.

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics
 A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites
 B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility
 C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency

D-2 Blank Walls
 D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures
 D-7 Personal Safety and Security

EDG Public Comment

- General concern was expressed that the proposed commercial use(s) will reduce an already inadequate supply of parking spots;
- As the site is a prominent intersection and a principal approach along South Columbian Way, members of the public suggested that the applicants take cues from the surrounding context and thoroughly consider a more unique and special design.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION: July 22, 2008

The applicant applied for the Master Use Permit (MUP) on April 22, 2008. After initial DPD design, zoning and SEPA review, the Design Review Board met on July 22, 2008 to review the project design and provide recommendations. The four Southeast Design Review Board members present considered the site and context, the public comments, the previously identified design guideline priorities, and reviewed the drawings presented by the applicant.

The project proponents focused the presentation on their preferred scheme which is their response to earlier design guidance and priority guidelines established by the Board. The design update offers a change to the corner design in which the massing is stronger, turns the corner from 15th Avenue South onto South Oregon Street, and offers a larger gathering space at the street level. The design is set back off 15th Avenue South and includes a canopy across the entrance.

The design of the access point from South Oregon Street presents a more visible and prominent entry, and the building materials are more contiguous with the retail element. More commercial parking spaces than normally required by code are provided.

The design update of the alley presents a softer transition of the commercial zone on the adjacent single family zone to the west. The brick material has been wrapped around the corner from South Oregon Street north along the alley wall. The proposal now includes a wider green screen along the alley wall; the green wall has been pushed back to facilitate the growth of vegetation; and the concrete wall has been scored to add texture.

A number of elements have been added to the project to enhance the overall green system, such as stormwater planters on the courtyard level and at the street levels of both 15th Avenue South and South Oregon Street. A water feature along South Oregon Street west of the garage access point, which also acts as a stormwater collection device, has been added to offer interest at the street level and enhance the façade and streetscape along South Oregon Street.

BOARD CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, WITH ANSWERS

- How will the commercial garage door activate during regular business hours?
 - *The garage door will be continuously open during commercial hours and closed after regular business hours. Signage will be conveniently and readily located for commercial and residential on-site users.*
- How will people in cars get to the retail, will they walk down a ramp? Is there a ramp in the lobby area?

- *There is a door from inside the garage/parking area to the residential/commercial lobby area with stairs leading to the sidewalk level. Individuals will then walk along South Oregon to the commercial spaces along 15th Avenue South.*
- Where is the trash bin/recycling area for the residential users?
 - *The garbage area is a combined residential and commercial collection area. There is a trash shoot on every level and a stairwell to the garbage area.*
- Will there be bicycle parking at the street level?
 - *Not at present, however, this feature could be added into one of the existing spaces currently designated for seating area, between the sidewalk and the curb area along South Oregon Street.*
- Why are you proposing private plantings along 15th Avenue South, in front of the retail spaces?
 - *We initially tried to put them outboard of the property line; however SDOT stated there was not enough room for street trees or additional landscaping along this sidewalk area. We felt the streetscape needed improvement, we needed to satisfy development standards for landscaping (green factor), and we intend to incorporate a stormwater system of collection into the planters. The overflow from the planters will go into the drainage system. Vegetation options include Dwarf Redtwig Dogwood, for example.*
- The canopies over the marquee are green roofs? How would these be maintained?
 - *That is the intent/idea. The homeowners association will maintain these green spaces, which will not need much in the way of maintenance after the initial season. We hope to create a benefit to the residents and a pleasant visual feature for passersby – enliven the streetscape.*
- Have you considered including furniture and/or benches in the courtyard area? Will there be privacy fences of any type?
 - *We intend to include communal furniture and will set the edge of the courtyard with planters for informal seating, while maintaining the views of the Sound and mountains. This will be designed as an informal buffer between shared and private spaces – small trees and planters to soften the edge(s).*
- Please explain the architectural concept of the north elevation – the blank walls.
 - *We view this as an element that overlaps the individual elements, as a contiguous element that brings a unifying piece to the whole façade - a backdrop to other elements. We believe this gives a strong back-presence, and a larger presence, to the commercial façade – with the major element traversing the commercial street and the minor element along the residential portion of the building.*
- Is the north wall all blank? What type of materials do you plan along this elevation?
 - *There is the wrapping element of the painted hardi-panel siding, and there is cmu block.*
- How much of the area of the green screen along the alley is being provided to make this a viable feature – 6 inches is shown, will 6 inches indeed work?
 - *It will work as long as the depth needed is attained. There are examples around town that are working. We are only able to provide 6 inches along the alley for the green screen, because we are stepping the building back for vegetation along 15th Avenue South.*
- How will you manage light spillover from vehicles parking in the upper level parking area?
 - *We brought up the bumper element to 42 inches to block lights from the cars.*
- Did you study ways to soften the transition of the building to the residential neighbors to the west? Part of the south elevation feels overly tall.

- *From grade, the height is 40 feet and we're allowed 44 feet. We set back the building, per development standards, and we looked at several options for the car park. The corner is less than 13 feet at the southwest corner; we've added fenestration to the concrete wall, have added a green wall, and have worked to soften this massing.*
- What is the orange material?
 - *Stained hardi-lap siding, which looks like cedar (but is not wood). This is an attractive modern material that lasts longer. The windows are colored vinyl; the base elements are concrete with sandblasting to add texture, and the brick material is stacked rather than standard brick coursing.*
- What is the material at the edge of the balcony? The two grays are different – please clarify.
 - *The material is gunmetal gray (metal). The gray tones look similar in the renderings, but are actually different. We'd like to implement a gray tone to soften the transition, rather than a dark black. All the metal material will be the darker gray material, such as the flashing, railing, etc.; the hardi-panel siding will be a lighter gray (not including the stained hardi-lap siding).*
- The entrance to the residential tower seems undifferentiated from the adjacent commercial uses. Please explain.
 - *We brought out this area to make a contiguous building element. Users will know where the entry is, will either park in the parking garage or catch the Metro transit. We didn't feel there was a need to differentiate this area. We felt there was no need to add an additional element to the overall façade, and that what we came up with would be appreciated as a solid, unified and stronger element.*

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 9 members of the public attended the Recommendation meeting, and as with the EDG meeting held previously, members of the public were concerned primarily with parking, per unit value and type of residential development, and general timeline for demolition and construction; no design related questions were offered at this design review meeting.

SUMMARY OF DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board discussed several items during the course of deliberations, and was unable to reach consensus on the majority of issues raised. Topics of discussion included the following:

1. The updated corner design;
2. Treatment of the alley;
3. The additional access point along South Oregon Street;
4. The residential entry point along 15th Avenue South;
5. Finish materials;
6. Overall massing;
7. Resolution of the north façade;
8. The viability of the proposed landscaping system.

BOARD RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

At the recommendation meeting on July 22, 2008, the 4 members of the Southeast Design Review Board unanimously recommended approval of the project with the following recommended conditions to be worked out administratively by the Department prior to approval of the final Master Use Permit (MUP) plans:

- 1. The Board felt the east residential entry along 15th Avenue South needs more work towards offering a more prominent, differentiated, and safe entryway. The Board recommended adding a canopy/marquee above the entryway, much like what currently exists over the remainder of the commercial base. Another recommendation included the direction to add glazing (window) in the side of the commercial space facing north. Landscaping and/or lighting, and increasing or widening the amount of proposed glazing or widening the entire entryway to the space, would also improve the current design.**
- 2. The Board wants the project proponents to develop a clear access plan for commercial visitors parking in the commercial parking garage to safely and conveniently navigate their way to the retail space(s) proposed along 15th Avenue South. This could include access through the residential lobby to the street, or the addition of rear doors to the retail spaces.**
- 3. The Board recommended that the landscaping plan be further developed to include a recommended management and maintenance plan for the entire proposed green system. At present, it is unclear how the vegetation will be maintained (i.e., above the marquees along 15th Avenue South, planters and vegetation along 15th Avenue South, the green screen along the alley); it is also unclear as to the extent the water feature along South Oregon will be a “feature” (e.g., only during the rainy season, or otherwise).**

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

LAND USE CODE STANDARD	PROPOSAL	RATIONALE FOR REQUEST	BOARD GUIDANCE AND RECOMMENDATION(S)
<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>The Board recommended approval of the additional access point from South Oregon Street.</p> <p><i>DPD Staff Note: The applicant should work to soften this larger corner-garage area, by adding vegetation to the trellis above the garage door, or providing texture to the wall faces, for example.</i></p>
<p>Residential street-level requirements, SMC 23.47A.010</p> <p><i>Either the first floor of the structure at or above grade shall be at least four (4) feet above sidewalk grade or the street-level façade shall be set back at least ten (10) feet from the sidewalk.</i></p>	<p>Requests that the residential entry be at sidewalk grade along South Oregon Street.</p>	<p>The entryway from South Oregon Street doubles as a residential entryway and a commercial/residential leasing office and lobby. The entryway is set back approximately 4.5 feet.</p>	<p>The Board recommended approval of this request as conditioned to provide a safe, visible pathway for commercial guests to navigate to commercial uses along 15th Avenue North.</p>



Figure 1 East Elevation



Figure 2 South Elevation



Figure 3 West Elevation