



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

**Department of Planning & Development**

D.M. Sugimura, Director

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

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**Project Number:** 3008739

**Address:** 5022 Martin Luther King Jr. Way South

**Applicant:** Linh Tran, Owner

**Date of Meeting:** May 27, 2008

**Date of Report:** June 23, 2008

**Board Members Present:** Brett Conway  
Rob Mohn  
Michele Wang  
John Woodworth, Chair

**Board Members Absent:** Steve Sindiong

**DPD Staff Present:** Lisa Rutzick, Senior Land Use Planner  
Laura Kim, Land Use Planner  
MillieAnne VanDevender, Land Use Planner

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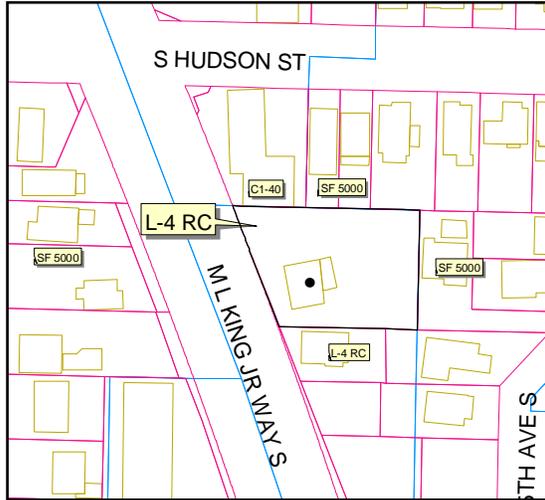
**SITE & VICINITY**

The site consists of approximately 16,850 square feet in area located along Martin Luther King Jr Way S. It is one parcel south of S Hudson St. There is no alley located on or adjacent to the site.

A retail structure currently occupies the site as well as some on-site parking for use by the retail space.

The topography of the site is mostly level at the street; slopes about 6' in the first 50' from the west property line; then drops dramatically toward the east. The land slopes down about 20' from the southwest corner of the property to the northeast.

The zoning of the site is L-4 RC (Multifamily Lowrise-4 Residential-Commercial). Approximately one-third of the north property line is adjacent to a C1-40, Commercial One with a 40 foot height limit, zone. The remaining zoning adjacent to the north property line as well as the east property line is SF 5000 (Single Family). The parcel to the south is also zoned L-4 RC. The parcels directly across Martin Luther King Jr Way S are zoned SF 5000. The site falls within the “Columbia City Residential Urban Village” and the South Seattle Reinvestment Area.



The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) classifies Martin Luther King Jr Way S as a principal arterial. The site is located in the Light Rail Construction Impact Zone along the future light rail system route. The Alaskan Street Station for the South Transit Light Rail was built approximately 4 blocks to the north. Sound Transit recently located and installed one curb cut for access to the subject site.

The majority of development in the neighborhood consists of single family structures. An automotive repair shop occupies the parcel north of the site and retail uses exist further north of that. There is a motel south and west of the site. Multifamily structures currently occupy properties south along MLK Jr Way S with an additional multifamily project under development on a previously vacant lot. Recent development in the area consists mainly of additions and alterations to existing single family homes.

Metro transit (bus route #42) serves the immediate area with a transit stop just north of the site on S Hudson St and MLK Jr Way S.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The project consists of demolition of the existing retail building and construction of a new mixed use structure. The proposal includes four retail spaces at ground level with one residential unit above for a total of two stories. The proposed retail spaces will total approximately 6,000 square feet and the residential unit will be approximately 1,200 square feet. Parking for at least 20 spaces is proposed with at least one space enclosed within the structure for use by the residential unit.

## **DESIGN PRESENTATION**

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options were designed to take advantage of the limited access to the site via a driveway entrance from MLK Jr Way S. Each of the three options located the structure to the north and west of the site to ensure visibility for drivers traveling north on MLK Jr Way S. All three schemes have retail on the ground level and one residential unit on the second floor located to the north of the site.

The first scheme, preferred by the applicant, (Scheme A) proposed four retail spaces on the ground floor that form an “L” shape with the residential unit above the middle of the building. The area of the residential unit comprises the only portion of the structure greater than one story. The majority of the building is one story tall with a roof deck above. A tower of at least two stories stands in the center of the “L”. This scheme allows all retail spaces to have street exposure. Parking intended for the retail spaces (six spaces) would be located in the void of the “L” shaped building with additional parking both to the rear of the building and within the structure itself. Additionally, the first scheme (Scheme A) proposed open space opportunities between the street and the façade of the building.

The second scheme (Scheme B) proposed retail spaces on the ground level with the northern-most space closer to the street and the other retail spaces stepping away from MLK Jr Way S to the east. The massing of the building follows the same pattern: a single story at the street, two stories at the center and rear of the building. The residential unit was again located above the middle of the building with surrounding roof decks. A portion of the structure extended almost to the south property line and spanned over the existing slope to allow the driveway to pass through to the rear of the site thus straddling over the driveway access. Several parking spaces (at least eight) were located between the building and the street and nine more between the building and the east property line.

The third scheme, (Scheme C) proposed the maximum space for retail at ground level with the residential unit above the northeast corner of the ground floor. Two of the retail spaces had street frontage with the other retail space(s) accessed via internal circulation. The third retail space essentially fills the void of the “L” shaped schemes of A and B. The massing appears as three parts with the northeast retail space at one story with a pitched roof, the rear retail space at two stories with a pitched roof and the south west retail space at one story with a flat roof. All parking was located to the rear of the structure accessed by a driveway along the south property line.

A departure from open space requirements was requested for all three proposals. A roof deck was proposed in lieu of ground level open space for the residential unit in each scheme.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

- Requests that parking be located in the front of the retail building so that it may be visible to drivers passing by.
- Crime is a concern if the parking is located in the back because it would be less visible from the street and because the topography of the back side of the lot would further hide any crime activity.
- Encouraged sufficient screening where the development is adjacent to residential lots.
- Apprehensive of the early morning noise generated by delivery trucks.
- Encouraged owners to seek quality tenants to occupy the retail buildings. Also encouraged owners to bring in quality tenants that would add to the surrounding community a variety of services as well as bring in an attractive aesthetic quality to the area.

## **PRIORITIES & BOARD GUIDANCE**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance 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. Note: The Board's guidance follow in *italics*.

### **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-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-4 Human Activity**

New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on 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-8 Parking and Vehicle Access**

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

**A-9 Location of Parking on Commercial Street Fronts**

Parking on a commercial street front should be minimized and where possible should be located behind a building.

*The Board members noted that there were too many parking spaces located in the front of the building towards the street front. The Board prefers the parking to be located in the back of the retail building towards residential units. Parking should not drive the design of the development, but the street front should enhance and encourage safe and interesting pedestrian activity. It was suggested that the front parking area be designed as a plaza area incorporating outdoor seating, landscaping, water features, etc.. The Board also urged a clear explanation of how to avoid any conflicts of cars that will be backing out of parking spaces located in the front.*

<b>B. Height, Bulk, and Scale</b>
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**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.**

*The Board requested that the massing of the development be shifted toward the streetscape. The Board encouraged moving the residential unit towards the streetscape as well in order to transfer the bulk of the structure away from the adjacent residences.*

## **C. Architectural Elements**

### **C-1 Architectural Context**

**New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.**

### **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 context.**

*Board members emphasized the importance of designing the east side of the development. The back side of the project should not be forgotten in terms of design elements*

### **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 urged the architect to specify high quality materials throughout the development and requested transparency for the retail/commercial uses along the street front.*

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

**D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks**

**Parking lots near sidewalks should provide adequate security and lighting, avoid encroachment of vehicles onto the sidewalk, and minimize the visual clutter of parking lot signs and equipment.**

*The Board desires a maximum of three to four parking spaces between the sidewalk and the proposed structure. The design should incorporate an attractive parking court with high quality pavers, benches, and landscaping. The Board encourages reduced widths for the curb cut and driveway. In order to provide exposure for the retail businesses along Martin Luther King Jr. Way and ensure ease of vehicular maneuverability, modifications to the requirements for screening of parking will be considered although attractive landscaping in front should enhance the project's overall appearance.*

**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.**

*The Board specified that all garbage, utility and service areas should be screened.*

**D-7 Personal Safety and Security**

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

*Board members commented that having a residential unit on the second floor of the building will bring in safe elements to the retail area.*

**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 during 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 the building. Blank walls should be avoided.**

*The Board asked for transparency on the west side facing the street to emphasize pedestrian activity and build connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and activities occurring in the building. The Board strongly encouraged the developer to utilize what ever is not used as commercial development, to maximize open space.*

**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 visual interesting street front for pedestrians.**

*Overall, the Board believes pedestrian safety, screening and visibility should be significant factors for creating a parking scheme.*

<b>E. <u>Landscaping</u></b>
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**E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites**

**Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.**

**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.**

**E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions**

**The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.**

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departures were requested:

- 1. OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS (23.45.0165.A3b2i):** The Code requires that a minimum of 25% of the lot area shall be provided as usable open space at ground level. 25% of 16,850 = 4,213 Sq Ft. required. The applicant proposes a reduction to the required open space and proposes the open space to be provided at the roof deck.

The Board indicated that they were unable to support the departure request for a reduction in open space at this time. The Board was not inclined to allow for the open space to be located on the roof deck, and was not in support of reducing the minimum requirement of 25% of the lot area to be open space.

Overall, the Board will evaluate how the design of the project will be made better as a whole in light of the proposed departure request for a reduction in open space. However, the Board’s recommendation on the requested departure will be reserved until the final Board meeting and will be based upon the departure’s potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure.

**Summary of Requested Departures**

<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>REQUEST</b>	<b>BOARD DIRECTION</b>
<b>Open Space Requirements</b> <b>SMC</b> <b>23.45.016A3ib2i</b>	Minimum of 25% of the lot area shall be provided as usable open space at ground level.	To request a reduction of open space requirements and to allow for some ground level open space to be located on the deck of the residential unit on 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor.	The Board members were not inclined to allow for reduction of open space and do not favor the location of open space on the deck. It was not determined how this reduction would better meet design guidelines.

**STAFF COMMENTS & NEXT STEPS:**

**MUP Application:**

1. Submit application for Master Use Permit (MUP) application. Please call **Bruce Rips** (at **206-615-1392**) when you have scheduled your MUP intake appointment.
2. Please include a written response to the guidance provided in this EDG. Plan on embedding four 11x17 colored and shadowed elevations, landscape and right-of-way improvement plans into the MUP plan set (4 per sheet).

**Recommendation Meeting:**

1. *Please submit a color and materials board.*
2. *Present a detailed landscape plan that includes the open spaces, specifically those associated with the residential unit and the rooftop.*