



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning & Development

D.M. Sugimura, Director

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

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: **3008847**

Address: **2743 California Avenue SW**

Applicant: **Ross Jamieson, Lewis Architects**

Meeting Date: **April 24, 2008**

Report Date: **June 24, 2008**

Board Members Present: **Deb Barker, Chair**
Christie Coxley
Joe Hurley
Brandon Nicholson

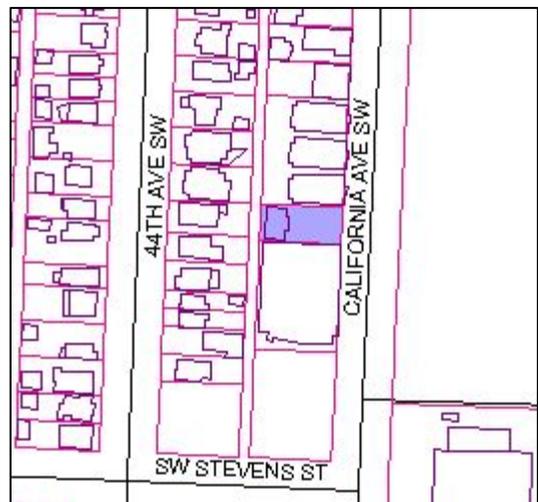
Board Members Absent: **David Foster**

DPD Staff Present: **Lisa Rutzick**

SITE & VICINITY

The subject site is located within a Neighborhood Commercial 2 zone with a 40-foot height limit (NC2-40) and the Admiral Residential Urban Village. This zoning extends north and south of the site, as well as across the street to the east. Across the alley to the west is a Single Family 5000 zone. The lot is approximately 5,650 square feet and is a rectangular shape. The site is currently developed with two story building to be demolished.

The subject site is bounded to the east by California Avenue SW and an alley to the west.



Across California Avenue SW to the east is the Hiawatha Playfield. To the south is a PCC grocery store and to the north is a multifamily residential structure. Across the alley, the development consists of single family structures.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for the design and construction of approximately 14-15,000 square foot medical office building. All of the parking (approximately 10 stalls) for the proposed development is to be provided in a below grade garage that is accessed from the alley.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options showed parking located below grade and accessed from the alley. The design proposes a medical office building with the street level use either as medical office or retail. The second and third floor uses are medical office. The building footprint is proposed to extend to the north and south property lines without openings on these two elevations. A setback from the single family zone across the alley is also proposed.

The first scheme (Option A) proposed a simple block mass at the street. In Option B, the proposed massing includes a gable form with more of the massing located at the street side and transitioning downward at the alley side. Option C proposed stepping back the building at the upper floors to create a balcony and/or planted area.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 11 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Want to see a well-designed building at this location. Concerned that the proposed windows are set back appropriately from abutting neighbor. The views of the proposed building from the park and from the single family zone to the west are important to understand. Locating the elevator core at the street creates a less active area and additional bulk at the street, where activity should be encouraged. The blank wall at the property line should be well designed. The code required parking is insufficient.
- The views from an abutting apartment unit to the north will be lost and the value of this unit will be diminished. Concerned that the fire code is followed. Would like to know when construction will occur. Interested in the aesthetics of the proposed north façade, that will become the new view from this unit.
- The existing medical office building takes access from both the alley and the street. Would like to see the new building take ingress from the street and egress from the alley.
- Pleased to see that the proposed project does not include townhomes. Would like to see modern high quality materials proposed for this project. Prefer a lower height and minimal bulk on the west side, across the alley from the single family zone. The limited hours of operation will have less parking demand than a residential project.

- One comment letter was received advocating for access off of California Avenue, not the alley. Traffic along the alley should be minimized as much as possible and efforts to slow down alley traffic is desired.

PRIORITIES

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.

A. Site Planning

A-2 STREETScape COMPATIBILITY

The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

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.

ADMIRAL DESIGN GUIDELINES: Consider the following methods:

- *Reduce the number of windows and decks on proposed buildings that overlook neighboring residences.*
- *Step back upper floors or increase side and rear setbacks to pull windows farther away from neighboring residences.*
- *Stagger windows to not align with adjacent windows and minimize the impact of windows in living spaces that may infringe on the privacy of adjacent residents.*

The Board encouraged the applicant to design all four facades of the building in response to the unique conditions of the four sides: multi family residential to the north whose views of the building are significant, a shorter commercial grocery store to the south which will not screen the blank wall at the property line, lower density and scaled single family development to the west and a strong pedestrian friendly streetscape to the east with a playfield beyond.

The Board would like to see a high quality right-of-way design and landscape plan that endeavors to enhance the pedestrian streetscape. See also E-1 and E-2.

The Board suggested that the mechanical equipment at the alley be enclosed/screened from views from the west. The Board would like to see the design of this screening and understand how it addresses visual, noise, security and exhaust impacts to the neighbors.

The Board voted unanimously that taking access from the alley is appropriate and that access from California Avenue SW is unacceptable and would compromise the pedestrian environment.

B. Height, Bulk, and Scale

B-1 HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE

Provide sensitive transition to nearby, less intensive zones.

ADMIRAL DESIGN GUIDELINES: Provide a sensitive transition to less intensive zones by reducing the appearance of bulk by setting back upper floors using methods described on page 25 of the Citywide Design Guidelines.

- *Use architectural styles and details (such as roof lines or fenestration), color or materials derivative from surrounding, less intensive structures. Where appropriate, consider using the following methods to provide a sensitive transition to less intensive zones:*
- *Locate features such as required open space on the zone edge to create further separation and buffering from the lower intensive zone.*
- *Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that conform to the existing structures or platting pattern in the vicinity.*

The Board discussed the relationship to the Single Family zone to the west and agreed that a distinct transition to the lower scaled community to the west should be accomplished.

The Board agreed that the bulk of the mass should be shifted towards the Avenue, rather than towards the alley and Single Family zone to the east. The massing should come to the east property line and define the street edge on California, while eroding back to provide visual relief on the west side. See also E-1 and E-2.

C. Architectural Elements

C-2 ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT & 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 forms and features identifying the functions within the building.

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 area encouraged.

The Board encouraged the design team to move away from a building that appears too much like a medical office building.

The Board stressed that using high quality, durable and well-detailed materials are critical. They look forward to reviewing a permanent, well-detailed material and

color palette. Materials such as vinyl, T1-11, painted hardi lap siding and synthetic stucco would not be acceptable. The Board suggested that a softer version of the proposed material palette would work well on the residential side (west) of the proposed building.

D. Pedestrian Environment

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.

ADMIRAL DESIGN GUIDELINES: Employ small setbacks, indentations or other means of breaking up the wall surface into human-scaled intervals.

D-5 VISUAL IMPACTS OF PARKING STRUCTURES

The visibility of all at-grade parking structures should be minimized. The parking portion of the structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape.

ADMIRAL DESIGN GUIDELINES: Visually integrate the parking structure with adjacent buildings.

D-11 COMMERCIAL TRANSPARENCY

Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians and the activities occurring on the interior of a building.

The Board discussed the blank walls proposed at the north and south facades and agreed that they should be designed and treated to create visual interest as viewed from the pedestrian level and from the park across the street.

The Board was very pleased that all of the proposed parking will be located below-grade and accessed off of the alley. The Board expects to see lighting designed along the alley that is sensitive to the residential neighbors to the west, while also creating a safe alley environment. The garage should be designed to be secured during off-hours. The design of the garage entrance should be well-integrated into the rest of the building and be sensitive to the residential neighbors.

The Board specified that all garbage and service areas should be screened or located within the proposed structure and accessed from the alley. The Board would like to know specifically where the compactor and waste dumpster will be located and managed.

The Board discussed the importance of designing the ground level commercial space to suggest a vibrant retail use, regardless of whether the use is medical office or retail. The ground level windows should be large, transparent storefront

windows at the ground. The upper level fenestration should differ from that of the base in terms of pattern and size. The Board encouraged the building design to steer away from the typical medical building appearance which has large horizontal windows. The Board agreed that modulation of the building faced is less critical if a clear distinction between the base and upper levels is achieved. See also C2.

E. Landscaping

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.

ADMIRAL DESIGN GUIDELINES: 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. Soften the form of the building by screening blank walls. The west wall of the Thriftway on 42nd Avenue SW is a good example of this type of treatment.

The Board looks forward to reviewing a well-detailed landscape plan that includes dense vegetation wherever possible. The Board would like to see the majority of the Green Factor contributions located in the right of way and visible to pedestrians. The existing extra wide right of way is an excellent opportunity for additional trees and landscaping. The Board encouraged pushing the Green Factor as far as possible in these areas of the site, as well as using landscaping to soften the transition between the site and the residential zone to the west. The possibility of coordinating with PCC to accommodate a planter which could allow for vertical landscaping along the south façade was discussed. See also B-1.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

A potential departure from the Green Factor was discussed at the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting. The Board was not favorably inclined towards granting such a departure and encouraged the applicant to really strive to satisfy the Green Factor standard in a meaningful and creative manner.

The Board noted that they would be supportive of a departure from the mix of parking stall sizes if more parking stalls could be accommodated.

The Board also encouraged the applicant to explore having a narrower driveway width in order to allow more landscaping and plantings at the alley. Should this departure be

pursued, the Board would expect to see mirrors or other devices proposed to help driver visibility.

NEXT STEPS

MUP Application:

1. Submit application for Master Use Permit (MUP) application. Please call Lisa Rutzick (at 206-386-9049) when you have scheduled your MUP intake appointment.
2. Please include a written response to the guidance provided in this EDG. Per Attachment B of Client Assistance Memo 238, plan on embedding four 11x17 colored and shadowed elevations, landscape and right-of-way improvement plans and three-dimensional street level vignettes into the front of the MUP plan set (4 per sheet) as Design Review sheets.
3. A parking and traffic study will be required as part of the MUP process.

Recommendation Meeting:

4. The Board would like to review three-dimensional drawings showing how the ground level uses, details and design relate to the sidewalk.
5. Please provide a shadow study showing solar access opportunities to the proposed open spaces and effects on neighboring properties at the extreme seasons.
6. Please submit a color and materials board.
7. Please also prepare a conceptual signage plan.
8. Please submit a conceptual lighting plan, particularly along the alley, California Avenue and all proposed open spaces.
9. Sections through the site and into the SF zone, showing the grade change, sidewalks, curbs, overhead weather protection and all relevant dimensions.

Please note that per Client Assistance (CAM) memo 238, updated March 13, 2008, it is now the responsibility of the applicant to submit a .pdf file of the 11x17 design proposal packet to DPD 5 days prior to the public Design Review meeting.

Please see the instructions in CAM 238 and as detailed on the Design Review webpage:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Overview/