



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning & Development
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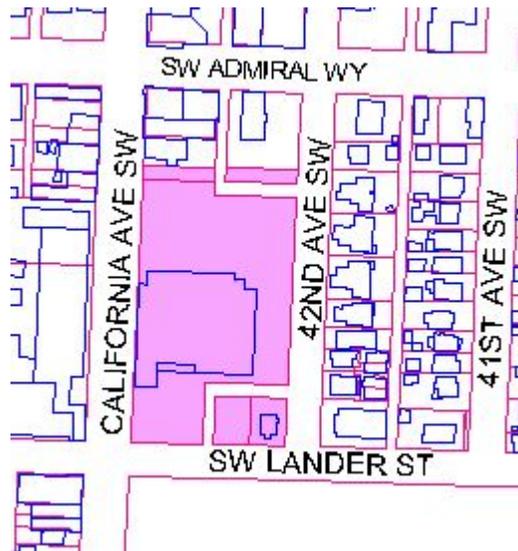
**DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES
OF
THE WEST SEATTLE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD (AREA 5)
September 25, 2008**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3009367
Address: 2622 California Av SW
Applicant: Bill Fuller, Fuller Sears Architects, for Safeway Stores, Inc.
Board members present: Brandon Nicholson
Joseph Hurley
Christie Coxley
James Foster, Chair
Deb Barker
Land Use Planner present: Michael Dorcy

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The site is located at 2622 California Avenue SW, extending between California Ave SW and 42nd Ave SW, and from SW Lander Street north to a point approximately 150 feet south of SW Admiral Way. The irregularly shaped site abuts two “L”-shaped alleys, one connecting between SW Admiral Way and 42nd AV SW on the north and a second connecting SW Lander Street to 42nd Ave SW at the southeast corner of the site. The site is currently occupied by the existing single-story Admiral Safeway store, surface parking and a single family residence located at the southeast corner of the site. Lafayette Elementary school lies directly across California Ave to the west. Hiawatha playfield lies directly south of the site across SW Lander St. The northern end of the block consists of several smaller commercial buildings that face onto California Ave SW and onto SW Admiral Way. Across from the site, the east side of 42nd Ave SW is lined with multi-family residential structures.



The development site slopes up gradually from north to south. The property is zoned Neighborhood Commercial 2 with a forty foot height limit (NC2-40') as are the properties on the west side of California Ave SW. South of SW Lander Street the property is zoned Single-family (SF5000) and across 42nd Ave SW properties are zoned Lowrise (L-3). The site is located within the Admiral Residential Urban Village. The site lies within one block of four City of Seattle Landmark structures, the Admiral Theater and West Seattle Branch of the City of Seattle Public Library to the north, and the Hiawatha Community Center and West Seattle High School to the south.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

Bill Fuller of Fuller Sear Architects made the substantive presentation at the meeting on behalf of the developer of the site, Safeway Stores. The applicant proposes for this site of approximately 130,000 square feet to replace the existing Safeway Store with a larger store of some 60,000 square feet, additional retail shop spaces, and 30-50 residential units. Parking would be provided both at the surface and as roof-top parking. Access to the surface parking (accommodating approximately 70 vehicles) in each of the presented alternatives would be provided from California Ave SW, while access to rooftop parking (accommodating approximately 150 vehicles) would be provided from SW Lander Street or, in alternative 3, from the surface parking area. Each of the proposed alternatives showed a separated building containing additional retail shops that was located facing California Ave at a northern portion of the site. Only the third alternative showed residential units. These were a band of single-loaded units facing 42nd Av SW, rising to three stories above the grocery store at the southeast corner of the structure and stepping down to two stories at the northern half of the structure.

In making its presentation, the development team referred to the programmatic objectives regarding the site, which included expanding the size of the Safeway store, adding to the retail activity along SW California Avenue in order to activate the street edges, providing convenient access from the neighborhood and adequate parking, providing urban density by "creating great spaces for urban living," and doing this within a time-frame that would minimize the shut-down time for the grocery store (16 months projected).

In order to achieve the programmatic objectives, the development team is seeking both an alley vacation and a rezone from NC2 to NC3, which zoning change would allow for the increased size of the space needed for the grocery expansion. In addition, the development team identified two departures from development standards that would be sought for the preferred option:

- unspecified modifications of street-level use and development standards;
- exceeding maximum allowed width of parking along the street frontage.

Staff notes that another departure would be required to take vehicle access from the street(s) since there was alley access to the site from the alley on the north which would not be included in the vacation petition.

The development team also identified for the Board those Design Guidelines from the *Admiral Residential Urban Village Design Guidelines* that they believed to be of highest priority for the project: A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, A-5., A-6, A-7, A-8, A-9, A-10, B-1, C-1, D-1, D-2, D-3, D-6, and E-2.

BOARD CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The Board asked clarifying questions regarding the architect's presentation which included the amount of parking required and proposed and the chosen location and number of the proposed residential units.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were 9 members of the public who signed in to become parties of record. Three members of the public indicated a general support for the project; the proposal was said to be complementary to the neighborhood plan and an improvement upon the existing situation. One of those expressing general support of the proposal, however, did express a desire to have seen a broader array of alternatives. Another was less favorable to the proposals, commenting that they all were more sub-urban than urban in character. It was further noted that the solution for the site would be implanted there for the next quarter of a century and would set the wrong tone and direction for other development in the area. Specifically, the positioning of bulk and height toward 42nd Ave SW was wrong and the primary focus of the project should be toward enlivening California Ave SW. The entire project, but the residential portion of the program in particular, should address in some tangible form the park across SW Lander Street. The break for auto access along California was singled out as particularly "unfortunate." Lastly, one member of the public was strongly critical of the presentation, in that the three massing studies that had been presented were not thought sufficiently different from each other to constitute real alternatives.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS

General Directives

The members of the Board expressed the following, generally shared, concerns regarding the proposal which echoed some of the comments from the public:

- The presentation had not provided siting and massing alternatives that were sufficiently differentiated from each other.
- The schemes proposed were more appropriate for a sub-urban site rather than for one in the heart of a Comprehensive Plan-designated Urban Residential Village.

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 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 & Commercial Buildings* of highest priority to this project.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

A Site Planning

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics

The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities.

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility

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

A-4 Human Activity

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

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 commercial street fronts should be minimized and where possible should be located behind a building.

The guidelines above were all chosen by the board to be of high priority. The Board desires that future design development should clearly demonstrate how the design responds to the Hiawatha Playfield directly across SW Lander Street. This was deemed an important edge, one requiring a substantial response.

Among the desirable streetscape qualities noted by the Board was a rhythm of continuous retail along California Ave SW and any break in that desirable rhythm, for example for vehicular access, stood in need of a cogent rationale. There needed to be a careful sectional analysis of the relation of proposed heights, setbacks, etc., of the residential portion of the structure along 42nd Avenue SW to existing residential structures across the street.

The Board questioned the desirability of the proposed curb cut along California Avenue SW, but also observed that it “might be OK” if it were “part of a great design.”

The Board expressed concern regarding possible negative visual and aesthetic impacts of the rooftop parking area

Human activity on the street should be promoted by the interface of sidewalk and retail spaces; the applicant should be prepared to demonstrate how the proposed grocery and other retail spaces provide for an enlivening of the street.

The location and quality of usable open space for the residents should be considered a significant element of the design especially as it might interface with the rooftop parking.

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale

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 zone.

In citing this guideline the Board took exception to what was regarded as a lack in the applicant’s presentation of a clear set of contrasting siting and massing alternatives. It was the Board’s expectation that when the project was again presented that there would more clearly articulated alternatives.

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

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 indicated these guidelines to be of highest priority for the project without much further comment except to request at the next presentation some hint of the direction they were heading in choices of materials.

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.

D-6 Screen Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas

D-11 Commercial Transparency

Commercial store fronts 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.

The Board observed that the project appeared to propose an inordinate amount of “green wall.” The design team should provide studies of the proposed pedestrian environment on all three street sides of the project as well as along the parking lot and vehicular driveway and entry. The Board would expect to see fuller details of the loading dock, dumpster and storage areas as design development occurred. Studies of the rooftop parking area as almost a separate façade would likewise be expected as design development occurred. A particular area of concern was any visual impact the rooftop parking area would have on the Hiawatha Playfield area to the south of the project.

E Landscaping

E-1 Reinforce existing landscape character of the neighborhood

Landscaping should reinforce the character of neighborhood properties and abutting streetscape.

E-2 Landscaping to enhance the building and site

Landscaping 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.

Landscaping should be designed with the goal of realizing the prioritized guidelines, should soften the edge conditions where appropriate, and should contribute to attractive and usable open spaces. The SW Lander Street edge of the development was singled out as of particular importance since it interfaced with the Hiawatha Playfield across the way. The Board would expect to see a comprehensive Landscape Plan, one that treats not only on-site open spaces but surrounding street conditions and the edges where the proposed structure meets the public realm.

Departures from Development Standards:

The development team indicated that their preferred scheme would require departures from street-level uses and development standards, without further specification, as well as a departure to allow the width of a surface parking area to exceed sixty lineal feet of street frontage (SMC 23.47.032 B1c).

The Board unanimously recommended that the applicants return for a second Early Design Guidance meeting at which time a more clearly differentiated set of alternatives would be proposed.

Staff Comments:

DPD concurs with the Board's request for a second Early Design Guidance meeting at which time the applicants are expected to present a more comprehensive analysis of alternative schemes for the siting of parking and structures and overall massing as these relate to the developer's programmatic intentions and expectations regarding the site. It is also DPD's expectation that the additional time given to the proposal at this schematic stage will permit the Board to impart greater articulation to specific expectations relating to those Design Guidelines they have already designated to be of highest priority for the project and to make reference to the Admiral Residential Urban Village Design Guidelines as might be appropriate.

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