



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning & Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**RECOMMENDATION
OF
THE WEST SEATTLE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD (AREA 5)**
Meeting Date: October 22, 2009
Notes Completed: November 5, 2009

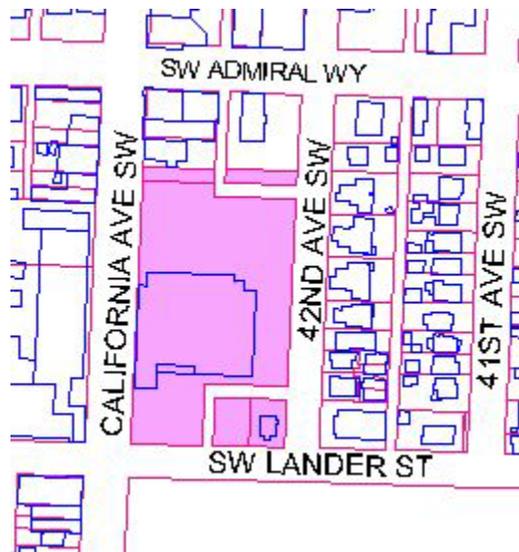
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Numbers: 3009367 & 3010684
Address: 2622 California Av SW
Applicant: Bill Fuller, Fuller Sears Architects, for Safeway Stores, Inc.
Board members present: Christie Coxley, Chair
Myer Harrell
Joseph Hurley
Brandon Nicholson
Robin Murphy
Norma Tompkins

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.

Project Proposal

The updated proposal is for a Safeway grocery store occupying 59,581 square feet on the ground floor of a building that will also provide roof-top parking for 141 vehicles, 41 apartment units, and 20,100 square feet of flex-work units. A separate single-story building totaling 6,860 square feet and containing retail shops will be constructed at the northwest corner of the site facing onto California Avenue SW. Surface parking for 66 vehicles will be located to the east of the smaller building. A driveway/ pedestrian pathway, extending from California Avenue SW to 42nd Avenue SW, will separate the grocery store building from the smaller shops building and surface parking that will occupy the northernmost thirty percent of the site. The development proposal will require City Council actions to vacate the dog-legged alley at the southeast corner of the site and to approve a contract rezone that will designate the entire site as NC3-40. The latter approval will allow the grocery store to expand beyond a maximum size of 50,000 square feet.

Recommendation Meeting, October 22, 2009

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

Bill Fuller of Fuller Sear Architects provided a brief introduction to the Board and public, recounting reviews by SDOT and the Design Commission as well explaining the choice of relegating approval of the smaller, separate commercial building to a separate MUP (3010684) in order to allow its development to proceed prior to the grant of approvals (alley vacation, rezone) needed for development of the entire site. (The separate approval of the so-called "shops" building will also require a Lot Boundary Adjustment (MUP 3010683) to segregate the structure and parking area, and DPD has accepted an application seeking that approval.) Steve Johnson of the same firm made the substantive presentation at the meeting on behalf of the developer of the site, Safeway Stores. Andy Wiseman, the landscape designer for the project followed up with some brief comments regarding on-site and off-site landscape improvements which included supplemental street lighting, planters and seat walls, and decorative paving at the intersections of both SW Lander Street and California Avenue SW and SW Lander and 42nd Avenue SW. For the intersection at SW Lander and 42nd Avenue SW new landscaping was proposed at the park entry.

By separating the approval of the small "shops" building from the larger development, Safeway, it was noted, would be able to provide a continuity of pharmacy services to prescription customers during the time that the grocery store structure was being demolished and under construction. In making their presentation, the development team referred to the overall 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, and providing urban density to the tune of 41 apartment units to be located at the southeast corner of the site. Additionally, and a notable change from what had been previously presented to the Board, three stories of “flex work” spaces, totaling 21,100 square feet, would be located along 42nd Avenue SW, just to the north of the apartment units. The roof top of the portion of the structure occupied by flex work units would be accessible from the top floor of apartment units and would provide an amenity area for all occupants of the apartment units.

In order to achieve the overall programmatic objectives, the development team would continue to seek both an alley vacation and a rezone from NC2-40 to NC3-40. In addition, the development team identified the following departures from development standards that would be sought for the proposal:

- a departure for not meeting the .30 Seattle Green Factor score for the area of the site to be occupied by the “shops” building and its attendant parking (23.47A.016), even though the overall Seattle Green Factor for the entire development site would exceed the .30 standard;
- a departure for not meeting the minimum depth for commercial spaces (30 feet) for the street-level flex work units proposed along 42nd Avenue SW (23.47A.008);
- a departure would be required to take vehicular access from the street(s) since there is alley access to the site from the alley on the north, an alley which would not be included in the vacation petition (23.47A.032);
- departure to allow parking between a structure and the street (23.47A.032);
- departure to allow less than 60 percent façade transparency (23.47A.008);
- departure to allow for a blank façade greater than 20-foot in width (23.47A.008);
- departure to allow blank façade segments to exceed 40 percent of a single façade along the street (23.47A.008).

BOARD CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The Board asked a number of clarifying questions regarding the architect’s presentation which included a question regarding the precise depth in feet proposed for the ground-floor flex work units for which a departure was being sought.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were 11 members of the public who signed in to become parties of record. Seven members of the public spoke to the proposal. One indicated unqualified support for the project, noting that the details of the proposal and design were in keeping with the Admiral neighborhood plan and neighborhood-specific guidelines. Some others expressed a qualified approval of the design as presented while suggesting that the California Avenue façade of the grocery store needed further design enhancements, particularly a greater sense of transparency into the interior of the building and more opportunities for actual physical penetration into the structure from the sidewalk along that façade. More than one member of the public commented on the need for more rooftop greening of the project and especially for screening of the rooftop parking.

One member of the public thought that the addition of the flex work units along 42nd Avenue SW was a particularly fine improvement to the overall site planning but noted that the choices to locate the office and elevators along the California Avenue side contributed to a major problem with blank walls and lack of transparency that were already questionable elements in the design. The same individual opined that street improvements proposed along 42nd Avenue SW should be continued all the way to SW Admiral Way. Another commentator thought the overall design remained “too suburban,” and called for the greening of the roof of the smaller shops building and a significant increase in the landscaping, particularly that proposed to buffer the rooftop parking on the grocery store building.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS

General Directives

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

- the project, though improved in this iteration, embodied design issues that in the Board’s view needed further resolution;
- the addition of the flex work units was a good move, although the depth of the units at the sidewalk level could use further adjustment;
- the Board remained concerned regarding the possible negative visual and aesthetic impacts of the rooftop parking area, which in the view of some members ideally should be underground parking; as rooftop parking it needed more landscaping and the effectiveness of its screening from adjacent properties needed further demonstration;
- the Board had previously emphasized that human activity on the street should be promoted by the interface of sidewalk and retail spaces and some members remained skeptical that the location of proposed grocery store functions provided for the enlivening of California Avenue SW they envisioned; the interior of the grocery store building remained in need of substantially greater connectivity with the California Avenue SW sidewalk and the pedestrian experience along that sidewalk;
- interior/exterior connectivity and enhancement of the pedestrian experience along California Avenue SW, the Board were agreed, would require actual penetration of the façade at some mid point to provide for pedestrian movement at least from the outside into the interior of the building;
- the Board had previously noted that the location and quality of open space for the residents of the proposed apartments should be considered a significant element of the design, especially as it would interface with the adjacency of rooftop parking; as shown, the proposed amenity space for residents atop the flex work spaces would be a real asset to the project; the adequacy of screening and landscaping for those units looking directly over the rooftop parking, however, remained a priority concern; it was noted that the Board had earlier referred to the rooftop parking area as “almost a separate façade,” and more detailed studies of this area as such would be expected as design development continued.

BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION

A single story rectangular retail building, totaling 6,860 square feet, approximately 20-feet in height, with its longer façade set to the sidewalk at SW California Avenue, is proposed to occupy the northwest corner of the site. As explained at the beginning of the design team's presentation, the applicants have chosen to relegate actual approval of the smaller, separate commercial building to a separate MUP in order to allow its development to proceed prior to the grant of approvals (alley vacation, rezone) needed for development of the entire site. The separate approval of the so-called "shops" building will also require a Lot Boundary Adjustment to segregate the structure and parking area and DPD has accepted an application seeking that approval.

In terms of process, approval of the design of the smaller building remains part of the Recommendation phase of the Design Review process. The question was raised to the Board whether at this juncture separate design approval could be recommended for the so-called "shops" building since it was clear from the Board's deliberations that recommendation of approval of the entire proposal would require at least one additional Recommendation meeting. After some discussion and agreement of the Board members that they would not recommend a grant of a departure to allow less than a .30 Seattle Green Factor score for the segregated "shops" building portion of the site as requested by the applicants, five of the six Board members did recommend approval of the proposed design of the smaller building.

In discussing the design of the "shops" building, Board members took note of the palette of materials prepared on a presentation board by the design team and specific references made during the design team's presentation that cues for detailing of the two colors of brick chosen for the "shops" project were taken from the nearby Hiawatha Community Center where horizontal bands of contrasting brick were set proud of the field brick. It is the Board's expectation that this level of attention in the finish detail will be evident in the completed structure. It was noted during the Board's deliberations that elements of "quirkiness" were characteristic of the commercial establishments along the California Avenue commercial corridor. The Board encouraged the design team to explore some of these elements while finalizing the design of the "shops" building. It was also noted that nowhere in the presentation drawings was there an indication of bicycle parking (a Code requirement) and one Board expectation would be the integration of a bicycle parking component into the design. Likewise, it was an expectation that storefront lighting on the west, south and east facades of the "shops" building should be carefully coordinated with adjacent street, walkway and parking lighting.

While the "shops" building, with further development by the design team of the considerations noted immediately above, was recommended for approval, it was the Board's expectation that the grocery store building, with its apartment and flex-work components, together with the rest of the site and adjoining right-of way, would undergo further design development in response to the design issues raised by the Board. Those portions of the project will then be returned to the Board for its further review and recommendation.