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

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE
OF
AREA 4, THE SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

**Meeting Date: October 14, 2008
Report Date: November 5, 2008**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Project Number: 3009397
Address: 2800 Martin Luther King Way South
Applicants: Taine Wilton, Rolluda Architects, Inc, for owner North Sound Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
Board Members Present: John Woodworth, Chair and Development Community Representative
Robert Mohn, Local Business Representative
Michelle Wang, Design Profession Representative
Brett Conway, Local Residential Representative
Board Member Absent: Steve Sindiong, Community Representative
DPD Planner Present: Art Pederson

PROJECT AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is to develop a 7,000 square foot, 2-story medical office building consisting of an oral surgery office designed for the owner on the first floor and lease-able space on the 2nd floor. The concept floor plans show a 1st floor that includes a 2,700 square foot oral surgery office and lobby. The 2nd floor would consist of two spaces (1350 square feet and 1600 square feet) for lease. Surface parking for approximately 17 vehicles is requested to be accessed from Martin Luther King Jr. Way South (MLK Way).



A substantially similar development proposal was presented to the Southeast Design Review Board on June 25, 2005, and received early design guidance under DPD project number 2502105. However, the owner chose not to pursue the project at that time and the project number was cancelled.

The 10,854 square foot site is zoned Neighborhood Commercial 1 with a height limit of 40 feet

(NC1-40). The site is located at the southeast corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Way South and South McClellan Street and developed with a former gas station / auto repair building.

The site slopes approximately 10 feet from its northeast corner to its southwest corner. The single family homes located southeast of the site is about 10 feet lower in elevation as compared to the site; there is an existing rockery / retaining wall along the site's southeast property boundary. Several mature poplar trees are located southeast of the site in a neighboring yard. No significant vegetation is on site; it is mostly covered in asphalt or building.

The surrounding zoning and development is as follows: NC1-40 along the north and south sides of South McClellan Street on this block and to the south of the project site along MLK Way to the Franklin High School campus. To the north across McClellan Street the uses are a mix of single and multi-family and commercial structures of a variety of ages and sizes. Directly to the east the single-story buildings are used for medical offices. To the south of the project site there is a single-story multiple tenant commercial building. Across MLK Way the zoning is NC3-65 and contains a number of stand-alone single-business structures with extensive surface parking. To the northwest across the MLK Way and McClellan Street intersection is a large "Loews" home improvement store on land zoned Commercial 2 with a 65-foot height limit (C1-65). To the southeast the zoning is Single-Family 5000 (SF 5000) along both sides of 29th Avenue South. 29th Avenue S dead-ends at the north end of the Franklin High School track field, which is also zoned SF 5000.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

Linda Siau, architect of Rolluda Architects, described the neighborhood context, as outlined in *Project and Site Description* above, discussed the proposed development, and presented three siting and massing design alternatives.

The project, which is a continuation of the previous EDG proposal (DPD # 2502105), was delayed due to the owner having to address site contamination issues from its original use as a gas station. Related site remediation will be undertaken prior to future construction.

The owner of the site is a maxillofacial surgeon who intends to use the ground floor level for his practice. All patient work (exams and surgery) is done on a drop-off basis; there would be no overnight patient accommodations. A ground floor office location is necessary due to the difficulty patients can have negotiating stairs or an elevator after surgery. The owner would like to build an energy efficient building, although not to LEED standards.

Three development alternatives were presented. Option 1 is fully Land Use Code complying (not requesting any *Design Departures*). It proposed a 4,497 square foot (footprint) two-story structure along the site's length of MLK Way with parking access from McClellan Street for approximately 18 vehicles at grade along the eastern one-half of the site. The street facing building entry would be at the corner of MLK Way and McClellan Street. Although this configuration meets Code requirements for parking access it is not preferred for four reasons: it locates the parking entry at the site's high point and where the driveway would then descend onto the site thereby making entry and exit visibility difficult; the resultant long double-loaded one-way parking aisle makes drop-off and pick-up of patients difficult; the north to south building orientation results in a structure that is too long and narrow to both accommodate the

lay-out of a dental office; and this configuration had distinctly “morning and afternoon” sides that are not optimal for the relatively even northern lighting possible with a structure that is oriented predominately along McClellan Street.

Option 2 is a response to the restriction of a narrow one-way parking aisle for patient drop-off and pick-up. It proposes a smaller building footprint of approximately 3,752 square feet that extends along about three-fifths of both street frontages with a vehicle entrance and one row of parking parallel at the remainder of each frontage. The principal building entry would be in the center of the MLK Way façade with a second east facing building entry to the parking lot. This is also not a preferred option primarily because it still does not fully address the building orientation / solar orientation goals, creates multiple curb-cuts, which are generally not supported by DRB’s or the City, and results in only 15 parking spaces.

Option 3 places a 4,157 square foot foot-print structure along the length of McClellan Street and extending south approximately one-half of the MLK Way frontage with the remaining 60-foot frontage for a curb-cut and double loaded parking parallel to this frontage. The building entry would be at the proposed structure’s southwest corner and facing MLK Way in an entry tower / circulation area that will access all building levels.

Because this was the second EDG meeting for this proposal, the applicant’s were able to present a more developed design in response to the first Early Design Guidance. According to the applicants, the design responds to the previous guidance:

- Include a way finding element to guide users to the front door on MLK Way. This entry should be visible and prominent.
- Emphasize the corner, even if not the location of the entry.
- Create a good human scale to the pedestrian environment.
- The design should complement the character of the buildings identified in the presentation, especially Franklin High School (pictures of these were shown again at this recent presentation).
- Adequately screen dumpsters and provide for parking lot security.
- Provide substantial landscaping.

The presented design proposed a three story expression, although at this time the proposal is for a two story structure with a double height ceiling in the upper level with fenestration that reads three stories. The rectangular building has its long axis along McClellan Street and a shed roof sloping down to the south. At the southwest corner an entry, lobby, and circulation tower rises above this mass with another shed roof but sloping down to the north. The main roof would include two shed or flat roof clerestories. The first level of the south façade would be carved away in steps beginning approximately mid-point in the façade by a passenger pick-up area then further for the dumpster storage, storage room access and probably to accommodate extra parking, and hence below the overhanging upper level.

The proposed design and materials are: a cast in place concrete base with texture and strong horizontal reveal lines (to respond to the strong base at the older Franklin High School building); the fenestration along McClellan Street provides small windows for internal privacy (requires a Design Departure from commercial transparency requirements) but larger four light window assemblies along MLK Way; horizontal siding on the upper level(s) with expressed diagonal bracing; upper level fenestration that reads as two upper levels on McClellan Street with the

MLK Way façade having one-level (row) of smaller four-light assemblies; the corner is chamfered on both levels to allow signage and respond to the corner; a large overhead weather protection (OHWP) assembly of frames and glass would wrap the corner and extend approximately one-third the length of McClellan and almost the entire length of MLK Way; the southwest tower element would have a modulated façade with a full height recess between the entry doors and the main building element; a large canopy would extend over an entry façade of extensive floor to ceiling glazing; the recessed portion would have vertical siding (with a board and batten appearance), which would extend south over horizontal siding or possibly brise-soleil section above the entry doors. No details of the south and east facades were provided.

DEPARTURES FROM CODE STANDARDS

Two *Design Departures* were requested for the applicant’s preferred option, Alternative 3.

SUMMARY OF THE DEPARTURE REQUESTS

Land Use Code Standard	Proposed	Rationale for Request	Board Comments
Transparency. 60% of a structure’s street level façade between 2’ and 8’ shall be designed and maintained to allow unobstructed views from the outside into the structure. (SMC 23.47A.008.B.)	Reduce the amount of transparent glazing along the McClellan Street frontage substantially (no specific percentage given, although a visual representation was presented).	The first level exam and surgery rooms require visual privacy from the street. Also, the ascending street grade would place the first floor level almost 7-feet below the sidewalk at the building’s easterly end. This would require windows on the upper half of the first level and the bottom portion of the second level, in this area.	The Board is supportive of reduced transparency beyond approximately the first 30-feet of the McClellan Street façade from the corner. However, the façade in these first 30-feet must comply with the transparency requirement.
Vehicle Access. Site vehicle access must be from the street that has the least amount of commercially zoned frontage adjacent to the site (SMC 23.47A.032.A.1.c).	Although McClellan Street has less commercially zoned street frontage than MLK Way the project proposes access from MLK Way.	Access from McClellan Street would be made from a point on the uphill grade of this site and then downhill onto and across the subject site, which would be awkward and possibly dangerous. Also, the optimal building location for the owner and user would be along the full length of McClellan Street.	The Board was supportive of this request provided the building transparency along McClellan Street and the screening of the parking area along MLK Way responded to the guidance given below.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Two members of the public attended the Early Design Guidance meeting and offered the following comments:

- The owner of the adjacent commercial site fronting on McClellan Street to the east plans to re-develop his site within the next two years and is interested in how the siting and design of this proposal would affect his plans. Specifically, he was concerned with any possible limitations on his parking access from McClellan Street. He offered that he is considering using this project's architect.
- A resident to the southeast in the Single-Family 5000 zone along 29th Avenue South expressed concern that any new structure should not be so tall that it would appear to tower over their house or adjacent houses in their lower height zone.
- Graffiti resistant materials should be used on all ground-level facades because graffiti is a common neighborhood problem.

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 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 and Commercial Buildings*" of highest priority to this project.

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.*

The three predominant site characteristics the project should respond to are: the MLK Way / McClellan corner, raising grade along McClellan Street, and the grade changes between the project site and the location of the single-family structures to the southeast (a slight average grade drop of approximately 4 to 6-feet between these two but separated by an approximately 10-foot depression abutting the project site).

At the street corner, the building design should continue to be developed to assure the facades do not appear to be the back of the building. This is a prominent and visible intersection because of heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The building entry does not have to be at the corner, however. Full required transparency must be included in at least the first 30-feet from the corner of the McClellan façade.

The rising grade (approximately 6-feet) along McClellan and desire for windows and privacy at the street level should not result in a featureless and uninteresting street level façade.

Any retaining walls at the southeast corner should be designed to be visually interesting and human scaled as viewed from the single-family properties to the southeast. Landscaping along the southeast corner of the proposed parking area should adequately and attractively screen this area from the single-family properties to the southeast.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. *Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.*

The proposed entry tower responds to this guideline. However, the door location at the tower's forward façade and not in the recessed façade portion is confusing and should be transposed. Entry door relocation should resolve what now appears to be the out-swinging doors extending onto the sidewalk. The proposed entry canopy should be relocated as well.

The proposed overhead weather protection (OHWP) along part of McClellan Street and most of the MLK Way facade further confuses entry identification and exacerbates the lack of an entry at the corner. OHWP is appropriate at the corner for pedestrians waiting to cross the street, but it should not extend beyond the corner.

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 could be supportive of the proposed *Design Departure* for vehicle access from MLK Way primarily because of the purported solar / sustainability benefits from the proposed building orientation. However, the applicant must provide a narrative quantifying exactly what these benefits would be. And the south façade, because of its visibility, must be designed as an attractive principal façade.

If MLK Way vehicle access is continued the street frontage must receive more than the minimum Code required landscaping and screening.

A-10 Corner Lots. *Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.*

The out of place OHWP and proposed signage and corner chamfer do not honestly create a building orientation to the corner. Although the entry does not need to be at the corner active uses must be visible through the façade. The proposed exam rooms and storage at the corner are not active enough spaces to create the visual interaction necessary between the building and the corner. A suggested solution is to shift the reception, waiting, and / or more active areas to the corner. More prominent signage, for example, perpendicular to the façade, may also be appropriate.

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.*

The EDG packet cover perspective drawing shows the roof eaves and the OHWP out of proportion with the building; the roof eaves are well over the street property lines and the OHWP almost to the curbs. These must be corrected.

It was unclear to the Board whether the large eave shown on the east façade could be built, due to the proposed east wall already at the property boundary. If this eave must be removed, the continuation of the eave from this façade along the McClellan Street façade would be awkward.

The Board suggested that one alternative would be to have an eave only over the westerly two bays of the north façade (from the corner to the east). This would also allow for a varying of the north façade expression between the easterly two and westerly two bays proposed.

The Board also questioned the expressed diagonal bracing on both street facades. They noted that these confuse and diminish the otherwise appropriate proportions and relationship between

the horizontal siding and fenestration and conflicts with the clean horizontality of the proposed design.

The proposed east façade second floor access stairs and balcony should be carefully thought through. If a building on the adjacent site is built to the lot-line, as is likely, the balcony and stairway could become unattractive as well as an area of minimal personal safety.

The proposed rusticated concrete base could be an attractive element to the overall design. However, the strong horizontal reveals proposed create too strong a separation between the base and upper levels. A possible solution would be bringing upper level vertical elements down to the ground, such as pilaster extensions of the vertical frame elements already proposed between the second floor level and the roof.

The north façade upper level (possible third level) windows should be continued along the MLK Way façade, appropriate to the sloping roof line here.

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 is comfortable with the preliminary material and color choices presented and discussed.

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.*

The first 10 to 20-feet of the east façade's first level at the property line and the upper level(s) will be very visible from the higher elevations descending McClellan Street. Material choices and articulation should be used to avoid blank walls.

D-3 Retaining Walls. *Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where high retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce the impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscape.*

Due to the topographic depression to the southeast of the project site, any retaining wall system and fencing will be highly visible from the properties in that direction. A poured concrete wall with extensive articulation is preferred over an ecology block wall. Any fence above should be of a high quality. A suggestion is a low maintenance ornamental metal fence that would allow visibility of the adjacent parking lot landscape screening and allow solar exposure for that landscaping while not exacerbating the grade difference by a solid continuous combined retaining wall and fence.

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.*

If parking access continues to be proposed from MLK Way and flanked by double-loaded parking stalls, extensive and attractive landscape screening must be included. The screening will have to balance the needs for visual screening of parked cars, ensuring visual interest for pedestrians, and maintaining personal safety for street and parking lot users.

The addition of a seating bench should be considered at the north end of the landscape area by the proposed building walkway as a way to add another layer of potential activity along the street frontage.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security. *Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.*

In addition to the guidance on parking lot safety in D-4 above, the recessed and minimally glazed eastern half of the lower level south façade could be an area lacking “eyes on the street” safety surveillance. The Board suggests the transposition of the proposed recovery room and the storage space to its south as one opportunity for creating greater outside oriented visibility. This option should also be looked at for moving the proposed windowless laboratory and sterilization rooms and replacing them with rooms that could benefit from windows.

Security lighting to address nighttime safety should not produce “light trespass” to the adjacent single-family neighborhood or to the street. Proposed approaches to lighting and security gating must be submitted with the MUP application for review by DPD and the Board.

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.*

The effort to integrate signage into the corner façade is appreciated. When responding to the guidance above regarding the building corner design, any signage should relate to the façade and building design. Angled signage, as shown on the building chamfer, should only be used if it can be shown it will be visible from passers-by. Visibility from northbound on MLK Way is a particular concern. Per A-10 above, an orientation perpendicular to the streets may be more effective.

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 a building. Blank walls should be avoided.*

The Board is not supportive of reduced transparency along the western 30 feet of the McClellan Street façade regardless of the interior programmatic desire for exam room privacy. This is of particular concern should the exam room function be discontinued and the building remain; the proposed cast in place concrete base material makes the proposed minimal fenestration permanent beyond the proposed dental office use.

Also, when the nearby Sound Transit McClellan Street station opens, there will be many more pedestrians along this frontage, so a transparent street front is very important. The Code required glazing along the western 30-feet of McClellan Street and MLK Way should not use frosted glass or similar at the corner.

E. Landscaping

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.*

The proposed surface parking area should include treatments to soften its heavily impervious character as seen from the adjacent residential zone and MLK Way.

Staff Comments

After integrating the above guidance into the project design, the applicant should proceed to submit an application for the full Master Use Permit. Include colored and shadowed elevation drawings and site/landscaping plans in the MUP submittal plans. Include material and color samples for planner review. Finally, please inform the assigned planner when the applicant has secured a MUP intake appointment so notification of fees owing can be made.