

**FINAL DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS
OF
SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

November 10, 2009

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3009571

Address: 7700 Rainier Avenue South

Applicant: Kevin Sutton Architect, for Urban Impact

Board members present: Brett Conway
Robert Mohn
Michele Wang
John Woodworth

Board Members Absent: Steve Sindiong

DCLU Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips, AICP

Project Description:

The applicant proposes a four-story, mixed-use structure on the east side of Rainier Avenue South between South Holden Street and South Chicago Street. Fronting onto Rainier Ave. S., the first floor would include approximately 5,700 square feet of commercial use. The three upper floors would house 60 residential units. A garage containing an estimated 96 parking spaces would extend behind the commercial space recessed into the slope of the hillside.

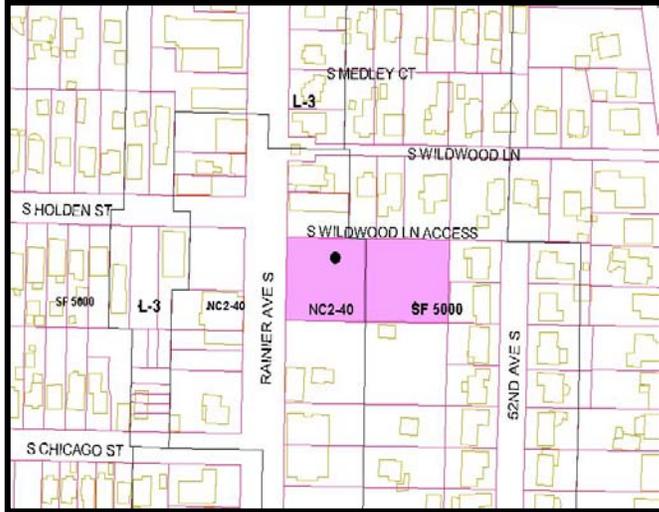
In order to accommodate the number of residential units planned, the applicant proposes a contract rezone for the site's eastern portion, which currently has a zoning classification of Single Family 5000 (SF 5000), to conform with the parcel fronting on Rainier Ave. The western half of the development site has an existing zoning of Neighborhood Commercial Two with a forty foot height limit (NC2-40). The applicant does not request a zoning change for the parcel adjacent to Rainier Ave. S. As part of the future MUP application, the development team proposes to rezone the eastern half of the four parcels to the south. These lie behind an athletic facility, Rainier Health and Fitness, and the Emerald City Bible Fellowship. Next steps in a five phase development will include a new health and fitness facility, housing, and offices for Urban Impact.

Site and Vicinity

The area proposed for the mixed-use building, a 38,610 square foot rectangular site divided into two parcels with a slope, ascends roughly 24 feet from west to east. Most of the

topographic change occurs on the site's eastern half. A partially paved parking lot lies closest to Rainier Ave. S. The western parcel remains vacant.

The site lies along the Rainier Ave. S. north of the Rainier Beach Residential Urban Village. The Rainier Beach neighborhood planning area extends northward to include the parcel closest to Rainier Ave. S. The corridor comprises commercial and multi-family structures for several miles north and south of the proposal site. Zoning in the immediate vicinity consists



of NC2 40, Lowrise Three (L3) and Single Family 5000 (SF 5000). The NC2 40 zone begins on the north end at South Wildwood Lane and extends towards South Kenyon Street. North of S. Wildwood, the zoning changes to L3 as it does south of Kenyon St. This pattern of alternating NC and L3 zones continues along Rainier for several miles. The zoning boundary parallel to Rainier Ave for the NC zones extends only a parcel deep on the east side of the avenue. To the east of the NC zone, the zoning is single family. On

the west side of Rainier Ave., the L3 zone often creates a transition between the NC2 and the Single Family residential zone further to the west.

Recent construction in the immediate vicinity includes the Emerald City Bible Fellowship (church and social service provider) and a three unit townhouse structure on the north side of S. Chicago St. An older, one-story commercial building with storefronts facing the project lies immediately to the north of the subject site. S. Wildwood Lane access road services the businesses occupying this structure. Six single family homes border the property on the northern and eastern edges.

The western parcel lies within the Rainier Beach planning area boundary covered within the Rainier Beach Neighborhood Plan (Rainier Beach 2014) adopted in 1999. However, the eastern parcel is not within the Neighborhood Plan Area

Design Concept

At the EDG meeting, the architect presented three options with similar programmatic approaches. Each had a commercial use on the first level fronting onto Rainier Ave. S. with a large, level parking garage extending eastward into the hillside. After the EDG meeting, the architect designed a large, three-story, rectangular volume with residential units accessed from a double loaded corridor that extends along an east west axis. The bulk of the mass sits close to the north property line near adjacent commercial and single family properties. Three courtyards carved from the south façade face toward the athletic facility and the Emerald City Bible Fellowship building. Access to the courtyards and the plaza level residential units would occur from an exterior stair leading up from Rainier Ave. or from an internal central

residential lobby. A third exterior stairs and pathway would lead up from Rainier on the north edge of the proposed project for the residential units on the second level.

A driveway would lead from a curb cut on Rainier Ave. S. at a non-perpendicular angle to the garage entrance over forty feet past the sidewalk. The applicant proposes to install two rows of bollards flanking the driveway in order to separate the drive lane from walkways leading to the residential lobby and an exterior stairs leading to a second floor plaza.

As the proposal complies with the Neighborhood Commercial code (the proposed rezone for the eastern parcel), no departures have been requested. The proposal, however, would not meet regulations governing Single Family zones.

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES: EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING, February 10, 2009.

At the Early Design Guidance meeting held on February 10, 2009 and after visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, 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-1 Responding to Site Characteristics.
- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility.
- A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street.
- A-4 Human Activity.
- A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites.
- A-7 Residential Open Space.
- A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access.
- B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility.
- C-1 Architectural Context.
- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency.
- C-3 Human Scale.
- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials.
- C-5 Structured Parking Entrances.
- D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances.
- D-2 Blank Walls.
- D-3 Retaining Walls.
- D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas.
- D-7 Personal Safety and Security.
- D-9 Commercial Signage.
- D-10 Commercial Lighting.
- D-11 Commercial Transparency.

Summary: The Board identified several significant issues including: the proposed structure's relationship (density, massing / bulk, and materials) to the houses to the north and east of the site, its compatibility with the streetscape and the quality of the open space.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY:
NOVEMBER 10, 2009

On November 10, 2009, the Southeast Design Review Board convened for a Recommendation meeting. Site, landscaping, and floor plans, and elevations were presented for the Board members' consideration. The applicant did not request departures from the city's Land Use Code.

Public Comment: Nine individuals signed-in at the Recommendation meeting. The one person who spoke supported the proposed development as good for the area. He noted the importance of safety as a consideration.

Board Recommendations: After considering the proposed design and the project context, hearing public comment and reconsidering the previously stated design priorities, the Design Review Board members arrived at the following recommendations on how the applicant met the identified design objectives.

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.

The Board did not contribute further comments.

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

The Board recommended creating a greater street presence for the residential entrance on Rainier Ave. The entrance should be pulled forward to align, at least, with the exterior green wall at the residential levels above.

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.

The applicant documented and explained the relationship of the proposed building's height with the neighboring single family house to the east. An explanation of the relationship of the complex with the houses to the north was also provided.

The Board asked why the existing property lines needed to be respected if the applicant controlled the parcels to the south. Potentially the proposed development could be shifted to the south to decrease impacts on the properties to the north.

A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

The future opportunity to integrate the south plaza into a larger plaza attached to the health club pleased the Board members.

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.

Board members preferred a driveway approach at a 90 degree angle to the sidewalk and the street. Because the applicant appeared to have minimal communication with SDOT regarding the value of an existing street tree and whether the angled driveway made sense, the Board asked for further investigation. Based on these findings, the DPD planner will recommend an angle and design of the driveway approach.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

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.

By not stepping up the proposed structure as the grade ascends to the east, the architect has reduced the height of the structure in relation to the houses uphill from it.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials.

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.

The volume of the proposed structure closest to the east property and nearest the residential neighbors should be clad in lap siding with the same coffee coloration as the rest of the fiber cement siding. The Board conditioned the project to ensure that this occurs.

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 commercial storefront appears enervated due to the placement of an exit stairs in the center of the space and the lack of commercial entries at the sidewalk. The Board encouraged the architect to change the color of the canopy to provide more visibility for the commercial use. It also recommended changing the color of the exit door (see C-4).

C-3 Human Scale. The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.

No further discussion ensued.

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.

See C-1 above.

The exit stair at grade on the west façade should not call attention to itself from the streetscape. The Board conditioned the design to have a less obtrusive color and one preferably similar to the coffee color hue of the stair tower.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

No further discussion addressed the garage entrance.

D. Pedestrian Environment.

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrance. 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.

See A-3.

The Board requested a design for the gates and fences securing the open spaces above the two exterior stairs at the upper plaza levels. The gate and fence should be compatible with the design of the proposed building. The land use planner shall review and determine the adequacy of the proposed gate and fence design.

Considerable discussion focused on the relationship between common residential and private open spaces at the upper plazas. Changing the pavement pattern or color to demarcate private unit areas on the south plaza or the walkway on the north side did not appear adequate. The Board recommended adding planters or some other architectural feature to distinguish these spaces that will inevitably contain bicycles, play equipment and grills from the larger common areas.

The Board recommended adding overhead weather protection above the entry at the community room off the south plaza.

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

The retaining wall close to the north property line should be pushed back further to the east to enable more light and transparency into the health club (potential future commercial space) at the front of the building. The stairs leading to the residential units will need to be pushed back as well leaving a larger open space at street level.

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 placement of the trash and recycling storage room did not warrant further comment.

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

The Board conditioned the design of the gates and fences at the plaza level. See D-1.

The programming of the six residential units closest to Rainier Ave. should be reconceived to place the living and dining areas closest to the street in order for the residents of the units to have eyes on the streetscape. The current arrangement has a bathroom and bedroom facing the street. These most private of spaces would likely have shades drawn and negate the applicant's desire to create a safe and secure environment. The Board recommended a design review condition to achieve this change.

Discussion among the Board members also addressed the extension of the green walls beyond the plane of the south elevation as these walls could block the vision of the residents from surveying the plaza. The Board did not determine whether the green walls should be shortened.

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 "Impact Family Village" sign could be more pronounced as it lacks visibility due to the upper green wall potentially blocking it and the signs distance from the street.

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. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the

building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.

The applicant did not provide a lighting design at the Recommendation meeting, but described translucent awnings, illuminated bollards, and lighting in the circular areas of the plaza. The Board requested lighting along the Rainier Ave. storefront, illumination under the overhangs throughout the project, at the residential entrances on the north and south plazas, and additional lighting at the northeast corner of the north walkway where it terminates. The lighting plan should be submitted to the land use planner for review and approval.

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.

Increasing the amount of transparency along the north side of the building at the health club was important to the Board. See D-3.

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.

Questions focused on how vegetation planted along the north retaining wall could be maintained without an agreement from the neighboring property owners.

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 Board generally praised the landscape plan particularly at the south plaza. At the retaining wall that would extend along the north property line, the portions of the wall in concrete and glass (shown at an angle askew from the top plane) that rise above the walkway should better relate to the planters and the modulation of the proposed structure. These elements aligned with the scoring in the retaining wall could be the back of a seating wall or an element of the planters.

The various drawings submitted to the Board show an inconsistency in the number of trees to be planted along the north walkway. The drawings should be revised before issuance of the MUP decision. The trees will provide needed screening between the proposed complex and the housing to the north.

Recommendations: The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the November 10th, 2009 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings available at the November 10th, 2009 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design. The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

1. Create a greater street presence for the residential entrance on Rainier Ave. S. The entrance should be pulled forward to align, at least, with the green wall above. (A-3)
2. Based on discussions with SDOT, the DPD land use planner will determine the angle and design of the driveway approach. The Board prefers the driveway to have a 90 degree alignment with Rainier Ave. S. (A-8)
3. Clad the volume closest to the east property and nearest the residential neighbors with a fiber cement lap siding with the same coffee coloration as the other lap siding. (C-1, C-4)
4. Use a less obtrusive color for the exit stair door on Rainier Ave. and one preferably similar to the coffee color hue of the stair tower. (C-4)
5. Design the gates and fences at the top of the two exterior stairs to be compatible with the design of the proposed building. The Land Use Planner shall review and determine the adequacy of the proposed design. (D-1)
6. Add planters or some other landscape or architectural feature to distinguish the areas between common residential and private open spaces at the two upper plaza levels. The demarcation should have a height and a thickness to separate private open spaces from the larger common areas. (D-1)
7. Add overhead weather protection above the entrance to the community room off the south plaza. (D-1)
8. Push back to the east the retaining wall close to the north property line to enable increased light and transparency into the health club (future commercial space). The exterior stairs leading to the residential units will need to be pushed back as well leaving a larger open space at street level. (D-3, D-11)
9. Reconceive the programming of the six residential units closest to Rainier Ave. to place the living and dining areas closest to the street in order to facilitate resident eyes on the streetscape. (D-7)
10. Provide exterior lighting at the following locations: along Rainier Ave. at the storefronts, under the overhangs throughout the project, at the individual residential entrances facing the north and south plazas, and at the northeast corner of the north walkway where it terminates. The lighting plan should be submitted to the Land Use Planner for review and approval. (D-10)
11. Realign the portion of the retaining wall above the north walkway rendered in concrete and glass (shown at an angle askew from the top plane) to correspond with the planters and the modulation of the proposed structure. This repetition of elements potentially could be the back of a seating wall or an element of the planters. (E-2)
12. Revise the drawings to establish a common landscape plan that is reflected in all other drawings which provide landscape elements. The drawings should be revised before publication of the MUP decision. (E-2)