



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning & Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE PRIORITIES OF THE QUEEN ANNE / MAGNOLIA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

JANUARY 21, 2009

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3009833

Address: 901 Dexter Avenue N

Applicant: Brian Runberg with Runberg Architecture Group PLLC for Legacy Partners Residential LLC

Board members present: Bill Vandeventer
Kristen Clem
David Nemens
John Rose Jr.

Board members absent: Matt Roewe
Mark Garrell

DPD staff present: Colin Vasquez, Senior Land Use Planner

VICINITY INFORMATION

The site is located at the corner of Dexter Avenue N and Aloha Street. Dexter Avenue N is a minor arterial. The site and vicinity slope down to the east toward Lake Union. The site is currently occupied by a two-story Korry Electronics Building. There is a steep slope on the west side of the site, vegetated with grass, vines and small shrubs. There is an existing surface parking lot to the north of the site.

Note: The site to the north is under MUP permit # 3006945 for a proposed 348,200 gsf office building to occupy a parcel from Dexter Avenue N to Aurora Avenue N.

On Aloha Street and Dexter Avenue N, there are existing curbs and sufficient width to accommodate full sidewalk improvements. There is a bus stop off the ROW at Dexter Avenue N serving Metro routes 26 and 28. Much of the site is level, subject to historic grading associated with the



adjacent rights of way. A topographic break of roughly 60' runs along the west side of the site. The site's atypical topography due to the pre-existing building is eligible for consideration under Director's Rule 12-2005. Portions of the site are designated as Environmentally Critical Areas on City maps (steep slope, potential slide).

The site is zoned Seattle Mixed with a 65' base height limit (SM-65). The site is located in the South Lake Union Hub Urban Village and falls under the South Lake Union Design Guidelines. Properties to the north, south, and east of the site are also zoned SM-65. Land to the west across Aurora Avenue N is zoned Low-rise 3 Residential-Commercial (L3-RC), and land directly to the west is zoned Commercial 1 with a 65' base height limit (C1-65).

Because most of the sites in the vicinity do not reach full zoning potential, the area could experience substantial redevelopment in the future. Low commercial buildings and newer mid-rise residential condominiums characterize the east side of the Aurora corridor, while older low-rise apartment buildings along with some commercial make up the west side. Dexter Avenue N is characterized on its east and west sides with mid-rise mixed use and residential buildings, some lower commercial, and newer mid-rise office buildings. Several businesses have large accessory surface parking lots. Dexter Avenue N is also a principal route for bicyclists and within close proximity to South Lake Union Park and the Center for Wooden Boats.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a 7-story (approximately 65 foot high) mixed-use development consisting of approximately 270 residential units, 10,000 square feet of retail, and underground parking for 250 vehicles in new construction. Existing building will be demolished.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Three massing schemes were presented by the architect. All schemes were code compliant and included ground-level retail and live/work along Dexter Avenue N, parking garage entrances on both Dexter Avenue N and Aloha Street, stacked residential units above street level development, and proposed open spaces at Levels 2 and 7.

The first scheme ("E") included a continuous street wall along Dexter Avenue N with Level 2 courtyards on the west, facing the Alterra condominiums. The applicant noted that the west-facing units and courtyards will be severely compromised with low quality light due to the site's steep slope and orientation to the west.

The second scheme ("3-pod") was a variation to the E-scheme, where the Level 2 courtyards are located on the east, breaking up the façade along Dexter Avenue N. The applicant also noted that the west-facing units would be severely compromised with low quality light but the east-facing courtyards will have better sun exposure than the E-scheme.

The third, and applicant preferred, scheme ("4-pod") proposed an expression of four solid blocks with voids for Level 2 courtyards fronting Dexter Avenue N, connected by single-loaded corridors along the west. The applicant noted that this scheme was a more appropriate response to the site by eliminating western-facing units on a steep slope, in an effort to take advantage of the eastern exposure and also to avoid privacy issues with the Alterra residents.

The applicant expressed the goal to achieve LEED certification and improve the pedestrian environment along Dexter Avenue N.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

There are no departure requests from the applicant at this time.

BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The Board had the following questions and clarifying comments, with responses from the applicant:

- How did the applicant determine the width of the pods versus the courtyards in the preferred scheme? Concerned that the courtyards in the “4-pod” scheme will feel like a light shaft. Did the applicant try terracing back the units facing the courtyard?
 - Width of courtyards in “4-pod” scheme are narrower than the “3-pod” scheme, but were developed in effort to create equality of light for all units.
- Parking access off Dexter Avenue N could be problematic.
 - Steep grades make it difficult for all parking access to be located on Aloha Street.
- Will the driveway on Dexter Avenue N be on applicant’s site or adjacent site?
 - Driveway is on applicant’s site, but could be combined with adjacent site to 30’ width
- How are the live/work units organized in relationship to the street?
 - 9’-13’ setback will establish defensible space.
- How will west façade look from perspective of neighbors in adjacent property?
 - West façade will be treated with 2’ modulation and change in materials.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 30 members of the public attended the Early Design Guidance meeting. The following comments were offered:

- Developers are entitled to build an 85’ office building but chose not to with respect to Alterra residents.
- Concerned about the flat wall along the west façade. Concerned about the application of the Director’s Rule. Would like to see the roof pulled back from the west property line.
- Resident from north Alterra building stated the proposed building will block all light to her windows. Would like to see landscaping options, possibility of trees.
- Isn’t it mandatory for an 85’ building to step back?
 - Board response: Not mandatory. Director’s Rule appears to be correctly applied.
- Concern about parking garage entry on Aloha Street.
 - Board response: DPD will review the traffic study with the transportation planner.
- Concern about additional equipment on top of the mezzanine roofs.
- Would like to see adjacent approved commercial building represented in images.
- The opening on Dexter Lake Union Apartments runs through the block from Aurora to Dexter. That doesn’t happen on the proposed scheme.

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES

- The Board believes the biggest issue is the massing. In response to the two Alterra buildings, the north and south part of the site should be approached differently and the massing should be more site specific. The “E” scheme responds well to the south Alterra building, but the west elevation of the “4-pod” scheme represents a long wall. The Board would like the applicant to find a compromise, perhaps an “S” scheme or a modification to the “3-pod” scheme by pushing the central corridor to the east. Courtyards on the west will not receive quality light, but there should be more relief from the Alterra buildings. The courtyards in “E” and “3-pod” seemingly are a better scale than those of the “4-pod” scheme and respect the adjacent Alterra building. The north and south pods may not have to align.

- The Board recognizes the importance of detailing the roof and would like the applicant to provide more information about the design, specifically the setbacks on the west side, the location of elevator and stairwell overruns, and the detailing of mechanical equipment.
- The Board encourages the applicant to explore landscaping opportunities, especially at street level, along the west façade, and activating the bus stop area.
- The Board is concerned about pedestrian safety and the width of the drive access on Dexter Avenue N. The applicant will represent the adjacent commercial building in all future renderings.
- The live/work should create a common edge along Dexter Avenue N and have defensible space.
- As for architectural context, the Board would like to see a design that is not as busy as the Dexter Lake Union Apartments and not as monolithic as the Neptune Apartments or similar projects.
- As for materials, Dexter Avenue N is an eclectic street. There is no predetermined set of materials, however the applicant should respond to the adjacent projects. The Board would like the applicant to study the materials proposed for 1101 Dexter and how the design responded to glare and window placement.

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-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.**

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

South Lake Union Guideline (augmenting D-7):

- **Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18-hour public activity. Methods to consider are:**
 - **enhanced pedestrian and street lighting;**
 - **well-designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street;**

NEXT STEPS

1. Submit application for Master Use Permit (MUP) application. Please include a written response to the guidance provided in this EDG. Plan on embedding the 11x17 colored elevations and landscape plans into the MUP plan set (4 per sheet).
2. At the next design review meeting, please submit a color and materials board. Please also provide colored renderings and/or graphics showing the relationship between the proposed development and the existing development on either side.