



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Diane Sugimura, Director

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES

OF

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD 1

September 28, 2009

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3010265

Address: 100 N.W. 85th St.

Applicant: GGLO Architects for Fred Meyer (Kroger) Inc.

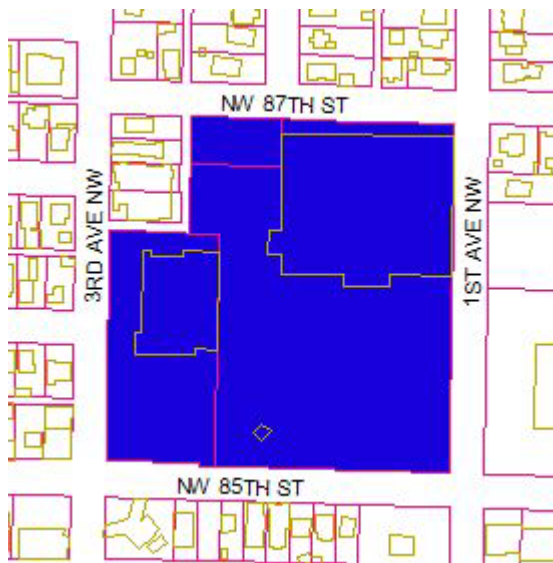
Board members present:
Guy Peckham
Mark Brands
Joe Gimapietro
Bill Singer
Jean Morgan

Board members absent: none

Land Use Planner present: Scott Kemp

This early design guidance meeting was conducted for a proposed re-development of the existing Fred Meyer and Greenwood Market sites in the Greenwood neighborhood of Seattle. The site consists of most of the block between N.W. 85th St., N.W. 87th St., 1st Ave. N.W. and 3rd Ave. N.W., with an area in the northwest corner of the block excluded.

A public alley borders four parcels in the northwest corner of the block which are not a part of the proposal site. The large site contains approximately 12 feet of topography drop from the southwest to the northeast.



Existing development on the site consists of a two-story Fred Meyer building in the northeast corner, a grocery store (Greenwood Market) in the western area and a small retail structure (lock and key shop) on a large paved parking lot located in the south portion of the site.

The entire site is designated a Peat Settlement area, and environmentally critical area with associated development regulations to limit disturbance dewatering of peat layers. The peat layers are beneath fill material approximately 10 feet thick.

The proponents of the project seek to develop the site with an approximately 160,000 sf Fred Meyer store with groceries and other goods. The store would be set on one level just above that of the highest area of peat soils. Other uses, at sidewalk level would face N.W. 85th, 1st Ave. N.W. and 3rd Ave. N.W. A parking garage, above the peat layer and rising five stories above grade in the northeast portion of the site would provide the great majority of parking for the development. Multifamily housing would be constructed on the concrete lid of the Fred Meyer store, along with associated parking and landscape areas.

At this second Early Design Guidance Meeting (“EDG”) a further refined “Preferred Option” was presented as well as a two story option as requested by the Board at the first EDG meeting.

The proposal as shown at the second EDG meeting has 200 residential units moved away from N. 87th St. and concentrated along N. Residential uses are present at grade along 3rd Ave. N. The N. 85th Street frontage is comprised by a “ribbon” of commercial uses approximately 40 feet deep. Pedestrian paths create an “x” across the site as the climb onto the lid above the Fred Meyer Store. The main entry to the grocery store faces onto a public plaza on 1st Ave. N. across from the private “Morrow Ln.” across that street. An above grade parking garage is in the northeast corner of the site separated from N. 87th St. by a 20 foot landscaped area. An access bridge crosses a portion of the site connecting residential buildings north and south of the east/west pedestrian crossing.

A second option shown at the meeting would incorporate a two story Fred Meyer store, a parking garage and some surface parking. Approximately 120 residential units would be placed in the southwest portion of the site.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Extensive public comment was received at the meeting. These comments included the following.

It is a relief to see the existing, mature trees in the 20 foot landscaped area along the north of the site are remaining.

Moving the residential height from the north, above the parking garage, to the southern areas is a positive move in that it moves structure height away from the single family areas to the north.

It would be good if the plaza area was designed to accommodate farmer's markets and other community events.

The bog beneath at least a portion of the site needs to be protected and should be driving the store up, not down in elevation.

It is unfortunate that much of the façade along 1st Ave. N., identified in the Greenwood Plan as a green street, is occupied by a parking garage. This is not an optimal arrangement opposite the new park area across 1st Ave. N. to the east. Townhouses along this façade, facing the park area, would be more compatible.

The stairs up onto and across the lid make passage by bicycle, wheel chair or with a stroller difficult.

The "four corners" area at the intersection of the pedestrian crossings on the lid should be improved with spaces which allow flexible use so the area can be a lively pedestrian node in the future.

Raised sidewalks across curb cuts would help to give pedestrians some right-of-way.

The bog and the movement of water through the soil is a defining physical element of the site and should influence project design.

The housing on the lid is not a certain outcome; depending on economic factors at a future date.

A meeting about soils was promised and this may be a good time to have it.

"Exposing" some of the drainage, on street edges or on the lid, would add to the character and environmental quality of the development.

Delivery trucks entering the site from 3rd Ave. N.W. may cause congestion as they block or slow traffic on that arterial. Entry from N.W. 87th might be preferable.

The entries to pedestrian crossing paths need to be "wheel friendly." An elevator at the north entry would greatly aid in entry from that direction. From the west a ramp and stair would be appropriate. The north/south crossing of the site should have a protected pedestrian element and not be diminished by the fact that it is also a driveway for most of its extent.

The porches and steps to residential units along 3rd Ave. N.W. work well.

Another access point, likely on 87th, would lessen congestion on 1st Ave. N.W.

What is the expected need to connect with N.W. 86th to the west of the site? That street is narrow, with no sidewalks and parking on both sides of the street.

Design of the exterior facades of the parking structure is important. It will be especially impactful to properties to north. The solution should not be landscaping alone, either trees in the existing buffer or green walls, but should include architectural details. The landscaping alone may fail to do the job.

The appearance of impervious parking areas should be lessened by incorporation of landscaped areas, a solar array or other measures.

The leasing area could be incorporated into the storefront areas and the “crossroads” area on the lid made into amenity space.

The pedestrian path from the garage to the store needs to be safe and not negatively influenced by the passage of trucks from the loading dock to 1st Ave. N.W.

The quadrants approach to organizing the lid area works well. Sinking the store relative to the elevation along N.W. 85th St. is a “brilliant” move.

The two-story store option is not as good as the one-story one. The store works better at one story. The housing element works better on the lid of the store and not on grade in a separate area.

The garage is ugly and should be located centrally within the site.

The developers should think with a 60 year mind set and reduce the influence of the automobile. The number of parking spaces should be reduced. Think inter-generationally. Where will people, children, adults, seniors, mix? This could happen if the surface parking areas on the lid were dedicated to other, recreational open space uses.

Exhaust from trucks idling at the loading docks could be a problem and should be addressed in the design.

The “skybridge” connection across the east/west pedestrian crossing will tend to “wall off” the interior of the site. It would be better if it was not there. The density of the residential uses to the north of it should be increased and an elevator for that building added. There should be higher residential density on the site.

Trees should wrap the parking garage along the empty “Parcel Three.

Overall, the current preferred option is a good solution. The retail around the edges greatly improves conditions around the edges of the site. The garage is in the best place it can be. There should be more internal green spaces for residents. Autos should be organized to more directly access surrounding streets, leaving internal areas for pedestrian uses. The spaces between the buildings are the key element from the pedestrian perspective.

Noise dampening, or other forms of control, needs to be implemented in the loading dock area.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS:

At this second Early Design Guidance Meeting the Board reviewed application materials presented by the applicants who presented two development schemes: one a further revision of the one-story preferred option from the prior meeting and a second option with a two story store. These designs consisted of site plans, elevations and floor plans of potential structures.

The Board resolved that the applicants can proceed with a one story store proposal as the two story store represents a significant obstacle to the applicant Fred Meyer in the form of reduced profitability and it does not accomplish a greatly improved urban form. The two story store remains too large to fit in a single quadrant of the site, presents extensive store walls to adjacent sidewalks without intervening uses, and leaves undeveloped areas which are not viable for dense multi-family development.

Pedestrian accessibility to and through the site continued to be a major element of concern. The pedestrian entry from N.W. 87th St. needs to be designed to have increased importance and presence. It looks a bit too much like a fire escape now.

The sky bridge across the walkway in from Third Ave. N.W. is encouraged to be removed. It would be better to add a second elevator and another story of housing in the area north of the walkway. This entry should be wide and inviting to pedestrians cross the site.

The applicants should investigate alternate ways to secure the residential areas without gating the pedestrian crossings. The Board is concerned about closing the site at night. Maybe the crossings could be left open, but the internal quadrants could be closed off.

On-street parking, particularly on Third Ave. N. as an option to reduce the amount of parking in pedestrian areas of the lid should be investigated.

Bicycles and people should be able to enter the site with ease. Bicycle parking should be placed in areas where it is easily accessible to users of the site, not hidden in the parking garage.

The Gateway entry from N.W. 85th St. should read as very pedestrian even though cars access through it as well. This may mean one side is favored over the other for pedestrians through the site on this axis.

The “four corners” area at the crossing of the pedestrian routes on the lid needs to be functional and a grand space; a focal point of the uses on the lid.

The southwest corner is an important retail location with good solar access and should be developed with this in mind.

The view of the plaza in front of the Fred Meyer entry with a stair case up along the pedestrian path and is very successful.

Next Steps

The applicants should move on to Master Use Permit Application.

Development Standard Departures

The applicant disclosed three potential departures from development standards desired in order to achieve a better designed project. Requested was:

1. To allow more less than 60% non-residential uses along an arterial street (3rd Ave. N.W.).
2. To allow access to parking from surrounding streets in addition to the existing alley.
3. To allow the parking garage along 1st Ave. N.W. without an intervening use.

The Board indicated receptivity to these proposed departures.