

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE PRIORITIES
OF THE
NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

**Meeting Date: June 7, 2010
Report Date: June 15, 2010**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3011030

Address: 2510 NE Blakeley Street

Applicant: B.Z. Zenczak

Board members present: Peter Krech, Acting Chair
Salone Habibudden
Joe Hurley
Tricia Reisenauer

Board members absent: Craig Parsons (excused)

DPD staff present: Shelley Bolser, Senior Land Use Planner
Bruce Rips, Interim Design Review Program Manager

SITE & VICINITY

The approximately 13,426 square foot corner site is located on the northwest corner of NE Blakeley St and 26th Ave NE. The site is occupied by a one-story vacant 2,300 square foot restaurant building constructed in 1976 and 20 surface parking stalls. There is one curb cut located near the southeast corner of the property, accessing NE Blakeley St.

The site slopes from the north down to the south and is split zoned Neighborhood Commercial 2 with a 30' height limit and a Pedestrian designation (NC2P-30), and Single Family Residential (SF 5000). The NC2P-30 zoning continues to the northwest and west. The SF 5000 zoning continues to the north and east. More intensive Commercial 1 zoning with a 40' height limit is located to the south, across NE Blakeley St.

Surrounding uses include a mix of commercial and residential. Commercial areas flank 25th Ave NE and NE Blakeley St near the site. University Village shopping mall is located to the south. Multifamily residential development is located along NE Blakeley St and 25th Ave NE. Nearby single family residential development is located along 26th Ave NE and the blocks east of the site. Most of the nearby single family and older retail structures are 1-2 stories tall. Newer multi-family residential, hotel, and mixed-use structures are around 4 stories tall.

Bus stops are located on 25th Ave NE. Burke Gilman Trail is a heavily used path for cyclists and pedestrians, and is located across NE Blakeley St from the site. Off-street parking is predominantly in private surface parking lots, with some below grade and structured parking. There are no alleys adjacent to the site.

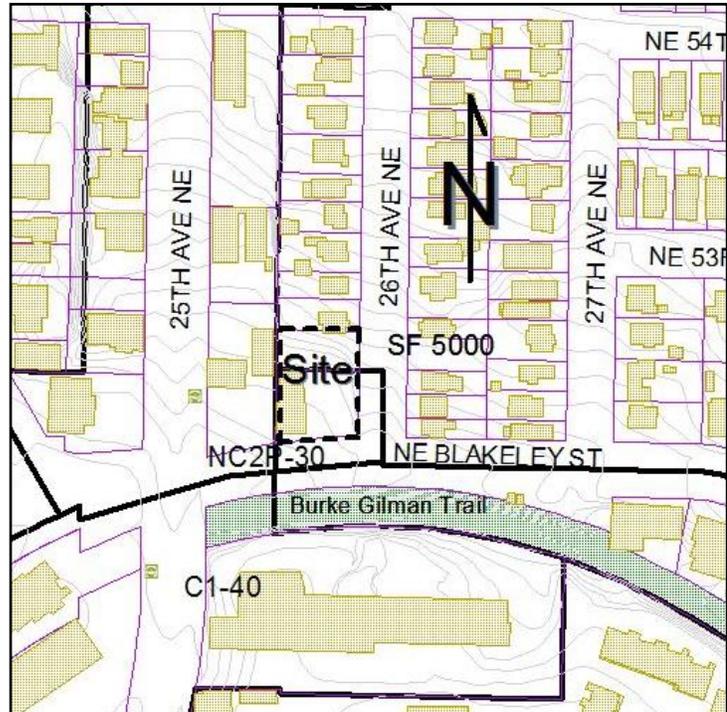
The site is located adjacent to the east border of the University Design Guidelines area, but is not located inside the University Design Guidelines area.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing structure and parking and construct a new 35' tall building with 6,400 square feet of commercial space and 12 surface parking stalls.

Columbia Bank would occupy the structure with bank lobby areas on the ground floor and loan offices above.

The proposal includes two curb cuts, one with access from 26th Ave NE and the other with access to NE Blakeley St. Landscaped open space would be located on the Single Family zoned portion of the site.



For illustrative purposes only

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Three schemes were presented at the Early Design Guidance meeting. All of the options included the same proposed curb cut locations, same proposed building location, the same amount of building and parking areas, and the same areas of landscaped open space. All three options included a pedestrian entry at the southeast corner of the building, with a surface parking area and second entry at the north side of the building. A landscaped open space area would be located on the Single Family zoned portion of the site, providing a buffer for the residence to the north.

The primary differences between the three options included building articulation and roof forms.

The applicant identified two departures that would be required for the proposed design. The first departure would be to reduce the amount of transparency required at the street level at 26th Ave NE and NE Blakeley St, with the rationale that it would be necessary for security measures. The applicant noted a second potential departure to reduce the depth of overhead weather protection due to overhead power line locations.

Design intent for the proposed development is based on Columbia Bank's desire to be consistent with the corporate materials, color, and identification.

BOARD QUESTIONS

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

- Does the applicant propose to raise the grade of the site to achieve parking access from 26th Ave NE? The grade at the proposed curb cut location is higher than the grade of the existing surface parking on site.
 - Intention is to keep the grades close to existing, with an approximately 12% sloping driveway down into the parking area adjacent to 26th Ave NE.
- All three alternatives propose two curb cuts, one from each street frontage. Why has the applicant not shown an option with only one curb cut?
 - The design team analyzed access alternatives and decided two curb cuts were best for pedestrian and driver safety. They didn't want to create a 'dead end' parking lot with only one access point because it would potentially cause accidents and be difficult for fire truck access.
- The site size doesn't require fire truck access and turnaround, but how will trash and recycling be collected?
 - Trash and recycling would be located at the interior of the lot off the northwest edge of the parking area.
- Is there an ATM location? Is the applicant proposing a drive-through ATM on the west side of the building?
 - The ATM would be located at the north side of the building, and there is no drive-through here because it's not allowed in the zone. The west door is access to mechanical equipment.
- Would there be exterior lighting associated with the ATM facing the residential areas? Glare issues?
 - Yes, likely there would be exterior lighting at the north façade.
- Why propose the parking driveway loop configuration, instead of a turnaround area in the parking lot with one curb cut?
 - The applicant felt the east driveway may be too steep when it's icy, etc. so the loop allows safer exiting.
- What is the minimum needed by the bank to operate at this site? Is it possible to reduce the size of the proposed building and still meet the bank's needs?
 - All the proposed square footage is needed for the bank lobby and loan office areas anticipated by the bank.
- Some of the proposed schemes show a tower-type massing at the corner. What is the wall height at this area?
 - 35' wall plus a hip roof.
- Is the applicant proposing to step the mass back at the SE corner? The drawings show a solid mass.
 - The street level would include a recessed entry. The massing diagrams just show the outline of mass and not the proposed recessed area.
- How does the applicant anticipate combining the corporate identification needs with the neighborhood character of this area?
 - In addition to the corporate materials of brick wainscoting, stucco second story, and blue roof, the applicant could incorporate wood siding, parapets, possibly use all brick, and use the roof forms to modulate the building.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Seven members of the public signed in at the Early Design Guidance meeting. The following comments were offered:

- There are many residents on 26th Ave NE and few off-street parking spaces, so on-street parking is a challenge. A second proposed curb cut would remove approximately three on-street parking spaces.
- Twelve parking spaces are provided, but the building occupant load is 65. This would make on-street parking situations worse.
- The proposed 35' tall building is out of scale for the small single family residences adjacent to the north and east.
- The proposed material selection and blue roof aren't consistent with the neighborhood context. There are other examples of Columbia Bank branches (downtown, etc) where they have used other materials. Consider a palette more in context with the area.
- The proposed pedestrian entry at the southeast corner would bring more commercial activity toward the residential nature of 26th Ave NE. The entry should be primarily located on NE Blakeley St.
- Potential light and glare from the entries is a concern to adjacent residences.
- The proposed design references commercial development on 25th Ave NE, but the proposed building siting is oriented to residential development on 26th Ave NE. The building should instead be set back from the sidewalk at 26th Ave NE and oriented more to the commercial areas to the west and south.
- The proposed east driveway slope of 12% could be a problem and the applicant should carefully calculate the resulting driveway length.
- The proposed flat roof with potential for mechanical equipment is a concern to nearby residences. Rooftop screening should be anticipated and proposed with the primary building design.
- Many cyclists and pedestrians use 26th Ave NE to access the Burke Gilman Trail. A proposed curb cut with a steep slope at that street could cause a lot of safety problems.
- The retaining wall at the north property line is already sliding. Additional grading in this area could create a problem for the adjacent neighboring structure.
- The proposed bank use is appreciated by neighbors, as long as it's designed in a way to meet concerns of scale, context, and grading.

DESIGN GUIDELINE 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 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*. All guidelines apply to the project, and the following list is those the Board identified as having the highest priority to this project.

"Hot Button Issues" are items initially discussed by the Board and include items of top importance for the design. For this project, the Board determined the hot button issue was:

1. **Proposed vehicular access to the site.** The applicant has proposed two vehicular access points to the site, one at 26th Ave NE, and one exit-only to NE Blakeley St.

- The heavier traffic and nearby adjacent gas station curb cut at NE Blakeley make a curb cut at that location challenging. DPD has also noted that the pedestrian designation in this zone conflicts with a proposed curb cut at NE Blakeley St.
 - The residential uses and zoning on 26th Ave NE make a curb cut at that location a challenge. Additionally, the proposed driveway would be steep and could create safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - The Board noted that there doesn't appear to be one clear solution for vehicular access at this point, but the applicant should demonstrate how they analyzed the vehicular access alternatives, and show development alternatives with one curb cut location.
2. **Scale and context.** The applicant has proposed a building built to the maximum zoning height of 35' plus roof forms. Commercial development to the south is consistent with this type of development, but the zone transition to SF 5000 at this site brings the scale into question.
- The applicant should provide additional urban design context analysis for the proposed development. Consider and show examples of existing neighborhood commercial development in the area that is clearly commercial in design, but provides a good transition to adjacent single family development.
 - The applicant should also provide context analysis of adjacent development. Graphics including sections, elevations, and sketches of proposed development and adjacent structures should be provided.
 - Include analysis of the proposed development in relation to the context on 26th Ave NE, as well as the context on NE Blakeley St and 25th Ave NE.

The applicant should address all priority guidelines and Board guidance below during the next stages of design review.

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.

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.

Guidance relates to Hot Button #1, with the proposed two curb cuts and the challenges of a curb cut on either adjacent street. Additional analysis is needed and should be demonstrated at the next Design Review meeting for this project.

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

The proposed overhead weather protection needs to function as actual weather protection for pedestrians, and not just decorative canopies.

A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

The proposed departure to reduce transparency at the street facing facades is a concern at this site, especially with the transition to residential development to the east and north. The applicant has indicated that the departure is proposed to address security concerns. Additional analysis of how the proposed departure better meets the intent of the adopted design guidelines should be provided by the applicant at the next Design Review meeting for this project.

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.

Guidance relates to Hot Button #2 and the scale of the proposed development in relation to existing neighborhood context. Additional analysis is needed and should be demonstrated at the next Design Review meeting for this project.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

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 anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

Guidance relates to Hot Button #2, Guideline A-5, and the scale of the proposed development in relation to existing neighborhood context. Additional analysis is needed and should be demonstrated at the next Design Review meeting for this project.

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.

Guidance reflects comments found in Hot Button #2, and Guidelines A-5 and B-1.

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 facade walls.

Additional information is needed from the applicant in order for the Board to provide guidance related to this item. The applicant should demonstrate how the proposed design goals (corporate identity, etc.) could meet this guideline. The applicant should identify which corporate goals are critical to their design, and work to integrate these goals with neighborhood context in developing a design proposal.

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

Guidance reflects comments found in Hot Button #2, and Guidelines A-5 and B-1.

In addition, the applicant should demonstrate how the proposed landscaping and retaining walls near the north property line and proposed building mass at the south property line would meet these guidelines.

D. Pedestrian Environment

- D-1 **Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances.** 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.

The proposed pedestrian entry at the southeast corner is problematic as the street transitions from single family residential to commercial development. The applicant should demonstrate alternatives for pedestrian entry, including an entry point from NE Blakeley St.

- 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.

Additional information is needed from the applicant in order for the Board to provide guidance related to this item. The applicant should demonstrate how the proposed design (departures to reduce transparency, etc.) could meet this guideline.

- 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.

Provide additional information in order for the Board to review this item. The applicant should demonstrate how the proposed design (vehicular entry at 26th and surface parking grading) could meet this guideline.

- 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.

Additional information is needed from the applicant in order for the Board to provide guidance related to this item. The configuration of the parking lot will vary, depending on the three new design options to be provided at the next meeting. The applicant should demonstrate how the proposed design (vehicular entry at 26th and surface parking grading) could meet this guideline.

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

Comments reflect those found in Hot Button 1, and Guidelines A-1 and A-8.

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.

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 should demonstrate how the proposal meets these guidelines at the next Design Review meeting for this project. The lighting plan should minimize glare to nearby residences.

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.

Comments reflect those found in Guideline A-4.

E. Landscaping

No one specific guideline is of highest priority. The Board noted that the landscape plan appears to have a positive direction for providing landscaped buffer areas near the north property line and screening for surface parking areas.

The applicant should address landscape and hardscape design on NE Blakeley St, and provide more landscape plan information at the next stage of design review.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

SMC Reference	Requirement	Anticipated Departure	Applicant Rationale	Board Guidance
Depth of overhead canopies (SMC reference not provided by applicant)	Not provided by applicant	Some canopies reduced in depth or eliminated (measurement not specified by applicant)	Overhead power line location	It's unclear whether this is a requirement in this zone, and whether a departure is necessary. Applicant should provide more information about proposed departure.
23.47A.008.A.3 Maximum façade setback	Street-facing facades shall be located within 10 feet of the street lot line, unless wider sidewalks, plazas, or other approved landscaped or open spaces are provided	Separate the sidewalk from the building with landscaping (proposed setback unspecified at this time)	Security measures	See response to Guidelines A-4 and D-11; The Board will continue to evaluate the proposed departure, provided the applicant can demonstrate that the departure would better meet the intent of the adopted design guidelines.
23.47A.008.B Transparency at street level	Transparency at Street Level required between 2-8' above the sidewalk	Provide transparency no lower than 2'6" above the sidewalk	Security measures	See response to Guidelines A-4 and D-11; The Board will continue to evaluate the proposed departure, provided the applicant can demonstrate that the departure would better meet the intent of the adopted design guidelines.

SUMMARY

The Board recommended that the applicant return for a second Early Design Guidance meeting, due to the lack of analysis of critical site planning issues, lack of neighborhood context analysis, and the lack of three different massing/site plan alternatives.

NEXT STEPS

Second Early Design Guidance Meeting Required:

1. Please contact Colin Vasquez (at colin.vasquez@seattle.gov or 206-684-5639) to discuss Early Design Guidance packets and to schedule a second EDG meeting.
2. Provide three different massing proposals, including an alternative to provide massing closer to the west property line.
3. Provide a vehicular access study, looking at alternatives to two proposed curb cuts. Study should demonstrate the benefits and challenges for a single point of vehicular access, as well as vehicular access on 26th Ave NE and vehicular access on NE Blakeley St.
4. Provide sections demonstrating proposed massing in context with existing structures adjacent and across the street.
5. Provide sections demonstrating the proposed elevation of surface parking and existing elevations at adjacent streets.
6. Provide a neighborhood urban design analysis demonstrating existing neighborhood context and scale.
 - a. Provide examples of nearby commercial structures that are in scale with adjacent residential development
 - b. Identify the design cues this proposal is using (scale, materials, forms, etc), beyond those of existing Columbia Banks.
7. Provide pedestrian level sketches demonstrating the three alternative masses in context with existing development.
8. Provide a clear list of anticipated departures, including code sections and graphics demonstrating the proposed departure.