



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
D.M. Sugimura, Director

***EARLY DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES
OF THE
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD 4 SOUTHEAST***

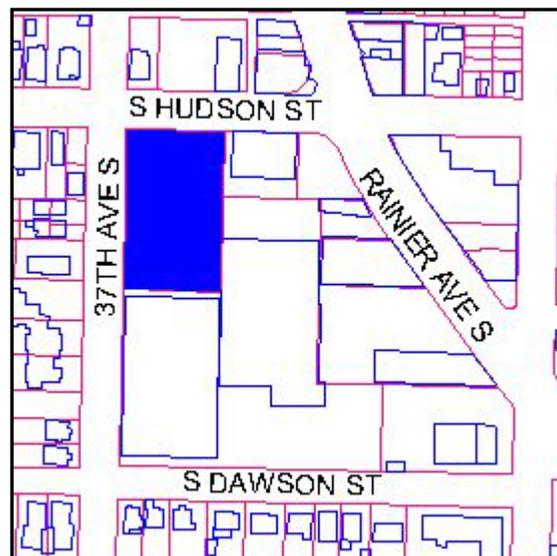
Project Number: 3011350
Address: 3701 South Hudson Street
Applicant: Brian Runberg, Runberg Architect Group, PLLC.
Harbor Properties, Owner
Meeting Date: June 22, 2010
Board Members Present: Robert A. Mohn, Chair
Sam Cameron
Tony Case
Brent Conway
Board Member Absent: Michelle Wang
Staff Members Present: Bradley Wilburn, Land Use Planner

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Site Description

The development site is located at the southeast corner South Hudson to the north and 37th Avenue South to the west and occupies a total land area of approximately 37,600 square feet. The subject lot is zoned Commercial Two with a height limit of 65 feet (C2-65), in the Columbia City neighborhood of South Seattle. Other overlays found at the site are the Columbia City Residential Urban Village and the Southeast Seattle Reinvestment Area Overlay District. Additionally, the east portion of the subject lot falls within the Columbia City Landmark District. The site is not within a designated Environmentally Critical Area (ECA).

The site is fully developed with a one-story building and accessory hard surface parking lot.



The site slopes moderately downward from the west property line to the east property line, approximately 6 feet over a distance of 150 feet. The abutting streets are fully developed rights-of-way with asphalt roadway; curbs, sidewalks and gutters.

Area Development

Rainier Avenue South located at the east end of the block is a primary arterial. Rainier Avenue is the life-blood of the commercial corridor for an area that supports a mix of retail, restaurant, office, and industrial uses to name a few. Zoning along Rainier Avenue includes C2, Neighborhood Commercial Two and Three with height limits of 40 and 65 feet (C2-65, NC2-40, & NC3P-40). The commercial zones are characterized by surface parking and buildings well under the area's zoned height limit predominates this area. To the west across 37th Avenue South are a number of residential zones, including Multifamily Lowrise Two (L-2) and Single family 5000 zones that supports a varied assortment of residential structures (apartments, townhomes, and single family). This area is distinctly residential in character with a modest density of residential uses. To the north across South Hudson Street commercial uses dominate the street experience.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

The design team (which included the owner's representative, lead architect and landscape planner) presented three alternative design schemes. All of the options showed vehicle access to an underground parking garage (109 spaces) taken off South Hudson. The building's northwest corner would be sculpted at the intersection of South Hudson and 37th Avenue in response to the lower density residential zones to the west. Each scheme would incorporate sustainable features including rooftop gardens, materials and elements to reduce the building's carbon footprint. The design includes a six to five-stories, with residential use above street level. One of the three schemes (Scheme "C") would establish residential use at street level. The residential unit count would range between 136 to 123 units. The architect says that exterior building materials and color palette will be influenced by buildings in the greater Columbia City area with sensitivity to abutting zones. Two development departures are being sought at this time, reduction in Driveway Width and Sight Triangle.

The first option (Scheme "E") has a six-story, E-shaped building with two courtyards facing east to take greater advantage of morning sunlight. A solid wall fronts 37th Avenue. In Option D, the building's height extends to five-stories with its center cut-out to allow natural light into an interior courtyard. The exterior wall along 37th Avenue would be modulated to break up the building's mass which is across the street from the lower density multifamily (L-2) zone. Under Option C (applicant's preferred scheme) the proposed structure would extend five-stories above grade, with residential use on all floors. The building's mass would be C-shaped with its open side facing west on 37th Avenue. Two, two-story townhouse structures will be set within the interior area, separated by a courtyard. The structure's footprint would provide a generous setback along South Hudson in alignment with the residential zone further to the west.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 16 members from the public attended this Early Design Review meeting with only eight filling out the sign-in sheet. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Supports preferred scheme with the C-shaped building mass opening up onto 37th Avenue. Many of the siting decisions were “spot-on.”
- Serious consideration should be made to establish 37th as the proposal’s front door, with South Hudson exploring options to have a more commercial orientation with live-work use.
- Five-story structure seems appropriate but would not mind if an additional story was added.
- Vehicle access should function more like an alley in anticipation of future development. We should know what easements are in place to allow other parcels on the block to access the driveway.
- The proposed building at street level should embrace the sidewalk; the building seems to turn its side to 37th and loses its connection to South Hudson.
- The building should be kept at five-stories, creates better compatibility with the residential zone to the west.
- It’s a good idea not to place commercial uses along South Hudson.
- The courtyard and perimeter landscaping seem generous, but what guarantees it will be well designed and maintained – will people actually use the courtyard. Will the at-grade courtyard be open to the public? (No, was the response from the applicant).
- Love street level variation with landscaping, retaining walls and modulations.
- Building appears to be too monolithic. Would like to see greater variations – shake up the exterior façade elevations.
- The proposed five-story building’s mass is too big; the structure should be lowered to minimize affected views on surrounding properties.

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*” of highest priority to this project.

Site Planning

A-1 RESPONDING TO SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as nonrectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

A-2 STREETScape COMPATIBILITY

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

A-3 ENTRANCES VISIBLE FROM THE STREET

Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

A-4 HUMAN ACTIVITY

New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

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.

A-6 TRANSITION BETWEEN RESIDENCE AND STREET

For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.

A-7 RESIDENTIAL OPEN SPACE

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

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.

The articulation of pedestrian entries should visually announce entries. Emphasis should be directed towards making the building readable, directing visitors to the development site to the appropriate destination entries. The two street fronts should be as welcoming as possible.

The Board encouraged the applicant to design a building that has a lively street edge especially along 37th Avenue. Thirty-Seventh Avenue is more appropriate to locate front entries (with wide steps or stoops) to provide opportunities for social engagement along the streetscape. The building's mass should be more permeable along 37th to activate the street. The Board encouraged the architect to reorient the townhomes entries to face 37th Avenue.

The Board would like to see a high-quality right-of-way design and a landscape plan that endeavors to enhance the pedestrian streetscape. See also E-2.

Contextually, the driveway access to the below grade parking garage should be viewed as an alley and designed in a manner to visually enhance this environment that will also serve as access for pedestrians. (Note: This area falls within the Columbia City Landmark District's purview and will need their approval.)

Board would like to see a detailed design of the courtyard space to better understand how it addresses visual, noise, and security impacts.

The Board supported the preferred design scheme with the C-shaped building mass opening out onto the 37th street frontage. However, the massing at street level should be reinforced with a strong street presence to help define the street edge.

Height, Bulk and Scale

B-1 HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE

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.

The Board acknowledged that the first floor is generous but the applicant should be considering impacts of the upper floors on the abutting properties to the south and across 37th Avenue. The setback along South Hudson provides an appropriate mass transition along a street that becomes residential in character west of the development site.

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 patterns of neighboring buildings.

C-2 ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT & 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 forms and features identifying the functions within the building.

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 area encouraged.

The Board encouraged the design team to pick-up on architectural themes found in the surrounding Columbia City area - Industrial Contemporary was one of several suggestions to inform a design language. The proposed structures should be designed to gracefully fit within a development site that is sympathetic to the residential zone to the west and commercially zoned properties to the north.

The Board emphasized the need to design proposed buildings in a manner that spatially integrate functional social spaces and establish safe spaces between townhouse structures and the main building.

At the next meeting, the applicant should provide well-detailed materials and color palette. Use of high quality, durable and well-detailed materials are critical elements to the overall success of the project. They look forward to reviewing a well-detailed material and color palette. The Board suggested that a design approach to enhance the 37th frontage, with an emphasis on pedestrian amenities in and around the proposed courtyard, will determine how successful this outdoor space will become.

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.

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 their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscape.

D-8 TREATMENT OF ALLEYS

The design of alleys entrances should enhance the pedestrians' street front.

D-12 RESIDENTIAL ENTRIES AND TRANSITIONS

For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and be visually interesting for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops, and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

The Board discussed the importance of the sidewalk street experience with retaining walls along both rights-of-way. Special emphasis should be directed towards 37th Avenue with the longest street frontage and the need to enhance a residentially oriented street. How the development is framed at the street edge is an important design element in the overall design composition and should be treated as such with an eye on detail.

As previously mentioned, the Board would like the design team to treat the driveway as an alley and consider design possibilities to establish an event space. Accommodations for pedestrians activating this space should be employed. The Board stressed the importance of pedestrian safety and connecting this area with existing and proposed structures. The applicant should show this is achieved at the next meeting. See also A-8.

The flow and connection of the entries along South Hudson are appropriate – if it is well executed. This frontage should become an asset to the overall design composition. Thirty-Seventh Avenue will need additional work to enhance the residential character of the streetscape. The front doors should open up onto 37th Avenue; creation of common social spaces are encouraged to facilitate interactions with neighbors. Good architectural detailing is needed to visually engage the public in this realm.

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 Board looks forward to reviewing a well-detailed landscape plan that emphasizes urban agriculture. A maintenance plan must be included to assure the green spaces remain vibrant and attractive over the years. At grade, the Board encouraged using quality landscaping to soften the transition between the site and the residential zone to the west.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board found that there was not sufficient justification for narrowing the driveway width, when there is the combined need for pedestrian access and existing and future vehicle activity. The Board would not support the departure request to reduce driveway width. The applicant needs to show that the lack of a sight triangle would somehow better meet the guidelines. Installation of safety devices alone are not a reason for granting a departure.

NEXT STEPS

MUP Application:

1. Submit application for Master Use Permit (MUP) application. Please call Bradley Wilburn (at 206-615-0508) when you have scheduled your MUP intake appointment.
2. Please include a written response to the guidance provided in this EDG. Per Attachment B of Client Assistance Memo 238, plan on embedding four 11x17 colored and shadowed elevations, landscape and right-of-way improvement plans and three-dimensional street level vignettes into the front of the MUP plan set (4 per sheet) as Design Review sheets.
3. A parking and traffic study will be required as part of the MUP process.

Recommendation Meeting:

4. Please provide a shadow study showing solar access opportunities to the proposed open spaces and effects on neighboring properties at the extreme seasons.
5. Please submit a color and materials board.
6. Please also prepare a conceptual signage plan.
7. Please submit a conceptual lighting plan, particularly along 37th Avenue, driveway, and all proposed open spaces.

8. The Board would like to see a detailed rendering of this courtyard with pedestrian connections to understand how it addresses access, visual, and security impacts to the neighbors.
9. Please identify and illustrate any Green LEED elements.

Please note that per Client Assistance (CAM) memo 238, updated March 13, 2008, it is now the responsibility of the applicant to submit a .pdf file of the 11x17 design proposal packet to DPD 5 days prior to the public Design Review meeting.

Please see the instructions in CAM 238 and as detailed on the Design Review webpage: http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Overview/