



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3011443

Address: 4484 Martin Luther King Jr. Way South

Applicant: Christina Bollo

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, January 11, 2011

Board Members Present: Michele Wang (Chair)  
Sam Cameron  
Tony Case  
Brett Conway  
Rob Mohn

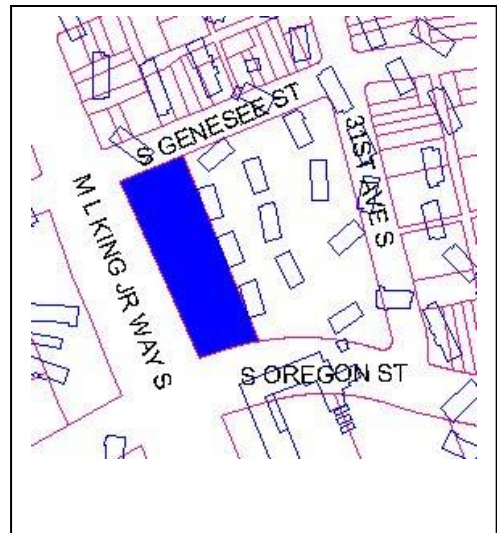
DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser, Senior Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial (NC1-40) and Lowrise Residential/ Residential Commercial (L-4 RC)  
(see page 3 showing site with zone change location)

Nearby Zones: (North) L-4 and L-4 RC  
(South) NC1-40  
(East) L-4 RC  
(West) NC1-40

Lot Area: 34,055 square feet



Current  
Development:

The existing site is currently vacant. The previous use was low income apartments, until the structures were demolished by 2007 as part of Seattle Housing Authority's Rainier Vista Master Plan for redevelopment. The Rainier Vista Master Plan requires preservation of three mature trees at the Martin Luther King Jr. Way S. street frontage adjacent to this parcel.

The site is relatively flat, with a slight slope from the west down to the east.

Access:

The site is currently vacant and fenced and doesn't include vehicular or pedestrian access. The adjacent street frontages are undergoing improvement for new curbs, gutters, and sidewalks.

The surrounding development includes a mix of newer multi-story mixed-use and residential structures, and older single family residences. The newer structures are primarily within the Rainier Vista development.

The Light Rail line is located in the center of Martin Luther King Jr. Way S, which borders the west side of the site. The nearest light rail stop is approximately two blocks to the south at S. Alaska Street.

Surrounding  
Development:

The parcels to the east of the site are planned for new townhouses and a community park. This development will likely be constructed prior to the proposed development, but the site is currently vacant. A long driveway that functions as an alley would separate the proposed development from the adjacent future townhouses.

The applicant has identified only part of the subject property as proposed for development. Seattle Housing Authority indicated that they intend to submit a contract rezone application for the northern part of the subject property. The anticipated development of that site would be townhouses.

ECAs:

There are no Environmentally Critical Areas mapped on the site.

The neighborhood character reflects the recent redevelopment of Rainier Vista and the established single family neighborhood to the east. Areas adjacent to Martin Luther King Jr. Way S. have been redeveloped with mixed-use and residential structures approximately 3-4 stories tall. Mixed-use structures predominantly line Martin Luther King Jr. Way S., with townhouse and single family structures to the east and west. The Boys and Girls Club is a newer single story structure that is located south of the subject property, at S. Oregon St and Martin Luther King Jr. Way S.

Neighborhood Character:

The more established single family development to the east consists of 1-3 story single family residential structures in a range of ages. The center of the Columbia City neighborhood is located approximately 1/2 mile to the southeast of this site.

The neighborhood is well served by transit (both light rail and bus) and pedestrian activity appears to be growing with the increase in the amount of residential development, the types of businesses, and community centers and parks.

The topography is relatively level in this area from north to south. The neighborhood slopes downhill to Rainier Ave S., and steeply uphill to Beacon Hill. The Cheasty greenbelt and Cheasty Boulevard separates this area from the Beacon Hill area to the west.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



The proposed development includes a four story low income residential development with structured and below grade parking. The total proposal includes approximately 52 residential units. The applicant preferred option includes a building entry at the southwest corner and vehicular access from the private alley at the east façade.

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## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options included a four story residential building, an approximately 22' setback at the east façade, retention of the mature trees at Martin Luther King Jr. Way S., two secondary residential entries at the east façade, and the garage access from the private alley near the north end of the site. Two pedestrian paths were proposed at the east and west sides of the building, which is a modification of the Rainier Vista Master Plan that identified an east-west pedestrian connection through this site.

The first scheme (Option A) included the primary residential entry near the southwest corner, with the entry doors facing south. A community room was proposed at the southwest corner. The proposed entry and community room were in response to the Boys and Girls Club location across the street (S. Oregon St.). The façade modulation grouped the mass visually into four building bays, with one large bay near the center of the façade. Modulation and articulation defined narrower building bays to the north and south ends of the building. The west façade was approximately 22' from the west property line.

The second scheme (Option B) proposed a primary residential entry at the west façade near the center of the building, and greater modulation and articulation to emphasize vertical modules. The narrow vertical bay design was inspired by the idea of basalt columns. The primary residential entry was extended to the west, for a setback of 12' from the west property line.

The third scheme (Option C) included an entry and community room configuration similar to Option A, with more modulation and articulation than Option A. The modulation and articulation again used the design parti of basalt columns. The modulation and articulation was intended to blend the Neighborhood Commercial and Lowrise Residential zoned portions of the site into a cohesive design. The west façade was located approximately 22' from the west property line. This was the applicant's preferred option.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately 14 members of the public entered their names on the Sign-In sheet at this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Appreciation for the proposed design and the proposed density at this site
- Identification of the mature trees as an asset to the project but also a challenge; the proposed design should relate to the strong street walls nearby on Martin Luther King Jr.

Way S. The proposed setback could appear suburban, and not the urban context of this area.

- Support for the mid-building entry at Martin Luther King Jr. Way S.
- Support for the proposed departure for transparency, especially considering the safety concerns of residents in the at-grade units
- Questions about the mix of units and the intended residents for this building
  - The applicant responded that the mix would be 1-2 bedroom units and wouldn't be reserved for any particular age group

## PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

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. The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the mature trees at Martin Luther King Jr. Way S. present a challenge in massing alternatives for the site.

Given the requirement to save the trees, the design should be organized into massing that frames the open space at the west façade. The pedestrian path should be removed from the proposal north of the building entry, and the setback should be landscaped in a way that creates a functional and visually interesting transition between the sidewalk and the residential units at grade. The path that connects the building entry with the sidewalk should respond to the bus stop location on Martin Luther King Jr. Way S.

For the Recommendation stage, the applicant should show the anticipated development on the north portion of the site to be developed by Seattle Housing Authority. The proposed design should respond to the future development's massing and setbacks.

**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board was concerned with the proposed massing at the southeast corner, in relation to the pedestrian connection at the east façade and the proposed townhouse development immediately to the east. This pedestrian connection is especially important because it will provide a link between the Boys and Girls Club across the street to the south, and the park that will be developed on the northeast portion of this block.

The Board directed the applicant to pull back the massing at the southeast corner to provide additional light and air, and sense of entry for pedestrians using this path.

**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board directed the applicant to provide a landscaped buffer in the west setback, and coordinate the pedestrian paths and building entry with the bus stop at the west façade. This guidance also relates to the statements in response to Guidelines A-1 and A-2.

<b>B. Height, Bulk and Scale</b>
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**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the proposed modulation and its articulation should have a low contrast color palette and subtle range of textured materials. The high degree of modulation combined with contrasting colors and contrasting textures could make the façade appear to be larger in scale or visually confusing. The applicant should work to coordinate these items into a cohesive design, and a bulk and scale that complements nearby development.

The Board also noted that the garage wall at the east façade will be visible above grade, due to the grade change across the site. This garage wall will border the proposed east pedestrian path, so it is particularly important to provide human scale at that level. The

proposed design should include surface treatment of the east garage wall to provide human scale through a visually interesting texture or other permanent treatment.

Comments related to the southeast corner height, bulk and scale can be found in response to Guideline A-5.

## 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board expressed appreciation for the proposed ideas regarding materials and architectural character that differs from the nearby development. The Board supported the design direction regarding these items, and also noted that the proposed design should respond to the future context of massing and site planning for the adjacent developments.

- 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.**

- 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.**

Comments reflect those found in response to Guideline B-1, regarding proposed materials and colors related to the modulation, and garage wall surface treatment.

## 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the need for careful design of the pedestrian areas and open spaces at the west and east facades.

The east path should be well lit, with landscaping to soften the garage wall façade, and interesting and high quality walking surfaces and façade treatments. The ‘pinch point’ at the southeast corner should be modified to provide additional light and air between the proposed southeast corner and the adjacent future townhouses. Additional comments related to this item are found in response to Guideline A-5.

The west façade will include a setback between the sidewalk and the residential units at grade. This area should be landscaped and the proposed path should be removed. Additional comments related to this item are found in response to Guidelines A-1 and A-2.

**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.**

Comments reflect those found in response to Guideline B-1, regarding the east garage wall surface treatment.

**D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures. The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.**

Comments reflect those found in response to Guideline B-1, regarding proposed materials and colors related to the modulation, and garage wall surface treatment.

The Board also discussed the possibility of interior light fixtures in the garage being visible from the east pedestrian path and adjacent development. The applicant should demonstrate the potential for light spillage and glare at the Recommendation stage.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the need for actual and perceived safety and security at the east path. The proposed design of this area should be well lit and the east pedestrian entries should be emphasized to provide human activity and “eyes on the street” at this location.

**D-8 Treatment of Alleys. The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the private alley will function as an alley and is also intended for pedestrians. Comments related to surface



materials, façade treatments, landscaping, and lighting reflect those in response to Guidelines A-5, B-1, D-1, D-5, and D-7.

**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 a visually interesting street front 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.

Comments reflect those found in response to Guidelines A-1, A-2, and A-7 related to the primary west pedestrian entry. Comments also reflect those in response to Guideline D-7, regarding the design of the east pedestrian entrances to the building.

## **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.

**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.

**E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions.** The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the importance of landscaping in the west setback and at the east pedestrian path. Comments reflect those found in response to Guidelines A-1, A-2, and D-1.

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departures were requested:

- 1. Minimum Depth of Modulation (L-4 zones) (23.45.012.D.2.a):** The Code requires a minimum of 8' deep modulation on front facades of apartments in Lowrise 4 zones. The applicant proposes to provide a modulation depth of 3', but provide the modulation changes closer together in the façade. The result would be a front façade of narrow vertical bays that would modulate with less depth.

The Board indicated that they will continue to entertain this departure, but the material textures and colors should be simplified and lower contrast.

- 2. Residential units in a street-level street facing façade (NC zones) (23.47A.008.D):** The Code requires residential units in a street-level street facing façade to be set back 10' from the property line, or located 4' above grade. The applicant proposes to place two residential unit 2-3' above grade at S. Oregon St. The units would be set back 5-8' from the property line.

The Board indicated that they will continue to entertain this departure.

- 3. Building Setback (NC zones) (23.47A.008.A.3):** The Code requires street-level street-facing facades to be located within 10 feet of the street lot line, unless wider sidewalks, plazas, or other approved landscaped or open spaces are provided. The applicant proposes to preserve the existing mature trees at Martin Luther King Jr. Way S, and locate the west façade 22' from the property line.

The Board indicated that they will continue to entertain this departure.

- 4. Transparency for non-residential uses at street level (NC zones) (23.47A.008.B.2):** The Code requires Sixty percent of the street-facing facade between 2 feet and 8 feet above the sidewalk to be transparent. The applicant proposes to provide 50% transparency in these areas.

The Board indicated that they will continue to entertain this departure.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

**At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forwards to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.**