

**Department of Planning and Development**

Diane Sugimura, Director

**Early Design Guidance  
North West Design Review Board**

August 23, 20.010

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<b>Project Number:</b>	<b>3011448</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>6559 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W.</b>
<b>Applicant:</b>	<b>Clark Design Group</b>
<b>Board Members:</b>	<b>Bill Singer, Chair Jean Morgan Mike DeLilla</b>
<b>DPD Staff:</b>	<b>Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner</b>

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**Proposal Description:**

The proposed multi-family project would excavate the site for a parking garage below sidewalk level, provide live work, commercial units along the sidewalk level and apartment units on three levels above. No retail or office uses are proposed. The line of floor plates is proposed to break once in the apartment levels as the sidewalk grade drops to the south. At the street level there would be four different floor levels, maximizing sidewalk accessibility to the uses there. Access to the parking garage is proposed to be from N.W. 67<sup>th</sup> Street. The intersection of that street and 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. is signalized.

The NC2-40' zoned sight is approximately 87 feet deep in the east/west direction and extends approximately 300 feet south from N.W. 67<sup>th</sup> St. along 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. There is no alley. Across 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. is Ballard High School and the Ballard Public Pool building. To the west is an

area of single family zoning with the rear yards of single family houses abutting the proposal site.

Two vacant, wood frame houses and three driveways currently exist on the site which rises from the sidewalk level by as much as eight feet. The site slopes 16 feet from the north property line to the south property line.



Envisioned is a building which modulates to break down its scale. Along the 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. sidewalk a pedestrian friendly experience would be created through a layering of landscape, sidewalk and building façade treatments. At the corner the building would respond to increased pedestrian activity through some measure of additional setback, pavement, and/or canopy coverage.

Along the rear property line a concrete wall without penetrations would form the base structure. A landscaped area would be atop the base, with an approximately 15 foot setback to four stories of

residential structure.

### **Public Comments**

Public comment was received at the meeting. Concern was expressed about the impacts of a driveway entry on N.W. 67<sup>th</sup> St. with the commenter stating it would be better on 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. where there would be less potential conflict with pedestrians to and from the high school and other nearby schools and day care centers. Driveway sight triangles were called for as a measure to increase pedestrian safety. Vertical and horizontal modulation of the building should be incorporated including more than the proposed one step in roof height. Planters should be incorporated along the rear property line on the deck lid to keep people away from the edge and increase privacy for adjacent residents to the west. Both ends of the building should have windows and be modulated.

### **Priorities Identified:**

The Design Review Board members provided the siting and design guidance described below 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 on this project. The guidance made were agreed to by all the Board members present,

unless otherwise noted. While the notes below indicate the area the Board found most important, all of the Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings apply.

**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 features.**

Along 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. the northern and southern corners of the proposed building will have a high level of visibility to passersby and should be designed with that in mind. This does not call for “artificial expressions” such as towers or turrets, but for a completeness of the expression of the building in these areas especially.

The long length of the site in the north/south direction requires the proposed building to be designed with “movements”, whether horizontal or vertical or both, and material and color changes, all designed to lessen the appearance of a long building. The two to four feet of modulation movement mentioned by the applicants may not be enough to get the desired effect.

Along the rear property line, the site sits above the rear yards of single family houses to the west. The cement wall of a parking garage along this line needs to be designed to lessen the blankness of the wall which may be as high as 13 feet above grade.

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

Ballard High School across N.W. 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. provides a substantial element neighborhood structure which should be respected, not mimicked, in the proposal.

Fifteenth Ave. N.W. is a very broad right-of-way with high levels of vehicle traffic. Design of the building and of the sidewalk improvements should respond to this condition. Street and building landscape should provide a buffer. Building architecture should be commercial enough in character; with some formality and hardness to be successful in this environment.

The location and form of potential signage on the building should be developed and incorporated into the architecture.

**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.**

Landscape elements along the western edge, on the landscaped lid of the parking garage, should be designed to keep pedestrians far enough away from the edge to prevent looking down into the back yards of the houses to the west.

**A-10 Corner Lots - Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.**

The fact that the building sits on a corner should be expressed in the architecture and at grade. Some area of pedestrian refuge would be appropriate at the corner sidewalk area.

**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.**

The building forms should express the commercial, live-work base, and the residential upper stories while also incorporating much movement of elements and other modulation to lessen the look of a long, narrow building.

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

Overhead weather protection along sidewalks is highly encouraged. Such a canopy along the length of the 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. frontage is encouraged.

**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.**

Bring a color and materials board to the recommendation meeting demonstrating consistency with this guideline as well as with the “A” guidelines above.

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

The surface of the driveway out of the parking garage should have a feature incorporated into it which signals to exiting motorists that they are entering the pedestrian realm and need to exercise caution.

### **Departure Request**

The Applicant indicated interest in three potential development standard departures.

1. To allow the amount of residential uses along 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. to increase a maximum of 20% to 35%.

The residential uses incorporated would consist of pedestrian entry to the building, a leasing office and an exercise room for residents. The areas of residential use would otherwise appear to be commercial in architecture and would be animated with users much of the time.

The Board indicated an early inclination in favor of this departure request. The applicant will need to demonstrate how this departure would result in a development that better meets the intent of adopted design guidelines.

2. Reduction of the rear setback above 13 feet above grade from 15 feet to between 11 and 15 feet.

This reduction is requested for the purpose of incorporating modulations of the west walls of the building above the parking level. The site is very narrow and it would be difficult to incorporate these modulations within the area where the building is allowed.

The three Board members present differed in their views of this request with one member not in favor of it without a compensating reduction in setback of equal area to the amount of departure granted area of encroachment into the required setback. The other two members stated they would be in support of a reduction in the order of 15% of façade width at four feet of encroachment and 15% at 2 feet of encroachment. The applicant will need to demonstrate how this departure would result in a development that better meets the intent of adopted design guidelines.

3. Reduction in the amount medium size stalls from 60% to zero.

This reduction would respond to the narrow site allowing deeper live-work units than would otherwise be possible east of the parking area.

The Board members indicated they would not be in favor of such a large reduction, but might look favorably on a parking configuration with 50% compact and 50% medium sized stalls. They also stated they would look at a departure for minimum depth of non-residential space if necessary.