



Department of Planning and Development

Diane Sugimura, Director

**Design Review Recommendation
Northwest Design Review Board**

November 8, 2010 and January 3, 2011

Project Number: 3011448

Address: 6559 15th Ave. N.W.

Applicant: Clark Design Group

Board Members:	<u>First Meeting:</u>	<u>Second Meeting:</u>
	Bill Singer, Chair	Bill Singer, Chair
	Mark Brands	Jean Morgan
	Mike DeLilla	Mike DeLilla
	Ted Panton	Ted Panton

Board Members Absent: Jean Morgan Mark Brands

DPD Staff: Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner

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. 67th Street. The intersection of that street and 15th Ave. N.W. is signalized.

The NC2-40' zoned site, approximately 87 feet deep in the east/west direction, extends approximately 300 feet south from N.W. 67th St. along 15th Ave. N.W. There is no alley. Across 15th Ave. N.W. are 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 at the site which rises from the 15th Ave. N.W. sidewalk level by as much as eight feet. The elevation of the street grade along the site rises approximately 16 feet from the south property line to the north property line.



Proposed is a building which modulates to break down its scale. Along the 15th 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 open space would be atop the concrete base, as part of an approximately 15 foot setback of

the four stories of residential structure.

Public Comments

Public comment was received at the meetings. Concern was expressed about the impacts of a driveway entry on N.W. 67th St. with the commenter stating it would be better on 15th 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. It was pointed out that the parking count remains at 67 spaces a number thought too low to meet the project demand for parking. It was stated that a departure for parking size should not be granted as the code already strikes a balance between the need for larger spaces and the pressure to provide smaller ones. Another commenter stated that all of the building setbacks should be from the west where there are sensitive uses and none to the east where 15th Ave N.W. provides adequate separation from uses further east. The underlying design premise preferred by a commenter would be to work within code restrictions, not to allow design departures sufficient to obtain 101 units.

The equipment and stair penthouses were pointed to as too tall making them unattractive. Landscaping, it was stated, should be designed to discourage “J-walking.” Someone stated that a departure allowing reduction of the depth of non-residential spaces could have the effect of lessening their economic viability. Another person indicated that the proposed development was a good solution for the site and stated “if not this, what kind of development?” It was pointed out that there is not commercial parking or loading areas.

The overall scale of the proposed development was objected to. A person stated brown colors should instead be green. Privacy of residents in homes west of the site was pointed to with concern and an objection to the large, clear windows looking west was made; the commenter stating they should be frosted. A design element limiting views into neighboring yards was called for. The corners were said to be uninteresting. The presence of a rooftop deck was objected to because of the negative impact its use could have on neighbor’s privacy. Trash pickup along the curb adjacent to the building driveway was stated as a likely interruption of traffic past the site and as a potential hazard to pedestrians. The proposed structure was characterized as too large in comparison with existing development in the vicinity, especially with the single family areas to the west.

It was pointed out that three design review priorities, A-8, D-7 and A-10, relate to the site planning issue of driveway location. A neighbor stated that he counted 95 pedestrians moving past the site in a one, a.m. hour-long, weekday period.

It was pointed out that the planting used to screen the building when viewed from the west should not be deciduous. The proposed landscape under a building overhang at the northeast corner was identified as unlikely to flourish.

An attendee that the small size of some of the units, combined with the possibility of less than top quality construction could lead to “slum conditions” a few years hence.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, recommended conditions and departures, and reviewing the plans and renderings showing the proposed revisions, the Design Review Board members recommended **approval of the subject design and of two of the three design departures** mentioned below as revised with the following **recommended conditions** (all recommendations were by all attending members agreeing, unless otherwise indicated). There were four Board members attending each of the two recommendation meetings. The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans submitted at the meetings. Design, siting, or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans available at the January 3, 2011 meeting.

The Board recommended **against** granting a departure to reduce upper level setbacks on the west façade of the building stating that the sensitive nature of the relationship of the four story, multifamily building to the single family residences adjacent to the west requires the full code mandated setback. At the first recommendation meeting they took this position knowing that not granting the requested departure might result in reduced architectural interest through modulations in the west façade wall. At the second recommendation meeting the Board expressed approval of the modulated west wall of the building with its mix of materials, colors, window forms and balconies.

The Board discussed the northeast corner of the proposed building; both its architectural expression and the desired provision for some expanded sense of pedestrian refuge at the corner. At the first recommendation meeting, canopies were ruled out due to the presence of a pedestrian crossing light and other elements of the traffic signal located in the area. Also at the first recommendation meeting, landscape “turning the corner” back along N.W. 67th was determined to be of limited benefit as a pedestrian amenity. The Board recommended additional setback at the first level for the Northeast corner of the building as a pedestrian refuge with the second story overhang providing weather protection to the sidewalk refuge the setback provides. At the second recommendation meeting the Board recommended approval of the proposed cantilevered design of the northeast corner, providing expanded sidewalk refuge with the added requirement that the covered area be entirely paved and not partially landscaped.

At the first recommendation meeting the Board recommended a condition requiring changes to the building architecture to better express the building entries, possibly though a more enhanced canopy or signage. The revised scheme of canopies, better aligned with building entries, shown at the second recommendation meeting met with its approval.

At the first recommendation meeting the Board recommended that the design incorporate some further expression of the northeast corner of the building, such as a contrasting color or some element of overhead weather protection. This was accomplished to its satisfaction at the second recommendation meeting.

At the first recommendation meeting the Board recommended moving the proposed above grade utility vault to the western edge of the north façade, that art be incorporated into the sidewalk facing wall of the vault, that the driveway area be opened up further to allow greater sightlines for existing vehicles and that the bike storage locker be left along the northern façade east of the driveway exit. A design with the vault moved to the northeast corner of the site and the bicycle parking area moved into the northeast corner with a window facing east and a basket weave patterned brick wall along N.W. 67th was shown at the second recommendation meeting. The Board approved this re-design and asked that the weave pattern be incorporated elsewhere on the site, such as in the privacy walls of the live work units.

The Board recommended that mirrors and warning lights be incorporated into the driveway exit to increase pedestrian safety there. These were incorporated into the design shown at the second recommendation meeting.

The Board considered public comment received concerning the perceived height of penthouses and concluded that their location near the interior of the building would limit their visibility from surrounding locations, but did recommend they be painted a grey color to aid in blending into the sky.

The Board, at the second recommendation meeting, considered the location of the access driveway. It was pointed out in public comment that design guidelines A-8, D-7 and C-5 have potential application to location of the driveway. Guideline A-8 provides in part that siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety. Guideline D-7 states in part that project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review. Guideline C-5 states in part the presence and appearance of garage entries should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building. After considerable discussion at both meetings, the Board voted at the second meeting (4 to 0) to recommend that the driveway be located on 15th Ave. N.W. as far away from the intersection with N.W. 67th as possible. They made this recommendation based upon site design considerations, and that they found the pedestrian realm along N.W. 67th to be the more important one. Due to its lesser length it is less able to successfully incorporate driveway access. The corner and the street level frontages nearby, they thought, should not be disrupted by a driveway access point. The Board also stated that were the project redesigned to move the driveway, blank façade elements should not replace it on N.W. 67th St. and that the proposal would not need to return to them for review of this change alone so long as substantially the same architectural expression remained in these areas and the building as a whole.

Departure Requests

The Applicant requested four potential development standard departures.

1. To allow the amount of residential uses along 15th Ave. N.W. to increase to 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 appearance and would be animated with users much of the time.

The Board recommended in favor of this departure request. The Board thought these kinds of uses tend to be animated with users and well meet the intention of providing visual interest in the pedestrian realm.

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 Board recommended that this departure **not be approved**.

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 recommended a configuration with 50% compact and 50% medium sized stalls. The Board thought this departure appropriately responded to the unique site configuration (Guideline A-2) with limited lot depth.

4. Reduction in the depth of non-residential use from 30 feet average and 15 feet minimum to 23 feet average and 9 feet minimum.

This reduction would allow for a widened sidewalk and street landscape area, and for a parking garage behind the non-residential use area on this unusually narrow site made so in part by historic widening of the 15th Ave. N.W. right of way. (Guideline A-2)

The Board members recommended approval of this departure.

Recommended Conditions:

1. The building constructed shall substantially conform to the one represented to the Design Review Board and which received a recommendation of approval.
2. Any proposed changes to the exterior of the building or the site must be submitted to DPD for review and approval of the Land Use Planner (Scott Kemp, scott.kemp@seattle.gov). Any proposed changes to the improvements in the public right-of-way must be submitted to DPD and SDOT for review and for final approval by SDOT.

3. Compliance with all images and text on the MUP drawings, Design Review meeting guidelines and approved design features and elements (including exterior materials, landscaping and ROW improvements) shall be verified by the DPD planner assigned to this project, or by the Design Review Manager.

An appointment with the assigned Land Use Planner must be made at least three working days in advance of field inspection. The Land Use Planner will determine whether submission of revised plans is required to ensure that compliance has been achieved.

4. The cantilevered area providing expanded sidewalk refuge at the northeast corner should be provided as shown at the second recommendation meeting and the covered area should be entirely paved, not partially landscaped with plantings.
5. The weave pattern shown in the brick elements along elements of the north facade should be incorporated elsewhere on the site, such as in the privacy walls of the live work units.
6. Mirrors and warning lights should be incorporated into the driveway exit.
7. Penthouses should be painted grey to aid in blending in to the sky.
8. The driveway should be located on 15th Ave. N.W. as far away from the intersection with N.W. 67th as possible and blank façade elements should not replace it on N.W. 67th St.