



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

**JANUARY 10, 2011**

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**Project Number:** 3011720

**Address:** 3606 Woodland Park Ave N

**Applicant:** Tony Fan with Studio MENG STRAZZARA (SMS) Architecture  
for GRE Fremont LLC

**Board members present:** Mark Brands  
Mike DeLilla  
Bill Singer

**Board members absent:** Jean Morgan  
Ted Panton

**DPD staff present:** Colin Vasquez, Senior Land Use Planner

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**VICINITY INFORMATION**

The site is located on the 3600 eastern block front of Woodland Park Av N — one lot north of N 36<sup>th</sup> St. Woodland Park Av N is a minor arterial. The vacant site is mostly

level to the sidewalk with a slope down to the south toward N 36<sup>th</sup> St. Zoning is C1-40, Commercial with a 40-foot base height limit.

Adjacent property to the north is a multi-family apartment building built to the sidewalk. Adjacent property to the south is a small one-story commercial structure at the corner of Woodland Park Avenue North and N 36<sup>th</sup> St. Adjacent property to the east has low commercial buildings and surface parking, including a branch bank at the corner of Stone Way N and N 36<sup>th</sup> St.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes a four-story building with two 400 square foot live-work commercial units at the sidewalk level and surface parking for 40 vehicles at grade behind. Three levels above will be multi-family apartments, with 48 to 50 dwellings in a mix of 1-bedroom and studio units. Vehicular access is from Woodland Park Ave N. No development standard departures are anticipated at this time.

### **DESIGN PRESENTATION**

Three development options were presented — the ‘Red Delicious’, Sloped Roof, and 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Clerestory. However, all three use a common “T” scheme for the massing and structure siting.

The “T” scheme — fronts on Woodland Park Ave N — includes live/work units at the ground level with three levels of residential units above. Approximately 30 to 40 feet back from the front lot line at grade screened surface parking for 40 vehicles is proposal and is covered by three levels of residential units. The residential upper levels are setback 13 feet from the northern property line and 13 feet from southern property line.

### **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

There are no departure requests from the applicant at this time.

## BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

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

- Have you met with any adjacent property owners? **SMS:** No.
- Do you see any need for departures? **SMS:** No.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 4 members of the public attended the Early Design Guidance meeting. The following comments were offered:

- Concerned about the future rental rates on the units.
  - Applicant's response: Workforce housing (100 to 120% median income). For example a restaurant worker or bank teller.
- Owner/resident from the adjacent southern building stated that he was concerned about the fence separating the sites.
- Wanted to know the timeline for construction.
  - Applicant's response: Depends on the reviews by DPD.

## DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES

- The Board believes the biggest issue is the blank facades and would like the applicant to explore optional materials, specifically for the eastern, northern, and southern blank facades.
- The Board encourages the applicant to explore 'greening' or landscaping opportunities for the southern surface parking area. Especially as view from the upper residential units within the structure and as viewed from the southern adjacent property.
- The Board is concerned about the live/work. It should create a common edge along Woodland Park Av N and have a commercial space appearance.
- As for architectural context, the Board would like to see more consideration to the established structures along Woodland Park Av N.

- As for materials, there is no predetermined set of materials, however the applicant should respond to the block front north and south of the proposal.

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:

#### **A. *Site Planning***

**A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics** *The siting of buildings should respond to specific conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.*

The Board asked about building configuration and whether or not different massing options were explored.

SMS wanted to avoid an 'L' shape because the goal was to maximize the amount of light and air that reaches every residential unit. If we build within 3'-0" from the lot lines, the building code would not allow us to have windows on these facades. Because we were able to organize the building into a 'T' at the street front, we are able to have these windows and provide adequate light and air to each unit. Stepping back from the property line along the north will also allow the existing apartment building to maintain their access to light and air as well.

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

The building is sited between 1'-0" and 3'-0" off the sidewalk along Woodland Park Ave N. Building is canted at this level (live-work units) to emphasize entry.

The Board recommends pushing back the live-work units to be square with the building and allow a little more privacy for these tenants.

**A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street** *Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.*

The Board is concerned that the residential entry as it is currently shown is too diminutive.

The Board gave recommendations to explore awnings, benches, or other details that could make more of a statement at the residential entry from Woodland Park Avenue N. [Look at The Solstice project as a precedent for the neighborhood On Woodland Park Ave, just north of the site].

**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.*

The Board recommends adding something by way of vegetation to the south side of the building to add interest to the 2nd floor level as they can be seen from 36th Avenue. This may include trees or enclosing the parking lot. SMS will investigate this but notes that enclosing the parking lot may include a financial hardship because it would mean adding mechanical ventilation to the parking area.

**B. *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. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.*

The Board discussed more modulation along the front façade because of the large scale of the building compared to adjacent context. Look at examples in the neighborhood just to the north of the site.

**C. *Architectural Elements and Materials***

**C-1 *Architectural Context*** *New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.*

**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 indentifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its façade walls.*

The Board determined that the preferred concept is good and looks forward to further developments of this scheme. SMS's description of the relief of materials and fenestration on the facades is a good way to activate the street-front. The Juliette balconies shown along the south are already showing progress.

**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.*

The Board recommends looking into more “sturdy-looking” materials for the base of the building at the street front (live-work units) so as to break up the building massing. CMU might be a good choice and can be used to wrap the corner to become the blank wall. Masonry might also be a better option because of its three-dimensionality and ability to hold onto vines and greenery better than the corrugated metal panel as shown.

#### **D. Pedestrian Environment**

**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.*

The Board has concerns about the large blank walls on site. There is lots of variety in the neighborhood of Fremont and there are many possibilities to be more expressive at this site. Blank walls can be made more interesting by simple things like reglets, CMU, etcetera.

**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 evening hours.*

**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.*

The Board recommends that if live-work units have 13'-0" ceilings, then the scale of the fenestration can be much larger to emphasize that they can function as commercial spaces.

***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.*

## ***E. Landscaping***

***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.*

Board recommends that green wall/living wall is not made from deciduous plants so that they don't die off in the fall. Board also recommends looking into using some type of trailing greens from the green roof so that it can be seen from the street level. Landscape architect notes that trailing vegetation does not typically do well in the long run in places like Seattle, but it can be explored.

The Board wants the team to maximize the use of street trees in the right-of-way areas.

## **NEXT STEPS**

1. Submit application for Master Use Permit (MUP) application. Please include a written response to the guidance provided in this EDG. Plan on embedding the 11x17 colored elevations and landscape plans into the MUP plan set (4 per sheet).

2. At the next design review meeting, please submit a color and materials board. Please also provide colored renderings and/or graphics showing the relationship between the proposed development and the existing development on either side.