



INITIAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3011720

Address: 3606 Woodland Park Ave N

Applicant: Chris Davidson of Studio Meng Strazzara

Date of Meeting: Monday, June 13, 2011

Board Members Present: Mike DeLilla (Acting Chair)
Jerry Coburn
David Neimen

Board Members Absent: Jean Morgan
Ted Panton

DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser, substituting for Colin Vasquez

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: C1-40

Nearby Zones: (North) C1-40
(South) C1-40
(East) C2-40
(West) C1-40

Lot Area: 12,936 square feet



Current Development: The vacant site is mostly level, with a slight slope down to the south toward N 36th St.

Access: n/a

Surrounding Development: Adjacent property to the north is a multi-family apartment building built to the sidewalk (West property line). Adjacent property to the south is a small one-story commercial structure at the corner of Woodland Park Avenue North and N 36th St. Adjacent property to the east includes low commercial buildings and surface parking, including a branch bank at the corner of Stone Way N and N 36th St. The parking lot of this bank shares a property line with the proposed development.

ECAs: None.

Nearby development includes a wide mix of residential, commercial, and office development in a variety of architectural styles and ages. Many buildings are 1-2 stories tall, with newer construction and a few older apartment buildings developed closer to the 4-story limit.

Neighborhood Character: The area is in the transition between the Fremont and Wallingford neighborhoods in the Fremont Hub Urban Village. The area doesn't include environmentally critical areas, but the overall area slopes steadily down to the south towards Lake Union. The neighborhood has good pedestrian connections and transit opportunities. Several cyclists use this area to access the trails along the north side of Lake Union.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed four-story building includes one live-work unit at the sidewalk level and surface parking for 40 vehicles at grade. 51 residential units would be located in the upper three stories. Vehicular access is from Woodland Park Ave N.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: January 10, 2011

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three development options were presented — the 'Red Delicious', Sloped Roof, and 4th 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 proposed 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.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately four members of the public attended the Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- 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.

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DESIGN PRESENTATION

The applicant noted that the proposed program now includes 51 units and one live-work unit (an increase in residential units and a decrease in live-work units since EDG). The design of the street level façade was modified in response to EDG direction, including storefront windows for the live-work unit instead of the previous punched window design, use of ground face and split face CMU, and a recessed residential entry with a colorful canopy.

The outside design of the project had changed significantly since the Board last reviewed the project. The previous design was a "bite of an apple" concept, in which the "skin" of the building was to be a delicious red color, with the facades that included windows and decks to be the "bite" of the apple colored in white and green, with "seeds" as the windows. The applicant modified the design in response to EDG direction to incorporate context from nearby development.

The proposed street facing façade was modified be more "playful" with colors and modulation and materials to reflect the context of nearby development. The applicant noted a distinct pattern of royal/navy blue colors used on nearby buildings, paired with dark concrete/masonry colors, which was used in the proposed façade design. An orange canopy was added to the entry of the project to help enhance the main entry and make it more visible to the street. Modulation was proposed in the form of variations in roof form, variations in color, and variations in materials.

The upper level residential units were designed with large slider windows and railings for a Juliet balcony appearance and natural light to the units. The applicant showed a colors and materials board (CMU, cementitious panels, wood fence, beige vinyl upper windows, and gray aluminum storefront). During the presentation, the applicant showed a landscape plan with sedums at the

rooftop vegetation, evergreen shrubs in the street front planter, and evergreen hedge at the south side of the parking area. The applicant also showed the Board a shadow study and lighting plan at this meeting.

Through additional questions from the Board, the applicant explained the following items about the current proposed design:

- Surface parking would be located inside the building envelope, but open to the air. It would be screened with a 5' high wood fence on the north and south sides, a CMU wall at the east façade, and an evergreen (Pyramidalis) hedge at the south side. A columnar tree is proposed at the southeast corner, which should be visible to pedestrians on Stone Way and N. 36th St.
- There are two units that would include terraces instead of Juliet balconies on the north and south ends of the "T" shape.
- Views are possible from this site to Lake Union, especially from the top two floors of the building.
- Only CMU is proposed at the east property line, since the proposed development would be located at the property line. The proposal does not include a green screen or vegetation at this façade. The east wall would include a combination of split face and ground face CMU applied in a banding pattern for visual interest.
- The applicant has worked with Seattle Public Utilities and the recycling/trash collection design would be acceptable.
 - The proposed steel doors accessing the trash area would be located at street level on Woodland Park Ave N. and would be painted gray steel to match the storefront design.
- The current design does not include the green canopy above the exposed parking area that was proposed at EDG because the applicant felt that it could cause drainage issues, reduce passive ventilation for the parking area, and reduce natural daylight to the parking area.
- The current design concept differs substantially from the "apple" design concept shown at EDG, despite the Board's support for that design concept.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Two members of the public added their names to the Sign-In Sheet at this Initial Recommendation meeting. No public comments were offered at the meeting.

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.

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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board asked about building configuration and whether or not different massing options were explored.

THE APPLICANT wanted to avoid an 'L' shape because the goal was to maximize the amount of light and air that reaches every residential unit. Building within 3'-0" of the lot lines would not allow windows on these facades (Building Code requirement). Providing a 'T' at the street front allows windows and provides 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.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board didn't express concern with the proposed massing of the design, but did express concern with the blank walls that appear to come with placing the development at the property lines. More direction about this issue is found in response to Guideline D-2.

- 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 expressed concern with the live/work spaces. These should create a common edge along Woodland Park Av N and have a commercial space appearance.

The building is sited between 1'-0" and 3'-0" off the sidewalk along Woodland Park Ave N. The 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.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board didn't comment on the design of the single live-work unit, but noted that additional information is needed to demonstrate how the streetscape landscaping will relate to the overall design. More direction about this issue is found in response to Guideline E-3.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board was concerned that the residential entry as it is currently shown was 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].

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board didn't comment on the residential entry design, but asked for additional information to demonstrate how the streetscape landscaping will relate to the overall design. More direction about this issue is found in response to Guideline E-3.

A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board recommended 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. The applicant will investigate this but noted that enclosing the parking lot may include a financial hardship because it would mean adding mechanical ventilation to the parking area.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board was concerned about the proposed parking lot design and the lack of information about landscaping and screening and security for that design. More direction about this issue is found in response to Guidelines D-2, D-5 and D-7.

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.

Early Design Guidance and Initial Recommendation reflect the comments in response to A-4.

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.

Early Design Guidance and Initial Recommendation reflect the comments in response to A-4.

A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

Early Design Guidance and Initial Recommendation reflect the comments in response to A-4.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

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 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.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board noted that at EDG, they had directed the applicant to develop the proposed design concept with additional modulation in response to nearby context. The current design's CMU and modulation are proposed as solutions to that direction. The resulting design, however, is substantially different from the design concept presented to and supported by the Board at EDG.

The presentation and packet were lacking sufficient information for the Board to make a determination about whether the proposed design responds to guidance from EDG. The Board recommended that the applicant return for a second Recommendation meeting with more detail about the proposed design, including modulation dimensions and how the modulation relates to nearby context.

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 directed the applicant to design the proposal with consideration to the established structures along Woodland Park Av N.

The Board determined that the preferred concept is good and looks forward to further developments of this scheme. The applicant'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.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board noted that this was previously described as a “pod of projects” in the area. The applicant intends to use this design concept in at least two other sites. The Board noted that it will be a challenge to fit the concept with the context of the site and area for each location.

The Board noted that at EDG, they had requested that the applicant incorporate the context of the brick building next door to respond to the context of this site. The CMU and modulation is proposed as a solution to that context.

The presentation and packet were lacking sufficient information for the Board to make a determination about whether the proposed design responds to guidance from EDG. The Board recommended that the applicant return for a second Recommendation meeting with more detail about the proposed design, including modulation dimensions and how the modulation relates to nearby context.

The applicant should demonstrate how the proposed design concept relates to nearby context, and also how the proposal is based on a unified design concept. One way to achieve this would be to further develop the original “apple” design concept that was supported by the Board at EDG.

- 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.**

Early Design Guidance and Initial Recommendation reflect the comments in response to C-1.

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted there is no predetermined set of materials, however the applicant should respond to the block front north and south of the proposal.

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.

Initial Recommendation reflects the comments in response to C-1.

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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated that 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 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.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board was concerned with the lack of information in response to this high priority item from EDG. The applicant should return with additional information at the next Recommendation meeting, demonstrating proposed details to create visual interest and detailed information about the proposed fence and landscape screening.

The Board noted that the four story blank wall at the east façade is a particular concern, and banded CMU materials may not be sufficient to meet this guideline. Mitigation of this four story blank wall is important because it is highly visible to pedestrians at Stone Way North, across the open bank parking lot. Detailed information about the proposed materials (coursing, finishes, etc.) is needed to determine whether the proposal meets this guideline. The applicant should consider the use of additional treatments, such as a planted area with vines.

The Board was unable to comment on the potential blank wall issues at the north and south facades because of the lack of information. The applicant should provide detailed and overall information to demonstrate the proposed design of these facades, including fences, landscaping, materials, and modulation.

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board encouraged the applicant to explore 'greening' or landscaping opportunities for the southern surface parking area, especially as viewed from the upper residential units within the structure and as viewed from the southern adjacent property.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board didn't have enough information about the proposed screening to make a recommendation about this item, but expressed concern with the appearance of parking as viewed from above and from adjacent properties. The applicant should return with information that demonstrates how the proposed design meets this guideline.

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 did not identify this as a priority guideline, based on the information provided at the Early Design Guidance meeting.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board noted that the proposed parking lot design seems to raise safety and security concerns, given the partially open design that could allow access over 5' fences, but without the safety of "eyes on the street" in the parking area.

The Board didn't have enough information about the proposed screening and accessibility of the parking to make a recommendation about this item. The applicant should return with information that demonstrates how the proposed design meets this guideline.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, 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.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board didn't comment about this item, but requested that the applicant return with more information about the proposed façade design, especially materials and modulation as described in response to Guideline C-1.

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 during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.

Early Design Guidance and Initial Recommendation reflect the comments in response to D-9.

- 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.**

Early Design Guidance and Initial Recommendation reflect the comments in response to D-9.

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board didn't seem to have specific comments about this item, but identified it as a priority guideline for the proposed design.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board didn't comment on this item, but noted that more information about the façade design is needed.

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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the directed that green wall/living wall is not made from deciduous plants so that they don't die off in the fall. Board also directed the applicant to look into using some type of trailing greens from the green roof so that it can be seen from the street level. The applicant's Landscape architect noted 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.

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board reiterated the guidance from EDG, and noted that the proposed landscape plan should demonstrate the details of the proposed planters at the west building façade, and any proposed landscape screening at the north/south façades. The Board recommended additional landscape screening at the north and east facades, and above the parking area.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

No development standards were proposed.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the initial Recommendation meeting, the Board recommended the project should return for a second Recommendation meeting.

In the Recommendation packet for the second Recommendation meeting, the applicant should provide the following information:

- All the information provided at the Initial Design Recommendation meeting
- Clear information about the proposed program (site size, square feet of live-work unit, number of residential units, number of parking spaces, etc.)
- Overall and detailed elevation drawings of all four facades
 - Include shadowed colored elevations, perspective graphics, and other graphics needed to demonstrate how the proposed design meets the Design Review Guidelines
- Dimensioned plans and elevations that demonstrate proposed modulation
 - Demonstrate how the proposed modulation responds to nearby context.
- Dimensioned floor plans, with clear indication of how the floor plans relate to the building facades
- Building sections, including adjacent development and topography (minimum one north-south section and one east-west section)
- Description and graphics that demonstrate how the proposed parking area will provide safety and security for building users, per Guideline D-7. Graphics should clearly demonstrate the appearance of any proposed screening, lighting, and passive (“eyes on the street”) or active (security system) surveillance methods.
- Landscape plan showing location, species and size of proposed plants, as well as information about special paving surfaces and any green screen materials
 - Include planter area dimensions
- Colors and materials information, with a colors and materials board presented at the Recommendation meeting
- Demonstration of how the proposed design responds to the guidance for Blank Walls (D-2)
- Identify any proposed departures (code requirement, proposed departure, code section, rationale for how the proposed design better meets the Design Review Guidelines)
- Demonstrate how the proposed design concept relates to nearby context, and also how the proposal is based on a unified design concept, such as the original “apple” concept.