



# City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development  
D. M. Sugimura, Director



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3011964

Address: 8022 15th Avenue NW

Applicant: Chris Davidson, Studio Meng Strazzara

Date of Meeting: Monday, March 14, 2011

Board Members Present: Mark Brands (Chair)  
Mike DeLilla  
Jean Morgan  
Ted Panton  
Bill Singer

Board Members Absent: None

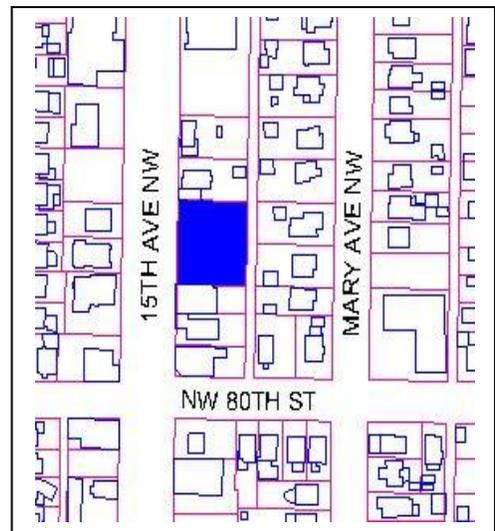
DPD Staff Present: Lisa Rutzick

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 2 - 40

Nearby Zones: (North) NC2-40  
(South) NC2-40  
(East) SF 5000 across alley  
(West) NC2-40

Lot Area: 13,574 square feet



Current Development: Vacant

Access: Alley

Surrounding Development: One and two story commercial buildings and converted single family structures.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: Strong single family character across alley to the east. 15th Avenue is clearly a commercial corridor with variety of developments in commercial uses.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project is for the design and construction of a four story mixed use building with approximately 48 residential units located above ground level live/work use. All of the parking (approximately 39 stalls) for the proposed development is to be provided in an at-grade garage that is accessed from the alley.

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## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include access off the alley.

The first scheme (Option A) was a doughnut configuration with a central courtyard.

The second scheme (Option B) was an H-shaped configuration with sloped roofs above the two long building sections.

The third scheme (Option C) showed a box shaped with a central recess notch at the north and south ends. This is the applicant's preferred option. In the packet to the Board, another option was shown with a clerestory roof form. The Board liked this roof form and would like to see this alternative further pursued.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

- Noted that a true live/work unit cannot be reasonably accommodated in the floor plan presented.
- Clarified the proposed building height maximum (44') and ventilation requirements.
- Objected to weight and mass of the 'bookend' features as too heavy. The ends should be a lighter material and wrap around to the north and south walls to help break up the expanse of these walls.
- Encouraged carving out the upper corners to include balconies for those units and help reduce the mass.
- Would like to see canopies over the main entrance extended to the other entries – either as continuous or over the multiple points of entry. Overhead protection would be an important pedestrian amenity.
- Encourages more modulation of the 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue façade.
- Suggested that the fenestration wrap the corners of the façade that turn into the main entrance to increase visibility.
- Supported more modulation of the alley elevation to respond to the lower density context across the alley (single family neighborhood).
- Would like to see the parking along the alley well-screened.
- Suggested that more horizontal elements should be introduced on the front façade to mimic shelves between the bookends. Also, the vertical piers need to meet the street rather than disappear into the store front.
- Encouraged parapet design that is less flat and provides transition to the sky.
- Supported the following: include modulation along the longer west and east facades and the proposed north and south walls are oppressively detailed should relate more sympathetically to the front and back facades. The live/work storefront is too transparent for this busy arterial. Some of the solid facade materials should occur on this ground level to provide these residents with some more visual/acoustic separation from the very-adjacent high-traffic volume and speeds. The facade transitions at floor level 2. A second EDG should be required because 3 equally developed concepts were not presented at this one. Other-shaped plans would be worthwhile to explore for site-specific opportunities, instead of focusing on their over-developed and under-designed formula-H shaped one.
- Concerned with the expanse of blank wall as viewed from the Single Family zone across the alley to the east.

## **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. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

## **A. Site Planning**

### **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 discussed the importance of overhead weather protection to an active, successful pedestrian environment. The Board recommended that overhead canopies be included over each entryway at a minimum and preferably, in a continuous configuration to provide full protection from the elements.

### **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 noted that the main entrance should be distinguished from the other live/work entries. See also D-1.

### **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 agreed that the storefront system should include more masonry and less glass to create a strong building base and better transition to buffer the area between the live/work units and the sidewalk.

The Board was very concerned that the proposed live/work units will be viably designed to encourage active use at the sidewalk level. The shallow depth shown for these units is problematic as noted by the Board and every effort should be made to design live/work units that can operate successfully as actual live/work units that engage with and activate the street. The Board recommended that these units be deeper to accommodate functional live/work uses.

## **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 preferred the massing along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue and rooflines presented in Option 3. The modulation of the north and south elevations was also preferred, however, the Board did not care for the bookend approach which created too heavy an appearance and did not integrate well with the front façade, in addition to creating heavy blank walls. The Board did not support the massing shown in Option 3, however, as it relates to the single family neighborhood across the alley.

The Board discussed the east side of the proposed building and agreed that it needs to include more modulation to respond to the single family neighborhood across the alley. The west side of the building is more commercial in character and does not this extra modulation and sensitivity to the smaller scale context to the east.

The Board expressed a preference for the clerestory option shown in the original packet.

## 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 was disappointed with the lack of contextual analysis and would like to see at the next meeting more examination of the architectural context of buildings along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue and how these building have informed the materials, colors and detailing of the proposed development. The Board did not support the Juliette balconies along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue because it is a loud and busy arterial and such details are out of context.

**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed that a strong commercial base with less glass is critical. The Board also discussed the detailing and agreed it should include overhead weather protection, punched openings and intentional reveals and joinery to create more texture and less flatness to the facades.

The Board strongly agreed that the storefront system for the live/work units should not be expansive, but rather establish a clear base that relates well to the upper levels. The vertical lines should extend downward to the meet the sidewalk.

See also B-1.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discouraged the bookend approach, encouraged more of a solid base that is well integrated with the upper floors in terms of materials and architectural lines. The Board also encouraged the design of residential units on the upper floors that would allow for individual units to be expressed.

- 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 looks forward to reviewing a carefully selected material and color palette at the next meeting.

## **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 agreed that the proposed development should strive to include wider sidewalks, wider planting strips, distinct entrances and continuous overhead protection. See also A-3.

- 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 indicated that the north and south walls and should be well detailed and include visual interest.

- D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas. Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed that the parking located off the alley should be well screened and would like to see green walls/screen accommodated. The Board suggested allowing for the vertical vegetation to climb over the setback area.

- 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 noted that appropriate lighting and mirrors should be considered and included in the alley design to allow for safe maneuvering of car to and from the site.

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

See discussion of screening in D-6.

**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed that less transparency than shown would be appropriate for the live/work units along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The design presented included a large glassy storefront system that would not provide enough of a transition buffer needed for a comfortable live/work use. If the ground level use was true commercial, then such a design would be more suitable.

## **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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the benefit of a wider, densely vegetated planting strip that will serve as a buffer for pedestrians from the fast moving traffic of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Additional vegetation along the building front was also proposed and would help with the transition between the live/work units and the sidewalk, but should be viable with the overhead canopies.

## **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, no departures were requested; however the Board suggested that the applicants further examine the FAR and commercial depth calculations.

## **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.**