



City of Seattle

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



FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

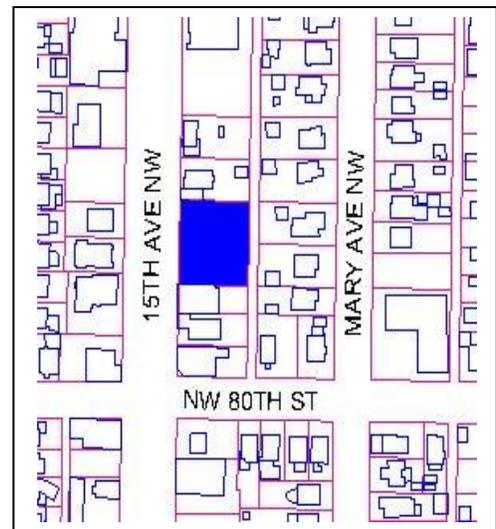
Project Number: 3011964
Address: 8022 15th Avenue NW
Applicant: Chris Davidson, Studio Meng Strazzara
Date of Meeting: Monday, October 10, 2011
Board Members Present: Jean Morgan (Chair)
Jerry Coburn
Mike DeLilla
David Neiman
Ted Panton
Board Members Absent: None
DPD Staff Present: Lisa Rutzick

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 three ground level live/work use. All of the parking (approximately 34 stalls) for the proposed development is to be provided in an at-grade garage that is accessed from the alley.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: March 14, 2011
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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 15th 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.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: October 10, 2011

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

At the Final Recommendation meeting, a design concept was presented to the Board which differed dramatically from the preferred option that the Board reviewed at the previous EDG. The Board was not pleased with the significant shift away from the original concept, particularly because the resultant design was overly similar to two other projects recently reviewed. The Board's frustrations centered on the concern that a design should be site specific and respond directly to the given context and should not be a formula. That said, however, the Board reviewed the proposed design and agreed that in this case, the design concept along 15th

Avenue was reasonable and well-considered. The 15th Avenue façade was more modulated and visually interesting than the alley elevation, which was flatter and less articulated. The alley level fence proposed both for security and screening included solid and grid planes.

Two landscape designs were presented along 15th Avenue. Both included dense landscaping of the planting strip with six street trees, shrubs and ground cover. The building face was been set back from the sidewalk by about six feet. The first option included four feet wide charcoal colored concrete paver pathways connecting the sidewalk to each point of entry. The intervening set back areas were densely planted with a combination of trees, shrubs and grasses. The second option included beige contrasting colored concrete pavers both for the pathways as well as the space against the building to create a small patio space in front of each live/work entry. The patio spaces were defined with low barrier elements. The lobby entry would be marked with a charcoal grey paver and a cast-in-place concrete bench was shown in front of the reception area. The remaining set back spaces were densely planted with a combination of trees, shrubs and grasses. Both options had seasonal plantings at the lobby entry.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately two members of the public attended this Recommendation meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Would like to see more modulation provided on the east elevation. The level of modulation and visual interest shown on the west elevation should also be applied to the east elevation.
- Concerned that the fencing proposed along the alley will attract graffiti. Would like to have the parking and garage screened, but would prefer a materials that will discourage tagging or other graffiti.
- Did not have a preference between the two designs proposed for the blank walls at the north and south property lines.
- Would like to see more depth provided for the live/work units.
- Prefer the more urban alternative for the 15th Avenue landscape plan.

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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board expressed concern that the live/work units should feel connected to the streetscape. The Board recommended in favor of the dense landscape plan with widened entry pathways. See discussion under E-1.

The Board was supportive of the proposed overhead steel canopies painted the red accent color over the ground level entries and windows. The residential lobby entrance also has a canopy overhead. The leasing office, however, was defined with a deep landscape bed and no overhead canopy.

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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board evaluated this guideline as part of their discussion under E-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 functional live/work units that engage with and activate the street. The Board recommended that these units be deeper to accommodate functional live/work uses.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board was very supportive that the departure request for reduced commercial depth was eliminated and the live/work units provide the requisite depth, with the exception of the middle unit which was expanded to provided an intervening use between the sidewalk and the utility vault room. The expansion of the live/work unit into this space was considered positive both because it screens the vault with a more engaging and activating use, but also because it increases the size of the live/work unit to become more adaptable to a future use. See also D-11.

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 15th 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 lacks response 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 require 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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board strongly agreed that the east elevation which faces the lower intensity zone across the alley should receive the same level of modulation as the street facing façade. This issue was addressed as part of the architectural concept discussed under C-2.

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 15th 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 15th Avenue because it is a loud and busy arterial and such details are out of context.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board did not discuss the inclusion of the guard rail grilles in front of sliding windows proposed for ventilation along 15th Avenue.

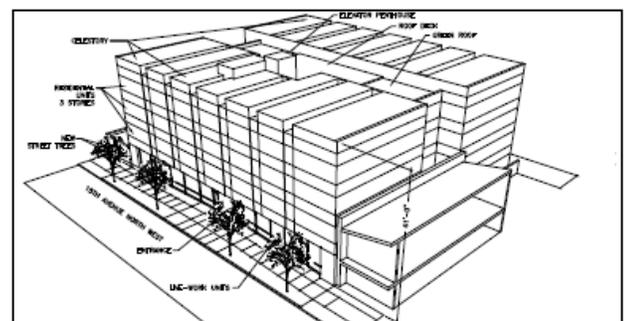
C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency. Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the 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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board discussed at length the lack of modulation provided on the east elevation and agreed that the same level of visual interest and articulation of the massing should be provided on the east façade. The Board agreed that the approach to the design of the east elevation should be similar to that of the west elevation in terms of modulation in response to the Single Family zone across the alley. The Board also agreed that the east elevation shown on the EDG packet (page A11) would also be a reasonable approach. The range of design presented by these two design concepts is the direction that the east elevation should strive towards.



The majority of the Board was supportive of the proposed color scheme. The dissenting opinion was that the color scheme be simplified to two colors for a more dramatic presence. The Board was supportive of either direction at the architect's discretion.

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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board acknowledged that the design changed considerably away from the original approach and did not closely resemble that building or the direction given based on the EDG designs. The Board did, however, feel that the proposed design manages to express clearer lines that relate the base to the upper floors.

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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board expressed support for the proposed material palette which included beige panel hardi panel with red accent hardi panel and white ribbed panel. The fence along the alley was a tube steel with inset panels. The Board was concerned with the flat fencing panels being used for graffiti and recommended that the gate and fence structure shown along the alley be re-designed to be a combination of screens (that provide some transparency) and green walls. Irrigation should be also provided directly to the ground where the green walls are planted.

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.

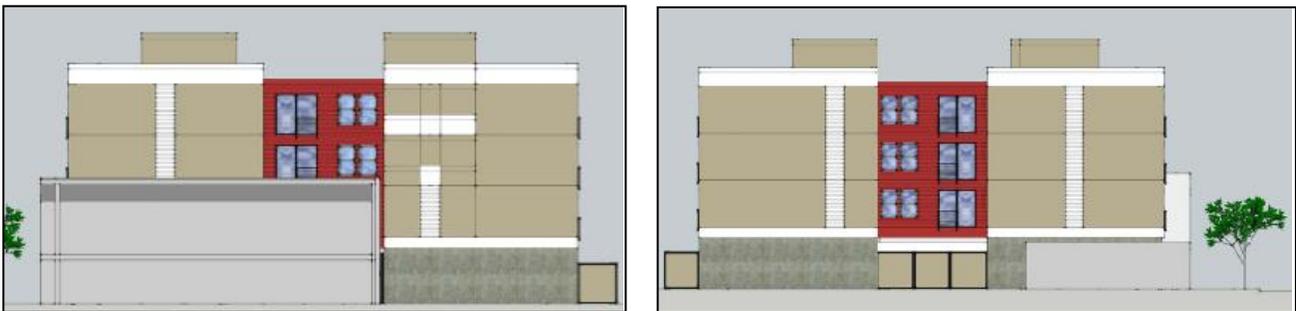
At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed that the proposed development should strive to include wider sidewalks, wider planting strips, distinct entrances and continuous overhead protection. See also A-3.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board was supportive of the building setback along 15th Avenue and the proposed dense landscaping of the planting strip and between the sidewalk and the building façade. The Board reviewed both ground level design options and settled on a hybrid – see discussion under E-1.

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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board reviewed two designs for the blank wall condition on the north and south elevations. The Board did not have a strong preference and was supportive of either option and are comfortable leaving the decision to the architect.



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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board was pleased that all of the service elements were located within the building and/or screened by the fencing along the alley. The Board, however, did recommend a maneuvering diagram that shows how vehicles will circulate to and from this property, as well as adjacent properties safely, both during garbage collection days and regular days.

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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board was supportive of the exterior lighting plans which illuminate the ground areas of the building along 15th Avenue, as well as along the alley. The recommendations regarding the gate and fence design should also discourage graffiti from occurring at the alley.

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 15th 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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board recommended that proposed the rental office should contain transparent walls within the office interior to maintain views from the sidewalk to the office spaces. This recommendation is tied to the departure request.

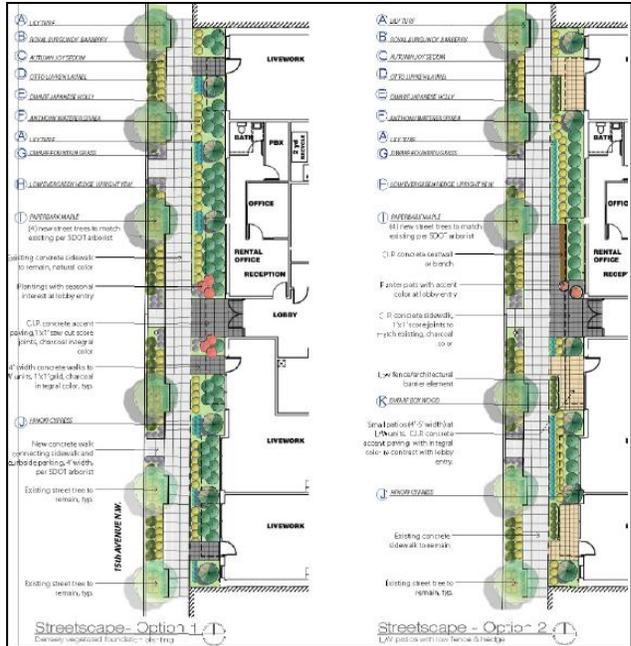
E. Landscaping

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 15th 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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board reviewed both options for the landscaping and hardscape design for 15th Avenue and recommended a hybrid which keeps the entry designs of Option 2 (at the lobby and live/work units) with the benches and landscaping and combines that with the simple, wider pathways leading to the individual entries shown in Option 1.

The Board was satisfied with the proposed six foot tall fence at the alley. The Board agreed that the addition of green walls and screens along the alley fence would help provide visual relief and softening of proposed development in relation to the lower density zone.



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).

- 1. Residential Uses at Street Level (SMC 23.47A.005.C.3 and 23.47A.008.A.1):** The Code requires that residential uses located at street level are limited to 20%. The applicant proposes to have 40% residential uses located at street level. The applicant proposes to use transparency and human activity generated by the proposed leasing and rental office at the street level in order to accomplish the intent of commercial uses at street level, consistent with Guidelines A-2, A-4, and D-11.

The Board unanimously recommended that DPD grant the departure for the residential use at street level, subject to the conditions listed below for interior transparency to the leasing office and reception area.

- 2. Non-residential Use Depth (SMC 23.47A.008.B.3.a):** The Code requires non-residential uses shall extend an average of at least 30 feet and a minimum of 15 feet in depth from the street level street facing facade. The applicant proposes to provide a depth of 8 feet for a portion of one live/work unit.

The Board unanimously recommended in favor of the proposed departure given that it provided an intervening and more active use between the sidewalk and the utility vaults. The Board agreed that the longer street frontage and expanded live/work unit will allow

further flexibility and activation of this unit to encourage a more commercial use consistent with Guidelines A-2, A-3 and A-4.

BOARD DIRECTION

The recommendation summarized below was based on the design review packet dated October 10, 2011, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the October 10, 2011 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and initial recommendation conditions, and reviewing the plans and renderings, three of the five Board members recommended approval of the project with the following conditions. One Board member abstained and one opposed.

1. The approach to the design of the east elevation should be similar to that of the west elevation in terms of modulation in response to the Single Family zone across the alley. The Board also agreed that the east elevation shown on the EDG packet (page A11) would also be a reasonable approach. The range of design presented by these two design concepts is the direction that the east elevation should strive towards. (B-1, C-2)
2. The gate and fence structure shown along the alley should be re-designed to be a combination of screens (that provide some transparency) and green walls. Irrigation should be provided directly to the ground where the green walls are planted. (C-4, D-7, E-1)
3. A maneuvering diagram that shows how vehicles will circulate to and from this property, as well as adjacent properties safely both during garbage collection days and regular days. (D-6)
4. The landscaping and hardscape design along 15th Avenue should be a hybrid which keeps the entry design of Option 2 with the benches and landscaping and combines that with the simple, wider pathways leading to the individual entries shown in Option 1. (A-2, A-3, A-4 and E-1).
5. The proposed ground level rental office should contain transparent walls within the office interior to maintain views from the sidewalk to the office spaces. (A-4, D-11)