



City of Seattle

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



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012121

Address: 355 15th Avenue

Applicant: Einar Novion

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, May 18, 2011

Board Members Present: Evan Bourquard
Dawn Bushnaq
Clint Keithley
Wolf Saar
Chip Wall

Board Member Absent: Lisa Picard

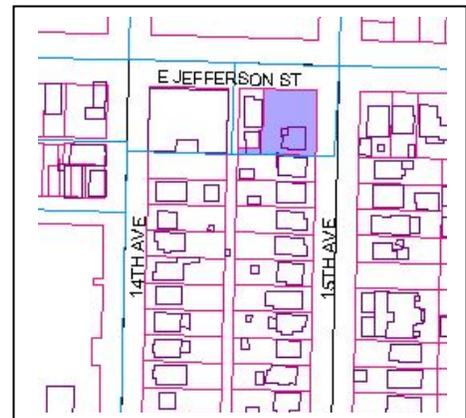
DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial One with a 30 foot height limit (NC1 30).

Nearby Zones:

- North: Major Institutional Overlay with a 65 height limit (MIO 65) with an underlying zone of Lowrise Three (LR3). MIO 65 with an underlying zone of Single Family 5000 (SF 5000).
- South: SF 5000
- East: SF 5000
- West: NC2 40 (40' height limit).



Lot Area: 8,686.73 sq. ft. The irregularly shaped lot at the corner of East Jefferson Street and 15th Avenue extends in a panhandle shape to a north/south alley between 14th and 15th Avenues. The western boundary is jagged in shape. The site descends approximately 12' from its northeast corner to its southwest.

Current Development: A single family house currently occupies the site.

Access: Existing vehicular access occurs at 15th Ave.

Surrounding Development Neighborhood Character: The subject site lies across Jefferson St. from two major institutions, Seattle University and Swedish Hospital at Cherry Hill (aka Providence). Directly north of the site lies a parking lot for Seattle University's Connolly Center. Catercornered to the northeast, a large parking garage occupies the southwest corner of the Swedish Cherry Hill campus. Directly to the west is a single family house and a five to six story office building further to the west.

Single family houses occupy most of the properties to the south and west of the subject property. Jefferson St. serves as a commercial corridor although institutions occupy much of the north side of the street. Small scale retail and commercial businesses line parts of the south side of E. Jefferson to the west of 14th Ave.

ECAs: Based on DPD's Geocortex maps, no Environmentally Critical Area exists on the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to build eight townhouses with commercial spaces at the ground floor. Parking access would occur from the alley and continue through the site's panhandle along the southern edge of the neighboring property to the west. The proposed development would require the demolition of the site's existing single family house.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented three alternatives. Option A and B would serve as mixed use buildings each containing approximately 20 residential units, commercial use at street level and parking generally below grade. The courtyard of the proposed U-shape structure of Option A would face west with units on the upper floors ringing the courtyard and a single loaded corridor. Ingress in this scheme would occur at 15th Ave. Option B would provide two east and west running bands

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of units above a plinth with commercial uses and parking. One set of units would face E. Jefferson and the other would front on to the south.

The applicant's preferred scheme represents a significant change from the other two options. Two sets of townhouse structures with three and five units each would form a perpendicular array anchored at the intersection of the two streets. Each residential unit would have a separate work or commercial space at street level. In the site's southwest quadrant a surface parking lot would house the occupants' vehicles. Access or approach to the proposed parking would begin at the alley and then travel down the site's panhandle behind the adjacent house to the west.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Four members of the public affixed their names to the sign-in sheet. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- The conversation has focused on the developer's pro forma rather than the guidelines.
- The design review packet lacks a comprehensive understanding of the site.
- The project packet lacks true alternatives (reiterated by others). The three schemes do not compare apples to apples.
- Had the applicant added the office building to the site's west to the axonometric drawings, the case for the proposal would have been more convincing.
- Mixed use is preferable at this location. Please limit auto body shops and other businesses that may use toxic materials.
- There is economic value in creating secured underground parking. This would attract buyers.
- Prefers craftsman style architecture. Don't build another glass and metal modern box in the neighborhood.

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.

The site's salient features include its irregular shape, the narrow access drive to the alley, a corner condition at the juncture of a commercial street and a single family neighborhood, and 12 feet of grade change. These features offer the architect the opportunity to design a complex that embodies a sense of place, inserting into the neighborhood a structure that mediates between the varying land uses and building masses and at the same time anchors the corner.

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

The Board noted that the applicant failed to present a concept for the commercial portion of the project. The relationship of the proposed work units to the two quite different streets interested the Board. The Board members expressed their desire to see commercial spaces that responded to the two distinct streets and connected the streets to the court (to be used for commercial uses) proposed behind the units.

The commercial units facing E. Jefferson St. in the Board's judgment should be through spaces that both physically and visually connect to the court. The facades of the units facing Jefferson should be clearly commercial in appearance. The commercial space for the corner unit should wrap around the corner to face both streets. This space should be larger than what appears in option #3. Units # 6,7 and 8 (option #3) ought to mediate between the commercial frontage on Jefferson and the single family neighborhood immediately to the south. Imbue the design with both a residential (stoops or some other architectonic solution) and a commercial sensibility.

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

Place the residential entries on the court side so that they do not face the street. The appropriate design and placement of the commercial entrances from the two streets matter greatly to the Board.

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

The Board emphasized the importance of designing commercial storefronts on both streets. The design for each street front should reflect the nature of the right of way and the transition from one zone to another.

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.

The relationship of the southern most unit and the adjacent property must be carefully addressed. The appearance of the unit should remain architecturally part of the

ensemble of live/work units but must defer to the residential zone by either setting back from the street or using another architectonic solution that respects the adjacent single family home. The Board did not endorse the departure request to reduce the 15' residential setback, preferring to see the architect's response to the transition in zones and building masses.

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access. Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties, and pedestrian safety.

The Board devoted a great deal of attention to the open space (or court) and parking area behind the units (option #3). The design of this area should reduce the impact of vehicles on the function of this outdoor space as an integral element of the commercial realm. By taking advantage of the change in grade, the architect should reduce the visual presence of the parking area by potentially placing some of the parking below the units or terracing the parking area several feet lower than the open space. Consider separating the vehicles from the open space by aligning the parking area parallel to the south property line rather than as shown in option C.

A-10 Corner Lots. Building on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

The characteristics of E. Jefferson and 15th Ave vary from one another. The structure's corner must visually reinforce the transition from a commercial street to 15th Avenue's residential qualities.

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.

The site's unusual location at the intersection of several zones (Neighborhood Commercial, Single Family, Lowrise and two major institutional overlays) demands sensitivity to the varying types of development that exist and that may occur in the area. The future design must mediate between the large scale development across Jefferson St. (parking garages, athletic facilities, and institutional buildings) and the finer grain of a single family residential neighborhood. The scale of the building should respond to this stark juxtaposition of uses.

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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.

The Board noted that the images presented of the architect's earlier work could serve as a starting point for the kind of design exploration needed for the site. The neighborhood context offers great possibilities.

- 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.

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

Imbuing the storefront facades along both streets with good proportions and detail that reflect the fine grain of the neighborhood will be critical to the project's success at meeting this guideline.

- 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.

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.

The Board members discussed the importance of the pedestrian pass through into the court. They encouraged the applicant to give thoughtful consideration to the location and design of the passage.

- 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.**

Ensuring minimal amounts of blank wall near the single family houses is important to the Board.

- D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.**

The Board looks forward to reviewing how the complex will provide tenant and pedestrian security.

- 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.**

The applicant will need to provide a concept design for commercial signage.

- 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.**

The applicant will need to provide a commercial and residential lighting concept plan.

- 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 emphasized the importance of commercial storefront transparency particularly along E. Jefferson St by having the architect provide through commercial units with unobstructed space between E. Jefferson and the open space behind the complex. This represented one of the Board's highest priorities.

- 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.**

The Board strongly preferred locating the residential entries behind the complex facing the open space. The staircases leading to the residential portion of the units at the upper levels need to be separate from the commercial space.

E. Landscaping

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site. Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

The landscaping of the open space behind the complex will be critical to the success of the commercial space. The Board expressed its desire for a space that has high quality materials, robust landscaping and supports the many uses that could occur in the court. The parking lot should be physically separate and not interfere with the use of this area.

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, the following departures were requested:

1. SMC 23.47A.014B.1 Setback requirement for lots abutting a residential zone. The Board did not endorse the proposed setback. It preferred an architectural solution rather than a diversion from the code. Nonetheless, the Board members look forward to the applicant's solution to an important siting condition.

BOARD DIRECTION

All of the Board members stated that the lack of three true alternatives frustrated their review. Board members and the public reiterated this complaint. If the applicant had no intention of placing a building with traditional apartment flats on the site, it was ingenuous to present the two alternatives. The appropriate presentation to the Board would have included three alternatives with roughly eight live/work in different configurations on the site.

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forward to MUP application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.