



INITIAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012121

Address: 355 15th Avenue

Applicant: Chris Pardo

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, May 01, 2013

Board Members Present: Dawn Bushnaq
Ric Cochrane
Dan Foltz
Natalie Gualy
Christina Orr-Cahall

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 are 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 15th Avenue. 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

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.

By the Initial Recommendation meeting, the architect refined the preferred scheme with its "L" shaped configuration. Access would occur from 15th Ave close to the south property line. The 15 percent incline of the driveway would lead to a flat parking court occupying the site's southwest corner.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Access

- Access on 15th Ave is difficult for commercial use.
- Use the alley for access.
- The driveway is too steep. Vehicles ought to approach from Jefferson St.
- The curb cut should be on Jefferson St.
- There are safety issues at the curb cut because of the steep driveway and the proposed lack of sight triangles.
- Most vehicles will turn to go west on Jefferson.
- Have the applicant solve the panhandle issue to provide alley access.
- Don't have vehicles exiting onto 15th Ave.
- Have two curb cuts---one on 15th Ave and the other on Jefferson St.

Aesthetics

- The Jefferson St. façade is hostile looking
- The kitchen windows are too small.
- The blank walls facing the south and west are unattractive.
- Concrete will get tagged. This is common in the neighborhood.

Live/Work Units

- How viable are live/work units in this neighborhood?
- Don't front the live/work units on to Jefferson.
- Increase the amount of commercial space on Jefferson.

Open Space

- Where will children play? The driveway area, called a "woonerf", is not suitable for playing.
- There is little opportunity for the households to meet in an outdoor gathering space.

Parking

- The area behind the buildings is just a parking area and not a woonerf

Other

- The proposal is too bulky
- The building should be energy efficient and sustainable.
- The project needs soft transitional spaces between the sidewalk and the units.
- More density for the neighborhood is welcome.
- Create a softer transition at the storefront on 15th Ave.

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.

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

Create a more robust or lush landscaping between the sidewalk and the live/work units. A revised landscaping plan supplemented by lighting and signage should better define the individual units along the streetscape.

At the EDG meeting, the Board emphasized the need for the units to be through spaces that “both physically and visually connect to the court”. See guidance for D-11.

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

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.

The large blank walls facing the adjacent single family homes troubled the Board. See guidance for C-4 and D-2.

- 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.**

Concerned with pedestrian and vehicular safety at 15th Ave, the Board recommends revisions to the proposed curb cut and sight triangle. The curb cut should equal the 14 foot width of the driveway and the sight triangles need to comply with the DPD zoning code. See departure analysis below.

- 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.**

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 overall massing, height and scale of the project met the Board's approval.

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.**
- 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.**
- 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.**

Although the choice of materials received praise, the Board asked for a reconsideration of the expansive concrete walls facing the adjacent properties. In part, these walls may be subject to graffiti.

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.**

In spite of the applicant's intentions, the Board observed that the parking court did not function as a community space for the complex as the need for vehicular maneuvering dominated the design. However, the results of the deliberation did not convey additional guidance.

- 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 requested a different material or one combined with the concrete to soften the south elevation of Building # 2 facing the neighbor. Consider the use of wood or vines to provide relief from the blank wall.

- 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.**

The Board found the operational plan for disposal of solid waste problematic. The owners would each have storage within his or her unit next to the parking court. It would be their responsibility to maneuver the dumpsters or canisters up the driveway to the front of the building. The Board's reservations focused on the steepness of the driveway (15% slope) as an impediment and the lack of a contained, screened area along the two streets to store the array of containers on pick-up day. This will need to be resolved prior to the next Recommendation meeting.

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

Placement of a gate at the steps leading from the sidewalk to the drive court would ensure a safer environment. Please provide the location of the gate and drawings of it.

- 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 Board did not have any comments on the general configuration of the live/work 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 deliberation did not focus on the lighting concept.

- 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 minimal size of the work areas in six of the eight units at the street frontage provoked considerable discussion. The Board prefers larger work areas or a commitment to provide a stronger visual connection between the front and the back of the units. As stated in the early design guidance meeting, the Board reaffirmed its desire that the architect provide thru commercial units with unobstructed space from the street to the open space behind the complex.

- 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.**

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.**

See the guidance for A-2.

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 Recommendation meeting, the following departures were requested:

1. SMC 23.47A.032A.1.a. Vehicle Access. The applicant requests access from 15th Ave rather than the alley. The Board indicated its inclination to recommend approval due to the wider driveway.

2. SMC 23.54.030D.2.a.2. Driveway. The applicant requests a 14' driveway which is a reduction from the 22' requirement for commercial uses. The Board indicated its inclination to approve the 14' driveway.
3. SMC 23.54.030F.2.b.2 Curb Cut. The applicant requests a 10' curb cut, a reduction in width from the 22' minimum for a non-residential use. The Board indicated that it would deny the 10' curb cut and asked for a width of 14' to match the driveway width.
4. SMC 23.54.030.G. Sight Triangle. The applicant proposed to eliminate the sight triangle requirement in favor of mirrors. The Board indicated that it would deny the departure requests. The applicant will need to design the driveway to comply with the code requirements for sight triangles.

BOARD DIRECTION

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

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