



City of Seattle

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



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012209

Address: 10201 Greenwood Avenue North

Applicant: Group Architect for GRE Crown Hill LLC

Date of Meeting: Monday, June 13, 2011

Board Members Present: Jerry Coburn
Mike DeLilla
David Neiman

Board Members Absent: Jean Morgan
Ted Panton

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

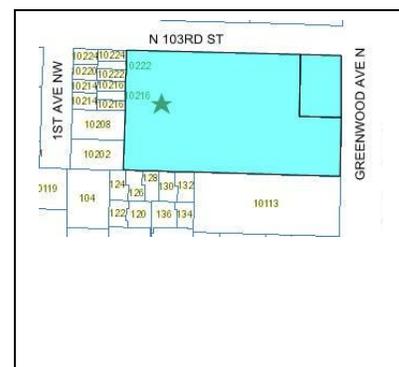
SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial One with a forty foot height limit. (C1-40)

Nearby Zones: North: C-40 until N. 107th St. and the zone changes to Lowrise Three (LR3).

South C1-40 fronting Greenwood Ave and Lowrise One (LR1) and Single Family 5000 (SF 5000) to the southwest.

East: C1-40 along the Greenwood Ave. N. corridor. Zoning changes to SF 5000 to the east of Greenwood Ave.



West: Lowrise Two (LR-2) flanking Holman Road NW until the zone changes at the commercial node (QFC).

Lot Area: 94,604 square feet (2.17 acres). The project site forms a rectangle with its length extending 419.5 feet along N. 103rd St. Frontage on Greenwood Ave. N. totals 234.14'. The site descends from east to west approximately 32 feet and slopes downward along Greenwood Ave. by approximately 12 feet.

Current Development: The site, once occupied by the Leilani Lanes bowling alley and a vehicle repair shop, lies vacant.

Access: Curb cuts exist along Greenwood Ave N. and N. 103rd St. A 46' by 175.5' easement on the southern edge of the property provides access to a loading area for the adjacent storage building.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character: To the immediate west lie several properties developed with townhouses and single family houses. To the southwest, there is an adjacent patch of new small-scale residences developed in the former Lowrise Duplex, Triplex zone. The balance of the property to the south is zoned like the subject site, C1-40; the immediately adjacent southern, Greenwood property is developed with a warehouse. On the east side of Greenwood Ave. N., mixed use buildings (a newly constructed one to the north of N. 103rd St. and Greenwood Ave.) and small business related enterprises line the corridor. Along N. 103rd St., directly north of the subject site, new multi-family and mixed use development occupy the block from Greenwood Ave. to NW Holman Road.

ECAs: No mapped Environmentally Critical Areas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a mixed use complex consisting of three structures over a common parking garage (an estimated 200 spaces), approximately 260 residential units, live/work units and commercial space surrounding a shared courtyard.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented three alternatives. The first option repeats an earlier design for the subject site by a different developer (the same architect, however). In the scheme, two large nearly interlocking masses form a central courtyard. The “L” shape of the western most structure extends along N. 103rd St. and parallel to the west property line. The eastern most structure forms a retail spine along Greenwood Ave. N. with two wings running parallel and close to N. 103rd St. and the southern property line. Live/work occupies a portion of the east building fronting on N. 103rd. The rest of the building has a mix of residential units. Vehicular ingress to a common garage occurs at two locations on N. 103rd St. and one point on Greenwood Ave. close to the access easement. The mass steps slightly down the hillside toward the west.

Option # 2 employs three masses above a common garage. The same “L” shaped volume anchors the site on the west. Two parallel structures extending east and west form a terraced open space area between them which links to Greenwood Ave. N. at mid-block. Two commercial storefronts flank this open space. A driveway follows the access easement from Greenwood Ave. to the neighbor’s loading dock and then turns north to connect with N. 103rd St. Garage access occurs in the heart of the site beneath the open space between the two parallel structures. The final option combines the strategies of the earlier MUP and option #2. Three structures are variously staggered on the site. Again, an “L” shaped mass establishes the property’s northwest corner and western boundary. Two other masses form the parcel’s eastern half and central portions. Another smaller “L” shaped structure anchors the northeast corner with live/work units facing Greenwood Ave. and several more fronting N. 103rd. The third volume steps back from Greenwood Ave. Its rectangular form extends parallel to the south property line. Above grade, the structure encloses the access easement to the loading dock providing a garage entry on Greenwood. Garage access occurs here and off N. 103rd St. at mid-block between two of the volumes. The masses step down the hillside by one or two levels. The conceptual landscape plan shows a series of terraces, a pool and a waterfall. Little of the open space appears devoted to play.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately ten members of the public affixed their names to the sign-in sheet at this Early Design Review meeting. They raised the following comments and issues:

- Several members of the public questioned why the applicant proposes fewer parking spaces than the number of units. Tenants and their guests will be forced to park on already overcrowded streets and in single family residential neighborhoods. More parking should be added to the complex.
- Massing of the proposed complex should reflect the views to the southwest. Too many units face north.

- The three options are too similar. Explore other massing options. An “E” shaped building facing south (toward the adjacent storage building) would provide for more light and space for units facing south. The storage building compromises views to the south.
- The design should strive to reduce noise generated by traffic on N. 103rd St. The noise will enter into the courtyard.
- The combined entry on N. 103rd is preferred.
- The new height measurements in the Land Use Code would allow for stepping down of the building mass from Greenwood Ave. Adding another floor level on Greenwood Ave. would benefit the project.
- Another commenter supported the height as shown on the drawings for the structures on Greenwood Ave.
- Consider infrastructure (particularly drainage) capacity for the site. The site lies within the Piper Creek watershed. Avoid the problems that the Crown Hill Safeway experienced.
- Leave the views from homes on N. 103rd St. (east of Greenwood) undisturbed.

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.

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

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.

As reviewed at EDG, the project design appears to capitalize on the mountain views to the west and the terrain’s continuous slope.

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

According to the Board members, the siting of the buildings recognizes the spatial characteristics of the two perimeter streets. Massing along these streets is placed close to the right of way. Discussion focused on whether more height should be placed at Greenwood. The Board generally agreed that the height was adequate as shown.

The Board, reflecting public comment, noted the discrepancy between the number of units proposed and the amount of parking spaces. The Board encouraged the developer to look into this concern.

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

The Board discussed the visibility of the three residential lobbies placed behind the garage entry, the trash room (along N. 103rd St.) and across the courtyard. The Board looks forward to seeing how the design evolves and allows the entries are evident from the street.

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

The Board did not support the placement of live/work units fronting onto Greenwood Ave. Development patterns, including new projects, in the vicinity support commercial uses unaffiliated directly with residential units. The proposed development would have approximately 260 new units that will help support a variety of commercial uses. Live/work units should be confined to the N. 103rd St. frontage which provides ample opportunity to contribute to the streetscape.

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.

In concept plan, Option# 3 appears to defer to the adjacent sites. Refinement of the design (heights, placement of windows, and design of landscaping) will reveal whether the design fulfills the expectation that this guideline establishes. The design should minimize the structure's bulk closest to the lowrise neighborhood.

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.

The relationship of the live/work units along N. 103rd St. to the streetscape is an important consideration. The upper right hand image on p. 27 of the EDG packet shows a portion of the parking garage above grade which would potentially place the live/work units at a height inaccessible from the street. The architect will need to resolve this issue.

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

The Board looks forward to seeing the details of the landscape plan and the landscape architect's handling of materials. The relationship of the generous amount of open space to the residential units must be carefully thought through.

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 concept for Option #3 focuses vehicular and pedestrian access at a major entry on N. 103rd St. How the design team handles garage egress, surface parking and pedestrian activity in this area will, in part, determine the project's success.

The Board asks that the applicant show how use of the easement functions.

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 Board did not see any reason to place more emphasis on the corner massing than what was shown in the EDG packet (p. 25).

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 relationship of the proposed structure to the lowrise, multifamily neighborhood on the west and south must be respectful of existing height, bulk and scale characteristics. For the Recommendation meeting, the architect shall produce a set of realistic sections cut through the Lowrise 1 and 2 zones. Consider the manner in which the buildings relate to one another. How is privacy of the proposed and existing developments maintained?

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 south building's relationship with the storage facility is important. How will the tenants perceive the wall? The Board asked for sections and other illustrations to show the relationship of the wall to the residential units.

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.

The Board noted that treating the architectural concept with consistency in such a large project is challenging. This will be an important consideration at future Design Review meetings.

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

Without a consideration of the human scale, the large size of this development project could overwhelm the streetscape and the finer grain of development nearby. The drawings presented at the next meeting must provide evidence that the architect has produced a design that reflects sensitivity to the smaller 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.

The Board members will review colors and materials at the next meeting.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

At concept stage, the location of parking entrances appeared to satisfy the Board members.

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 forecourt on Greenwood Ave. and the central courtyard are the defining elements of the proposal. The success of the design depends upon the quality of the landscaping. The Board expressed its appreciation for the general courtyard concept.

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 most obvious blank wall, an expanse of roughly 220 feet, faces the site from the south. The applicant proposes to place a substantial portion of the southernmost structure quite close to the storage facility's nearly 40' high largely blank wall. The architect will need to show how design of the building mass and its southern elevation respects the residents whose units would look directly into the adjacent blank expanse.

D-3 Retaining Walls. Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where higher retaining walls are unavoidable,

they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscapes.

Concept drawings of the courtyard illustrate a series of terraces beginning near Greenwood Ave. and stepping down the site's slope. The architectural treatment of this series of retaining walls will be of high importance to the Board. The development team will need to present detail drawings of the walls.

- 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.**

The Board identified areas of the façade along N. 103rd St. and within the courtyard where portions of the underground garage appear to be exposed. The applicant may need to lower the floor plate of the garage to ensure that blank walls do not dominate the 103rd street front and the courtyard. The Board asked for details of how the building meets the grade along N. 103rd St.

- 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 architect expects to place the trash and recycling storage along N. 103rd St. The possibility of a blank wall along N. 103rd presents area is problematic. Consideration should be given to moving the service area to an interior location.

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

The courtyard with its terraces and variations in grade introduces a complexity for safety issues. Site and landscape plans, as well as a diagram, to be presented at the Recommendation meeting will need to address safety and security concerns. The residential units should provide views into the courtyard to ensure that the central court has a level of informal surveillance by the tenants.

- 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 expects to review the type of signage and its general placement at the next Board meeting.

- 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.

A commercial lighting plan will need to be developed for the Recommendation meeting.

- 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.**

Providing adequate transparency for the live/work units fronting onto N. 103rd St. will be an important consideration.

- 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 noted the importance of creating visible residential entries seen from N 103rd St. See A-3.

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 landscape plan needs to be quite detailed in order to explain the series of terraces and walkways and their relationship to both grade and to the buildings.

The front court at Greenwood Ave in concept plan appears quite expansive. The design and its detailing will need to be thoughtfully considered. Consider enhancing this forecourt by adjusting the arrangement of the commercial spaces (and the leasing office) to form an outdoor room.

- 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.**

The applicant has proposed a complex series of courtyard terraces in response to the site's slope that ought to provide the essential character of the development. The Board agreed that the concept appeared headed in the right direction and looks forward to landscape plan's refinement.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departures will be based upon how the proposed relief from the Land Use Code helps the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieves a better overall design than could be achieved without the departures. The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the applicant listed five preliminary, departure requests associated with Option #3 pertaining to street level use and setback, visually prominent building entries from the street, single vehicular access and width of curb cuts. Due to time limitations, the Board briefly addressed street level uses by asking the planner to explain the anticipated departure. The Board also discussed the placement of the lobbies off an auto turnaround in the central court.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board specifically asked for the following in addition to the required drawings:

- dimensions on all plans and elevations;
- sectional studies (see guidelines); and
- detailed descriptions and diagrams of departure requests.

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.