



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012217 and 3012417

Address: 2615 25th Avenue S & 2715 25th Avenue S

Applicant: Trenton Associates McClellan LLC

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, June 28, 2011

Board Members Present: Sam Cameron  
Tony Case  
Brett Conway (Chair)  
Stephen Yamada-Heidner  
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Board Members Absent: Amoreena Miller  
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DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SF 5000 (Rezone to be proposed)

Nearby Zones: North: NC3-65  
South: LR2  
East: NC3P-65  
West: SF 5000

Lot Area: 25,867 & 42,000 square feet



Current Development: Five single family residences, one minor communications utility

Access: From 25th Avenue S. via S. McClellan Street

Surrounding Development: Commercial official, retail; residential (single family)

ECAs: Steep slopes to west

Neighborhood Character: Transitional/ mixed development to transit-oriented development because of proximity to Sound Transit Mt. Baker Light Rail station at S. McClellan Street

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Approximately 300 residential units (310,000 gross square feet) in two buildings of 6-7 stories, with parking for 300 vehicles. The project will include indoor and outdoor amenity spaces. Parking access for each building will be from S. Lander Street, which separates the two proposed structures and is currently unimproved. The project will further improve 25th Avenue S., a street one block in length at this point which leads into S. McClellan Street. The project contemplates additional pedestrian opportunities, such as access to the Cheasty Greenbelt which abuts the project to the west.

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## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

After brief introductions by members of the Board and the Planner, Lyle Bicknell of the Department of Planning and Development spoke of the proposed zoning changes that would be before the City Council later this summer as part of the *Mount Baker Town Center Urban Design Framework*. The area of the proposal, as part of that urban design framework, would more than likely be proposed for an up-zone to Neighborhood Commercial (NC3-65) or possibly Seattle Mixed (SM), a zone designation that would take into account not only the possibilities of new transit-oriented development but existing mixed patterns of uses ranging from residential to larger scale commercial and even light manufacturing in the area.

Three alternative design schemes were presented by the design team from Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects. All of the options were said to embrace three project goals. The first of these goals was to provide true transit oriented development. This was to be the first new development in the area of the Mount Baker Light Rail station and as such it would stimulate new construction and increased density in the area by providing much needed market rate

housing. A second goal was to strengthen the overall community by providing a needed balance of building types in an area dominated by industrial/commercial uses. Thirdly, the project would directly and physically relate to the Cheastly Greenbelt and provide a connection point between the urban and pastoral edges of the neighborhood.

Massing option one was premised upon a vacation of the street right-of-way of S. Lander Street, but with a re-alignment of the open space provided by the right-of-way further south between two proposed structure. A second massing option would not require a vacation of S. Lander street and showed a smaller structure to the north of the street arranged in the shape of a “U.” The southern structure was an inverted “U” with a squared foot at the base of the eastern leg.

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The third scheme, the preferred massing option, eroded a northwest portion of the upper “U” and the entire west leg of the southern structure, interlocking each of the structures more integrally with the greenbelt.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Seven members of the public attending this Early Design Review meeting affixed their names to the sign-in sheet provided. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Noted that the vehicular access was well chosen and that the proposed connections to the greenbelt were a welcomed move.
- Stated that the choice of materials for the project would be of special importance since the neighborhood was in need of quality buildings and noted that these structures would strike a tone that other developers would need to follow.
- Pointed out the need for the special treatment that the potential blank walls of the partially-exposed parking structures would need to make this a successful project. Also noted that the corner of the southern structure facing 25th Avenue S. and S. McClellan Street was in need of careful treatment and enlivening since it was where the project most notably met the pedestrian realm. The whole notion of a development responding to the goal of “transit-oriented” means pedestrian oriented, and the primary pedestrian face of the proposal is the corner of S. McClellan Street and 25th Avenue S.
- Noted that, although the building would be “background someday,” that it will be “front and center” for some time to come.
- Encouraged the development team to revisit the perceived need to provide so much parking as part of the development.
- Noted that the bike master plan showed 25th Avenue S. as a thoroughfare and that it was important to maintain that possibility for future development.
- Pointed out that some retail on the ground level could be desirable and might even be doable, and reiterated the importance of the southeast corner of the south building.

<b>PRIORITIES &amp; BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
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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 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.**

The slopes of the site and the Cheastey Greenbelt along the west margin of the site were obvious foils to the development and how these were interlinked would dictate a high percentage of the success of the design development.

- 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 noted that the placement of the vehicular entrances had been successfully thought out, but that the choreography of pedestrian movements needed more exploration and attention.

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

The Board thought that this issued had been addressed, but only partially. The guideline ought to be engaged in conjunction with guideline A-10. The corner of the structure that addressed the intersection of 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and S. McClellan Street was in need of revisiting, a revisit that should seriously ask whether a secondary pedestrian residential entry should be placed there.

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

Human activity, in the form of pedestrian activity, should be assumed for a project that conceived itself as transit-oriented and linked to the proximity of the light rail station. An obvious linkage to the station was through the intersection of S. McClellan Street and 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. As noted above, this has implications for the treatment of the southeast corner of the southern structure.

Choose an item.

- 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 Board thought this was a “big” issue for the success of the project.

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

The Board discussed this guideline briefly, noting that, while the open space in the Lander right-of-way was “of a piece,” the other two area adjacent the Cheasty Greenbelt might be better integrated with one another and of another piece, one less disparate in individual elements.

- 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 agreed that the choice of S. Lander Street as access to the parking and as designed was the right move for the project, but discussed the need to see more detail how the safety and comfort of pedestrians utilizing the S. Lander Street passage would be optimized given the right-of-way’s use as a driveway for parking to each of the structures.

- A-9 Location of Parking on Commercial Street Fronts. Parking on a commercial street front should be minimized and where possible should be located behind a building.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that this guideline was not applicable to the proposal.

- 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.**

This guideline was selected as of highest priority for the project. The Board affirmed those statements from the public that noted that the southeast corner of the southern structure was the primary corner in the overall project, particularly as the corner would function in the proposed conceptual orientation as a transit-oriented development. The Board recognized that the corner should function as a secondary point of entry, but that it needed to incorporate at least some of the energy given to the two entries located where the structures met S. Lander Street. In noting the importance of this entry members of the Board also suggested that other individual entries to units, located above stoops, might further energize the S. McClellan Street and 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. ground level facades.

## **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 Board noted that although this was always a guideline of primary importance they had no particular concerns related to how the design team had addressed compatibilities. As shown in the sections presented in the packets and the perspective drawings that were part of the power point presentation by the design team, the two structures carefully had exploited the topography of the site and embraced and engaged the hillside and greenbelt in a thoughtful manner.

## **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, as had members of the public, that these structures would set the benchmark for what hopefully would be more transit oriented development in the area.

- 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 this guideline was of high priority in conjunction with remarks that had been made regarding the priority of Guideline C-1.

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

The Board noted that they liked what they had seen in these preliminary renderings, how an attempt had been made to break down the scale of the two structures through a variety of techniques. The Board encouraged the design team to continue in this direction as design development occurred.

- 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 noted that this was of highest importance for a successful design and affirmed their earlier statements and those that had come from the public that the choice and detailing of materials in this project would set a benchmark for subsequent development.

- 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.**

Affirming the design team's decision to locate the parking entrances to each of the structures off S. Lander Street, the Board further stressed the importance of avoiding an abrasive interface between vehicles and pedestrians who would share a pathway.

## **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 reiterated the importance of addressing an entry at the corner of 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and S. McClellan Street. They also discussed the importance of providing a pedestrian connection, however informal, to S. McClellan Street along the west margin of the south structure.

- 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.**

See after D-3.

- 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.**

Guidelines D-2 and D-3 were chosen by the Board as of highest importance and, given the topography of the site, elements of the project that would need to be addressed.

**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.

This was chosen by the Board as a guideline of highest priority, but without specific comment beyond the directions of the guideline itself.

**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.

In response to a question from the Board, the design team noted that these functions would be located within the interior parking areas, a choice of location affirmed by the Board as important for the success of the project.

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

The Board noted this guideline to be of highest priority, but without further specificity.

**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 referred to earlier comments on providing a distinguishable secondary entry at or near the southeast corner of the south structure, as well as exploring additional individual residential stoops.

## **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.

See after E-3.



**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 after E-3.

**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 Board selected E-1, E-2 and E-3 as each being of high priority for this proposal. In doing so the Board noted that while the S. Lander Street landscaping might have a distinctive motif or theme of its own, an attempt should be made to integrate the motifs or themes proposed for the open area at the northwest and southwest edges of the site. Additionally, all three of the open space areas should be linked as far as possible with pathways, existing or proposed, for the greenbelt itself.

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

Since the proposal is premised on a contract rezone and particulars of the rezone have not of yet been determined no particular departures from development standard have been indicated at this time. The Board's recommendation on any departures that may be subsequently identified and requested 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 time of the final Board meeting.

## **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.**

In making this recommendation the Board noted that the amount of parking proposed for the project would seem to be out of step with the concept and intentions of Transit Oriented Development (TOD), and the Board wished to go on the record as being in favor of a less dense parking solution than that which had been shown.

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