



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012436

Address: 1760 NW 56th Street

Applicant: Dave Heater, Ankrom Moisan Architects

Date of Meeting: Monday, November 14, 2011

Board Members Present: Ted Panton (Chair)  
Jerry Coburn  
Mike DeLilla  
David Neiman

Board Members Absent: Jean Morgan

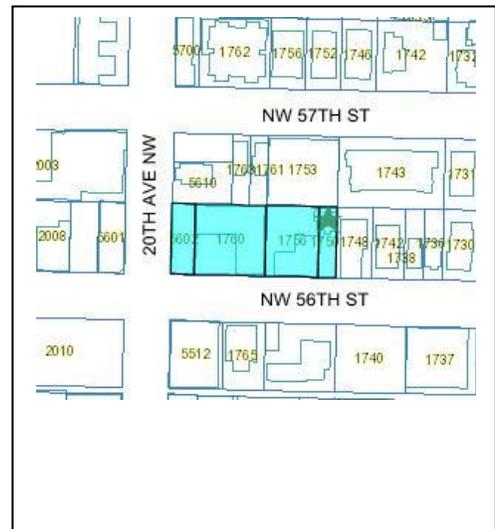
DPD Staff Present: Lisa Rutzick

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC3-65. Western portion of the site is subject to the "Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines."

Nearby Zones: (North) NC3-65  
(South) NC3-65  
(East) NC3-65  
(West) NC3-65

Lot Area: 23,400 square feet



Current Development: The project site consists of four separate parcels and slopes from a low point at the southwest corner intersection to three feet moving north along 20th Ave NW and four feet moving east along NW 56th St.

There are three (3) existing, low-lying commercial buildings plus one house, which will be demolished to accommodate the proposed project.

Access: No alley. Access proposed from NW 56th Street.

Surrounding Development: An existing four-story apartment building is to the east and a six-story apartment building is adjacent to the northeast. A single residential structure converted to office space to the northwest of the project site. A one-story retail/commercial use is across the street to the west and to the south.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: Transitional location between residential neighborhood to the north and a commercial core to the south. Within two blocks of the site are amenities such as the library, health care facilities, food/stores, banking, shops, theaters, restaurants. The existing built context is varied.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project is for the design and construction of a mixed use building with approximately 130 residential units located above 1,500 sq. ft. of ground level commercial use. All of the parking (approximately 110 stalls) for the proposed development is to be provided in a below grade garage that is accessed from the street (NW 56th).

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**DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options included a retail commercial space at the corner.

The first scheme (Option A) showed a “C” shaped configuration with a 20’ courtyard opening on the north side and a 0’ setback on the south. The “C” shaped scheme maximized the allowable FAR on the site, is code-compliant and offered no departures. The garage entry was on 20th Ave NW which is designated as an arterial road. This scheme also was a small courtyard on the north side.

The second scheme (Option B) showed a “T” shape configuration with a 10’ courtyard on the north and a 10’ setback from the property line. The “T” shaped scheme was code-compliant, did not take full advantage of the available FAR, had a smaller courtyard to the north, and had the garage entry access on 20th Ave. NW.

The third scheme (Option C) showed an “L” shaped configuration with a 30’ courtyard on the north side and a 5’ horizontal setback and varying vertical on the first level for the residential units on the south side. The “L” shaped scheme, which was the preferred option, reduced the width of the proposed building so it offered the largest courtyard. The garage entry was located away from the intersection as far as possible along NW 56<sup>th</sup> street.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately 15 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Clarified the elevation of the parking level below grade and distance between the property line and proposed building face. Expressed preference for option three because it provided the greatest light and air buffer area between the proposed building and the neighbors to the north.
- Suggested that a shadow study was needed to understand the impacts on the north and east. Clarified that proposed units would be apartments.
- Concerned that the proposed structure will be too close and too high to the abutting building to the east. Solar access to the rooftop deck will be impacted. Would like to see more of the building mass shifted to the southwest corner and the building form step downward to the east. Concerns that the conceptual design lacked sufficient modulation. Noted that the design should be more residential in nature and less institutional. Suggested breaking the building length into three modules. Opposed access proposed from 56<sup>th</sup>.
- Clarified the building code regulation governing windows on walls on property lines.
- Would like to see modulation of the north façade as well.
- Clarified design concept for rooftop plans.

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

**Ballard-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Development Surrounding the Park**

- **West, North and East sides of the park:** Townhouse style design is appropriate at street level adjacent to the park. Residential developments that provide units that directly access the public right-of-way are preferred since they help enliven the street environment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe and welcoming.
- **South side of the park:** If mixed use development occurs around the park, it is desirable to provide active storefronts along the entire south edge of NW 57th Street, west of 22nd Avenue NW, and a consistent street wall with a two-story minimum height.
- **Mixed Use and Residential on East-West Streets:** Buildings should maintain a consistent street wall up to a minimum of two story development and provide a setback(s), particularly on the south side of the street, beyond three stories to enhance solar access to the street and avoid a ‘canyon’. Deviations from the consistent street wall should be allowed for public usable open spaces. Where appropriate, mid-block pedestrian connections are strongly encouraged. The Design Review Board may consider a departure to reduce open space requirements in exchange for a mid-block pedestrian connection. Such spaces shall be sited and designed in a manner that are clearly public in nature and engaging to pedestrians.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the garage entrance should be designed to be minimally intrusive to the sidewalk and pedestrian circulation. The Board also pointed out more dedication to bicycle parking and accommodations should be included on the subject site.

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

**Ballard-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Development Surrounding the Park**

- **South side:** Setbacks from the property line should be allowed up to ten feet consistent with pedestrian zoning requirements for outdoor activity.
- **Mixed Use Development on Avenues:** Commercial uses are encouraged to setback in order to provide opportunities for pedestrian activities where appropriate.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed at length the viability of live/work units and how the proposed design can achieve an active and engaging street front. The Board was very supportive and encouraging of the proposal to over-frame the floor (to bring the floor up to grade) for the three units along 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue, thereby allowing flexibility of these units to be converted to commercial or retail use in the future. These three units would also take access directly from the sidewalk, in addition to the internal corridor.

The Board recognized the challenge of designing the proposed residential spaces along 56<sup>th</sup> Street to function well for both residential and potential commercial use and have the flexibility to convert from one to another as the economy dictates.

The Board expressed concern with these residential units and recommended that a privacy zone is needed if the units function primarily as residential use. The Board also agreed that micro-retail or commercial uses would better engage the sidewalk and could be viable at this location. As designed at this EDG phase, the Board felt that the ground level units were too detached from the street and needed to be better integrated. If the units continue to be elevated above grade, then they should have a direct connection to the sidewalk. For all of the units, the Board was very interested in units with sufficient depth to realistically accommodate work space separate from living space for future live/work or commercial.

**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that at the next meeting, they would like to review a solar/shadow study of the proposed building and how it affects both the neighboring buildings as well as the proposed courtyard open space. The Board would also like to better understand the relationship between the proposed building mass within the context of the surrounding buildings. The Board is especially interested in the sensitivity to the west façade of the building to the east.

See also D-2 for the discussion of blank walls.

**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.**

**Ballard-specific supplemental guidance:**

- **West side of the park:** For residential units with direct access to the street, a ten foot landscaped setback or pedestrian walkway immediately adjacent to the park property edge is recommended with a low landscaped fence or low hedge to help define the relationship between the property and the park edge.
- **North and East sides:** New development should provide a landscaped fence or low, dense hedge to help define the street edge. No more than a ten foot setback to provide an effective transition between townhouse units and the public realm is desirable. In general, the landscaped setback from the park to the building edge should be integrated as an extension of the mid-block pedestrian connection system.
- **Single Use residential:** Townhouse or other residential developments that have direct unit entrances on the sidewalk are encouraged. New development should mark the

property line with a landscaped fence or low hedge planting to enhance the continuity of the street.

See guidance provided under A-4.

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

See E-2.

**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed that the building design and form should hold the corner as shown in the initial preferred concept design (#3) shown.

<b>B. Height, Bulk and Scale</b>
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**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.**

**Ballard-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Development Surrounding the Park**

- **West, North and East sides of the park:** In general, the overall development massing should maximize the solar access to the park through careful massing arrangement of the upper levels, set back above a two-story base containing townhouse style units.
- **South side of the park:** Civic and cultural uses are anticipated to be developed along the south edge of the park. However if mixed use development does occur, it should provide a consistent street wall with a two-story minimum height. Development should be set back above the two story height and/or modulate the facade to enhance solar exposure to the park.
- **Mixed Use Development on North-Side Avenues:** Buildings should maintain a consistent street wall up to a minimum of two stories and provide a setback(s), particularly on the west side of the avenue, beyond three stories to enhance solar access to the street and avoid a ‘canyon’ effect.
- **Mixed Use and Residential Development on East-West Streets:** Same as above, except with setbacks particularly on the south side of the street beyond three stories to enhance solar access to the street. Buildings should provide façade modulations that

break down the scale of larger developments to recall the underlying original 50' parcel widths.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board appreciated the effort to keep the building profile narrow and less bulky. The Board requested more information regarding solar studies, landscape plans and blank wall treatment to address scale concerns. See also A-5, D-2, and E2.

## C. Architectural Elements and Materials

- 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.

**Ballard-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Institutional Development:** The design of institutional buildings should be distinguished from commercial and residential buildings by location on the site, materials and massing. A building with public uses should exhibit a civic presence through careful attention to its relationship with the public realm. A primary entrance, building form, and architectural elements should be designed and scaled to reflect the public activities contained within.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board appreciated the early design concept for clear and simple building forms and shapes using high quality materials and looks forward to further development of this concept. The Board encouraged a residential expression for the building that is well integrated with the residential/commercial expression of the ground floor. The Board warned against a monolithic expression along 56<sup>th</sup> Street and recommended setting the building back at the first or first and second 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.

**Ballard-specific supplemental guidance:**

**New development should exhibit craftsmanship through the use of durable, attractive materials. Building materials and interesting details found on older buildings on Market Street and the Ballard Avenue Landmark District should be recalled.**

The Board looks forward to reviewing the details of the color and material palette at the Recommendation meeting.

## **D. Pedestrian Environment**

- 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.**

**Ballard-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Active, open, interesting building facades are strongly encouraged, particularly on sites adjacent to the park.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the design and treatment of the east elevation is important and they would like to review details at the next meeting. The façade will be located at the east property line and will not have openings, so the material, texture, color and patterning of this façade should be addressed.

- 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.**

**Ballard-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Service areas, loading docks and refuse should be internal to the development or carefully screened, especially on sites directly adjacent to the park.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the access location and would like to better understand how the trash and recycling will be handled both in terms of storage, but also collection. This is particularly of concern with the residential units on either side of the garage entrance (one in the proposed building and one in the next door building). Clear sight lines and lighting should be included for safety measures. The Board also discouraged the transformer from being located at ground level along the sidewalk.

- 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 supported hybrid commercial and residential expression at the ground level.

- 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.**

See A-4.

## **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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board was concerned that the proposed courtyard area to the north of the building would be in shadow and therefore may lack usability by tenants. A strong landscape design (shadow garden) that activates this space and is well programmed will be critical elements to explore and detail at the next meeting. The Board also suggested that some of this amenity open space could be shifted to the street front in order to provide more relief for the ground level live/work units.

The area between the property line and the building face at the ground level are also critical and should be addressed with vegetation and grade changes to create a buffer between the sidewalk and the units.

## **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. Residential Setback on NW 56<sup>th</sup> Street (SMC 23.47A.008.D):** The Code requires a ten foot setback from the property line or a four foot vertical change for ground level residential units. The applicant proposes a five foot setback or a reduction in the vertical distance which

would vary from between 1 foot, eight inches (at the southeast corner) to four feet (at the southwest corner).

The Board indicated that more information is needed in terms of how these ground level units are designed and integrated with the streetscape along 56th Street. The design of the building base, the landscaping and connection to the pedestrian level will be critical considerations in reviewing this departure at the next meeting.

- 2. Non-Residential Use at Street Level (SMC 23.47A.005.D):** The Code requires that residential uses may not exceed 20% of street-level street-facing façade on an arterial. The applicant proposes an additional 43% of residential uses along 20th Avenue NW.

The Board indicated a favorable inclination towards such a departure request provided that the taller floor to ceiling height is provided by over-framing the floor and offering greater flexibility for future commercial use conversion along 20th Avenue.

- 3. Residential Setback on 20<sup>th</sup> Ave NW (SMC 23.47A.008.D):** The Code requires a ten foot setback from the property line or a four foot vertical change for ground level residential units. The applicant proposes no setback along 20th Avenue and a reduction in the vertical distance which would vary from between 1 foot (at the northwest corner) to two feet, seven inches (at the southwest corner).

The Board indicated a favorable inclination towards such a departure request provided that the taller floor to ceiling height is provided by over-framing the floor and offering greater flexibility for future commercial use conversion along 20th Avenue.

## **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.**