



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012473

Address: 3736 Rainier Avenue South

Applicant: Steven Tangney

Date of Meeting: May 22, 2012

Board Members Present: Sam Cameron
Amoreena Miller
Benjamin Smith
Stephen Yamada-Heidner
Bo Zhang

Board Members Absent: Tony Case

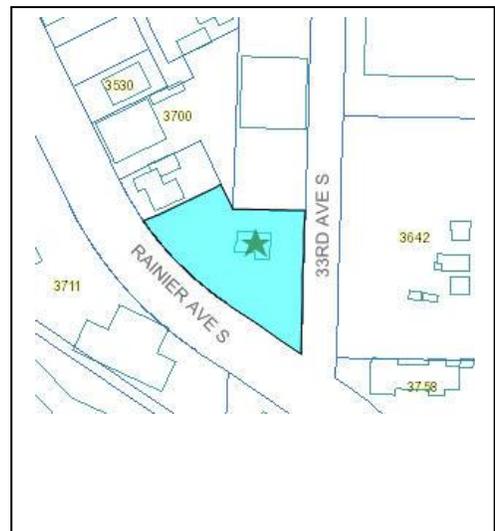
DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial Two with a 65' height limit (C2 65)

Nearby Zones: North: C2 65. Zoning changes to Lowrise Three (LR3) and Single Family 5000 (SF500) north of S. Spokane St.
South: C1 65 across Rainier Ave S. Zoning changes to LR2 and SF5000 further to the south.
East: C 2 65. East of 34th Ave S. the zoning transitions to C1 40 and then LR2 RC (residential commercial).
West: C1 65 west of Rainier Ave S. Zoning then changes to SF 5000.

Lot Area: 31,100 square feet.



Current Development: A former vehicle sales enterprise.

Access: Rainier Avenue South and 33rd Avenue South

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: The surrounding area has a quilt of land uses and building styles. Rainier Court, at this time, comprises two mixed use structures containing affordable housing and commercial space. The complex forms a strong edge defining two to three sides of the three subject property. A multi-phased plan for Rainier Court includes additional development on a total of approximately seven acres. Several parcels close to the subject site and across Rainier Ave. S. comprise auto sales and repair businesses. Commercial enterprises along the Rainier corridor are vehicle oriented. Rainier Valley Square shopping center includes a Safeway. Beyond the parcels that front onto Rainier Ave., land uses include lowrise multi-family (townhouses predominantly) and older single family residences.

ECAs: Liquefaction zone

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a five-story, 128,000 square foot self storage facility (containing approximately 960 storage units) and an estimated 43 parking spaces.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Due to the confined infill site, the applicant provided one massing scheme and three variations on access. The massing diagram presented at the EDG meeting illustrates a five story structure with a slight curve along the Rainier Ave. S. façade. At the corner of Rainier Ave. and 33rd Avenue S., the structure steps back modestly from the acute angle formed by the two streets. The east elevation parallels or mirrors the street orientation of 33rd Ave. S. The north elevation across from Courtland Place follows the dominant orthogonal street grid of the neighborhood rather than mimics the irregular property line.

All three design options locate vehicular access near the corner of 33rd Ave. S. and the esplanade along Courtland Place. Scheme # 1 has one point of entry. The other schemes have a second means of access on Rainier Ave. S. approximately at the parcel's mid-point. At the EDG meeting, the applicant and the Board chose to discuss only Option # 1. The location of the self storage office area represents the only other notable variation among the schemes. Two schemes place this accessory use mid-parcel Rainier Ave. Option # 1 orients the office close to the corner of the two streets.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Eight members of the public affixed their names to the sign-in sheet. They raised the following issues:

- The residents of the neighboring buildings do not want to view blank walls.
- 33rd Ave S. and the esplanade in front of Courtland Place fills up with school buses, medical and fire trucks and access buses for seniors and the disabled. These vehicles park in the place where the garage entrance is proposed.
- Place the vehicular entrance on Rainier Ave. S.
- The located of the proposed garage entry should be a public gathering area. It does not make sense to place open space on Rainier and 33rd Ave. S.
- This is an environment friendly to seniors and children. Seniors wait for their buses at the corner of 33rd Ave S. and the esplanade. People like to congregate there. (Mentioned by several people).
- The parking lot in front of Courtland Place becomes quite congested with traffic and people.
- Make the exterior interesting. Coordinate the colors with the existing apartment buildings.
- Add pedestrian amenities around the site.
- It is disappointing that this will be a storage facility. The community goal is to activate Rainier Ave. It should be pedestrian oriented.
- New senior housing is being developed nearby.
- Make the street level interesting. Add windows, art, landscaping.
- There is a lot of activity along the esplanade.
- The community wants this area to be a vibrant, mixed community. The people are concerned with this single use.
- Consider adding an accessory use (retail) to liven up the street front.

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.**

The site has three if not four significant sides. Due to the retail uses fronting the active parking lot at the base of Courtland Place, the elevations of the first floor of the proposal must engage with the activity that occurs along the esplanade at Rainier Court and the retail storefronts at the base of the Dakota.

The Board discouraged the serrated edge at the northern most corner on Rainier Ave S., preferring a wall parallel to the Courland Place facade before it bends becoming perpendicular to 33rd Ave S.

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

The first floor should have generous amounts of canopies and glazing along Rainier Ave S., 33rd Ave S. and the esplanade between Courtland Place and the site. Providing active facades enhances the sense of a neighborhood or “main street” that has been achieved along these edges. Installation of art, landscaping and community amenities (kiosks, benches) would complement the commercial uses along these edges.

- 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.**

The location of the office and garage at the first level should complement the commercial activity along the perimeter of Rainier Court. Placement of overhead weather protection, windows and entrances should also reinforce activity rather than as a source of enervation with blank walls.

- 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.**

Respecting Rainier Court represents for the Board and neighbors the sine qua non of the project’s success.

- 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.**

Acknowledging the public’s interest in keeping the corner between 33rd Ave. S. and the parking lot an active area for the residents and others who enjoy congregating there, the Board directed the applicant to shift the garage entrance to the south in order to provide

more room at the corner and to move the driveway and its curb cut away from the Dakota garage entrance.

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.

See Board guidance for A-1 (proposal's northern most corner) and A-8 (creating a small plaza at the northeast corner).

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 nature of a self storage facility reinforces its building bulk. Its program, quite different from the adjacent apartments, functions commonly as a windowless, thick structure in contrast to large apartment buildings, which require greater linearity and natural light. At the upper levels, the proposed building facades should form a composition of elements that diminish the apparent bulk by creating a scale that relates to the individual. Any number of strategies (modulation, choice of materials and their variation in unit sizes and number) could be deployed. Some designs of self storage facilities locate the hallways along the perimeter of the building allowing for greater amounts of transparency and a concomitant reduction in scale due to the sense of individuation produced by the windows.

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 well defined edges of the Rainier Court complex and the bend in Rainier Ave produce a distinct architectural context. Essential characteristics of the two buildings (and possibly future buildings in the complex) evidenced by similarity in heights, masonry bases with large storefront windows, frequent and repetitive modulation of the facades, and bright colors produce a visual ensemble. Decorative masonry and tile work, public art and high planters conducive to informal public gathering also provide this small cluster of buildings with a strong identity.

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.

This guideline will be an important consideration as the Board reviews the project at the next meetings.

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

The building's success depends upon the architect's ability to reduce this building type's bulk to discrete elements and to arrange them in a pleasing composition.

- 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.**

At the next EDG meeting, the applicant will need to present character studies showing the development team's ideas for the exterior.

- 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.**

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.**

Acknowledging the community's interest in locating a small plaza at the corner of 33rd Ave S. and the esplanade, the Board agreed that an open space was more appropriate at this location than at the corner of 33rd and Rainier Ave S.

- 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 guidance for B-1. Blank walls along the first floor should be avoided. Art, landscaping, glazing, canopies and community amenities should be features of the first level along the entire perimeter of the base.

- 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.**

Since most of the first floor of the building will be devoted to parking, this guideline is particular germane.

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.

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

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.

This represents an important consideration as design development occurs.

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.

By the Recommendation meeting, the applicant needs to provide a concept lighting 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 use of transparency should be one tool among others to engage the proposed structure with the streetscape.

Locating hallways on the perimeter of the floors would provide greater visual interest as windows would reduce the building's scale and provide visual interest to the neighbors.

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.

The neighboring Courtland Place has a series of raised planters designed to provide informal gathering spaces as local residents and clients of the businesses can sit on or lean against them. This approach to landscaping goes beyond providing visual interest. It helps fosters a sense of community and activates the street.

The public and the Board acknowledged that the proposal should assist in encouraging pedestrian activity along Rainier Ave.

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.

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 applicant did not request a departure from the land use code.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should return to the Board for an additional EDG meeting.

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