



City of Seattle

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



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012511

Address: 5444 Delridge Way SW

Applicant: Demian Minarez, SMR Architects, for Downtown Emergency Services Center (SESC)

Date of Meeting: Thursday, December 08, 2011

Board Members Present: Brandon Nicholson (Chair)
Myer Harrell
Robin Murphy
Daniel Skaggs
Norma Tompkins

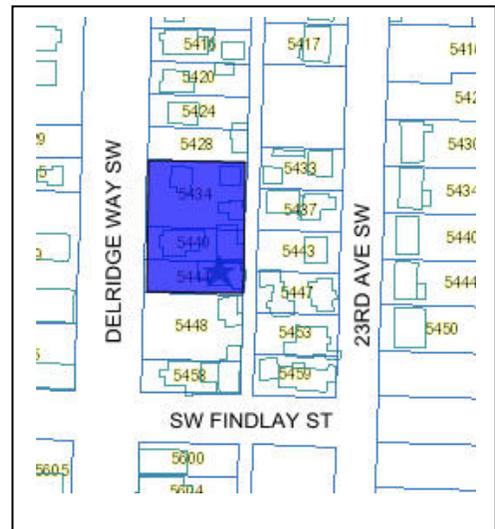
DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC2-40'

Nearby Zones: (North) NC2-40'
(South) NC2-40'
(East) SF 5000
(West) NC2-40'

Lot Area: The site is rectangular in shape, generally flat, and totals 19,200 square feet in size.



Current Development: The site has been previously developed with several smaller buildings.

Access: Current access is from both Delridge Way SW and from the alley a half a block east of Delridge Way SW.

Surrounding Development: The site is zoned NC2-40' and is identified in the Delridge Neighborhood Plan as the "central node" of the Delridge Way spine, a place for smaller commercial and mixed-use commercial and residential development. The NC2-40' zoning extends for one-half block on either side of Delridge Way SW. Directly to the east and west of this spine the zoning is Single Family, with a smattering of LR1 zoning to the north and south of the site. The City of Seattle Delridge Branch Public Library lies just north and west of the site, across Delridge Way SW.

ECAs: There are no identified environmentally critical areas on or abutting the site. There are several large trees located on the southern portion of the site. One of these trees, a deodar cedar, has been identified as a City of Seattle "Exceptional" tree and is slated for preservation on the site.

Neighborhood Character: The immediate area has been characterized by small, single-story commercial buildings interspersed with single-family and multifamily residential development. More recent development has been focused on mixed-use development with street-level retail commercial and office uses topped by two-to-three stories of residential units above. The relatively recent development of the local branch public library was designed with the library underpinning multifamily residential units above. While the Delridge spine is marked by a large office building at the northern node and a large box store (Home Depot) at the southern node, recent development along Delridge Way SW within the central node has been premised on mixed-use development of a smaller scale and a finer grain.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a four-story mixed-use, primarily residential, building containing approximately 75 apartments above a ground floor containing approximately 2,500 square feet of commercial use. There will be space provided for parking approximately 13 vehicles within the structure.

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| EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: December 8, 2011 |
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DESIGN PRESENTATION

Members of the design team made the presentation to the Board and the approximately 20 members of the public attending the meeting. In the course of explaining opportunities offered and constraints of the site and the general objectives of the intended program, the team identified individual design guidelines from the Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Development Guidelines which they judged to be of special importance for the proposal, namely A-1, A-2, A-3, A-6, B-1, C-1, C-2, D-1, D-8, E-1 and E-2.

Three different massing schemes were presented by the applicant. Because the intention was to save the existing cedar tree, however, each of the three schemes was a variation of an L-shaped design, where a portion of the building along the alley, considerably set back from the street, extended southwards behind the protected root zone of the deodar cedar, creating a courtyard at the southwest portion of the site with the tree as its center. In the preferred scheme, lantern-like, illuminated portions of the proposed structure anchored the courtyard surrounding the protected cedar tree, creating a strong “Lanterns in the Park” motif that characterized the direction that the design development might take.

PUBLIC COMMENT

After asking some clarifying questions of the applicant, the Board elicited comments from members of the public (nineteen signed in to become parties of record) attending the Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Requests to keep the structure at thirty feet or three stories (zoning would allow forty feet) so nearby neighbors could retain much of their existing views of the Delridge valley;
- Should neighbors have to exchange their longer views for views of walls, the walls should provide some interest in terms of design or plantings;
- Requests that the design take into account the privacy of neighbors, especially of those living on the other side of the alley;
- Requests to mitigate for shadows that would reduce the sunlight available to neighbors;
- The existing condition of the alley evoked several observations and requests, including: the developer should pave the entire alley behind the building; the new structure should accommodate deliveries and any need for emergency vehicles from Delridge Way and not the alley;
- The building should have a “green roof” and the overall building/landscape design should provide for a rain garden on site;
- Safety, especially along the alley, was of paramount importance and a concern offered by several members of the public; comments ranged from the statement of general concern to specific suggestions, including the quantity of lighting and the installation of cameras. A recurring concern was the problematic nature of open parking at the alley level.
- Specific comments did not enjoy the support of all the members of the public who spoke up. One member of the public suggested that the design should look to the library and nearby newer townhouses that had incorporated significant modulation into the facades and peaked roofs at the skyline. Another urged that the design team should not be

constrained by such considerations but be given latitude for a modern and potentially more pleasing design.

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 of highest priority for this project.

A. Site Planning

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

The Board acknowledged that circumstances, including the need to protect the cedar, made for a constrained and challenging site condition. Nonetheless, the applicant was urged to move the entry closer to Delridge as part of extending the residential common area to embrace and provide “eyes on the street.” Noting that the actual residential entry did not need to face directly onto Delridge, the Board suggested a design that would clearly embrace, integrate, and announce a courtyard-facing main entry.

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

In addition to providing commercial/retail space that would invigorate the activity on the sidewalk along Delridge Way SW, the board would like the applicant to locate some of the residential common space at the street to provide “eyes on the street” and make a better linkage to the residential character of the building.

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 Board strongly indicated that they would like to see the massing of the building extended towards the south property line while providing a greater buffer for the properties across the alley on the east (similar to Scheme “B”). The Board indicated their

willingness to grant a departure from SMC 23.47A.005 (Street-level uses) in order to accomplish this.

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 members were generally agreed that the best scheme would be one that extended the rear portion of the structure close to the south property line while providing a setback along the alley adequate to provide a buffer for residences across the alley to the east.

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 acknowledged that this was a challenging site, both because of the exceptional tree and the zoning transition between the NC2-40' of the site and the SF 5000 at the centerline of the alley.

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 context.

The design of the structure should be guided by the "lantern in the park" parti. The design team was encouraged by the Board to "fully embrace" this concept. In doing this effectively, the final design should incorporate communal uses and spaces into the lantern forms to enhance their effectiveness as perceptible objects.

D. Pedestrian Environment

- 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.

In choosing this Guideline as one of highest priority, the Board expressed concern for the appearance of the parking along the alley as presented in Scheme B and C. The Board thought the underground parking proposed as part of Scheme A was the most viable for the project and encouraged the applicant to locate all the parking in a below grade or at-grade garage with a single entrance off the alley. The Board members were adamantly opposed to covered, open stalls facing the alley. In the Board's view open stalls would be detrimental to safety and provide cover for illegal activities already a problem in the alley. The parking provided should be contained and controlled.

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

(See the comments above under D-5.) The Board also encouraged "eyes on the alley" from windows into staff or common areas and from units facing onto the alley. In addition to providing personal safety and security along the alley, the design of the courtyard and the interface of courtyard and structure provided by the north and east "walls" of the courtyard should ensure a feeling of personal safety and security.

- 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 strongly encouraged the applicant to locate a portion of the residential common area facing directly onto Delridge Way SW. This space could be contiguous with a main residential entry which would face onto the courtyard.

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.

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.

Provide street trees and an enhanced planting strip along Delridge Way SW as appropriate and as integrated with the landscape design of the proposed courtyard and the southwest portion of the site.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departures were discussed:

SMC 23.47A.005, which requires 80 percent of the façade along Delridge Way SW to be in non-residential uses. The Board is willing to recommend a departure in order to provide some accessory residential space on Delridge Way SW and to extend the building mass at the rear of the courtyard toward the south property line.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended that the project should move forward to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.

As noted by the Board Chair in summarizing the Board’s deliberations, “the biggest challenge will be how to address the zoning transition to the east of the property.” That challenge would best be met, the Board agreed, by pushing the building towards the south property line. The Board members noted that providing a wider horizontal setback from the alley, one that could be landscaped, might be as effective as stepping the building down a floor on the alley side.

Additionally, the Board encouraged the following:

- Provide some common residential space at the street frontage;
- Fully embrace the “lanterns in the Park” theme;
- No covered, exposed parking stalls at the alley;
- Work with SDOT to make major improvements to the alley;
- Provide an interesting design and landscaping to mitigate any blank walls along the alley façade;

- In the landscape design consider providing some active spaces for residents, consistent with arborist recommendations around the exceptional tree that will center the courtyard.

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