



# City of Seattle

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



## FINAL RECOMMENDATION 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, March 08, 2012

Board Members Present: Brandon Nicholson  
Myer Harrell  
Robin Murphy (Chair)  
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 structure containing 66 residential units with associated residential common areas and 2,466 sq.ft. of retail space At ground level. Parking for 13 vehicles will be provided below grade and one space at grade within the structure. Existing structures will be demolished.

<b>FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: March 8, 2012</b>
--

## **DESIGN PRESENTATION**

Members of the design team made the presentation to the Board and the members of the public attending the meeting, focusing particularly on those elements of the design that had been developed in response to the guidelines identified by the Board and the guidance conveyed relative to those guidelines at the Early Design Guidance meeting.

At the Early Design Guidance meeting, three different massing schemes had been presented by the applicant, each 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 exceptional tree, intended to be saved, as its center. In the preferred scheme, illuminated portions of the proposed structure, described as “lantern-like,” anchored the courtyard surrounding the protected cedar tree, creating a strong “Lanterns in the Park” motif that characterized the direction that the design development preferred by the Board as well, had taken.

Scott Starr of SMR Architects explained that the design development had responded to four major concerns. First, the bulk of the structure, as perceived from the single-family area east of the alley, had been minimized to provide a better transition from the single-family zone by being set back slightly more than eleven feet from the alley and by being reduced to 3 stories in height at that point. Second, the residential entry had been given greater transparency to and from Delridge Way and the approach to the residential entry marked by a canopy running from the sidewalk to the doorway along the north edge of the courtyard. Third, the impact of the parking structure had been minimized and windows from the common space within the building looked onto the alley. Fourth, a five-foot fence would enclose the courtyard, imparting greater definition to it and addressing security issues that might be associated with it. Demian Minjarez, also of SMR, then further described the transparent structure base along the north and east edges of the courtyard, a vestige of the “lantern” theme introduced at the Early Design Guidance meeting, gave more details regarding the transitional step in the building at the alley, the entry sequence and the various materials that were proposed for various portions of the structure. Finally, details were offered regarding landscaping features proposed, primarily those elements proposed to complement the tree to be saved at the center of the courtyard.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Following a few clarifying questions directed to the architects by the Board, the Chair opened the meeting to public comment. Comments included the following:

- Neighborhood planning called for this to be a commercial, community-serving node along Delridge Way SW, and questioned whether parking would be sufficient or functional enough for vital commercial development; urged that this be the best building possible for the site; questioned whether building, as designed, would provide adequate “eyes on the street”; did not want to see chain-link fence utilized.
- Questioned whether building was best design for safety and security concerns; objected to un-enclosed surface parking space off the alley and potential for unwanted activities

transpiring there; wanted to see higher plantings along the alley; wanted to see more details of a lighting strategy.

- Also asked for more screening along the alley; concerned with safety and security issues and how the design was meeting them; thought the building “more Lake Union than Delridge”; wanted bike racks on Delridge; more variety could occur in the Delridge façade; building needs more detail at the pedestrian scale; rooftop garden would be appropriate; complained that the “lantern” concept had totally disappeared.
- Break up the elevations with balconies; expand courtyard to the alley; it will be a fifty year building, “make sure it does not suck.”
- Comments regarding the proposed colors were opposite one another and of doubtful usefulness for determining a desired direction.

### **BOARD DELIBERATIONS**

The Board’s deliberations began with the observation that between the EDG meeting and the evening’s presentation, there had been something of a loss in the clarity of concept that the design conveyed. That loss of clarity, of the “lanterns in the park” motif celebrated at the Early Design Guidance meeting, it was suggested, resulted in the lack of overall architectural consistency the Board experienced. Additionally, there were other concerns, some of them raised in the public comment portion of the meeting, that the Board felt needed further resolution. Paramount among these were the following:

- The alley-facing (east) façade appeared flat and somewhat listless;
- The tripartite scheme of the Delridge Way SW-facing façade seemed too busy and needed simplification;
- More detailing was needed to provide a sense of transition between the ground floor brickwork and soffit along the west façade; entries along this façade needed a more refined treatment, including a deeper recess; (what provisions had been made for signage?)
- The alley needed more greening, specifically more vertical landscaping;
- The courtyard needed a well-designed fence, providing aesthetic value as well as a sense of security and actual safety;
- The loading space at the southeast corner of the structure off the alley needed to be safe and secure, designed to dissuade nuisance behavior as well as to be functional;
- If there were to be no strong vertical element imparted to the lantern motif, along the ground plane, horizontal lantern elements needed to pop, with lighting from the interior and perhaps with some over-lighting from the overhead soffit/canopy.

In response to the Chair’s request to provide the applicants with a concrete and specific list of areas to address in order to refine a project that had many good things going right for it, the Board fastened upon the following items, with the directive that the design team work with the Land Use Planner and DPD to provide alterations that would satisfy the Board’s concerns within the parameters of their guidance from the meeting.

1. Make changes to transform the plain alley façade. These should address the need to provide some tactile relief to the concrete base, provide for additional vertical landscape elements, increase the vitality of the windows and skin facing the alley.
2. Address the design of the loading space at the southeast corner of building off the alley, in order to provide a secure area that would not invite nuisance activities.
3. Provide a fence that is both attractive and secure at the perimeter of the courtyard.
4. Provide details that will enhance the pedestrian experience along the west façade, allow for clear, recessed entries with protection from the elements, and adequate and attractive commercial signage.
5. Design a single treatment of the upper west façade (Delridge) that would provide a continuous expression from above the ground floor to the roof line.
6. Provide integral illumination at the ground level of those facades facing the courtyard, soffits, canopies, etc., that would result in an unmistakably perceptible and convincing conveyance of a “lanterns in the garden” motif.

Responses to the above conditions, once approved by DPD, would be incorporated into the Master Use Permit sets of plans prior to issuance of a Land Use permit. With these conditions, the Board unanimously recommended approval of the project as proposed at the Recommendation meeting, with those alterations to be made and approved by DPD in response to the conditions noted above.

#### **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

SMC 23.47A.005 requires 80 percent of the façade along Delridge Way SW to be in non-residential uses. The Board unanimously recommended granting a departure from this requirement in order to provide some accessory residential space along Delridge Way SW and to provide eyes on the street from the ground floor accessory residential space.

H:\dorcym/docs/3012511 Recomm..docx