



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012694

Address: 3635 Woodland Park Avenue North

Applicant: Steve Yoon

Date of Meeting: Monday, January 23, 2012

Board Members Present: Joseph Hurley
Peter Krech
Christina Pizana
Martine Zettle

Board Members Absent: Salone Habibuddin

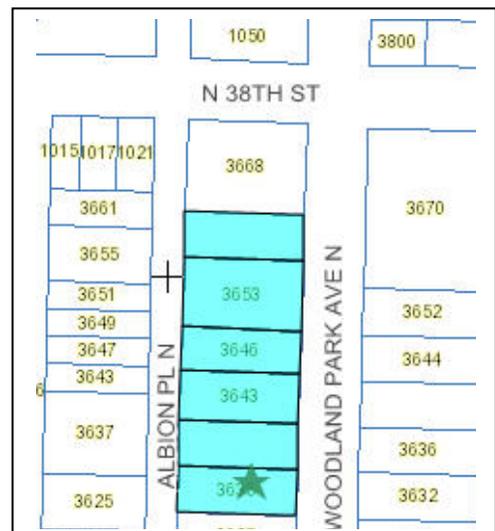
DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial One with a 40 foot height limit (C1 40).

Nearby Zones:

- North: C1 40 extends north to Bridge Way North.
- South: C1 40 continues to the Burke Gilman Trail. An Industrial Commercial zone with a 45' height limit occupies an area between N.36 St and the Burke Gilman Trail on the east side of Woodland Park Ave.
- East: C1 40 and then C2 40 fronting Stone Way North.
- West: Multifamily Lowrise Three (LR 3) west of Albion Place North.



Lot Area: The development site totals 42,380 sq. ft. consisting of six parcels. The site descends from the northwest corner to the southeast corner by approximately 22 feet.

Current Development: The site includes surface parking, an industrial facility, an apartment building, an office building with parking and a single family residence.

Access: Woodland Park Ave. N. and Albion Pl. N.

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: The farrago of building styles and uses that characterize this neighborhood provides one of its most interesting qualities. The narrow avenues also lend an intimacy to this portion of Fremont. Woodland Park Ave N. possesses a mix of commercial structures, both office and industrial, smaller brick apartment buildings and older single family houses. An interesting office building (1960) with a folded plate roof and a concrete screen anchors the southeast corner of Woodland Park and N. 38th St. An apartment building on the southern portion of the west side of Woodland Park has recently been completed. An applicant has recently applied for a MUP (3013012) with 60 rooms within four attached congregate residences and no parking. Another project with 51 units on the east side of Woodland Park near N. 36th St. is currently under construction.

Along Albion Pl., apartment buildings, newer townhouses and a contemporary single family residence line the west side of this unimproved street. The ages of the buildings in the neighborhood range from the early 20th century to a recently constructed 17 unit apartment building two parcels south of the site. The topography ascends east to west. The buildings on the west side of Albion sit higher on the slope than the buildings to the east. The area lies within close proximity to the Stone Way N. commercial corridor and the center of the Fremont neighborhood.

ECAs: The site has no mapped Environmentally Critical Areas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to design and build a four-story structure containing approximately 160 residential units, six to seven live/work units, and 130 parking spaces in a below grade garage.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant provided three unembellished massing concepts. Commonalities included introducing six to seven live/work units (to capture the higher floor area ratio) at the base, a single garage entrance off Woodland Park Ave. N, residential units at grade and on three floors

above grade. Each scheme steps the mass along the descending slope. Scheme A carves a linear courtyard into the center of the building mass the length of the development site creating two long rectilinear bars flanking the open space. On the Woodland Park Ave side, the volume contains units extended along a double loaded corridor---one side facing the courtyard and the other the street. This scheme steps down once at the mid-point of the long axis. The floors of each of the live/work units and the flanking apartment units appear to meet the grade along Woodland Park Ave. The narrower volume facing Albion Place is single loaded. On this side of the complex, the units closest to grade floor do not appear to always meet grade.

Concept B shifts the live/work units to Albion Place and carves three deep courtyards fronting Woodland Park which steps up from grade as they approach the center of the site. These establish four wings extending from the central longitudinal axis and provide light into these clusters of units. On the Albion side, the massing has slight vertical setbacks or insets (housing balconies?) for the entire length of the development site. Similar to Concept A, the building steps down near the site's mid-point. The final concept diagram places the open space in the form of two courtyards on the Albion Pl. side. At the residential levels, three, four-story wings extend from the larger north/south rectangular mass that houses units along a double loaded corridor. Above the live/work units facing Woodland Park, the architect implies a series of linear terraces or balconies that steadily step up the grade as the mass approaches the north. These sliding bars (at least in mass) emphasize the horizontality or linearity of the site. The step in the building mass for this scenario occurs once as well.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 29 people affixed their names to the Early Design Review meeting sign-in sheet. They raised the following issues:

Height, Bulk and Scale

- The proposed height of the building fronting on Albion Pl. is too high.
- The proposal should respond to the change in zoning across Albion Pl.
- The overall massing is excessive. Scale down the size of the building.
- The scale is out of proportion.
- View blockage is a concern. (Comment repeated.)
- Due to the change from one zone to a much less intensive zone across Albion Pl, the building should have reduced height and mass on Albion.
- Reduce the building mass.
- The project is far larger than anything else previously built or proposed. It is way out of scale.

Traffic/Parking

- Traffic and parking is already maxed out in the area. (Comment repeated several times.)
- The proposal does not provide enough parking.
- With one garage exit, 130 vehicles will be shining their lights on the neighbors across the street.

- The single garage will generate safety issues for pedestrians. There are many pedestrians in the neighborhood.
- Adequate on-street parking is a huge problem on Woodland Park Ave.
- Woodland serves as a thoroughfare with speeding cars and unsafe conditions.
- Characterizing the neighborhood as having access to good transit is false. The bus stops are crowded.
- The one garage produces a less safe pedestrian environment than if there were two garage entrances.

Neighborhood Quality

- Both Albion and Woodland Park are quaint, pleasant streets.
- The quality of the streetscape relates to old style Fremont.
- Woodland Park Ave. once served as a trolley line.
- Significant buildings are located on the east side of Woodland Park.
- The project will create a canyon on Albion Pl.

Noise

- With the addition of two other new projects, there will be a total of 300 new units in the neighborhood. The noise will be disruptive to a presently quiet neighborhood.
- Limit the use of the roof in order to prevent noise and height (no need for building parapets).

Landscaping

- Intensively planted street trees are encouraged.

Miscellaneous

- Ensure that the dumpsters remain hidden from the streets.

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.

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.

Future design concepts and any refinement of the previous ones should place greater emphasis on expressing the sloping terrain in built form. This will also assist in dividing the large mass into more discrete units.

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

The intimacy of the narrow streets should be reflected in the scale of the building particularly at street level. At the next EDG meeting, an overall concept plan for will need to illustrate streetscape improvements.

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

See Board guidance for C-3, D-1, and D-12.

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

The Board noted this guideline as an important consideration.

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.

Commercial uses lie to the north and south respectively of the project site. Discussion of height, bulk and scale by the Board applied to the proposal's relationship to the residential buildings across Albion Place and Woodland Park Ave.

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.

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

Development of the courtyard concepts (particularly, Options B and C) would begin to comply with this guideline.

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.

Recognizing the public's skepticism about a single garage access, the Board requested a valid argument and analysis for preferring one access point as opposed to two.

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.

All three massing concepts yielded a scale much larger in appearance than anything in the neighborhood. Without much of the neighborhood context placed in the schematic

presentations, the masses appeared overwhelming. The Board expressed some level of comfort with the strategy of locating two larger courts facing Albion Pl. as shown in Concept B. To provide a sense of human scale, the next iteration should indicate, according to the Board's directive, unit entrances and stoops along Albion Place and within the courtyards. This will better connect the project with the streetscape and begin to assume a greater sensitivity to human scale and activity.

The ideas diagrammed for Concept C's Woodland Park side appeared inchoate and less satisfactory to the Board. The extruded trays or shelves along the front emphasized the site's horizontality and its massiveness. The Albion side with its repetition of open spaces and division of building mass had more appeal. The Board requested an alternative concept "D" inspired by the more compelling elements of concepts B and C. The mass should begin to step back, perhaps, at the upper levels from Albion Pl. and begin to form discreet volumes which create a series of steps as the topography descends.

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.

Discounting Concept A as unrealistic, the Board conveyed that some elements of the other concept diagrams bore strong architectural ideas (the courtyards) but that other ideas appeared less successful, warranting rethinking of the approach. This appeared especially true of Concept C's Woodland Park massing. A new alternative would either knit together some of the more positive notions or formulate a new parti.

It is important to convey how the proposal relates to its context. The Board members conveyed their doubts as to whether the project team understood the neighborhood.

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

The nature of the diagrammatic modeling (generally condoned by DPD), as illustrated in the design packet, lacks a sensitivity to human scale. The designers should convey their cognizance of the human scale in the next iteration. The units facing the courts and the streets on Albion Pl. ought to enliven the streetscape. Doors, stoops, windows and decks would communicate an interest in the larger community that surrounds the development. Later in design development the details of these elements and others (e.g. stairs, gates, finishes and landscaping) will convey how well the proposal wishes to embrace its neighborhood.

- 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 quality of the finish materials will become more important as the design evolves. How these materials are detailed should reflect a strong architectural concept.

- 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.**

At the next EDG meeting, the architect will need to provide a study illustrating the garage's relationship to and its impact upon the neighboring residential buildings.

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 series of courtyards embody a strong urban design concept that would be enriched by the placement of unit entrances and well designed landscaping to reinforce the building's relationship to the life of the surrounding community.

- 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.**

The concept diagrams suggest a large garage opening and the potentiality of blank walls flanking it. A successful approach to minimizing the scale of the garage and its impacts will be an important consideration during the next reviews.

- 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.**

Given the potential size of the service area(s), the location and operation are important considerations. At the next presentation, conveyance of this architect's approach to this aspect of the program will need to be displayed.

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

As the design evolves, the architects should consider exterior lighting and security for the open spaces next to the streets and at the residential entries. A concept landscape plan will convey the designer's cognizance of this important element.

- 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.**

In plan and in three dimensional diagram, the live/work units appear as just more dwelling units within the larger residential complex. The next iteration should communicate a larger idea for the commercial uses. As the Board suggested, the programming of live/work units supplies the development with an increased floor area ratio. This acts to expand the bulk and mass of the structure, which as the Board noted, already appears quite extensive.

- 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 discussed whether the building's identity rests on programming a single, formal residential entry or the possibility of creating a series of entries. Utilizing the latter strategy would begin to reduce the scale of the proposal by complementing the idea of producing discrete massing elements within a larger complex. The entries, the design of the walkways and the landscaping would help establish a human scale.

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.**

As design development occurs, the Board will review the landscape concept. At the next EDG meeting, a concept landscape plan will need to be presented.

- 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.**

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.

BOARD DIRECTION

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

In addition to providing the usual drawings, the applicant will need to produce sections across the site showing the relationship of the proposal with the streetscape and the buildings across Albion Pl. N. and Woodland Ave N.

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