



# City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012712

Address: 4741 11th Ave NE

Applicant: Gordon Fleener Architects - GF

Date of Meeting: Monday, January 09, 2012

Board Members Present: Peter Krech (Chair) – PK  
Joe Hurley – JH  
Salome Habibuddin – SH  
Christina Paizana – CP

Board Members Absent: Martine Zettle

DPD Staff Present: Colin Vasquez, Senior Planner - CV

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC3-65

Nearby Zones: (North) LR-1, LR-3, LR-3  
(South) MR, NC3-85  
(East) NC3-65  
(West) LR-2

Lot Area: 55,430 square feet



Current Development: On project site property: New car showroom & on-grade parking for car service write-up customers; surface lots for new & used car display; parking for cars before & after servicing; 12-hoist car service building; single car wash machine; loading bay; dumpster area.

Access: Alley access from NE 50th St and NE 47th St; site access from 11th Ave NE.

Surrounding Development: Adjacent property west of alley (under same ownership): Surface lot for new & used car display; car showroom, car service building; parking for cars before & after servicing.  
 Adjacent property west of alley (under other ownership): Vacated building formerly housing Tubs.  
 Along 11th Ave NE east of project site: Three 5-story mixed-use apartment buildings, one 2-story apartment building, & 3 residences.  
 Along NE 50th St north of project site & divided by alley: Fire Station No. 17 & 1-story retail building.  
 Along NE 47th St south of project site & divided by alley: University Mazda car service building (no relation to University VW or University Audi) & parking lot used by University Audi for car storage.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: Mixed collection of building types (concrete, wood frame, structural steel), uses (offices, residences, retail, public service), & styles (International, Art Deco, Spanish Colonial, Bungalow, & “nondescript”).

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes to build a 50 foot, 3-story structure — for the service, storage and display of 300 new vehicles — to meet their current and future needs, while accommodating all the exiting uses currently on site. The proposal will be sited on the northern 470 linear feet of the site. This will require approximately 86,000 square feet and a ramp of approximately 6,300 square feet. In addition, a car display area is proposed at ground level for approximately 60 cars, requiring about 18,000 square feet. Also at ground level, a service area is proposed for 30 car hoists, tool storage, a locker room, etc. and associated parking for cars being serviced. This will require approximately 21,000 square feet. Accessory spaces will be provided for a car washing machine, facilities for recycling, trash compaction and trash pick-up. The entire facility will be approximately 130,000 square feet. The eastern portion of the roof will be a flat, green roof; the western portion will be sloped & will drain onto the green roof. Extensive landscaping will be installed along the 11th Ave NE and NE 50th St sides, in addition to required street trees & accompanying plantings.

## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Three alternative design schemes were presented. Similarities among all three options included building mass & footprint, identical storefront windows along NE 50th St and 11th Ave NE and a green roof. The alternative designs involved the street side facades of Levels 2 & 3.

The first scheme (Option A) showed a flat facade with punched windows similar to older apartment buildings.

The second scheme (Option B – the preferred option) showed a facade modulated by angled bay windows into which car fronts would extend.

The third scheme (Option C) showed a flat curtain wall facade similar to office buildings.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately 3 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Only one of three public attendees spoke. He noted he was familiar with this architect's work & that the building would be of high design quality & detailing.
- Stated that he & his wife often walked along 11th Ave NE and this building would be an asset to the neighborhood, citing better lighting & security cameras (presumably) would improve security. Was pleased with proposed building height (3 stories), appearance, & green roof.

## **BOARD CLARIFYING QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, prior to discussion of specific Priorities & Board Recommendation, the Board made the following general comments, not designated as addressing any particular guidance issues (see Board Members Present, above, for initials):

JH: Setback from the streets (NE 50<sup>th</sup> St and 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE) – questioned the 5' & 3' dedicated setbacks. The architect (GF): The 5' alley width increase is a dedication, but the 3' addition along 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and NE 50<sup>th</sup> St. is a setback.

SH: Four-story vs. three story building height – GF: Proposed building would have three stories.

CP: Asked about research into other garages in the U-District. GF: They are open sided, & often not roofed. Proposed building is not a parking garage, will be glass enclosed for a portion of the perimeter, certainly along 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and NE 50<sup>th</sup> St., and will have a roof.

CP: Questioned route cars would take for servicing. GF: Would remain the same – from NE 47<sup>th</sup> St into service write-up area @ existing show room. Valets would drive cars to service area of new building along alley. Cars leaving after service would exit from alley to either 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE or NE 50<sup>th</sup> St.

PK: Asked about need for mechanical ventilation – GF: If enclosed, the display & storage areas must be mechanically ventilated.

- PK: Asked about function of SW corner (near ramp). GF: Design shown has been changed; ramp will probably be open. Customers will enter the on-grade showroom portion of new building near that corner.
- PK: Asked how 10' grade change would be handled. GF: Roughly put, auto display part of building slopes N to S to follow sidewalk; service portion is also sloped, but toward 11<sup>th</sup>.
- SH: Is there a design relationship between existing Audi showroom & proposed new building?  
GF: Not really, but this is a "work in progress". SH: Prefers new building be stand alone.
- PK: Asked about design departure to create bay windows. All board members encouraged this be granted & that GF pursue widening the bays to accommodate 2 cars, noting this would create a more dynamic, less busy façade.

## 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.**

See A-3 below.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted this as important & should be addressed, no specific comments were provided.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that cars enter/exit the site from the alley. Although the access points from NE 47<sup>th</sup> St and 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE are clearly identifiable, pedestrians seldom access the site from 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board did not note this as a high priority, but asked that the applicant consider how the building meets the street with respect to scale, how it address its impact on human activity, and how vehicles and people will interact.

**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that vehicle entrances/exits to the site are from the alley.

**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 commented that the corner should be a strong element and was a design opportunity. If the right materials for the north & east facades are chosen, the corner will take care of itself. The materials could be different, depending on the final design. Perhaps the materials should be different because of the need to make the corner important.

**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted this guideline as important. One Board member noted that the early design proposed alternates barely meet the 3-scheme notion, but the typology of the building (needing to house many cars with adequate circulation space) limits the options and did not suggest designing more schemes. That Board member also noted the building is “huge” & seems to show Bauhaus factory precedents, this being a good characteristic, and suggested this as an architectural direction.

Others Board members noted the building should make a bold statement with its size, the almost industrial “muscle” of it, and with the ramp. It was suggested that the parapet be “pushed” out to further enhance the structures scale.

A majority of the Board members agreed with the Bauhaus comment and liked the bold scale of the ramp.

Two of the Board members suggested that the applicant explore combining the bays widths to improve the modulation/scale of the building.

## 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, this guideline generated the most comments. Comments included two very different ideas: 1. On the facade, visually distinguishing the car display from the car service portions of the building. 2. Maintaining visual consistency across the façade. This view seemed to prevail, as did emphasizing the early Bauhaus (industrial building) precedent.

One Board member liked making the ramp visible, as did the others, noting the opportunity for a strong design statement. That Board member noted the feeling of bigness was appropriate to the use. "...it was one move away from "great." Attention needs to be paid to the west façade – it will be visible from above the roofs of the nearby buildings. A Board member asked if the bays are needed. The applicant replied: Yes, to make more aisle width for moving cars in & out of their stalls feasible. Another Board member then noted the façade should have its own language – opportunity to speak "muscle". This area allows for iconic expression – to be its own thing.

DPD staff asked for ramp comments. One Board member asked about the challenge of holding the street edge w/ the open ramp. If unenclosed, wants it to be really visible. The applicant replied: Enclosure at base has been removed in further design refinements. Others want the ramp to be open.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, One Board member commented on the large scale of the storefront windows.

- 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.**

- 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 Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted their interest in having the ramp very visible as opposed to being minimized.

## **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.

**D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks.** Parking lots near sidewalks should provide adequate security and lighting, avoid encroachment of vehicles onto the sidewalk, and minimize the visual clutter of parking lot signs and equipment.

**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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board said D-5 is important, but made no further comments, other than what has been noted in C-2, C-4, C-4, & C-5.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board this might be addressed by site lighting.

**D-8 Treatment of Alleys.** The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board referenced taking into consideration the view from properties to the west when designing the west façade – see C-2, above.

**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.

**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.

**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 made no comments, possibly because the transparency of the facades at all levels is clear in the three design alternatives.

## **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.**
- 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 briefly discussed the required street trees and landscaping in the new 5' wide setback area, the new 5' wide sidewalk, and the proposed additional 30" wide area of landscaping, hardscape (planters, etc.) or other elements at the building edge along 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and NE 50<sup>th</sup> St designed to enhance the pedestrian experience, but cautioned that given the "racetrack" nature of NE 50<sup>th</sup> St, enhancing the pedestrian experience is a challenge.

### **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. Structural Building Overhang (23.53.035):** The Code requires some substantial portion of the proposed bays be parallel to the face of the building. The applicant proposes angling the bays 30-60 degrees from the face of the building.

The Board indicated they were in favor of allowing this departure and asked the applicant to look at increasing width of the bays to vertically/horizontally modulate the eastern façade of the structure.

### **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.**