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## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE PRIORITIES NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

DPD Project number: 3012943

Date/location of meeting: March 12, 2012 – Sunset Hill Community Center

Project Address: 6401 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW

Applicant: Megan McKay of Johnston Architects - Bill Parks (Ballard Lofts, LLC)

Board members present: Bo Zhang

David Neiman

Jean Morgan

Mike DeLilla

Ted Panton (Board Chair)

Board members absent: Jerry Coburn

DPD Land Use Planner: Lucas de Herrera

Design Guidelines: [Design Review Guidelines](#) (linked electronically)

EDG Proposal (pdf): <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/AppDocs/GroupMeetings/DRProposal3012943AgendaID3513.pdf>

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### **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL:**

The development site, located in NW Ballard, is zoned Neighborhood Commercial 1 (NC1-30) with a 30-foot height limit. The site locates at the NW corner of NW 64<sup>th</sup> St and 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW. Current development on the site is a two-story mixed-used structure containing the Sunset Hill Green Market and second story apartments above. The applicant proposes a new or partially retained 3-4 story mixed-use structure containing 15-18 residential units and up to 5,475 sq. ft. of commercial space with parking for 13-18 vehicles to be provided at and below grade.

## **SITE & VICINITY**

Street frontage along 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW is 134' and 60' along NW 64 St. The site is a corner lot and abuts a 16' paved alley to the north. Zoning designation for the site is NC1-30, which spans approximately 3 blocks north and south along 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW. This node of NC1-30 zoning is surrounded by Single Family zoning for several blocks in all directions. Two blocks east is the closest zone change to Lowrise (LR1), Multifamily Zoning.



Development in the NC zoned areas consists of older small scale commercial and mixed development scales (1 – 2

stories) and some three story apartment buildings. Single family homes surround the NC zoned node. The Sunset Hill Community Center is located two blocks northeast and the Nordic Heritage Museum is located four blocks north from the site.

## **ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION**

The architect presented the site context summarizing the zoning, surrounding development and also the overall project goals for 13 to 18 apartment units and commercial space below (multi-tenant).

Two well attended meetings were held by the developer prior to the City's EDG meeting, where the developer presented the proposal to the community to receive early feedback. Some of the main issues raised at these meetings were amount of parking, vehicle access and the appropriateness of a 4<sup>th</sup> story as part of a Living Building Pilot program the City of Seattle is currently conducting.

Site photos of the street frontages were provided to show the scale and architecture of the neighborhood along with angled overhead aerial photos showing local businesses and structure types. A site survey was provided and site characteristics were summarized: The alley has a slope from east to west with a 10' grade change from the SE corner to the NW corner of the site.

A site section (east/west) was provided to show where a parking garage access would be located from the alley. Alley access would require a long ramp run to access parking due to the alleys higher elevation as opposed to the street grades. A variety of access options were



reviewed during early design by the proponent. The applicant's preferred access to parking is from NW 64<sup>th</sup> St. This design choice was said to be based mostly on concern from the community about alley access. Feedback gathered during the meetings was said to indicate concern about alley congestion in evening and morning as well as hazards in the alley. The architects stated vehicle access from 64th would result in a shorter ramp and provide better access.

Pictures of successful building features in the neighborhood were shown such as Picolino's Restaurant, a recent rehab project across the alley to the north which has nice metal work and vibrant colors at the street. The small scale area and street offer a pleasant walking experience in this small scale commercial node. Their firm wants to keep with the character of the existing neighborhood and encourage walking. Parking is important to the community. Maximizing safety coming in and out of the parking garage is a priority.

Height and bulk are important to neighbors. There is desire by the applicant to use materials of human scale. The building would be pedestrian oriented with good lighting and commercial transparency. They want to incorporate lots of landscaping and possibly use large planters in the right of way.

Three proposed massing/design alternatives for the site were presented to the Board:

#### *Scheme A*

Maintains, as much as possible, the existing two story structure with a third story addition along with a full three floor addition to match, from the north side of the now undeveloped portion of the site. This version would use alley access for parking. The building would have 14 units (adding 8 to the existing 6) with additional parking. All zoning requirements would be met with this scheme, no departures are required for this scheme. Retail spaces would be provided (multi tenant) facing NW 64<sup>th</sup> St and 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW. This option is financially challenging because the existing structure's age and unknown structural system performance. This option would offer the least amount of parking, with the less desirable and less safe alley garage access. Topography slopes north up 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW, it would be difficult to match the floor heights of the existing structure. especially on the north end.

#### *Scheme B*

This scheme would demolish the existing structure and construct an all new three story building. Vehicle access is proposed from of NW 64<sup>th</sup> St, which requires a departure from vehicle access standards, alley access is code compliant. This option offers the most parking in an underground garage. The proposed structure would consist of 18 residential units and 18 parking spaces with 4,000 sq. ft. of retail. The proponent feels that parking off NW 64<sup>th</sup> St is probably safer than the alley. Setback departures are requested to allow the proposed structure in the required 15' setback above 13' from the western property line and Single Family zone. A 5' setback would be provided, except for the vehicle access ramp, from the



ground to the second floor. A 10' of setback is proposed at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Development standards of the Land Use Code require no setback from 0-13' in height and a 15' setback above 13' in height for structures with residential use.

### *Scheme C*

This scheme proposes to develop similar project goals as Schemes A and B in the number of units (18 units) and commercial square footage (4,300 sq. ft.) but to develop the project under the City's Living Building Pilot Project or LBP (more information below). Office use is also an option for this scheme, which would locate above the street level. This option is the most environmentally friendly in terms of building performance and is requesting certain departures available only to projects in the Living Building Pilot (Floor Area Ratio - FAR and Height). The existing building would be demolished and vehicle access is proposed to be from NW 64<sup>th</sup> St (departure). No setback departures are required for this scheme.

An additional 10' of height and 15% FAR increase would be requested as departures under the LBP. Development of a Living Building would increase the construction costs of the building substantially. The structure aims for natural energy use (solar, etc), efficient water usage and storm water usage. A similar project the firm has worked on in Ballard was referenced which uses the techniques. Sun shades and the use of light would be maximized. There is the potential for geo-thermal energy as well. Snapshots were shown of this scheme's potential in energy/water reduction methods along with new urbanism principals in design while incorporating art and landscaping. 50% of the units would have corner windows. There would be rain catchment on the roof and solar hot water heaters.

For more information about the City's Living Building Pilot Program:

<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Permits/GreenPermitting/LivingBuildingPilot/default.asp>

Block and alley section sketches were provided to show how the LBP will appear in context with the Single Family home to the west. The house to the west will sit above where the commercial spaces. The sketches show the scale of the proposed structure against the three story apartment structure south across NW 64<sup>th</sup> St. Block sections were also provided from 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW to provide a scale contrast with the existing structure massing in the vicinity.

Solar studies were furnished and they showed that there is not much difference, in shadowing, between the 3 and 4 story schemes. There would be very little shadow impact on 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW. The Seattle City Light (across the alley to the NW) site important to community so they don't want to block light there and this scheme would not.

### **BOARD CLARIFYING QUESTIONS**

- Details about the proposed setbacks for all schemes and about overall site dimensions, setback departures for Scheme B and structure interaction at the property line were requested, as well as the 5' setback for the entire structure for Scheme B.



*Clarification was provided, a 5' setback is provided from the abutting SF parcel and zone, except for the vehicle access ramp wall which is proposed be located at the property line for approximately 60'*

- Further detail was requested about the FAR departure request for the LBP, how much the increase would be. Questions were asked about the proposed setback departures of Scheme B and nature of the departure.
- Alley transparency was a concern along with safety and if pedestrian access would be provided from the alley. It was noted there were no reports cited at the alley of accidents in police information for this area.
- Keeping the Green Market in this neighborhood is very important.  
*The developer spoke, stating that the plan is to move the market out while construction occurs and move them back in as a tenant upon completion.*
- Questions were raised about loading berth requirements and location.  
*4 or 5 different tenants would be provided in the structure.*  
*Planner comment: None of the spaces would be large enough to require a loading zone on-site.*

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were approximately 20 public attendees at the EDG meeting and they provided comments on the proposed design:

- Support for the LBP (Living Building Pilot) was given and the 4<sup>th</sup> story is not concerning, although his property does not abut the proposal.
- Questions about why a 4<sup>th</sup> story (bigger building) is proposed for the LBP Scheme and what exactly makes a living building. *It was stated that to construct a LB, increases costs are a requirement so extra area and height is used to recover these costs and provide incentive for developers to make an attempt. Reduce water and energy use buildings and change development culture.*
- Alleys in the area are used for walking.
- A Request was made for similar projects, *the applicant directed the commenter to their website.*
- Vehicle access from 64<sup>th</sup> could be dangerous.
- The existing structure has little architectural value.
- There is existing parking provided on site. Saving the grocery store should be a huge priority. Keeping the existing structure is the greenest strategy.
- Too much building, loss of green space at street level is a shame. 18 apartments equals more cars on the street and where will visitors park. Street parking is already saturated.
- Will the units be condos or apartments? *The applicant stated they would be apartments.*



- Parking and traffic are concerns in the area as existing businesses do not have on-site parking.
- Questions about the additional story dimension, *it was stated the additional height would be 10'*.
- A new structure would be preferable from an engineering standpoint. The scale of drawings was questioned as the appearance of Scheme C viewed differently in alternate elevations.
- Further support for Scheme C was given, based on the City's goals for control of storm water runoff and education. Even if Scheme C is not pursued, a green roof should be included.
- Scheme C shows balconies facing the abutting SF property, but not on other options. Three stories of flatness is a lot to look at. People looking into a neighbor's back yard is a bit much. Balconies facing the SF zone should be inset. The Green Market needs to be retained; 24<sup>th</sup> Ave is too far away, but wants to keep it running.
- Parking off of 64<sup>th</sup> makes the most sense for traffic. Tearing down the building doesn't make much sense from a Living Building perspective. The parking issue should be handled through public transit subsidies to the building inhabitants.
- Parking is a large concern in the area.
- Is the LBP possible with a 3-story building? The previous meetings held by the developer yielded concerns for a 4-story building.

## **BOARD DELIBERATIONS**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, the West Design Review Board members provided the siting and design guidance described below. The Board and the Land Use Planner identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's "[Citywide Design Review Guidelines for Commercial and Multifamily Buildings](#)" of highest priority to this project.

Initial discussion revolved around preference of the schemes, of which B and C both showed the most promise. It was unanimous that vehicle access from NW 64<sup>th</sup> St was supported by the Board.

Providing guidance based on Schemes B and C was determined to be the best plan of action as the developer will make the ultimate decision to pursue the LBP and both schemes have many similarities relating to massing and relating to the neighborhood. Questions about contact with the abutting neighbor were posed to the developer. The developer noted that Scheme B was most liked by the neighbor. C provides the most setbacks, while option B appears jagged. Four stories doesn't appear to impact the street sides of the proposal, it's the interaction with the SF zone where wall treatments, modulation and setbacks need to be implemented.



## **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

### **A Site Planning**

#### **A-2 Streetscape Compatibility**

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

Siting of the building should take queues from the surrounding commercial buildings and their interaction with the right of way. The sidewalk condition may make landscaping challenging. Proposing smaller tenant spaces would help to meet this guideline.

Syncopated fenestration expression on the street front is an interesting idea and the sketches have nice appeal.

#### **A-4 Human Activity**

*New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.*

Small tenants will support smaller businesses in keeping with the area, keeping the Green Market is a priority to maintain the existing human activity and ensuring its continuation.

*The Board supports the keeping of the grocery store, although this is out of The Board's authority.*

#### **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 design should use cascading landscaping or green walls. Limit decks facing the single family structures in an appropriate manner to show respect to the adjacent sites.

#### **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*

A design departure to allow access from NW 64<sup>th</sup> St is supported by the Board, but safety is an issue, so the design should make visibility of pedestrians a priority. Design features should enhance the vehicle entrance to create an aesthetically pleasing entrance/exit.

### **B Height, Bulk and Scale**

*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 the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones*



Studies should be provided at the recommendation meeting of the Height Bulk and Scale impacts on the Single Family abutting property for the scheme submitted for the MUP. Use of setbacks, fenestration, color and landscaping should be considered. Mitigating Height Bulk and Scale is one of the highest priorities for the site.

The argument is yet to be made for setback departures on Scheme B, floor plate details need to be provided at the next meeting on why the setback departures are appropriate.

## **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*

Use positive cues from the surrounding development in the building form and function. Play off the color, liveliness and fenestration at the street level, similar to the recently renovated structure to the north (Picolino's).

### **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.*

See A-8 above.

## **D**      **Pedestrian Environment**

### **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*

Location of trash and recycling storage should be out of public view. A plan for the location of the containers during pickup should be provided. Trash/recycling normal and temporary storage locations should avoid pedestrian/vehicle conflict.

### **D-7**      **Personal Safety and Security**

*Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review*

Use of pedestrian scaled lighting and transparency are crucial along the alley. A preliminary lighting plan must be provided at the Recommendation meeting. Safety and visibility including transparency along the alley are important.



## D-8 Treatment of Alleys

*The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.*

As vehicle access may come from NW 64<sup>th</sup> St, the alley should be treated with transparency and a pedestrian access for commercial or the residential uses that can also carry the pedestrian experience from the street around to the alley.

## 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.*

No specific guidance was given, but a conceptual signage plan should be provided at the recommendation meeting.

## 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.*

A Living Building will provide an opportunity to showcase many different landscaping treatments. The Board is excited to see what the Living Building can bring in landscaping elements. The sidewalks/curbs are to remain and with no planter strip and utility conflicts it presents a challenge to maintain walk-ability while softening with landscaping.

Detailed landscape plans must be provided at the recommendation meeting.

## SUMMARY OF REQUESTED DEPARTURES

	Development Standard Requirements	Proposed Design	Board Comments
1.	<p><b>Setbacks:</b></p> <p>15' for portions of structures above 13 feet in height to a maximum of 40'; and for each portion of a structure above 40' in height, additional setback at the rate of 2' of setback for every 10' by which the height of such portion exceeds 40' (<a href="#">Exhibit C</a> for 23.47A.014)</p> <p><b>SMC 23.47A.014-B.3.a</b></p>	<p><b>Scheme A:</b> Compliant</p> <p><b>Scheme B:</b> 5' at 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor 10' at 3<sup>rd</sup> floor</p> <p><b>Scheme C:</b> Compliant</p>	<p>Additional information was requested to entertain this departure. Floor areas and mass should be pushed away from the residential zoning. Focus was on using modulation, landscaping, fenestration and minimizing privacy conflicts all to achieve appropriate bulk, scale and respect for surrounding Single Family zoned properties.</p>



	<b>Development Standard Requirements</b>	<b>Proposed Design</b>	<b>Board Comments</b>
2.	<p><b>Parking Access:</b></p> <p>Alley access required for new structures on sites abutting improved alleys.</p> <p><b>23.47A.032-A.1.a</b></p>	<p><b>Scheme A:</b> Compliant</p> <p><b>Scheme B and C:</b> Vehicle Access From NW 64th St.</p>	<p>The Board is willing to entertain this departure but the treatment of the vehicle access ramp needs to be respectful of the Single Family home it abuts. Use landscaping; fully enclose the structure for noise and odor considerations.</p>
3.	<p><b>Floor to Area Ratio (FAR - Living Building Pilot):</b></p> <p>2.5</p> <p><b>Table A for SMC 23.47A.013</b></p>	<p><b>Scheme A:</b> NA</p> <p><b>Scheme B:</b> NA</p> <p><b>Scheme C:</b> FAR: 2.875 maximum, specific figures proposed not known until MUP level.</p>	<p>The Board is willing to entertain this departure based upon compliance with SMC 23.41.012-D.1.</p>
4.	<p><b>Height (Living Building Pilot)</b></p> <p>30' Base Height</p> <p><b>SMC 23.47A.012</b></p>	<p><b>Scheme A:</b> NA</p> <p><b>Scheme B:</b> NA</p> <p><b>Scheme C:</b> 40' Base Height</p>	<p>The Board is willing to entertain this departure based upon compliance with SMC 23.41.012-D.1.</p>

**NEXT STEPS FOR MUP INTAKE**

The applicant should move forward to prepare the Master Use Permit (MUP) Application using the design guidance above and develop a comprehensive design response. The following items or comments must be included in the MUP submittal (unless otherwise noted) to ensure compliance with this report:



- Provide a written response to each bullet of design guidance above at MUP submittal (see Attachment B of [CAM 238](#)). Please email the electronic version of the narrative design response to each design guideline to the undersigned planner.
- Provide studies with varying treatments along the SF abutting property (west façade) to show the proposed transition to the SF properties.
- Provide color landscape and detailed site plans with dimension details along with floor by floor FAR documentation.
- Provide color elevations and perspective rendering from the southeast corner of the intersection of NW 64<sup>th</sup> St and 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW.
- Provide the proposed material & color palette and a conceptual signage plan.
- Work with the planner to create a recommendation packet that has a design that meets the Board’s priority guidelines and specific design guidance.
- Provide a detailed zoning analysis for proposed departures from the Land Use Code including required and proposed amounts clearly calling out requested development standard departures. Be ready to speak about specific departure mounts and code compliance.
- Include graphics demonstrating the proposed departures compared with a code complying design.

**Note to Applicant**

- Contact the planner once your MUP intake date is set to make sure you have all the requirements needed for MUP Intake including: Additional EDG fees, SEPA checklists (5), parking study (2). An 8.5” x 11” map for large (SEPA) environmental sign approval, four comprehensive (4) MUP plan sets (see guidance above), materials board (only needed to be provided at recommendation meeting, not at intake), owner authorization and financial responsibility forms and responses to the guidance (CAM 238 attachment B).

