



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013264

Address: 4724 California Ave SW

Applicant: Josh MacDonald of Weber Thompson for the Wolff Company

Date of Meeting: Thursday, May 24, 2012

Board Members Present: Robin Murphy (Chair)
Laird Bennion
Daniel Skaggs
Norma Tompkins

Board Members Absent: Myer Harrell

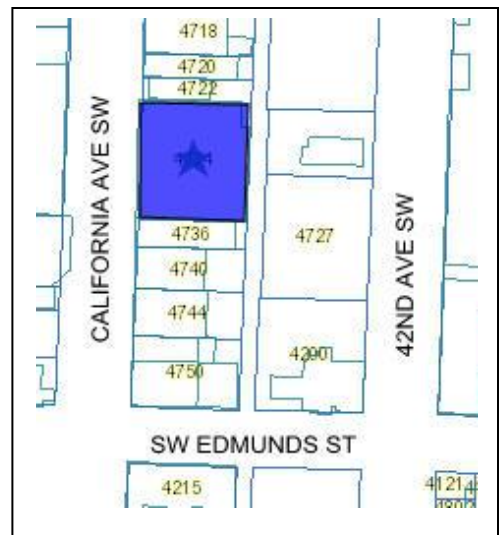
DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial (NC3P-85)

Nearby Zones: (North) NC3P-85
(South) NC3P-85
(East) NC3P-85
(West) NC3P-85

Lot Area: 14,375 square feet



Current Development: One story vacant commercial building.

Access: There is no existing parking at this site. Pedestrian access to the building is from the alley and from California Ave SW.

Surrounding Development: Surrounding development is a mix of one and two story commercial development, multi-story mixed-use, and multi-story residential buildings. A mid-block pedestrian connection is located on the block to the east, across the alley from the site. A similar mid-block connection exists across California Ave SW from the site.

ECAs: None.

Neighborhood Character: The site is located in the West Seattle Junction, an area of intense pedestrian and commercial activity along California Ave SW near the intersection of SW Alaska Street. Existing development in this area of California Ave SW is predominantly 1-2 story commercial development. The neighborhood beyond this section of California Ave SW consists of multi-story mixed-use and residential development, with single family residential further to the south and west.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed development includes a 7-story building with 4,000 square feet of retail area and 19 live-work units at the ground floor and second story, 80 residential units above, and two floors of below-grade parking accessed from the alley. The preferred option includes a mid-block pedestrian connection between California Ave SW and the alley, located on the north side of the site.

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DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The EDG packet includes materials presented at the EDG meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3013264) at this website:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp.

The EDG packet is also available to view in the 3013264 EDG file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Mailing **Public Resource Center**
Address: 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
 P.O. Box 34019
 Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

The applicant noted that the proposal would be built at approximately 75' tall, below the maximum 85' height permitted by zoning.

The proposed mid-block connection would include a high level of glazing at the building face, with open air above and treatments such as catenary lighting to frame the space. A retail/restaurant destination would be located adjacent to the entry to the mid-block connection (similar to The Mural building across the alley). The primary building entry would be located at the mid-block connection, allowing retail for the entire California Ave SW street frontage. The mid-block connection would be designed with visual interest and maximum visual connections into the building.

Murals could be used on the party wall at the south property line, similar to examples in the neighborhood.

The applicant noted that massing scheme C is preferred because it minimizes blank walls and allows the most glazing on the north and south façades, a three story base is created with upper story setbacks in order to minimize the scale at the California Ave SW street wall and south façade, and it includes additional setbacks at the pedestrian connection entry at California Ave SW.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 16 members of the public signed in at this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Mural apartment residents wanted to see more information about the design of the east façade, since the Mural Apartments building is located directly east across the alley from this site.
- Appreciation for the applicant's public outreach efforts and involving nearby residents in the design of this building.
- The upper stories of the building should be designed to minimize the scale and relate the 7-story structure to the 1-2 story structures nearby.
- Would like to see the design go in the 'brave' directions of the West Seattle Triangle combined with the traditional designs of the Junction.
- Concern with adding to the existing alley congestion of delivery trucks, moving trucks, and vehicular traffic, given the narrow alley dimensions.
- Mural Apartments management concerned with blocked views; the design should include setbacks for consideration of some views.

- The design challenge is to blend the existing very low height development with the existing 85' zoning. The direction of this design is good, but more effort is needed.
- The mid-block passage is a good aspect of the proposal and should be maximized. A 15' wide passage would be better, with landscaping.
- Human scaled materials are needed to break up the massing and make the scale relate to people at the street level.
- The design should include high quality materials, such as brick and other traditional durable materials.

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.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE:

1. **Relating proposed development to existing scale:** The existing development is one to two stories tall, and the zoning allows 85' tall structures. The challenge will be to use materials and massing and articulation to relate to the existing development, while keeping in mind that the maximum zoning will likely translate to taller buildings as the context in the near future.
 - a. Modulate the building beyond the current amount of modulation shown in Option C. (A-2, B-1)
 - b. Consider further setting back the 7th floor, increase the setback at the 4th floor, and use other modulation and treatment to let the upper portions of the building recede from the street wall. (A-2, B-1, C-2, C-3)
 - Examine the modulation used in the Connor building, as an example of this guidance.
 - c. A terrace or similar at the fourth level would help to accentuate the division between the three story base and the upper masses. (A-2, B-1)
 - d. The 3-story base should have a durable material with a human scale that relates to nearby context, such as brick. (A-2, C-2, C-3)
 - e. Use materials, massing, and articulation to emphasize the differences between live-work/commercial and residential uses. (A-2, B-1, C-2, C-3)
2. **The alley façade:**
 - a. Clearly show the distance between the proposed building and the residential balconies and windows across the alley. (A-5)
 - b. Include graphics that show how proposed windows and balconies relate to the window and balcony locations across the alley. (A-5)
 - c. The alley facing façade should include high quality visually interesting materials at upper and lower levels. (A-5, C-2, D-2)
 - d. The pedestrian connection should be designed to be welcoming and safe for pedestrians. The connection across the alley to the adjacent mid-block connection should be designed for pedestrian safety. (D-7, D-8, E-2)

3. **Alley vehicular entry and services:** (A-8, D-6)
 - a. At the Recommendation stage of review, the applicant should demonstrate how:
 - The alley entry is designed to provide adequate vehicular turning radii
 - Loading needs such as moving in and out will be accommodated
 - Trash and recycling storage will be accommodated within the building and how these materials will be staged on collection days.
4. **The mid-block connection entry point** provides interesting opportunities for design and can help to activate the passage.
 - a. Use landscaping to define and enhance the mid-block connection. (D-1, D-12, E-2)
 - b. At the Recommendation stage of review, include detailed graphics and renderings demonstrating the design of the mid-block connection. (D-1, D-12, E-2)
5. **Design Concept:**
 - a. The preferred Option C is acceptable, and the mid-block crossing is a critical aspect of this Option. (C-2)
 - b. The development will be very visible due to the lower adjacent building heights. Therefore, a strong over-arching design concept is needed. (C-2)
 - c. Provide information about how a mural on the south façade would relate to the overall design concept. (C-2, C-4)
 - d. The twist at the northwest corner is an acceptable move and complements the Mural pedestrian entry at the northeast corner of that building. (A-2, C-2)
 - e. The street level retail should include maximum transparency, a strong architectural expression at the building base, and high quality human scale materials. (A-2, C-2, C-3, D-11)
 - f. At the Recommendation stage of review, the applicant should demonstrate with diagrams, sections, and other graphics how the live-work units would function at the second story and at the alley. (C-2, D-9, D-10)
 - g. The live-work units should be clearly expressed in the exterior façade treatment. This may be achieved with modulation, articulation, fenestration, signage, and materials. (C-2, D-9, D-10)
 - h. Provide a conceptual signage plan, indicating signage design requirements for tenants and areas on the building designed for future signage opportunities. The plan should indicate the location and design of signage for the building (such as a large graphic building sign indicated in preliminary sketches). (C-2, D-9)

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.

West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:

A pedestrian-oriented streetscape is perhaps the most important characteristic to be achieved in new development in the Junction’s mixed use areas (as previously defined). New development—particularly on SW Alaska, Genesee, Oregon and Edmunds Streets—will set the precedent in establishing desirable siting and design characteristics in the right-of-way.

- 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.
- 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.

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.

West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:

Current zoning in the Junction has created abrupt edges in some areas between intensive, mixed-use development potential and less-intensive, multifamily development potential. In addition, the Code-complying building envelope of NC-65' (and higher) zoning designations permitted within the Commercial Core would result in development that exceeds the scale of existing commercial/mixed-use development. More refined transitions in height, bulk and scale—in terms of relationship to surrounding context and within the proposed structure itself—must be considered.

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.

West Seattle Junction-specific supplemental guidance:

New multi-story developments are encouraged to consider methods to integrate a building's upper and lower levels. This is especially critical in areas zoned NC-65' and greater, where more recent buildings in the Junction lack coherency and exhibit a disconnect between the commercial base and upper residential levels as a result of disparate proportions, features and materials. The base of new mixed-use buildings – especially those zoned 65 ft. in height and higher - should reflect the scale of the overall building. New mixed-use buildings are encouraged to build the commercial

level, as well as one to two levels above, out to the front and side property lines to create a more substantial base.

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

West Seattle Junction-specific supplemental guidance:

- Facades should contain elements that enhance pedestrian comfort and orientation while presenting features with visual interest that invite activity. Overhead weather protection should be functional and appropriately scaled, as defined by the height and depth of the weather protection. It should be viewed as an architectural amenity, and therefore contribute positively to the design of the building with appropriate proportions and character.
- Signage: Signs should add interest to the street level environment. They can unify the overall architectural concept of the building, or provide unique identity for a commercial space within a larger mixed-use structure. Design signage that is appropriate for the scale, character and use of the project and surrounding area. Signs should be oriented and scaled for both pedestrians on sidewalks and vehicles on street.

- 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 **Pedestrian Environment**. The presence of appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

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.

West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:

Design projects to attract pedestrians to the commercial corridors (California, Alaska). Larger sites are encouraged to incorporate pedestrian walkways and open spaces to create breaks in the street wall and encourage movement through the site and to the surrounding area. The Design Review Board would be willing to entertain a request for departures from development standards (e.g. an increase in the 64% upper level lot coverage in NC zones and a reduction in open space) to recover development potential lost at the ground level.

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

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.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, no departures were requested.

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.