



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013364

Address: 4128 Brooklyn Avenue NE

Applicant: Radim Blazej

Date of Meeting: Monday, October 01, 2012

Board Members Present: Salone Habibuddin
Joe Hurley
Peter Krech
Christina Pizana
Martine Zettle

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Midrise Residential--Commercial (MR RC)

Nearby Zones: Midrise zoning continues to the west and south. South of NE 41st St, a major institutional overlay zone begins. To the east of the alley, the zoning changes to Neighborhood Commercial Three with a pedestrian classification and a height limit of 65' (NC3P 65). To the north the NC3 65 zone extends to NE 43rd St.

Lot Area: 12,360 sq. ft.

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Current Development: Three parcels with a duplex, triplex and an apartment building. The site descends approximately 14' from the northeast corner to the southwest toward Brooklyn Ave. The northern most building was the former parsonage for the adjacent church. City records indicate that the parsonage was landmarked along with the church by the city in 1982.

Access: Alley

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character:: The three parcels comprising the proposal lie within the University District Northwest Urban Center Village. The east side of Brooklyn Ave on the block contains single family houses converted to multi-family as well as low rise and mid-rise apartment buildings and the Seattle Vineyard Fellowship Church (City of Seattle landmark 1982) at the corner which also houses restaurants at street level. Blocks to the south and west are predominantly residential. The areas to the north and east contain residential and commercial uses. The University of Washington's campus sits two blocks to the east with the University Way NE commercial corridor in between.

The neighborhood possesses a mix of low and mid-rise apartment buildings, single family houses converted to rentals, mixed use buildings, various commercial uses and institutional uses (educational and religious) spanning early one hundred years. The area has a considerable amount of pedestrian and vehicular movement. The south entrance to the future Brooklyn Ave light rail station will be approximately one block to the north at NE 43rd St.

ECAs: No mapped environmental critical areas (ECA).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a seven story structure with 84 residential units and below grade parking for 26 to 36 vehicles.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented three design options. Commonalities for the three alternatives include access to the below grade garage from the alley and a desire to have an entirely residential building although the City allows commercial use at street level. Option A illustrates a narrow rectangular light well carved into the center of the undifferentiated cubic mass. Access to the open space beneath the light well is accessed directly from Brooklyn Ave. The proposed development maintains roughly equal setbacks from the four property lines. The second option (B) possesses a modified "H" shape plan configuration. It provides modest courtyards facing Brooklyn Ave and the alley. Two wings of the front elevation meet the property line. The other elevations set back from the property lines. Option C illustrates an undifferentiated cubic mass with the exception of a sizeable notch at the southeast corner which provides a resident open

space at the second level above parking. This option varies from the previous two by the placement of surface parking adjacent to the alley and additional parking on the first floor.

The architect presented a modified Option C, which flipped the notch to the northeast corner with the tenant open space overlooking the alley and the church.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately twelve members of the public affixed their names to the Early Design Review meeting sign-in sheet. Speakers raised the following issues:

- The height of the proposed building is insensitive to the surrounding structures. It lies on a zone transition. See University Community Design guidance B-1.
- Using concrete, metal and glazing does not provide any sense of cohesion to the neighborhood. Brick, tile and wood are better matches.
- The church and parsonage are landmarks and should be respected.
- The proposed structure should not emulate the new University of Washington dorms.
- The proposal just doesn't sit well with the church.
- Provide more light into the church sanctuary. (Statement mentioned several times by speakers.)
- The cladding ought to be more like the historic buildings.
- The building is too tall. It will dwarf the Vineyard Fellowship.
- The EDG booklet was made without an understanding that the building serves as a functioning church.
- The picture in the booklet doesn't even adequately show the building's current appearance.
- The proposed structure sits too close to the church. The church needs space.
- How will traffic operate on the alley?

DPD received two letters and emails concerning the proposal. One email identifies the former parsonage adjacent to the church as a city landmark and included photos of the church's stained glass windows. The letter notes the zone edge; the discrepancy in heights with surrounding buildings if the project is built; and the use of brick, stone, tile and wood in neighboring buildings that is encouraged for new projects in the University Community Design Guidelines to achieve a more visually cohesive neighborhood.

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.**

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: The pedestrian-oriented street streetscape is perhaps the most important characteristic to be emphasized in the neighborhood. The University Community identified certain streets as “Mixed Use Corridors”. These are streets where commercial and residential uses and activities interface and create a lively, attractive, and safe pedestrian environment. The Mixed Use Corridors are shown in Map 1. Another important site feature in the University Community is the presence of the Burke Gilman Trail. The primary goal is to minimize impacts to views, sunlight and mixed uses while increasing safety and access along the trail.

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

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: Reinforcing the pedestrian streetscape and protecting public view corridors are particularly important site planning issues. Stepping back upper floors allows more sunlight to reach the street, minimizes impact to views, and maintains the low- to medium rise character of the streetscape. Roof decks providing open space for mixed-use development can be located facing the street so that upper stories are, in effect, set back.

Guideline - Solar Orientation: Minimizing shadow impacts is important in the University neighborhood. The design of a structure and its massing on the site can enhance solar exposure for the project and minimize shadow impacts onto adjacent public areas between March 21st and September 21st. This is especially important on blocks with narrow rights-of-way relative to other neighborhood streets, including University Way, south of NE 50th Street.

The extent of potential glazing shown for the lower portion of the structure at the frontage belied the predominance of intended dwelling units along Brooklyn Ave. As the design develops, this concept of a predominantly glazed base allowing the upper six floors to float visually above it may evolve.

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

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: Another way to emphasize human activity and pedestrian orientation, particularly along Mixed Use Corridors, is to provide clearly identifiable storefront entries. In residential projects, walkways and entries promote visual access and security.

Guidelines:

1. On Mixed Use Corridors, primary business and residential entrances should be oriented to the commercial street.
2. In residential projects, except townhouses, it is generally preferable to have one walkway from the street that can serve several building entrances.
3. When a courtyard is proposed for a residential project, the courtyard should have at least one entry from the street.
4. In residential projects, front yard fences over four (4) feet in height that reduce visual access and security should be avoided.

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

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: Pedestrian orientation and activity should be emphasized in the University Community, particularly along Mixed Use Corridors. While most streets feature narrow sidewalks relative to the volume of pedestrian traffic, wider sidewalks and more small open spaces for sitting, street musicians, bus waiting, and other activities would benefit these areas. Pedestrian-oriented open spaces, such as wider sidewalks and plazas, are encouraged as long as the setback does not detract from the “street wall.”

Guidelines: On Mixed Use Corridors, where narrow sidewalks exist (less than 15’ wide), consider recessing entries to provide small open spaces for sitting, street musicians, bus waiting, or other pedestrian activities. Recessed entries should promote pedestrian movement and avoid blind corners.

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.

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: This Citywide Design Guideline is particularly important where a building’s back side, service areas or parking lots could impact adjacent residential uses. Map 2 (page 8) shows potential impact areas—these are where Lowrise zones abut commercial zones.

Guideline: Special attention should be paid to projects in the zone edge areas as depicted in Map 2 to ensure impacts to Lowrise zones are minimized as described in A-5 of the Citywide Design Guidelines.

The Board requested a new option that does not crowd the church as the alternatives presented at the EDG meeting appear to do. The design of a new massing alternative(s) should allow natural light into the church's south façade windows. Employ massing techniques to accomplish this such as setting back the proposed structure further from the north and west property lines and terracing the building at the upper levels among others. Present shadow studies at the next meeting to illustrate the proposal's impact on the church.

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.

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: There is a severe lack of both public and private open space in the community. Small open spaces—such as gardens, courtyards, or plazas—that are visible or accessible to the public are an important part of the neighborhood's vision. Therefore, providing ground-level open space is an important public objective and will improve the quality of the residential environment.

Guidelines:

- 1. The ground-level open space should be designed as a plaza, courtyard, play area, mini-park, pedestrian open space, garden, or similar occupiable site feature. The quantity of open space is less important than the provision of functional and visual ground-level open space.**
- 2. A central courtyard in cottage or townhouse developments may provide better open space than space for each unit. In these cases, yard setbacks may be reduced if a sensitive transition to neighbors is maintained.**

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.

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: In Lowrise residential developments, single-lane driveways (approximately 12 feet in width) are preferred over wide or multiple driveways where feasible.

Board members questioned whether the grades on the north side of the project would work for the parking garage access. Prepare multiple section studies for presentation at the next EDG meeting.

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.

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: The residential areas are experiencing a change from houses to block-like apartments. Also, the proximity of lower intensive zones to higher intensive zones requires special attention to potential impacts of increased height, bulk and scale. These potential impact areas are shown in Map 4 . The design and siting of buildings is critical to maintaining stability and Lowrise character.

Guideline: Special attention should be paid to projects in the following areas to minimize impacts of increased height, bulk and scale as stated in the Citywide Design Guideline.

The Board encouraged the design strategy of manipulating the structure's scale by grouping the floors within a two-story pier and spandrel pattern to reduce the appearance of height.

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.

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: Buildings in the University Community feature a broad range of building types with an equally broad range of architectural character. Because of the area's variety, no single architectural style or character emerges as a dominant direction for new construction. As an example, the University of Washington campus sets a general direction in architectural style and preference for masonry and cast stone materials, however, new buildings on and off campus incorporate the general massing and materials of this character, rather than replicating it.

Guidelines:

1. Although no single architectural style or character emerges as a dominant direction for new construction in the University Community, project applicants should show how the proposed design incorporates elements of the local architectural character especially when there are buildings of local historical significance or landmark status in the vicinity.
2. On Mixed Use Corridors, consider breaking up the façade into modules of not more than 50 feet (measured horizontally parallel to the street) on University Way and 100 feet on other corridors, corresponding to traditional platting and building construction.
3. When the defined character of a block, including adjacent or facing blocks, is comprised of historic buildings, or groups of buildings of local historic importance and character, as well as street trees or other significant vegetation (as identified in the 1975 Inventory and subsequent updating), the architectural treatment of new development should respond to this local historical character.

The Board understood that the proposal would not necessarily have the same architectural and material character of the adjacent church. However, close attention to architectural devices can help the new structure relate to its surroundings by use of common datum lines, setbacks from the street, discrete modules, and alignment of glazing for privacy of adjacent dwelling units.

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

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Guidelines:

1. New buildings should emphasize durable, attractive, and well-detailed finish materials, including: Brick; Concrete; Cast stone, natural stone, tile; Stucco and stucco-like panels; Art tile; Wood.
2. Sculptural cast stone and decorative tile are particularly appropriate because they relate to campus architecture and Art Deco buildings. Wood and cast stone are appropriate for moldings and trim.
3. The materials listed below are discouraged and should only be used if they complement the building's architectural character and are architecturally treated for a

- specific reason that supports the building and streetscape character: Masonry units; Metal siding; Wood siding and shingles; Vinyl siding; Sprayed-on finish; Mirrored glass.
4. Where anodized metal is used for window and door trim, then care should be given to the proportion and breakup of glazing to reinforce the building concept and proportions.
 5. Fencing adjacent to the sidewalk should be sited and designed in an attractive and pedestrian oriented manner.
 6. Awnings made of translucent material may be backlit, but should not overpower neighboring light schemes. Lights, which direct light downward, mounted from the awning frame are acceptable. Lights that shine from the exterior down on the awning are acceptable.
 7. Light standards should be compatible with other site design and building elements.

Signs

Context: The Citywide Design Guidelines do not provide guidance for new signs. New guidelines encourage signs that reinforce the character of the building and the neighborhood.

Guidelines:

1. The following sign types are encouraged, particularly along Mixed Use Corridors – Pedestrian oriented shingle or blade signs extending from the building front just above pedestrians; Marquee signs and signs on pedestrian canopies; Neon signs; Carefully executed window signs; such as etched glass or hand painted signs; Small signs on awnings or canopies.
2. Post mounted signs are discouraged.
3. The location and installation of signage should be integrated with the building’s architecture.
4. Monument signs should be integrated into the development, such as on a screen wall.

- 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.

Access to the garage will occur on the alley.

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.

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: The University Community would like to encourage, especially on Mixed Use Corridors, the provision of usable, small open spaces, such as gardens, courtyards, or

plazas that are visible and/or accessible to the public. Therefore, providing ground-level open space is an important public objective and will improve the quality of both the pedestrian and residential environment.

Guidelines:

1. On Mixed Use Corridors, consider setting back a portion of the building to provide small pedestrian open spaces with seating amenities. The building façades along the open space must still be pedestrian-oriented.
 2. On Mixed Use Corridors, entries to upper floor residential uses should be accessed from, but not dominate, the street frontage. On corner locations, the main residential entry should be on the side street with a small courtyard that provides a transition between the entry and the street.
- 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-3 **Retaining Walls.** Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where higher retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscapes.
- 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.

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Guidelines:

1. The preferred solution for parking structures is to incorporate commercial uses at the ground level. Below-grade parking is the next best solution for parking.
 2. There should be careful consideration of the surrounding street system when locating auto access. When the choice is between an arterial and a lower volume, residential street, access should be placed on the arterial.
 3. Structured parking façades facing the street and residential areas should be designed and treated to minimize impacts, including sound transmission from inside the parking structure.
- 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-7 **Personal Safety and Security.** Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

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

At the next EDG meeting, the applicant will need to bring an analysis of the alley and the traffic movements on it. Are there solutions to improve the alley's operation?

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-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.

The Board encouraged the idea of placing a series of "pocket parks" within the structure. Show how they function as a green building technique. While the drawings display recessed decks equivalent in size to the proposed glazing pattern for the structure, the Board questioned the need for such similarity. Locating these decks on the appropriate sides to maximize wind or solar gain should be studied. The decks add porosity to the elevations; however, they must work both as an architectural conceit and as a technique to reduce energy consumption.

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 applicant preliminarily requested a departure (from SMC 23.45.518 setbacks and separations) allowing less than the 10 foot structure setback above 42' on the north elevation. Given the Board's interest in respecting the adjacent landmark structure, obtaining this departure will need more analysis and a significant revision of the massing.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project return for another EDG meeting.

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