



City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD July 23, 2012

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3013516

Address: 6404 24th Ave NW.

Applicant: Megan McKay, Johnston Architect PLLC, for Bill Parks, Ballard Lofts LLC

Board Members Present: Ellen Cecil
Jerry Coburn
Mike DeLilla
Ted Pantan (Chair)

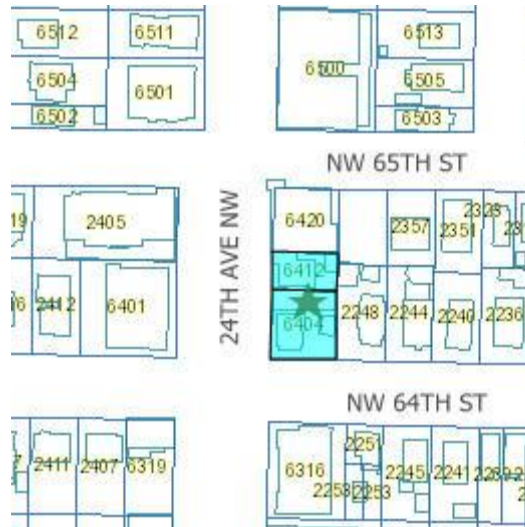
Board members absent : David Neiman

Land Use Planner present: Michael Dorcy

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The corner development site is bounded by 24th Avenue NW on the west and by NW 64th Street on the south. It is rectangular in shape, comprising 7,554 square feet in area, with approximately 111 feet along 24th Avenue NW and 68 feet along NW 64th Street. The site is zoned Neighborhood Commercial 1, with a 65-foot height limit (NC1-65').

The abutting site to the east, developed with a single-family residence, is likewise zoned NC1-65'. The rest of NW 64th Street, between the adjoining site and 22nd Avenue NW, is zoned Lowrise 1 (LR1) and developed with a mix of single family and multifamily structures. The site lies within the Ballard Hub Urban Village.



There are currently three structures located on the site, one single-story structure houses a barber shop, another single-story structure houses a tavern. A single-story single-family residence occupies the southern portion of the site. The site abuts a corner lot that fronts on both 24th Avenue NW and NW 65th Street, under the same ownership as that of the subject site and for which a Master Use Permit (#3007108) has been issued by the Department of Planning and Development. It is the intention of the developer of the two properties to develop them as what in effect will be a single building but with distinctive characters and architectural definitions, the site abutting to the north being identified as the “Phase 1” site.

The proposed development is for a 6 - story mixed use building, with 45-60 residential units located above ground floor retail/commercial space. Sixty five to seventy parking spaces would be located in an underground garage shared with the “Phase 1” proposed mixed-use building. As proposed, the common parking garage would take access from NW 65th Street and exit onto NW 64th Street. Project work for the current proposal would include landscape and pedestrian improvements along both 24th Avenue NW and NW 64th Street. The existing mature street trees along 24th Avenue NW would remain.

ARCHITECTS’ PRESENTATION

Three alternate massing models for the site were briefly presented to the Board. The first, “Scheme A,” showed a full-height buildout of most of the entire site. Development would attach to the proposed Phase 1 structure and extend to the west and south property lines, creating continuous streetwalls along the two adjacent streets. The development would also extend to the east property line. The project was described as allowed by zoning and code-compliant, requiring no departures from development standards (although it was not clear how such a proposed buildout could be accomplished within FAR restrictions). Scheme A would accommodate vehicles which would need to both enter and exit off 65th Avenue NW. The applicants identified alignment of floor plates with the Phase 1 structure as a substantial challenge inherent in the scheme.

The second scheme (“B”), was a sort of Scheme A manqué. A central lightwell removed a chunk from the structure along the east-facing façade. The proposal would allow for an alignment of floors with Phase 1 development and would accommodate an exit-only shared-garage opening onto NW 64th Street.

A third option, identified by the design team as the preferred option, provided a distinctive “gasket” between Phase 1 and the current proposed structure and aligned floor plates and set back a extensive portion of the east-facing façade, allowing for both fenestration and balconies on the east (and a kinder face to the neighboring structure). The resulting form was of a more integrated Phase1-phase 2 solution, providing a “L”-shaped development on the two sites. Since this design held a certain thickness to the property line along the entire NW 64th Street street-front, the “L” at the southeast corner becomes a kind of “L” *avec serif*. It was suggested by the design/ development team that the ground floor units along the excised or set-back portion of the east façade could be developed as live/work spaces. Scheme C would allow for a separation of the entry and exiting functions of the parking garage (with exiting at NW 64th Street). The scheme would require no departures.

The preferred third option was by far the most intriguing architecturally, especially as the atrium offered opportunities to integrate the internal spaces of the building and at the same time relate more sensitively to the existing urban context.

After asking a number of clarifying questions following the architect's presentation, the Board elicited comments from members of the public attending the meeting. Forty six members of the public (of perhaps 70 attending) signed in requesting to become parties of record for the project).

Public Comments:

Comments solicited from the public included the following:

- Impacts (both visual and noise) of HVAC equipment of importance for this location and project;
- Worried about increased units and impacts on sewer capacities;
- Wider setback from property line along NW 64th Street needed to better align with setbacks of existing structure;
- Project needs a traffic study, in particular one that addresses impacts of parking entrance and exit for both NW 65th and NW 64th streets; intersection at NW65th Street and 24th Avenue NW already dangerous;
- Shadow impacts of such a large and tall structure will severely impact neighbors to the east;
- Take into account the historic values embodied in structures and neighborhood fabric; aren't there ways to incorporate these historic references and values into the proposed architecture;
- There is no other place in the city that combines a NC1 zoning designation with a 65-foot height allowance; this is anomalous and the anomaly ought to be addressed architecturally;
- Concerns about security issues connected to proposed east courtyard;
- Concerned with the broader issue of the "fit" of the height, bulk and scale of the proposed structure within the established "neighborhood character."
- Concerned about truck loading required to service the retail spaces in such a development.

Board's Deliberations:

The Board began its deliberations with members noting that the Phase 1 development appeared to show more sensitivity and a greater respect for the immediate neighborhood context by setting back the upper stories on the two street sides and the east side to mitigate the bulk of the structure. A discussion ensued whether the phase 2 development should more closely emulate the phase 1 development in this regard. Two other considerations were offered. First, bringing the west and south facades uniformly to the streetwall allowed for generous and much needed openspace as well as an openness of the façade itself along the east side of the structure. Second, the uniform box of the south "structure" contrasted nicely with the two-tiered stacked boxes look of the north "structure" and "broke down" the overall impact of the block-long building while imparting variety and interest to it. It was generally agreed among members of the Board that the

treatment of the “gasket” or “knuckle” between portions of the building, re-enforced by the setback and entry courtyard, was a good move and vital element of the design.

The Board’s discussion identified a couple of related issues that need to be satisfactorily addressed by the development team as the project proceeds from this conceptual phase through full design development:

- Allow the indicated setback along the eastern facade to energize the structure, but,
- Don’t allow the focus on the east courtyard of the preferred scheme and the energizing of this space to serve as an excuse for neglecting the architectural expression at the perimeter of the building and the need there to manifest a sensibility to height, bulk and scale impacts.

During the course of the Board’s deliberations, it became obvious that the following design guidelines were “most pertinent to this project and site”: A-1, A-4, B-1, C-2, and C-3. The Board agreed that those guidelines, together with D-2, D-6, D-11 and E-3, should be regarded of highest priority for a successful design.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, hearing public comment, and addressing their major concerns regarding the proposal, the Design Review Board members provided the siting and design guidance described below and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle’s *Design Review Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings* of highest priority to this project.

A. Site Planning

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics

The siting of buildings should respond to specific site condition and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

The larger development site includes the site of this proposal and the site to the north for which a MUP, one that underwent Design Review, has already been issued. See comments above in the Board’s deliberations that relate to the integration of Phase 1 and current proposal elements.

A-4 Human Activity

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

This guideline was selected as a confirmation by the Board of the desirability of replicating a section of sidewalk along 24th Avenue NW that is already vibrant and active, a place of pedestrian activity, and adorned with attractive and established street trees. A special care should be in place to bring the attractiveness and activity of the pedestrian way around the corner

at NW 64th Street. Particular effort needs to be given to attractively intertwine the midblock residential entry and the public pedestrian way.

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....

This guideline reflects the Board's support of the overall alignment of the preferred scheme with the Phase 1 scheme and the importance of the setback from the property line on the east side of the proposed structure. As noted in the Board's deliberations, however, further design development cannot neglect the architectural expression at the perimeter of the building, specifically the west and south facades, and the need to manifest a sensibility to height, bulk and scale impacts in the building's overall expression.

C. Architectural Elements and Material

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'

Develop a well-portioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole. This guideline expresses the Board's concern that the external articulation of the building should give distinctiveness to each (Phase 1 and Current phase) portions of the building but not hide the concept that gives the building its strength and coherency.

C-3 Human Scale

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

There is an historical desirable human scale along this block whose memory after the existing buildings which provide for this interface are gone needs to be successfully architecturally transferred into the new interface of building and pedestrians. That is a challenging task. The activation of each of the entrances, both retail and residential, important to the success of the project. A further challenge will be to provide for a residential entry that is in harmony with retail entrances along the sidewalk.

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.

Utilities and service spaces needed to find their rightful hierarchical space in the scheme of things.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security

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

This was expressed as a priority concern by the Board, as in their view it always is, but without particular content or direction.

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 the building. Blank walls should be avoided.

There is a desirable commercial transparency and commercial presence already established along this block front. This should be maintained. The proposed building entry at the southwest corner and the contiguous retail space at the southeast corner need to engage the pedestrian environment forcibly, as this corner of the structure will be highly visible up and down 24th Avenue NW..

E. Landscaping

E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions

The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions...view corridors...and off-site conditions....

The design team should provide studies of the proposed pedestrian environment on all sides of the proposed development.. The applicant should be prepared to present details for a variety of streetscape and pedestrian pathway amenities, including lighting, overhead weather protection, signage and other elements calculated to generate a friendly and lively environment at the perimeter of the site.

Landscaping should be designed with the goal of realizing the prioritized guidelines, should soften the edge conditions where appropriate, and should contribute to an attractive and usable interior open space, courtyard area. The design should incorporate specific treatments to provide for attractiveness and an allure to the pedestrian through-site pathway and establish a genuine neighborhood amenity. The Board would expect to see a comprehensive Landscape Plan, one that treats not only on-site open space and pathways but the streets' edges as well.

Departures from Development Standards:

There were no requests for design departures at the EDG meeting.

Staff Comments:

It is the expectation of the Design Review Board and DPD that the applicant proceed to further design development, which includes a demonstrable response to the guidelines and guidance noted above, and to a Master Use Permit application. Subsequent to a successful application, the proposal will be returned to the Design review Board for a Recommendation Meeting, at which time the adequacy of the design's response to the stated guidelines and Board's guidance should be demonstrated.

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