



City of Seattle

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



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013699

Address: 4106 12th Avenue NE

Applicant: Tom Steidl of Nicholson Kovalchick Architects

Date of Meeting: Monday, September 17, 2012

Board Members Present: Peter Krech (Acting Chair)
Salone Habibuddin
Martine Zettle

Board Members Absent: Joseph Hurley
Christina Pizana

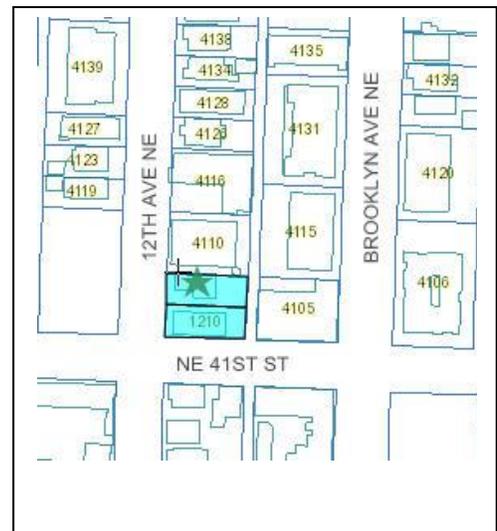
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: MR
Urban Village Overlay

Nearby Zones: (North) MR
(South) MIO-105-MR
(East) MR
(West) MIO-105-MR

Lot Area: 8,240 sf



Current Development: 80 ft x 103 ft deep corner lot; vacant north half of site; 2 story, five unit apartment building on south half. Site slopes approximately 7 feet from northeast corner to southwest corner, which is the street corner.

Access: Vehicular access from the existing, improved alley to the east.

Surrounding Development: 3 story apartment building adjacent to the north; 4 story apartment building across the alley to the east; new 6 story university apartments across streets to south and west. Site is one block north of ceremonial NE Campus Parkway.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: The site is 3 blocks west of the UW campus gateway and the busy commercial corridor of University Ave. A mix of older apartments and commercial structures of various scales is adjacent to the east and north, while taller new university residences and buildings are adjacent to the south and west. This site is in a dense student/pedestrian district, with an existing bus transfer zone 1 block south, and a future light rail station 2 blocks north.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Demolish the existing structure and construct a new 7 story residential structure with approximately 41,000 sf and 108 units. Ground floor contains utility, bike storage and day-lit units. No parking is required, and none is proposed. A green roof deck is proposed.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: September 17, 2012

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The EDG Design Proposal booklet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number at this website:

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

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

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

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments at the meeting.

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 following **Citywide Design Guidelines** and **University Community Design Guidelines** (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

The **priority guidelines** are summarized below, while all guidelines are still applicable. For the full text of all guidelines please visit the [Design Review website](#).

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.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the strong street wall along NE 41st street, shown in all options, was an appropriate response to the streetscape, assuming a positive design resolution of the ground plane transition (see D-1, D-12). However they cautioned that the long, tall street wall needed adequate relief and compositional interest, such as reveals, recessed windows and/or south facing sun shades.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the best location for the primary entry, and decided the corner provides optimum pedestrian activation of the street realm, affording a tall, transparent lobby to the corner, and also supported the lobby elevation and corner plaza matching the street corner elevation (not depressed).

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.”

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the corner plaza and adjacent leasing office supports human activity, and encouraged the landscape design to include seating, careful lighting and other welcoming features within the plaza.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed this issue at length, and agreed that the raised decks are strongly preferable, as long as they include quality materials below and carefully designed railings that maintain “eye on the street”. The Board was concerned that deep patios would appear as “moats”, and advised these be changed to light wells or double height units with no cut into the ground plane. Detailed cross sections showing curb, sidewalk, landscaping and architecture should be provided at each typical patio condition.

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.

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: The Citywide Design Guidelines encourage buildings on corner lots to orient to the corner and adjacent street fronts. Within the University Community there are several intersections that serve as “gateways” to the neighborhood.

Guideline: For new buildings located on a corner, including, but not limited to the corner locations identified in Map 3, consider providing special building elements distinguishable from the rest of the building such as a tower, corner articulation or bay windows. Consider a special site feature such as diagonal orientation and entry, a sculpture, a courtyard, or other device. Corner entries should be set back to allow pedestrian flow and good visibility at the intersection.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed this corner site is not a University District Design Guidelines mapped “gateway”, and does not deserve a corner tower or special feature; the proposed plaza and tall, generous overhang is acceptable. The Board, preferred instead a more subtle acknowledgement of the corner, such as windows that wrap the corner.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board acknowledged this site is on an edge between the MIO and MR zones, and agreed the wide side/courtyard of option C provides more daylight and spatial buffer to the adjacent apartment building to the north. To reduce shadow on north neighbors, the roofline and parapet of the building's north edge should be minimized and not be occupied roof deck.

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, the Board supported the basic 3 bar massing concept of option C, reinforced with clear separations at the open stairs and transparent corridor ends. They agreed that the composition of the north elevation is important as it is highly visible from 12th Avenue NE.

- 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, the Board discussed how the unit railings and exposed walls at grade should incorporate quality, human scale design, as well as the important aspects of the corner lobby and plaza (see A-4) and the southeast/alley corner (see D-2).

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the basic material palette verbally described, and encouraged the prime materials be consistently applied along street levels. They also agreed this could be a “companion” to a nearby residential building, while not identical in all color, material, and texture applications.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the proposed corner plaza meets this objective, and supported the overhanging bar, as long as the tall proportion shown is maintained, and lighting is well integrated (see A-4, D-2).

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the southeast corner is a logical location for the transformer and solid waste rooms, but cautioned that an approximate 15x20 ft tall blank wall is the maximum extent, and requires sophisticated design treatment to mitigate the blank wall. This includes the approximately 20 ft wrap onto the alley frontage, which is very visible.

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how important lighting is; though this is not a commercial project, it is on busy student/pedestrian streets.

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed this transition is crucial to buffer adjacent residential use from a busy sidewalk, and offer design relief from the large street walls above. The landscape design to soften the wall below the raised decks will be vital.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the inclusion of the loading zone and a highly permeable surface, and advised there be a direct access into the elevator corridor from the loading space. They also encouraged the roof deck to incorporate a range of landscaping and amenity features for the residents.

- E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions.** The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.

University-specific supplemental guidance:

Context: The retention of existing, large trees is an important consideration in new construction, particularly on the wooded slopes in the Ravenna Urban Village. The 17th Avenue NE tree-lined boulevard is an important, visually pleasing streetscape.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the side courtyard was a valuable buffer more than an active use space, and encouraged the stepped walls be designed to maximize daylight into the north facing units, and select adjacent wall colors and species to maximize daylight penetration.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based upon the departure's potential to 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. Front & Side Setback (SMC 23.45.518.B):** The Code requires a 5 ft minimum /7 ft average setback. The applicant proposes a 2 ft setback along a 25 ft portion of 12th avenue NE, the remainder at 7 ft; and a 0 ft setback along all of NE 41st street.

The Board indicated receptivity to this departure, as the resulting courtyard increases the daylight and spatial buffer to the adjacent apartment windows (see B-1), however they cautioned that the courtyard might need to be 1-2 feet less to allow the south wall to incorporate adequate depth and compositional interest to the street (see A-2).

- 2. Rear Setback (SMC 23.45.518.B):** The Code requires a 10 ft setback off the alley. The applicant proposes a 7 ft setback for a 40 ft portion, and 10 ft for the remaining 40ft.

The Board indicated receptivity to this departure, as long as the visible elevation design is superior and the roof parapet is minimized along the alley.

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.