



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013912

Address: 4433 42nd Avenue Southwest

Applicant: Tom Steidl, Nicholson Kovalchick Architects

Date of Meeting: Thursday, January 10, 2013

Board Members Present: Robin Murphy (Chair)
Laird Bennion
Myer Harrell
Norma Tompkins

Board Members Absent: Daniel Skaggs

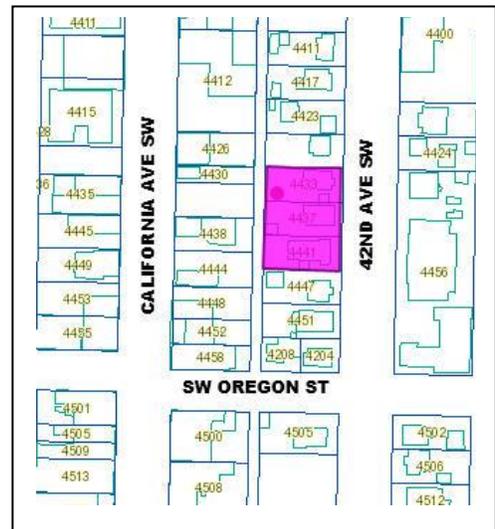
DPD Staff Present: Tami Garrett, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 2 (NC2-40)

Nearby Zones: North: NC2-40
South: NC2-40
East: NC2-40
West: NC2-65

Lot Area: 17,250 square feet (sq. ft.)



Current Development: The project site contains three existing structures: a live-work building, a single family residence and a triplex building. There are five significant trees on site, 6" in diameter or greater. One of the trees, a 33.2" Black Locust located near the site's southwest corner, has been identified as an Exceptional Tree.

Access: Vehicular access to the project site will occur from the existing 16' wide paved alley.

Surrounding Development: Surrounding development includes single family homes, duplexes and triplexes located along the project site's block front to both the north and south. A surface parking lot associated with the West Seattle Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie is immediately north of the subject site. This same private club, a veterinary hospital (Greentree Animal Hospital), accessory surface parking lots and other commercial uses are west of the project site. A church and parochial school (Hope Lutheran) is located directly across the street to the east. There are also several other churches and private schools (West Seattle Christian, Holy Rosary) in immediate vicinity of the project.

ECAs: The site's existing topography is characterized with having grades descending approximately 5' from north to south. There are no Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) mapped on or adjacent to the site.

Neighborhood Character: The project site is located within the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village, 1.5 blocks to the northeast of the intersection of California Ave SW and SW Alaska St. The general character of this block of 42nd Ave SW is generally residential in nature. A new 65' residential building is under construction a half-block to the south, and two relatively new mixed-use commercial/residential buildings are within two blocks to the south. The neighborhood is very pedestrian-oriented, and within 1,000' of the West Seattle Junction public transit hub. There are multiple shops, restaurants and grocery stores all within walking distance of the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for the design and construction of a mixed-use commercial/residential building with approximately 71 residential units surrounding two ground-level live-work units. All parking for the proposed development (approximately 57 stalls) to be provided in a below-grade garage accessed via the alley.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Four alternative design schemes were presented to the Board, including one option that was not originally included in the EDG design packets initially provided to the Board, but was provided as a supplement at the time of the meeting. This option, provided at the DPD Planner's request, illustrated a proposal that would preserve the City of Seattle exceptional tree (33.2" Black Locust) that currently exists on the site. All four options included a four-story structure with below-grade parking garages; and a residential lobby area primarily accessed from 42nd Avenue Southwest, but also with a smaller secondary entrance from the alley.

The first scheme (Optional 1) maximized the allowable buildable envelope and showed a deep courtyard accessed from grade along 42nd Avenue Southwest. This option included 73 residential units, 58 parking stalls and three live-work units at grade in the northeast corner of the site.

The second scheme (Option 2) also included central courtyard but it was wider and shallower in comparison to Option 1. This option included 69 residential units, 58 parking stalls, two live-work units accessed from grade along 42nd Avenue Southwest and an adjacent residential lobby in the northeast corner of the building.

The third and applicant preferred scheme (Option 3) included a courtyard along the alley as opposed to the main street. This option included 71 residential units, 57 parking stalls, two live-work units at grade along 42nd Avenue Southwest and an adjacent residential lobby in the northeast corner of the building.

Option 4, as stated above, illustrated a scheme showing the existing Exceptional Tree would be preserved. Due to the tree's location, this scheme provided a reduced building massing in comparison to the other three options, as well as, a lower parking stall count in the below grade parking garage. This option included 59 residential units, 43 parking stalls and two live-work units at grade and an adjacent residential lobby in the northeast corner of the building.

The EDG packet includes materials presented at the EDG meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3013912) 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 project file (project number 3013912), 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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately fifteen members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised (with Board/applicant response in *italics*):

- Questioned the height of the existing tree nearest to the south property line and who would be responsible for tree removal debris.
Existing mature tree is estimated between 40' to 50' maximum; owner of proposal site would be responsible for removal of tree debris.
- Asked if future development would be apartments or condos; and, what types of unit are being proposed.
Apartments with a mix of one and two bedroom units.
- Explained that a nearby construction proposal ("Oregon 42 Apartments") was required by Seattle City Light (SCL) to underground its electrical utility and encouraged the applicant to consult with SCL as early as possible in the design process to verify if their proposal would also be subject to that requirement.
- Advised that a design which included an onsite mid-block connection between the street (42nd Avenue Southwest) and the alley for the public's benefit would possibly require policy from the City of Seattle and easement property rights through the land.
- Inquired if departures were being requested with the preferred design scheme.
No departures requested.
- A representative from the West Seattle Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie :
 - Expressed that philosophically the organization has no significant objections to people doing what is within their right to do.
 - Explained that characterization of the neighborhood is active throughout the day and at night due to the close proximity of the numerous schools, churches and usage of the Eagles facility. Stated that maximum utilization of the Eagle's surface parking areas occurs at various times of the day/evening.
 - Requested the Board understand that Eagles property, as well as, other neighboring commercial properties west of the subject site may be sold in the future and developed to their maximum potential.
 - Stated that the proposal would be positive impact for the property values and an asset to the community.
 - Concerned about the lack of onsite parking being provided by development in the neighborhood.
- Representatives of Hope Lutheran Church:
 - Stated that existing parking conditions within immediate vicinity of the project site are a daily issue.

- Concerned that the proposed quantity of onsite parking is not adequate for the amount of units proposed and will negatively impact existing on-street parking conditions.
- Commented that the design schemes appeared monolithic and bland with no modulation along the street-facing facades.
- Encouraged a design that is more livable, pedestrian-friendly and retain more of the existing West Seattle character as identified in the West Seattle design guidelines.
- Asked why the term “flats” was used as part of the project’s name (“BCK Junction Flats”). *Explained that it is a working title and typical residential apartments are being proposed.*
- Preferred a design that resembles an “urban flat with retail at-grade” appearance which could potentially activate the street in the long-term.

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.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE

1. Design Concept and Massing:

- a. The Board felt the preferred design scheme Option 3 should move forward to Master Use Permit (MUP) submittal with the following guidance:
 - i. More modulation applied to the 42nd Avenue Southwest façade is necessary to bring more interest to the building mass.
 - ii. The design should include elements from Option 1-including the distinct separation between the commercial (live-work units) and residential units at grade. Also the orientation of the residential lobby entrance situated towards the mid-portion of the structure at grade visually creates a good separation of uses. (B-1)
- b. The Board agreed that the preferred design included a balanced mix of residential and commercial uses along the 4^{2nd} Avenue Southwest street-front. The Board noted that the amount of live-work units proposed (two) is appropriate for this mid-block site which is in a neighborhood in transition and situated across the street from several institutional uses (schools, churches). (B-1, C-1)
- c. The Board supported a design that did not include preservation of the Exceptional Tree. Detailed Board discussion/guidance concerning this subject is offered in item #4. (B-1, E-3)

- 2. **42nd Avenue Southwest frontage:** The design of the new building should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale, encourage human activity, and reinforce the existing spatial characteristic of 42nd Avenue Southwest. (A-2, A-4, C-3)

- a. The Board stated that a building with a strong street-facing urban edge and a softer urban edge to the west is appropriate. However, the Board expressed concern with the monolithic appearance of the building's east-facing façades abutting 42nd Avenue Southwest. The Board expects to review a design at the Recommendation meeting that incorporates modulation with upper-level setbacks and recesses that breaks down the mass and adds interest and character. (B-1, C-3)
- b. The Board discussed the merits between raised residential balconies and stoops with stairs for the first-floor residential units along the street-facing façade. The Board initially noted that a design inclusive of stoops would be more successful than raised balconies in creating a transition between the public sidewalks to the entrances. However, the Board recognized that, due to the horizontal distance from grade (approximately 7') created by the existing downward sloping condition from north to south, stoops would be problematic—would negatively affect available landscaping areas. Therefore, the Board stated it could support a design inclusive of raised balconies that enhance security and privacy to those units. The Board expects the applicant to continue to explore a stoop solution and provide renderings of this option at the Recommendation meeting. (C-3, D-12)
- c. The Board acknowledged that street-facing blank walls will need to be addressed. The Board expects to review details pertaining to any landscaping treatments (green screening) proposed to address this concern at the Recommendation meeting. (D-2, E-2)

3. Residential Open Spaces:

- a. The Board felt the preferred design (Option 3) which illustrated a raised courtyard along the west alley side would create a more usable gathering area for the residents as opposed to the at-grade courtyard areas abutting the east street side which could become space that isn't usable by the residents. The Board agreed that a design which included courtyards situated on both the street and alley side is optimal, but voiced concern that the courtyard abutting the street not be long and narrow as illustrated in Options 1 and 2. (A-7)
- b. At the Recommendation meeting, the Board stated that they expect to see elements (outdoor furniture, trees, landscaping, water features, etc.) that activate the proposed residential open spaces. (A-7)
- c. An alternative location for the proposed rooftop deck area should be explored and presented at the Recommendation meeting. (A-7)

- 4. Exceptional Tree:** A special site condition is the presence of one identified Exceptional Tree, a 33.2" Black Locust located near the site's southwest corner. The information presented to the Board from the applicant's arborist described the tree as having "a low safe and useful life expectancy considering its structural condition, extent of decay and proximity to proposed site development". The EDG packet showed that the preservation of the exceptional tree would result in a minimum loss of ten units (14%) and fourteen parking stalls (25%) in comparison to the preferred scheme (Option 3). (E-3)

- a. The Board agreed that a design which includes the preservation of the identified exceptional tree (Option 4) is not recommended based on the documentation presented by the applicant and initial feedback from the DPD Tree Expert.
- b. The Board recognized that tree replacement would be required per SMC 25.11.090 (Tree Protection). The Board reviewed this code citation which details the tree replacement process and acknowledged that further consultation between the applicant’s arborist, DPD reviewers and the DPD Tree Expert was necessary before the Board could offer any design feedback. Therefore, the Board requested the applicant to address this requirement directly with DPD during the initial MUP review process and provide tree replacement specifics at the Recommendation meeting. (E-3)
- c. The Board agreed that the future replacement trees provided an opportunity to enhance the project. The Board expects to review a quality landscape design that distinguishes the selected replacement trees and illustrates the placement of those trees. (E-2)
- d. The Board requested the applicant investigate alternative tree placement locations in addition to the site’s northwest corner podium. For example, tree clustering to better distinguish the building entry and offsite options (in addition to required street trees) were offered by the Board. (E-3)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text 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.

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

West Seattle Junction - specific supplemental guidance:

An active and interesting sidewalk engages pedestrians through effective transitions between the public and private realm. Particularly in the California Avenue Commercial Core, proposed development is encouraged to set back from the front property line to allow for more public space that enhances the pedestrian

environment. Building facades should give shape to the space of the street through arrangement and scale of elements. Display windows should be large and open at the street level to provide interest and encourage activity along the sidewalk. At night, these windows should provide a secondary source of lighting.

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-7 **Residential Open Space.** Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

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-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.

West Seattle Junction - specific supplemental guidance:

Facade Articulation: To make new, larger development compatible with the surrounding architectural context, facade articulation and architectural embellishment are important considerations in mixed-use and multifamily residential buildings. When larger buildings replace several small buildings, facade articulation should reflect the original platting pattern and reinforce the architectural rhythm established in the commercial core.

Architectural Cues: New mixed-use development should respond to several architectural features common in the Junction's best storefront buildings to preserve

and enhance pedestrian orientation and maintain an acceptable level of consistency with the existing architecture. To create cohesiveness in the Junction, identifiable and exemplary architectural patterns should be reinforced. New elements can be introduced - provided they are accompanied by strong design linkages.

- 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.

D. Pedestrian Environment

- 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-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-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.
- 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.

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, no departures were requested.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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.