



City of Seattle

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



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013971

Address: 9538 1st Avenue NE

Applicant: Kurt Jensen of Jensen Fey Architects

Date of Meeting: Monday, January 28, 2013

Board Members Present: Peter Krech (Acting Chair)
Salone Habibuddin
Joseph Hurley
Christina Pizana
Martine Zettle

Board Members Absent: None

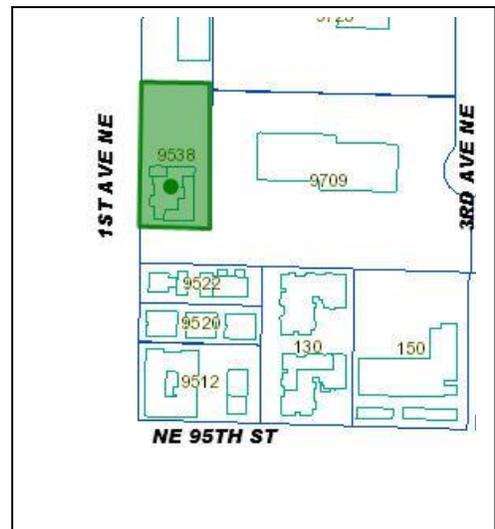
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC3-65
Northgate Urban Center within the
Northgate Overlay District

Nearby Zones: (North) NC3-85
(South) LR3
(East) NC3-65
(West) NC3-65

Lot Area: 37,713 sf



Current Development: Approximately 135 ft deep x 280 ft mid-block lot; north half of site is surface parking; vacant 1 story, retail building on south half. Site slopes down approximately 5 feet from southeast corner to northwest corner, but the lot was leveled so there is a steep 7-10 ft bank wrapping the east and south edges of property, with adjacent surface parking lots on top of that bank.

Access: Vehicular and pedestrian access from improved 1st Avenue along the west.

Surrounding Development: 1 story commercial buildings to the north; 5 story office building across parking lot to the east; 4 story apartments across parking lot to south. Site is one half block east of the I-5 freeway and its ROW adjacent to 1st Avenue; I-5 is raised approximately 20 ft on a berm.

ECAs: Peat Settlement Prone – Category 2; ECA 11

Neighborhood Character: The site is 4 blocks south of the Northgate Mall and fronts on the busy transit and minor arterial of 1st Avenue NE. A super-block of older retail and office structures with surface parking lots, is adjacent to the east and north. Newer apartment buildings are adjacent to the south, and the I-5 freeway is across 1st Avenue to the west. This site is in a transitioning commercial district, with the existing Northgate Transit Center 1 block north, and the future Northgate light rail station 3 blocks north on 1st Avenue at NE 103rd Street.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Demolish the existing structure and construct a new 6 story, limited service hotel structure with approximately 123,000 sf and 170 rooms. Ground floor to contain entry porte cohere, lobby, breakfast room, and possibly fitness and meeting rooms. Approximately 104 parking spaces are proposed, most on grade and under an elevated deck, which has about 43 spaces accessed via an easement from the surface parking to the south.

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DESIGN PROPOSAL

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 Public Resource Center
Address: 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000

P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following comments and concerns were expressed:

- Suggested the hotel entrance provide covered and tall drop off access for various shuttle vans [applicant answered they would be accommodated with proposed porte cohere].
- Requested verification the hotel would not be impacted by the future elevated light rail trackway along 1st [applicant clarified the trackway is proposed on the west side of 1st, and crosses over to the east side well north of this site].
- Concerned the large trees on or off-site to the south will be retained [applicant responded the on-site trees will be retained].

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 ***Northgate Urban Center & Overlay District Design Guidelines -2010*** (as applicable, shown *in italics*) of highest priority for this project.

The priority guidelines and **Board comments** 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-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the best location for the primary entrance is the northwest corner as proposed, and supported the porte cohere there as long as it promotes safe pedestrian movement and character, and affords a tall transparent lobby to the corner, maximizing visibility and light to the street. To announce this corner from afar, the Board encouraged the upper façade to express this important corner above the base, possibly incorporating corner-wrap windows or a treatment that emphasizes this corner differently from the south east one.

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

Northgate-specific supplemental guidance:

Consider setting portions of the building back to create spaces at street level for pedestrian-oriented activities. ...wider sidewalks allow for more pedestrian circulation and activity."

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the approximate 10 ft setback shown provides a wider sidewalk, and generous landscape relief adjacent to the building. They encouraged the paved platforms along this setback to incorporate seating and be coordinated with the uses and materials of the adjacent building wall. Retaining the pedestrian stair from the east neighboring property is important, and its pedestrian walk through the project should follow the most direct desire line to the north and west to the porte cochere and then out to First Avenue.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported Option 2, which conceals all the parking from the street and the north, and also keeps the curb cuts on First Avenue to one. NOTE: in subsequent stages, the applicants should provide evidence the required access easements with the neighboring south property are in process. If this easement is not secured, the parking design could be impacted greatly, but would need to still achieve the primary design and massing attributes of Option 2; meaning parking ramps might need to be accommodated inside the building, parking quantity might change, etc.

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.

Northgate-specific supplemental guidance:

Large monolithic structures are discouraged. Break down the mass of the building, horizontally and vertically, into a hierarchy of volumes.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board acknowledged this site is separated by a parking lot from the LR3 zoning to the south, but the building mass will be long and tall along First Avenue and very visible from I-5. The Board encouraged a more robust modulation along the north and west facades, possibly using an asymmetrical composition, deeper balcony recesses and/or additive frames, projections or window groupings. The parapet height and cap treatment could vary to express the modulations, and mitigate the 280 ft long flat top appearance.

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 Option 2 massing, as long as the modulation is improved and the northwest corner is more pronounced. The Board encouraged the windowless end-walls to receive a special compensatory treatment (possible windows at the corridor ends), especially on the highly visible south façade, and suggested a special corner room might provide corner windows at the northwest corner (see A-3 above).

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

Northgate- specific supplemental guidance:

The ground level of the building must offer pedestrian interest along sidewalks. Exterior building materials should have a human scale...good examples include stone and brick. Non-modular exterior materials, such as stucco and concrete panels, need finer details to reduce perceived bulk and create human scale.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board strongly endorsed the preliminary base materials shown, including full-height brick, deep window reveals, projecting canopies and pedestrian lighting fixtures. The Board also endorsed the stated switch to panelized upper floor cladding, and not stucco.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board emphasized that the large upper walls will depend on contrasting railings, material/color shifts and modulation reveals, and the generic unit designs will need to accommodate these exterior design contingencies. The Board requested actual material samples at future meetings.

- C-5 Structured Parking Entrances.** The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported a tall porte cochere as the access to covered parking and trash loading, but suggested the trash enclosure be well designed as it is visible to all entering the site. The porte cochere should be treated as an exterior room with quality finishes and a pedestrian emphasis, such as designed ceilings, generous lighting, modular paving, etc.

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.

Northgate-specific supplemental guidance:

If there is a significant grade difference, create an attractive transition. Incorporate pedestrian access, including walkways, stairs or similar features that can help build greater pedestrian connectivity.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the porte cochere meets parts of this guideline, and focused on the existing pedestrian access stairs needing a gracious and well designed transition down the east bank, and a better desire line path to the porte cochere (see A-4 above). They also advised there be clear, well-lit access from the upper parking deck into the building circulation, and a pedestrian walkway demarcated on that deck to the adjacent south parking lot.

- 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 2-3 bays of blank wall along First Avenue concealing the lower parking could be acceptable, if those materials have human scale, and the transparency is maximized all around those locations.

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 building and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the south edge of the upper parking deck should appear as a seamless landscape transition, including the retention of existing trees as stated by the applicant.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how lighting at all parking areas and along street edges must be adequate and pedestrian scaled.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how pedestrian scaled signage should animate the street edge, and provide wayfinding to and from the east stair. They also cautioned that any freeway oriented signage not be disruptive to drivers, or overwhelm the façade, especially considering hotel guests use taxis and GPS, not relying on signage impulse decisions.

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 the importance of generous and pedestrian scale lighting to animate the building base.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how every possible interior space along First Avenue be treated with transparent windows to the street, and others such as restrooms use spandrel glass or similar treatments to create a consistent commercial character.

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 discussed how the landscaping of the upper parking deck should be increased, possibly including tree wells, grass-crete pavers, and/or material patterns, and the east guardrails at the edge of the adjacent bank might incorporate planters and/or trellises to mitigate the combined parking surfaces .

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.

Northgate-specific supplemental guidance:

Retain natural greenbelt vegetation where possible. Incorporate native plants into the landscape design.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the retention of existing mature trees wherever possible, and the use of native species in the setback planters and parking deck. NOTE: the existing trees just off site to the south should be surveyed and the placement of the proposed south access drive should be designed to retain all those trees.

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 departure was requested:

- 1. Street level development standards (SMC 23.47A.008.B.2):** The Code requires a minimum 60% of the street façade between 2 and 8 ft above the sidewalk to be transparent. The applicant proposes about 50% of the west street façade in that zone to be transparent.

The Board indicated receptivity to this departure, as it places the pool and other active uses at eye level to the south of the 3 non-compliant bays, and as long as those blank façade locations receive a quality material treatment and use landscaping from the adjacent setback, to provide pedestrian scale and interest on those wall surfaces. (Design Guidelines C-3, D-2, D-7, D-11)

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.