
**FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE
NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Project Number: 3014328

Address: 4717 Brooklyn Av NE

Applicant: Joel Wilbur, Caron Architecture, LLC, for Fields Holdings

Date of Meeting: Monday, February 04, 2013

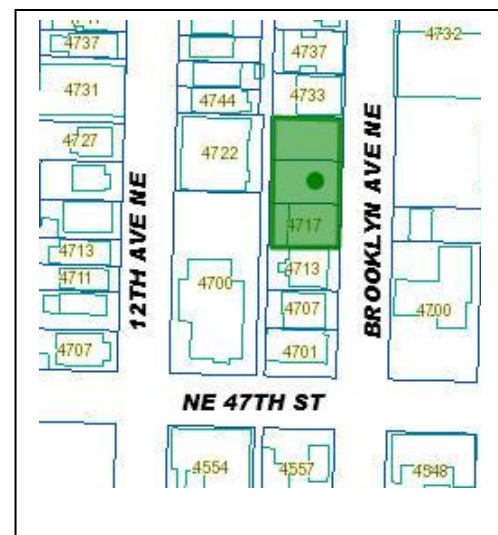
Board Members Present: Joe Hurley (Chair)
Martine Zettle
Christina Pizana
Ivana Begley

Board Members Absent: Salone Habibuddin

DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site is zoned NC3-65, as are surrounding properties and those properties across Brooklyn Avenue NE.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The rectangular, midblock site is composed of 3 parcels, totaling some 12,450 sq. ft., and slopes approximately 6 feet from west to east and 2 feet from north to south. The site faces onto Brooklyn Avenue NE on the east and an alley on west. The zoning of the site is NC3-65.

Three lots are being combined for proposed project. The northernmost is vacant; the middle lot is currently used for parking; the southernmost lot is currently occupied by a two-story commercial building (Weaving Works). Directly to the south of the proposed development site are two 2-story residential buildings. There is a small, single-story commercial building located north of the development site. Three multi-story residential buildings lie between the alley and 12th Avenue NE to the west.

Directly across Brooklyn Avenue NE is a grocery store (Safeway), its parking lot and a Chevron gas station. The University Heights Neighborhood Center (the former University Heights Elementary School), which houses a variety of educational and cultural functions, sits across NE 50th Street, just to the north and east of the site. The weekly University Farmers Market is held in the open area south of the historic structure. The uses along both sides of Brooklyn Avenue NE are a mixture of residential and commercial uses with a variety of newer and older structures.

Architectural styles in the area are mixed vernacular and revival styles, none of which particularly stand out, other than the wood framed and wooden clad community center, which is one of the oldest surviving elementary school buildings in the state.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The goal is to construct a mixed use building with a small area (8 parking stalls) of enclosed parking partially below grade off the alley and some commercial space along the street. The structure would contain six floors of residential units, “designed with the college student demographic” in mind. The building would include 56 studio units, each containing multiple bedrooms. Ample parking is proposed for bicycles. Private amenity areas, including a study and a recreation room would be provided within the preferred scheme, as would be a roof-top garden and recreation area. No vehicular parking was required at this site.

At the Early Design Guidance the preferred massing scheme showed a bar slightly recessed at the residential entry area off Brooklyn Avenue NE. The bar was slightly recessed at each end where a middle unit was located, from the second through the fourth floors. At the fifth, sixth and seventh levels the middle unit along the south end was omitted, allowing for light to penetrate a central circulatory courtyard. This preferred scheme was presented more fully developed at the Recommendation Meeting, with the front façade creating a solid front along Brooklyn Avenue NE, except for a recessed notch that accommodated the residential entry and elevator tower.

All the ground floor commercial spaces would be directly accessed from individual entries along Brooklyn Av NE, with the residential lobby distinguished with a different canopy profile and set back from the plane of the retail spaces. To the left of the residential entry was a double-height residential amenity area.

For design details, see the packet at:

<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/news/event/DesignReview/SearchPastReviews/default.aspx>

Public Comment

Comments on the project included those of owners of the small, neighboring building to the north which would be within the shadow of the much larger building during a significant portion of the day. A member of the public also noted that the parking lot and open space currently on site provided for regular vehicular and pedestrian pathways from the alley to Brooklyn Avenue NE, which maneuvering construction of the new building would put an end to.

Departures

Two departures from development standards were requested by the applicants. First, was a departure from SMC 47A.005, which does not allow more than 20 percent of the street facing façade to be occupied by residential uses. In all, 29.5 percent of the proposed façade would be occupied by residential uses, which would include residential lobby and a gym-amenity space for residents. A second departure was requested from SMC 23..54.030.D.3, which states that no portion of a driveway shall exceed a 15 percent slope. The proposed slope is 20 percent.

During their deliberations the Board recommended approval of the driveway slope, agreeing that the slope was related to only 8 parking space which were tucked below the alley grade, provided a better relationship to the alley than the option of parking at grade open to alley. In addition, the Board agreed that the increased slope allowed for the ground floor commercial spaces to have adequate depth and provide for greater human interaction and activity along the street front (Guideline A-4). Likewise, the Board recommended the departure from the diminishment of commercial frontage since the gym/amenity space at two stories of glass frontage was thought to enliven the street front dramatically and (Guideline A-40) and compositionally worked to add dramatic flair to the stair and elevator tower (Guideline C-2).

Project Approval

The Board unanimously recommended approval of the project and the requested departures. They found that the applicants had thoughtfully addressed the Guidelines determined to be of highest priority and had seriously considered the earlier guidance given by the Board. One particular area of some discussion by the Board was the stair and elevator tower that was

presented as a kind of signature of the project. Favorably reacted to by the Board, this element was thought by the Board to deserve even “more pop.” The Kynar painted perforated metal screen in bright metallic orange, as rendered. It was suggested, might be more fully integrated with the transparency of the elevator, in glass color, in interior elevator colors, or in lighting or all, to enhance what was a pleasant and significant architectural gesture of the project. It certainly should not be muted or dumbed-down in any way. Rather, the design team was encouraged to explore ways in which the element could become an even more forceful gesture and to work with the Land Use Planner to ensure that this element was not in any way degraded or perceptually lost.

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