

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE
EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Project Number: 3014366

Address: 103 12th Ave

Applicant: Jake McKinstry, Spectrum Development Solutions

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, February 13, 2013

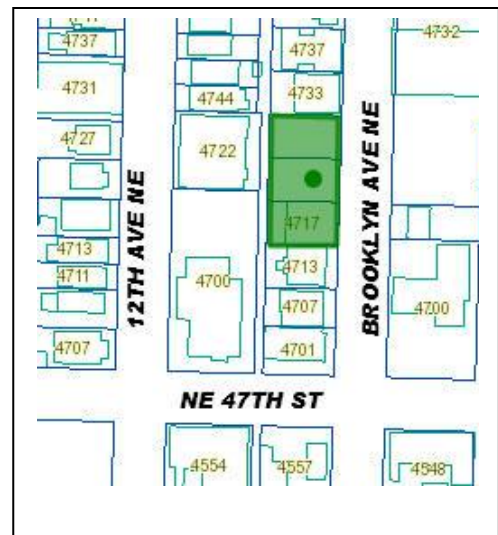
Board Members Present: Wolf Saar (Chair)
Dawn Bushnaq
Ric Cochran
Chip Wall

Board Member Excused: Lisa Picard

DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

The site is zoned NC3P-65, as are properties to the north and east across 12th Avenue. Directly west of the site, the development site for Seattle Housing Authority's 1105 E. Fir Street, project, is zoned MR, with a base height limit of 60 feet and a maximum height limit of 75 feet.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The rectangular, corner site is composed of 5 underlying parcels, totaling some 23,059 sq. ft., and slopes approximately 6 feet upwards from the southeast corner north along 12th Street. The site faces onto 12th Avenue on the east and E. Yesler Way on the south. The zoning of the site is NC3P-65. The site is located within the 12th Avenue Urban Center Village.

Five lots are being combined for the proposed project. The site is currently vacant and devoid of development. Directly across 12th Street are three single-story commercial buildings, the largest of which houses Seattle Curtain manufacturing and warehousing facilities.

Directly abutting the property along the west property line and extending along Boren Avenue between E. Yesler Way on the south and E. Fir Street on the north is the soon-to-be-developed site of Seattle Housing Authority's 1105 E. Fir Street project. This project will consist of a six-story apartment building and three townhouse structures containing a total of 100 residential units. The large area west and south of the site across Boren Avenue is comprised by Yesler Terrace, a public housing development scheduled to be entirely rebuilt and redeveloped over the next twenty years. Bailey Gatzert Elementary School occupies an expansive site extending between E. Yesler Way and S. Main Street and between 12th Avenue S. and 14th Avenue S. The school property begins just diagonally across the intersection of E. Yesler Way and 12th Avenue from the subject site.

The area is characterized with a variety of commercial and residential structures, some of them housing human and social services. Architectural styles in the area are mixed vernacular and revival styles. Although most do not particularly stand out, they are not necessarily devoid of character. Washington Hall, a City of Seattle Landmark structure, is located a block away, north and east of the site. Constructed as a cultural and social gathering place for the Danish Brotherhood in 1908, the building has served as home for a diverse number of ethnic and cultural groups. Among other important functions, it has served over the years as an historically important music venue and public dance hall.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As explained by Hal Ferris of Spectrum Development Solutions, the goal is to construct a mixed-use building with an area of enclosed, parking partially below grade and accessed from E. Yesler Way. Some 4,000 square feet of retail commercial space would be provided, primarily along 12th Avenue. The structure would contain five floors of residential units, designed with

“work-force” housing in mind. Parking would be provided at a ratio of .48 spaces per residential unit. The building would include approximately 100 units, some containing two bedrooms. Ample parking is proposed for bicycles. Private amenity areas, including a roof-top garden, recreation area and dog run would be included.

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Architects’ Presentation

After the brief introduction of the vision and scope of the project by Hal Ferris of Spectrum Development Solutions, Bert Gregory of *Mithun* presented *Three* alternative design schemes, each which included a structure generally occupying the entire site and calculated to meet a variety of goals, including:

- Anchoring the corner of 12th Avenue and E. Yesler Way so as to create a “gateway” experience to the neighborhood and the 12th Avenue corridor;
- Creating a vibrant urban street experience;
- Activating the street edges, in particular by adding to the 12th Avenue commercial corridor and enhancing the pedestrian experience there;
- Responding to the 1105 E. Fir Street project, in particular to the open courtyard of the project to be built due west of the subject site;
- Targeting the “work-force” housing market; and
- Seeking LEED ® silver certification for the building.

The first scheme (Massing “Option 1”) showed a rectangular “doughnut” with a compressed day-lit courtyard offset slightly to west of center. Both the ground floor and upper portions of the building were fitted snugly to the property lines. While creating a continuous face to 12th Avenue, the west façade did not appear to respond at all to the 1105 E. Fir Street development nor did the prominent southeast corner suggest a “gateway” in any particular sense.

The second scheme (Massing “Option 2”) was “C” shaped as it addressed 12th Avenue above its street-level base. While providing for the enhancement of a pedestrian experience at street level along 12th Avenue, the upper units at the middle of the façade were removed, allowing for greater light into the center of the structure. The scheme showed its backside to the E. Fir Street development, with no spatial or visual interaction with the neighbor to the rear.

The third scheme (Massing “Option 3”), the preferred option embraced by the design/development team, showed an “C” shaped scheme with its hollowed portion open to the west. The building base was set back along both 12th Avenue and E. Yesler Way, allowing for wider sidewalks. The upper building massing was set 3 feet forward of the base, except at the southeast corner where the vertical indentation aligned with the retail plane allowed an opportunity for a distinctive corner or “gateway” element. This scheme was said to allow for a building that related strongly to its west neighbor, strongly held itself to the two street fronts,

providing for an engaging street-level retail base, and presented a potentially distinguished corner.

The applicant noted that the preferred scheme would need a departure from the development standard (SMC 23.47A.014) that requires a 15-foot setback for portions of the building above 13 feet in height along the rear property line, since the site abuts a residential zone. The applicants propose a 10 foot setback all along the west property line. The presentation concluded with further comments regarding the departure quest and a brief explanation of how the reduced setback, in tandem with the open, west-facing courtyard and other concessions to the 1105 E. Fir Street development, would better meet the intent of the design review guidelines, in particular A-5, A-7, A-10, B-1, C-2 and E-2. Special thought and care had been given to offset and minimize any impacts on the privacy of residents who would be living in the adjacent Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) buildings. It was stated that SHA was supportive of the proposed preferred design option and of the requested departure.

Following the design team's presentation, the Board asked some clarifying questions, notably: 1.) Whether there was anything in writing that showed SHA's support of the requested departure? and 2.) Whether there would be actual access between the project and the 1105 E. Fir Street courtyard and open space?

At that juncture, Tom Eanes, senior development manager at SHA, acknowledged SHA's support of the design and the requested departure. He explained how the design teams for each project had been engaged in coordinating window alignments for the two projects to enhance privacy concerns for each of the developments. He noted that SHA would offer something in writing to the Board if that were deemed necessary. Regrettably, Mr. Eanes commented, there would not be any cross-access between projects, since SHA property management would not allow this.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately fourteen members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting and affixed their personal information to the sign-in sheet so as to become parties of record for the project. About six different members of the community provided public comment on the proposal, which included:

- One neighbor noted that the commercial strip along 12th Avenue didn't stop at E. Yesler Way and the project should recognize the connection south of there to "Little Saigon."
- Another asked whether the west-facing courtyard might be accessed from the commercial spaces along 12th Avenue. (In response the design team noted that the courtyard was not at the same level as the commercial spaces and that it was intended only for use by the residents.)
- Someone acknowledged approval of the widened sidewalk, but wanted the design team to make sure that the proposed sidewalk "was a sidewalk." "Look at signage, study the location of dumpsters and any potential for garage-entry/ pedestrian conflicts."
- Another person wanted to make sure that awnings of other overhead weather protection was provided along the sidewalk for pedestrian comfort.

- One person was concerned about the safety of the dog-run area on the rooftop.
- Several people commented on the desirability of providing smaller retail spaces which in turn might provide for more affordable retail in the area.

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 comments relating to the proposal.

- An agreement among the Board members that Scheme 3 offered the most promise.
- It was generally agreed by the Board members that the courtyard opening was too narrow, at least at its opening: “too much of a keyhole.” It was important to provide further studies that clearly show the visual relationships between the 1105 E. Fir Street open spaces and courtyard and the 103 12th Avenue inner courtyard. This was especially important since the connection between the two projects was to be a visual connection rather than an actual physical connection. “Show the views, both in and out.”
- The west elevation was generally considered to be drab, “flat,” and lacking the playfulness implied in both the E. Yesler Way and 12th Avenue elevations. It was extremely important for the success of the project to bring some of the vibrancy and playfulness of the other facades to its west-facing face. The Board wanted to understand the materiality of the wall. It should not be seen to be an “institutional wall.”
- At the street levels, both along E. Yesler and 12th Avenue, it was important to instill a “greater granularity” which could consist in smaller retail bays and sharper contrasts between solids and voids, or between colors, or both. Signage was an important part of a successful equation. The design of the retail front needed to be “taken to the next level”: “make it exceptional.”
- The Board was in favor of the allee of trees along the western edge, and would like to see fuller details in a refined landscape plan at recommendation time.
- Provide several sections to reveal the relationship of the proposed structure to existing and proposed grades, especially between the levels of the two courtyards and through the parking area and building to the sidewalk along 12th Avenue.
- Provide details of how the building courtyard works as both residential amenity and visual link to project to the west.
- Provide more street-level renderings of the proposed structure.
- Explore both the solar access within the proposed building courtyard and the effect of solar access and shadow on the development to the west.
- Overhead weather protection along the E. Yesler Way side is of important because of prevailing weather patterns.
- The appearance of a recessed corner element, whether gateway or simply a celebration of the intersection two important wayfaring paths, was a strong architectural move and feature of the preferred scheme. It should be enhanced and detailed as the project design continues.
- Provide examples of proposed finish materials at the Recommendation Meeting.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board indicated support of the requested departure in concept but noted that the recommendation regarding any requested departure(s) would 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 recommendations regarding any departures will be reserved until the recommendation meeting. Specifically, the Board would like to see studies (and possible changes to the west courtyard), an enhanced and more thoughtful west façade, and retail frontages revisited, refined and made exceptional.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following Design Guidelines from the *Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings* were specifically identified as being of highest priority for developing a successful MUP application and well-designed building: A-7, A-8, A-10, B-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, C-5, D-4, D-5, D-6, D-7, D-9, D-10, D-11, E-1 and E-2.

It should be noted that, although specific guidelines have been identified to be of highest priority for the success of the project, unless physically not applicable to the actual proposal, all of the design guidelines contained in the document are pertinent to a successful design.

A-7 Residential Open Space

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

As noted in the Board's comments, the correspondence between the building courtyard and the plaza and open space of 1105 E. Fir Street was of paramount importance for the success of this project.

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.

There should be ample clues to reinforce that the parking driveway is meeting and accommodating the sidewalk, not the other way around.

A-10 Corner Lots

Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

As noted above in remarks under the Board's deliberations, in-setting the corner from the two street facades was a strong architectural move and to be kept and refined.

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale

Projects should be compatible with the scale of development....Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale.....

The Board would like to see the complementarities between the proposed project and the 1105 E. Fir Street designs made more understandable through sections, solar access studies, view studies from one project to the other.

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.

The Board selected this guideline to be of special urgency in attempting to integrate the attractive energies conveyed in the street facades with that of the west façade. It was also applicable to issues of the location, size, proportions, and site-line relationships related to the proposed structure's west-facing courtyard.

C-3 Human Scale

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

The Board was especially interested in seeing details of the interactions with the retail spaces from the pedestrian, eye level perspectives along 12th Avenue and E. Yesler Way.

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, patterns, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

Architectural materials, scale and details should be integrated within a building whose concept is appropriate for the site and its surroundings as well as its programmatic uses. The Board was not prescriptive regarding materials, but would expect to see a choice of durable and sustainable materials and to be presented with samples of proposed colors and materials at the subsequent recommendation meeting. The handling of materials, colors, and detailing were of particular concern on the west façade.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances

The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

Pedestrian comfort and security were of special concern. Pedestrian paths should be sufficiently lighted and should be protected from the weather. Motor vehicles should be treated as intruders within this realm and architectural treatment and clues should indicate as much.

D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks

Parking lots near sidewalks should provide adequate security and lighting, avoid encroachment of vehicles onto the sidewalk....

This guideline should be viewed in concert with guidelines C-5 and D-5

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

Visibility should be minimized....

As with D-4, this guideline is not strictly applicable, but should be considered with C-5 as a directive to minimize as far as possible the disruptive impacts of vehicles crossing the sidewalk.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas

...locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible....

The guideline was offered as both a caveat from the Board, indicating their expectations of what they would consider a successful design, and a request for additional information regarding the location and treatment of such service elements at the time of the recommendation meeting.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security

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

This was a high expectation of the Board, but without further specificity.

D-9 Commercial Signage

Signs should add interest to the street front environment....

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.

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.

Each of the three above Guidelines was singled out by the Board as being of highest priority for the success of the project under review. Adherence to these guidelines would help to achieve the “greater granularity” they had requested in asking for smaller scaled retail bays and an overall “exceptional” design of the retail front, a design “taken to the next level.”

In addressing these issues, the Board would also asked for graphics that conveyed a sense of the experience of the building and its immediate environment from an eye-level view at the ground plane.

E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites

Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscape should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

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

In citing the above two guidelines the Board stated that they were affirming the direction in which the design team gave indications of going, that of enhancing the interface of between the subject proposal and the 1105 E. Fir Street development soon to be under construction. At the recommendation meeting the Board would be expecting a landscape plan that conveyed details of this as well as of the building's west courtyard, the two streetscapes, and the rooftop amenity area.

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