



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3014486

Address: 4400 SW Alaska Street

Applicant: Alyssa Mehl, Nicholson Kovalchick Architects

Date of Meeting: Thursday, June 27, 2013

Board Members Present: Myer Harrell (Chair)  
Laird Bennion  
Todd Bronk  
T. Frick McNamara  
Daniel Skaggs

Board Members Absent: None

DPD Staff Present: Lindsay King

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial (NC2-40)

Nearby Zones: North: NC2-40  
South: NC2-40  
East: NC2-65  
West: LR3-RC

Lot Area: 7,937 sq. ft.

Current Development: Two story apartment building



Surrounding Development: The subject site is located at the northwest corner of a three-street intersection; Glenn Way SW, 44th Avenue SW and SW Alaska Street. To the east heading toward California Avenue SW the neighborhood transitions to 1-2 story commercial buildings. Directly north of the subject lot is a three story apartment building. To the west, across the alley, the zoning changes to a lower density LR3 multifamily zone where 2-4 story apartment building area located. Directly south across SW Alaska Street is a 4-story brick apartment building and in the SW corner opposite the subject site contains the weekly West Seattle Farmers Market.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: California Avenue SW serves as a commercial corridor. Commercial uses continue down SW Alaska toward the subject lot but then transition to multistory apartment buildings and then lower density single family homes.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Design Review Early Design Guidance application proposing a 5-story structure containing four live-work units with 33 residential units above and parking for 6 vehicles.

### EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: June 27, 2013

## DESIGN PRESENTATION

The EDG packet includes materials presented at the EDG meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3014486) at this website:

[http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Project\\_Reviews/Reports/default.asp](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 3014486), 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](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

The applicant presented three alternatives. Each option includes a mixed use structure containing approximately 33 residential units above 4 ground level live work units. Each massing option includes an upper level setback along SW Alaska Street to maintain minimum clearance from existing Seattle City Light distribution lines within the right-of-way. Vehicle access is provided from the alley to an enclosed parking garage at grade with 6 parking spaces.

Massing Option One includes a five story building with a central open courtyard facing east. The courtyard contains the amenity space and primary residential entrance located adjacent to Glenn Way SW. Open circulation staircases are provided within the courtyard to access the units on floors 2-5. Two of the four live work units are provided at ground level on either side of the courtyard space on Glenn Way. The remaining two live work units are provided on SW Alaska Street. The building provides a 7' upper level setback along SW Alaska Street at floors 4-5. The building provides a uniform four story façade along Glenn Way SW and the alley. Massing option One includes a west facing roof deck at level 6. A departure request would be needed to locate residential uses less than 4 feet above grade.

Massing Option Two includes a five story building with an open two story lobby at the center of the SW Alaska street façade. The exterior lobby provides access to circulation areas enclosed within the structure. Glenn Way SW includes 4 live work units at ground level setback 8' from the street property line. Floors 2-3 project over the 8' setback and are flush with the street property line. Floor 5 provides additional modulation creating a saw tooth wall line facing Glenn Way SW. Along SW Alaska Street a residential unit is located at grade in addition to the entry courtyard and live work unit on the corner. Floors 3-5 provide a varied setback with a minimum 7' setback at floor 4-5. The building includes four story uniform alley façade. Massing option includes a southwest facing roof deck at level 5. A departure request would be needed to locate residential uses less than 4 feet above grade.

Massing Option Three (Preferred Option) includes a five story building with a south facing open courtyard at the center of the SW Alaska Street facade. The courtyard contains the amenity space and primary residential entry adjacent to Glenn Way. One circulation staircase is provided within the courtyard to access the units on floors 2-5. Four live work units are provided at ground level on Glenn Way SW. Glenn Way SW the wall is provided as a saw tooth. Along SW Alaska Street the 4-5 floors are setback. The building includes a four story uniform alley façade. Massing option includes a southwest facing roof deck at level. A departure request would be needed to locate residential uses less than 4 feet above grade.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following comments, issues and concerns were raised during the public comment portion of the Early Design Guidance meeting:

- Supportive of the preferred design option which includes a formal separation of work and living space within the live work unit.

- Felt the corner is important and the current design is missing an opportunity for opaqueness and presence. Suggested a corner treatment that includes the building wall line holding the corner or alternatively erode the upper level so ground levels are more prominent.
- Encouraged use of material sympathetic to adjacent sites. Material context can include stone and not necessarily brick.
- Preferred open stairway and believe it will be partially sheltered from SW winds by the building.
- Felt open stair may benefit from cover but also feels an open air stairway is preferable to an enclosed stair.
- Supportive of a semi-enclosed stair.
- Felt insufficient parking is provided.
- Supportive of the saw tooth wall like along Glenn Way.
- Encouraged the more contemporary façade expression and material treatment.
- Felt retail space on corner is too small for future commercial spaces.
- Noted project includes a lot of small spaces for residential units and live work units.
- Felt grade issues around site are unresolved; specifically the location of trash and recycling is undetermined.
- Felt proposed project is under developing site. Would like to see additional excavation to – provide more parking.

## 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.

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

### EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE:

1. **Massing and Building Location.** The Board felt the preferred Massing Option C should move forward to MUP submittal with the following guidance:
  - a) The Board agreed Massing Option C provided the better design solution. The preferred massing option locates the central entry courtyard at the SW Alaska Street sidewalk grade which eliminates the need for additional ramping to complete grade transition. The entry courtyard along the south façade creates a relationship to the courtyard opposite across SW Alaska Street (A-1, B-1).
  - b) The Board supported the massing option C which includes an upper level setback along the west façade. In addition to locating the rooftop deck at level 5 rather than level 6, the reduced massing is more sympathetic to the lower density zoning across the alley (A-5, B-1).

- c) The Board supported the location of live work units along Glenn Way SW which face the commercial corridor along California Avenue SW and the farmers market on the SW diagonally across the from the site (A-1).
  - d) The Board agreed that the saw tooth wall line along Glenn Way SW provides opportunities to add visual interest and unique architectural detailing. While the Board felt that the saw tooth was appropriate along the majority of Glenn Way SW the Board noted the corner treatment felt unresolved as discussed below (B-1).
2. **Corner Treatment.** The subject site is located at the corner of Glenn Way SW and SW Alaska Street. The corner is visually prominent to vehicle traffic from 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW and pedestrian traffic from California and the Farmers Market in the opposite SW corner.
- a) The Board expressed concern about the viability of the commercial use at the corner. The Board felt the space was too small to provide a viable retail space. The Board encouraged the applicant to develop the space to provide quality commercial opportunities. The Board provided the following suggestions: increasing the size of the space, develop a sense of height to create a tall space, develop the connection of the space to the central courtyard to promote the future commercial use to spill out into the area (A-6, A-10).
  - b) The Board felt the corner treatment was unrefined and the saw tooth wall treatment appeared more residential than commercial in character. The Board encouraged the applicant to remove the saw tooth from the corner and extend the wall line to hold the corner. The Board stated that the corner massing treatment should extend from the ground to the roof to express the corner. The Board felt the corner treatment also must be resolved within the building design parti and architectural concept (A-10, C-2).
  - c) In addition to the corner massing the Board encouraged the applicant to utilize fenestration, material and landscape treatment to read as urban commercial and articulate the commercial activity of the junction and farmers market. The Board encouraged transparency, commercial lighting on the interior and exterior, and landscape to reinforce the feeling of urban commercial uses (A-10, C-2, C-4, D-10, D-11, E-2).
3. **SW Alaska Street.** The preferred massing proposal includes a live work unit, the primary residential entry courtyard, a residential unit, and bicycle parking/workshop along SW Alaska Street. The uses and ground plans should relate to the existing sidewalk grades while providing a cohesive architectural concept.
- a) The Board encouraged a residential entry, with a stoop, for the residential unit along SW Alaska Street. The Board noted the entry should be designed to provide a direct relationship between the unit and the street to encourage human interaction while also providing security and privacy for residents (A-4, A-6).
4. **Open Circulation Stair in the Entry Courtyard.** The preferred massing option locates an open stair case within the residential courtyard entry.

- a) The Board was supportive of an entry security gate for the courtyard. The Board felt the security gate should be visually permeable to avoid feeling oppressive to the pedestrian sidewalk experience (A-4, A-6).
  - b) The Board was supportive of a partially open stair case but felt the stair should include some level of weather protection. The Board felt the weather protection should include a roof cover at a minimum but could also be partially enclosed (A-4).
  - c) The Board asserted that for the stair to be successful, the stair must be integrated into the building architectural concept to avoid the appearance of being ‘tacked on.’ The Board also noted that the stair should be designed with quality materials (C-2, C-4).
  - d) The Board noted that the stair access to the roof was visually prominent. The stair articulation and material treatment should be continued to the rooftop termination in order to read as one piece. (C-2, C-4).
5. **Alley Treatment.** Vehicle access and utility uses will be located in a partially subterranean garage located adjacent to the alley along the west property line.
- a) At Recommendation the Board requested more information on the treatment of the alley. The applicant will need to clarify the location of solid waste and recycling storage space and access to alley pickup. The Board would like to see the garage door proposed, as well as, the alley lighting concept to create safe spaces (D-5, D-6).
6. **Materials.**
- a) The Board encouraged use of durable, quality materials respectful of existing materiality context of the established West Seattle neighborhood (C-1, C-4).
  - b) The Board agreed the building’s corner location plays a prominent role in the overall neighborhood context and should be designed and executed with attention to long term quality. Corner material treatment should be applied from ground level to roof (A-10, C-4).
  - c) The Board encouraged the applicant to incorporate materials of human scale, with texture and pattern at ground level. The Board felt the material application should create a ‘timeless’ project (C-4).

<b>A. Site Planning</b>
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**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-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.

**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.

**West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:**

Pedestrian activities are concentrated at street corners. These are places of convergence, where people wait to cross and are most likely to converse with others. New development on corner lots should take advantage of this condition, adding interest to the street while providing clear space for movement. New buildings should reinforce street corners, while enhancing the pedestrian environment.

<b>B. Height, Bulk and Scale</b>
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**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-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.

West Seattle Junction-specific supplemental guidance:

New multi-story developments are encouraged to consider methods to integrate a building’s upper and lower levels. This is especially critical in areas zoned NC-65’ and greater, where more recent buildings in the Junction lack coherency and exhibit a disconnect between the commercial base and upper residential levels as a result of disparate proportions, features and materials. The base of new mixed-use buildings – especially those zoned 65 ft. in height and higher - should reflect the scale of the overall building. New mixed-use buildings are encouraged to build the commercial level, as well as one to two levels above, out to the front and side property lines to create a more substantial base



**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.

**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.

## **D. Pedestrian Environment**

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

**West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:**

- **Parking structures** should be designed and sited in a manner that enhances pedestrian access and circulation from the parking area to retail uses.
- The design of parking structures/areas adjacent to the public realm (sidewalks, alley) should improve the safety and appearance of parking uses in relation to the pedestrian environment.

**D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas.** Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.

- 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.
- 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.

## E. Landscaping

- E-1 **Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites.** Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping 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.

## 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, the following departure was requested:

- 1. Street Level Development Standards (SMC 23.47A.012 A1):** The Code requires residential uses located along a street facing façade to be located 10' from the sidewalk or 4 feet above or below sidewalk grade. The applicant proposes to locate a residential use a minimum of 3 feet above sidewalk grade. The floor line would be located between 3 and 5 feet above sidewalk grade.

The Board indicated a favorable response toward the requested departure. The Board noted the street-facing unit should be designed with a primary entry facing SW Alaska Street. The Board also noted the unit should be oriented to encourage human interaction with the street while also providing security and privacy for residents. The Board felt with the provided

guidance the proposed project would both better meet the intent of code and DR Guideline A-6 Transition between Residence and Street. The Board would like to see more information on the unit's relationship to the street at the Design Review Recommendation Meeting.

## **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.**