



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3014877

Address: 4745 40th Avenue Southwest

Applicant: Brad Reisinger with Alliance Realty Partners

Date of Meeting: Thursday, May 23, 2013

Board Members Present: Laird Bennion  
Todd Bronk  
Myer Harrell  
Daniel Skaggs

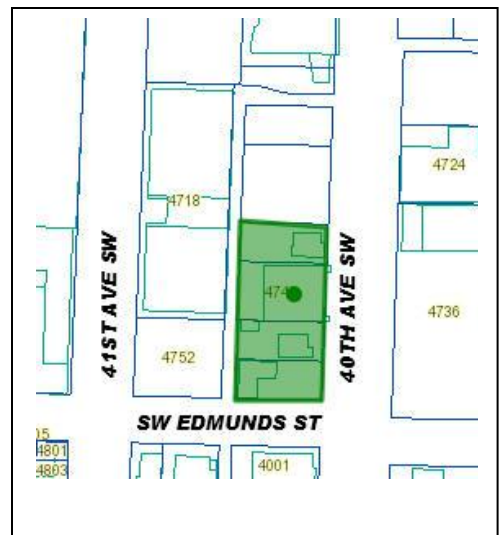
Board Members Absent: T. Frick McNamara

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Split zone: On the north half: Neighborhood Commercial Three with a 65' height limit (NC3 65). On the southern portion: NC3 with an 85' height limit (NC3 85).

Zoning Pattern: The predominant zoning classification is NC3 65 and NC3 85 in the vicinity. The zoning transitions to multi-family Lowrise Two (LR2) across SW Edmunds St. and Single Family 5000 farther south. To the east, zoning changes to LR2 from NC3 at the alley separating Fauntleroy Way SW and 38<sup>th</sup> Ave SW.



The 28,875 square foot site, located within the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village, lies at the northwest corner of 40<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW and SW Edmunds St. Four parcels comprise the site.

Lot Area:

SW Edmunds St. climbs approximately 20 feet from east to west. The alley's declination, an estimated 16 feet, occurs from the south to north. 40<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW is not parallel to the property lines on either side of the street. This off-center arrangement creates a broad zone between the property line and the roadway.

Current Development:

A two-story office building with surface parking.

Access:

Potential access would occur at the alley. The site currently has access from 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SW and SW Edmunds St.

As the topography ascends toward California Ave SW, two blocks of five to six-story multi-family and mixed use buildings sit west of the site. To the south is a low-rise multifamily complex and beyond that, a single family neighborhood.

To the east, the Masonic Temple and its parking lot lie across 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SW. Surrounding the Masonic Temple, the erstwhile Huling Brothers Auto Center occupies a majority of the block. A large mixed-use development is planned, including a grocery store, smaller retail shops, and approximately 400 residential units in two separate structures. City of Seattle Parks and Recreation has purchased property directly north of the subject site for a 11,000 square foot park. Design development for the park has not commenced. Further to the north on the same block, a Bank of America branch faces Alaska St.

Surrounding  
Development  
&  
Neighborhood  
Character:

The West Seattle Triangle planning area possesses a gallimaufry of residential and commercial uses. Other developments in the immediate vicinity include Trader Joe's and a large excavated area to the north; parking lots, a Safeway, and Highline Medical Plaza to the west; a childhood learning center, the Thunderbird apartment complex and a parking lot to the south; and the West Seattle Produce Market to the east. The West Seattle Golf Course and Recreation Center sits five blocks further to the east.

New developments in the area include the Mural Apartments and a mixed use structure including a QFC grocery store on SW Alaska. A sizeable, mixed use project at the southeast corner of SW Oregon St and 42 Ave SW is currently under construction.

ECAs: The site does not possess an environmentally critical area.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes to build an eight story structure containing 150 dwelling units with nine live/work units and a 100 space parking garage. The existing structure would be demolished.

## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Within the proposed building program, the applicant submitted three concept massing schemes. The organization of the program offers variations on a theme. In each case, the parking garage, accessed from the alley on the west, sits tucked into the hillside. In scheme A, the lobby and commercial retail front onto 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SW. Schemes B and C allow residential units to front onto the proposed park to the north and introduce commercial live/work units and the building lobby to face 40<sup>th</sup> Ave.

In Scheme A, the rectangular volume housing the dwelling units sits on a one-story plinth facing 40<sup>th</sup> Ave. The building steps up in height to the north from six to eight floors as it gains its additional levels due to the change in zoning allowance. Similar to option A, Scheme B sits on a plinth, although slightly recessed at the central entrance, and steps up in height. The northern portion of the building forms an “L” shape in plan to create a court, enclosed on three sides above the plinth. Scheme C reduces the presence of the one-story plinth, although it remains as a central feature of the project. The volumes surrounding the second story court rise six floors on the south and west and seven floors on the north. Slight recessions in the volumes occur at the south and north facades and along 40<sup>th</sup> Ave at the base the concept drawings suggest an arcade.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Fourteen members of the public affixed their names to the Early Design Review meeting sign-in sheet. Several of the speakers, who reside to the west of the building, spoke about the disruption of views, the potential loss of value in their residence, the loss of privacy and the obliteration of sunlight. They expressed frustration over the city’s willingness to upzone the subject property after they had bought their condominiums. Speakers requested a reduction in the height of the proposed structure, a desire for a greater setback from the property line, and a higher quality design for the west elevation.

Other comments focused on vehicular and pedestrian safety on Edmunds St. Turning movement to the alley from a steep incline generates safety concerns. The subject proposal and the one across 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SW will generate a significant increase in traffic. Two large vertical walls facing the alley will also exacerbate the “shady activity” that occurs in the alley. One community member suggested moving the park to the corner and the proposal to the north.

## **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](#).

### **A. Site Planning**

**A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics. The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.**

- 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.**

Evidence of how the proposal connects with other projects (namely the Whole Foods site) across 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SW. needs further explication. Provide a schematic or concept landscape plan along the frontage for the next EDG meeting. The wide planting strip on 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SW warrants a creative landscape design that complements the design for the Whole Foods mixed use project.

- A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.**

- 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.**

See guidance for B-1. The proposed structure should acknowledge the buildings across the alley with a larger setback or with the use of terraces. See guidance for B-1.

- 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.**

By the next EDG meeting, the applicant must provide a more explicit response to this guideline.

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

Provide a conceptual landscape plan by the next meeting. Focus the effort on open spaces adjacent to the future park, at the broad planting strip on 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SW and on the upper level open space.

- 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.**

Location of parking access on the alley met with the Board's approval.

- 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.**

The Board, reinterpreting the guideline, noted the significance of the building's corner at the future park and 40<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW. The structure's corner should have a prominence more significant than the corner at Edmunds St.

## **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.**

The Board noted the proposal's lack of recognition of the residential structures across the alley. The architect should step the structure back from the alley or sculpt its west façade in deference to the neighboring structures.

None of the three design alternatives received the Board's endorsement. A revised design may result in a hybrid of the three. Along with changes to the west façade, the structure should exhibit modulations or changes in form on the north façade facing the future park. A sheer vertical elevation facing the park is unwelcome. The south façade ought to acknowledge the incline along Edmunds St. and respond to the grades at the street frontage.

The varying heights of the wings, the extent of the plinth and the size and placement of the second floor open space received lengthy Board deliberation. No explicit direction emanated from the discussion; however, elements of schemes B and C had merit.

## 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.

The vicinity's context does not distinguish itself. The architect has the opportunity to endow this area of W. Seattle with greater character.

**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.

The Board emphasized the importance of this guideline.

- 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.**

Imbue the structure with a fine grain along the street frontages and the park. The choice of materials, overhead weather protection, and detailing will ensure that the pedestrian and the park users relate to the building's scale.

- 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.**

Use materials at the podium level to reflect its smaller scale in the larger composition.

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| <b>D. Pedestrian Environment</b> |
|----------------------------------|

- 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.

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

Design projects to attract pedestrians to the commercial corridors (California, Alaska). Larger sites are encouraged to incorporate pedestrian walkways and open spaces to create breaks in the street wall and encourage movement through the site and to the surrounding area. The Design Review Board would be willing to entertain a request for departures from development standards (e.g. an increase in the 64% upper level lot coverage in NC zones and a reduction in open space) to recover development potential lost at the ground level.

By the next EDG meeting, the design team must present a strong concept plan for the landscaping along 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SW and other open spaces. Scale and size the open spaces to orient to the neighborhood and future developments.

- 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.**

Ensure that a purely blank wall at the parking garage does not face Edmunds St.

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

See guidance for D-8.

- D-8 Treatment of Alleys. The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.**

Step the structure back from the alley at the intersection with the Edmunds St. right of way to ensure safe vehicular and pedestrian conditions along the street frontage.

- 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.**

Provide concept signage for the commercial uses at the Recommendation meeting.

- 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.**

The Board expects to review lighting concepts at the Recommendation meeting.

- 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.**

Ensure that live/work spaces have expansive amounts of glazing at the street frontages.

- 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.**

Consider adding a secondary residential entry facing the future park.

## **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.**

The future park provides a special opportunity for this project. Without the city's design for the future park to the north, however, the landscape architect has little direction in which to create a complementary outdoor space. Design for both continuity and the privacy of residences facing the park.

- 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.**

Provide a schematic landscape plan for the street frontages, the area adjacent to the park land, and the upper level open spaces.

- 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.**

The right of way along 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SW needs careful consideration. The unusually wide planting strip between the roadway and the property line provides an opportunity both

to consider aligning the street with future improvements to 40<sup>th</sup> Ave (SDOT concern) north of the site and to provide a gracious front yard to the commercial and lobby areas facing the street.

## **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 departures were requested:

1. SMC 23.54.030. Parking Space Standards. When more than five parking stalls are provided, a minimum of 60% of the parking spaces shall be striped for medium vehicles. The applicant requests a reduction in the number of medium sized stalls. The applicant has not determined a proposed ratio.

The Board indicated its willingness to entertain the proposal.

2. SMC 23.47A.009. Setbacks. A setback of at least ten feet from the street lot line is required along non-arterial north-south avenues for at least 25% of the lot frontage or 100 feet of the lot frontage, whichever is less. The applicant requests to reduce the setback to eight feet at street level to allow viable parking and live/work units.

The Board stated its willingness to consider the departure based on how the design evolves and how it better meets the design review guidelines.

3. SMC 23.47A.032. Parking location and Access. Within a structure, street-level parking shall be separated from street-level facades by another permitted use. The project team requests to allow a small portion of the garage to front onto Edmunds St.

Board directed the architect to design a high quality wall along Edmunds St. The design must clearly show how the guidelines are better met.

4. SMC 23.47A.005. Street-level Uses. In Neighborhood Commercial zones, residential uses may occupy, in the aggregate, no more than 20% of the street-level, street facing façade in a zone that has a height limit of 85 feet or higher. The project proponent requests a reduction in the required commercial use on the north parcel where the 85 foot height limit occurs.

The Board found the request problematic and suggested the following: consider placing commercial use at the corner of the project site and the future park and shift the lobby / amenity area away from the corner toward the mid-point of the property's frontage on 40<sup>th</sup>

Ave. SW. The Board looks forward to seeing the architect develop more ideas and how the frontage and the building mass evolve.

5. SMC 23.47A.008. Street-level Development Standards. Where residential uses are located along a street-level, street-facing façade, the floor of a dwelling unit along the street-level, street-facing façade shall be at least four feet above or four feet below sidewalk grade or be set back at least ten feet from the sidewalk. The applicant would like dwelling units closer to the sidewalk due to the steep slope along Edmunds St.

In the discussion above (D-8), the Board encouraged a setback from the corner of the alley to ensure vehicular and pedestrian safety. The departure request will be considered based on how the applicant responds to this direction.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should return to the Board for an additional EDG meeting.

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