

Current Development: Single-story commercial building

Access: Street access

Surrounding Development: The site abuts a townhouse development to the north and a sports bar to the west. A single story commercial structure and three residential structures sit across Greenwood Avenue N. from the development site.

ECAs: The site slopes approximately 10 feet from north to south and is relatively flat from east to west. There are no ECAs on site.

Neighborhood Character: The site is located along a commercial / industrial street in the Fremont Neighborhood, N. 36th Street which is a principal arterial. There are a variety of commercial buildings located along the arterial. Primarily to the north are located a mixture of older and newer residential buildings, with many of the newer buildings possessing a Seattle-townhouse character.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed development is for a mixed-use building with residential units above a ground floor of commercial, live/work, and residential spaces. Sixty seven residential units are proposed. The project is not required to provide parking since is located within a residential urban village, but 16 stalls are proposed for the ground floor, with access from Greenwood Avenue N. An Early Design Guidance meeting was held on July 22, 2013, at which time the Board enumerated the design guidelines of highest importance for the project and recommended the project undergo further design development according to the guidelines and the Board's guidance and proceed to a Master Use Permit application.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: February 24, 2014
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DESIGN PRESENTATION

Design development had refined the third massing scheme as shown at the Early Design Guidance meeting. The third scheme as originally presented at the Early Design Guidance meeting had shown the bottom floor pulled back at the corner of Greenwood Ave. N. and the topmost floor pulled back from N. 36th street its entire length. There was a thin vertical notch extending from the ground through the top floor approximately three-quarters of the distance from the intersection corner which appeared as a larger slice or wedge removed from the massing, partially in-filled but allowing for an amenity space above the podium level that was open to the west. This, the preferred scheme, also showed vehicular access at approximately the midpoint along Greenwood Ave. N.

The refinements to the preferred scheme, as presented at the recommendation meeting, deviated from the earlier massing in that the ground floor was not recessed along N. 36th Street, nor at the intersection with Greenwood Avenue N. Instead of the top floor, being pulled back from N. 36th Street, the top two floors were set back from N. 36th Street. The vertical slice and wedge allowing for a plaza above the podium level and opening to the west, with refinements, was generally as had been presented at the EDG meeting. For details, see the packets from each meeting, available on the DPD-Design Review website:

[Design Review website.](#)

After the design team's presentation and time for clarifying questions, comments were elicited from members of the public attending the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately six members of the public attended the Recommendation meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised by the public:

- It was noted that there was already a difficulty for residents and customers of businesses in the area to find street parking and the scant number of parking spaces proposed for this project would exacerbate the problem.
- A resident in the town houses directly north of the proposed project voiced concerns about the privacy of his unit and about being literally overshadowed by the new structure, as well as concerns about the impacts on available parking, especially for guests.
- A representative of the George & Dragon establishment located directly to the west of the proposal, as he had at the EDG meeting, voiced concerns about the effects of demolition and construction activity on his business establishment and customers. He voiced special concern regarding the proposed courtyard overlooking the G&D outdoor patio where patrons watched TV broadcast matches and the impacts on a business that relied upon using its outdoor space during the less inclement months as an extension of their establishment where and their customers ate, drank and watched soccer games. He was concerned that customers could be adversely affected by the close proximity to the proposed new residential units and wanted to minimize tensions or conflicts between his patrons and neighbors, and vice-versa.
- The west wall, especially the southernmost extension, will be very visible for those travelling east on N. 36th Street and needed greater attention given its appearance; art or a mural might be appropriate treatments.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS

During the period allowed for clarifying questions from the Board, members of the Board had inquired into the following (and offer comments, given in parentheses):

- Why use brick in the columns on the commercial level? (The use of brick is incongruous with the materials used elsewhere in the project.)
- Railing material on south elevation? Vertical orientation on lower? Horizontal orientation on upper? Canopy materials? Band above the canopy? Brown wall material at the north elevation? (Lagging) Will the steel pilings be exposed as a vertical element as well? The wood siding material on the building itself?
- How making bike stalls are being provided? Will there be short-term bike parking for patrons of the commercial uses located outside the garage?
- How high and deep is the landscaped area at the edge of the patio overlooking George & Dragon? How tall will the plantings be? Explain the general landscaping plan for the area between the structure and the property line at the north.
- Height of the walls on the west overlooking George & Dragon? Exact location of the G & D signs anent the proposed wall?
- Why locate the bedrooms in the prominent corner of the building at N. 36th and Greenwood? (Having bedrooms with limited glazing seems too timid a move.)

The Corner Several of these questions were followed up during the Board’s deliberations. First was the alignment of the residential floor plans above the first floor and the effect that placing bedrooms at the corner had on the design. In effect, the building “turned its back” on the neighborhood and provided a situation lacking a desirable “eyes on the street.” The units needed greater openings at the corner and the living rooms belonged there, not bedrooms. The corner was thought to be the “weakest part” of the overall design of the building. The Board would expect to see a stronger street presence at the southeast corner of the building, at the upper residential floors. This would appear to necessitate providing living area at the corner units

Ground Floor The vertical brick pilasters on the ground-floor, commercial level were at odds with the pronounced horizontality of the upper floors. Brick did not appear to be the proper choice in materials; the Board found the rationalization regarding contextual considerations of Fremont brick usage to be weak; the choice of brick struck the Board as being “too arbitrary.” Wood or concrete might be preferable as materials. The commercial frontage, it was suggested, could be all glass, with structural elements interior to the glass, or the entire lower level façade could respond to other elements of the Fremont look. It should echo the horizontality of the upper floors in some way. The perspective showing the residential entry and the bike rack is “anywhere USA”; it falls with a thud.

Blank West Wall The Board thought that the blank wall on the west façade needed further attention. While unavoidable, the blank wall along the west façade still requires design treatment to reduce pedestrian discomfort and, since highly visible, to increase visual interest along the street scape. The Board was not convinced that the proposed treatment had exhausted the possibilities for a design that promoted pedestrian comfort and visible interest. Although the possibilities may be limited, there remained opportunities that needed further

exploration. The EVO building, further west on N. 36th Street, was mentioned as an example of an art treatment of a highly visible blank wall.

Deck Design The low level of landscaping at the western edge of the upper roof amenity space does not provided a sufficient buffer to prevent residents from obtruding themselves into the G & D outdoor serving areas. The general design of the rooftop deck lacks detail, but nonetheless is unconvincing as an attractive amenity area or well-functioning space. While the lower amenity area, open to the west, seems to provide a sufficient buffer area at the western edge, a section through the space and through the entire property to the west would be useful to aid in the Board's deliberation. In addition to the landscape buffer, add some type of screening/fence atop the wall at the slice through the building, probably of wood to match the other "slices" and with greater openness as it increases in height. (No powder-coated aluminum.)

Likewise, at the north property line, there seems to be an adequate landscape buffer between the proposed structure and the town homes to the north. A question was raised regarding the alignment of windows with those in the town homes. More detailed views and cross sections of the retaining wall and plantings, continuing to the floor levels of the neighboring structures to the north would be most helpful in confirming this. More details and specificity are needed. The trees at the low courtyard should be shown in section. There should be an addition of vines growing down the western portion of the north wall.

Deck Railings and Bike Racks The deck railings along N. 36th Street need further scrutiny. Why is the pronounced horizontality of the rooftop handrail not matched with a more pronounced horizontality of the hand rail at the third floor? Why powder-coated aluminum railings off the shelf when architectural consistency would suggest a more industrial or other look?

There should be short-term bike parking easily available for patrons of the commercial uses.

Departures A Departure was requested from SMC 23.47A.008.D.2, which requires the floor of a dwelling unit locate along the street level, street-facing façade to be at least 4 feet above or below sidewalk grade, or set back at least 10 feet from the sidewalk. As they had at the EDG meeting, the Board indicated that they thought the departure was a reasonable request. The actual recommendation by the Board for granting this request must await the return of the proposal to the Board for a second recommendation meeting and would depend upon the applicant's responses to the Board's guidance given at the interim recommendation meeting and the compatibility of the forthcoming with the Design Review Guidelines.