



# City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development  
D. M. Sugimura, Director



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number: 3015241

Address: 2150 N 107th St

Applicant: Dale Pinney, for First Western Development Services, Inc.

Date of Meeting: Monday, September 16, 2013

Board Members Present: Ellen Cecil  
Jerry Coburn  
Mike DeLilla (Chair)  
David Neiman

Board Member Absent: Ted Panton

DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy, Senior Land Use Planner

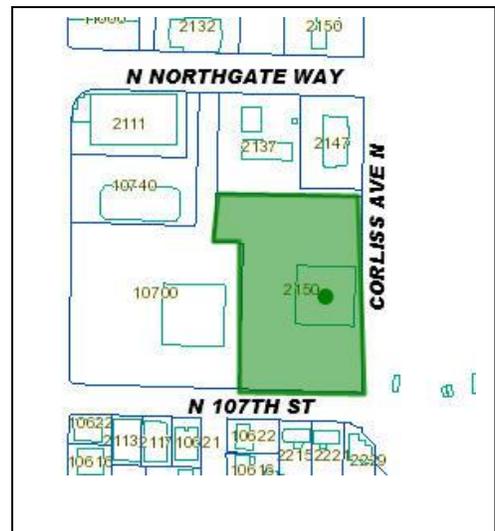
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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC3- 85

Nearby Zones: (North) NC3-85  
(South) MR-85'  
(East) NC3-85  
(West) NC3-85

Site Area: 100,635 square feet



**Current Development:** The east/central portion of the site is currently occupied by a 85,000 square foot, five-story commercial building with the majority of the site utilized as a surface parking lot.

**Access:** Proposed access is from the north/south access easement that extends between N. Northgate Way and N. 107th Street.

Much of the existing development in the immediate area consists of 2-5 story office buildings from the 1970s. The northeast corner of the block consists of a gas station/ coffee shop and fast food restaurant (McDonald's). The adjacent block along N. 107th Street contains 3 and 4 story apartment buildings and some smaller single-family houses.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:** The site and area lie within the Northgate Urban Center & Overlay District. The recent merger of Northwest hospital, located a short distance north and west of the site, with UW Medicine, and the location of other out-patient facilities off Meridian Avenue N., have positioned this area west of I-5 and the Northgate Shopping Center as a prime candidate for out-patient medical care facilities. Much of the older face of the neighborhood is characterized by single-family residences on streets sparse for sidewalks and island-like commercial and institutional buildings (as on the current site) surrounded by seas of surface parking. The sizeable campus of North Seattle Community College lies just a few blocks due south of the site. Extensive retail/commercial uses (including the Northgate Shopping Center) lie to the east of the site, separated by the wide swath cut by I-5, but linked by Northgate Way which provides at grade access beneath the elevated freeway.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal includes a new six-story medical office building with 88,000 square feet of medical office space, a remodel of an existing five-story office building of 85,000 square feet, and construction of a free-standing parking garage for 510 vehicles. The 6-7 level parking structure s would be accessed from the an existing easement that connects the site to both N. Northgate Way and N. 107th Street.

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| <b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: September 16, 2013</b> |
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## **DESIGN PRESENTATION**

Three exploratory massing schemes were briefly presented, two showing a new parking structure along the north side of the site with the new medical office building along the south periphery of the site. Design alternative number three, the applicant's preferred alternative, located the medical office building at the south edge of the site but pulled the mass of the building away from the southeast corner. This provided an opportunity for an outdoor plaza area and pedestrian access to and from Corliss Avenue N. It also allowed the building massing to be arranged into three discernibly different shapes and to allow greater views from both the

existing and the proposed office structures. By opening up the southeast corner, the massing at least as perceived from the southeast, was also perceptively reduced.

See the DPD Design Review website for a copy of the packet presented:

[http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Overview/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Overview/default.asp)

Two potential departures from development standards were identified by the applicant. One was related to the requirements of SMC 23.47A.008, Street-level development standards, as those standards would relate to the parking structure. The other departure would be from stipulations in SMC 23.54.035, regarding required loading berths. The proposal would not reduce the number of loading berths but separate them in different parts of the development.

### Exceptional Trees

A larger portion of the applicants' presentation centered on the question of retaining existing trees on site. As explained, the site contains a number of trees along the peripheries of Corliss Avenue N. and N. 107<sup>th</sup> Street, thought to have been originally planted as "street" trees, although for the most part they are planted on the site, that is within within the private property lines rather than in the street rights-of-way. Along N. 107<sup>th</sup> Street, the trees would constitute a grove of trees (and therefore would be considered "exceptional") if on private property, whereas the same trees, if street trees, would not be considered exceptional if in the right-of-way. Two of the three trees along Corliss Avenue N., located at the southeast edge of the site, could also be considered "exceptional." Retention of any of the trees would interfere with installation of full street improvements within the Corliss Avenue N. and N. 107<sup>th</sup> Street rights-of-way where sidewalks are proposed as assets not only to the project but to the neighborhood as well.

25.11.080.A. states: The Director may permit an exceptional tree to be removed only if the applicant demonstrates that protecting the tree by avoiding development in the tree protection area could not be achieved through the development standard adjustments permitted in Section [23.41.018](#) or the departures permitted in Section [23.41.012](#), a reduction in the parking requirements of Section [23.54.015](#), and/or a reduction in the standards of Section [23.54.030](#).

The question put before the Board was whether the proposed design with the trees removed would better meet the Design Review Guidelines than a proposal that would include the retention of the trees. The retention of the trees that could be determined to be "exceptional" would not appear to affect the placement of the proposed structures on the site but rather prevent the street improvements at the periphery of the site along both Corliss Avenue N. and N. 107<sup>th</sup> Street. While not making any determination at the Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board did listen to comments from Galen Wright, a Master Arborist who had prepared a tree evaluation report for the City on behalf of the applicants which concluded that it would be better to redesign the planting strips and create more room for new trees and sidewalks along

the east and south peripheries of the site. The existing trees, mostly deformed and diseased, should be replaced by quality new trees of a good urban species which would enhance the site and the neighborhood. The Board indicated they would be anxious to see a developed landscape plan that would fully describe the placement, caliper size and species of replacement trees and illustrate the relationship between the streetscape and the site and neighboring properties (Guidelines A-2, A-5, E-1) and add to the quality of proposed open spaces A-1, E-2, E-3), especially at the southeast corner of the site.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Three members of the public signed in to become parties of record. The following issue was raised:

- A traffic study is clearly required to assess the impacts of all the expected traffic that will be generated by this proposal.

## **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.

### **EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE (SEPTEMBER 16, 2013):**

- Provide details of the proposed preferred scheme; the packet showed massing but “no architecture.”
- Provide more details of site circulation, both of vehicles and pedestrian experience of the building;
- Provide a sense of safety and refuge for the pedestrians on site.
- The response of the open space at the southeast corner and scheme for providing for a cut-through from Corliss Avenue N. were welcomed by the Board (A-1, D-1, E-3).
- It was thought by the Board members that the landscaped open space at the southeast corner was ripe for the introduction of earth berms or mini-mima mounds as well as for plant materials to deflect sounds from the freeway (E-2, E-3).
- Integrating the large parking garage into the campus would be a challenge and the Board was eager to see some architecture as well as landscaping plans addressing the structure (C-2, D-5).
- It is important to provide clear spatial signs that the southeast corner space is intended for public use as would be the pedestrian connector (D-1).

- The Board acknowledged that the preferred design provided a challenge in integrating the internal pedestrian pathways with the frontages of the two south buildings as well as the parking garage (D-1).
- The Board discussed the need to create a unified campus that provided a synthesis between the parking structure, the older and newest office buildings (C-2).
- The Board indicated that it would be important to see how cladding materials might stitch the various campus structures together (C-2).
- The Board indicated concerns regarding the comfort and security of pathways leading to and from the parking and the openness and invitational quality of the amenity space at the southeast corner of the site (D-1, D-7).
- Adequacy of after-dark lighting is important to the design and pedestrian safety (D-7).
- The lighting should be designed to enhance the ground plane and to provide a glow rather than a glare for neighbors to the project. The Board expects the design team to come back with a lighting strategy that provides for that goal (D-10).
- The Board expects the design team to proceed along the direction of the preferred plan shown at EDG, with real architecture, and fuller details regarding materials, color, texture, and landscaping as the buildings' designs mature (C-2,E-1).

## **DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES**

The Board identified the following Citywide Design Guidelines of highest priority for this project.

The Neighborhood specific Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District design guidelines are summarized after the citywide guidelines. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

**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.**

- Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through access points and pathways to buildings.
- Articulate the pedestrian connectivity to the center of the site.

**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.

- 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 the building.
- The guideline was chosen to emphasize the importance of providing a clear vehicular pathway to the parking structure entry and clear pedestrian pathways to the other campus structures.
- 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.
- New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm, in this case the transition pathways between private property and the public right of way.
- D-4 **Design of Parking Lots near Sidewalks.** Parking lots [structures] near sidewalks should provide adequate security and lighting, avoid encroachment of vehicles onto the sidewalk, and minimize the visual clutter of parking lot signs and equipment.
- 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.
- 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[s] and streetscape. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.
- The Board favored the concept of placing a level of the parking structure below grade to diminish its overall bulk.
- 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 street front where possible....
- In this case, the inner court of the lot providing both its public face and front yard as well as back-of-house functions, great care must be taken to screen and minimize the intrusion of unattractive functions.
- D-7 **Personal Safety and Security.** Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

**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.

- Retain existing, non-intrusive mature trees or replace with large caliper trees.
- Water features are encouraged including natural marsh-like installations.
- Reference the City of Seattle Right Tree Book and the City Light Streetscape Light Standards Manual for appropriate landscaping and lighting options for the area.
- Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a the campus and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the broader context of the area.

**E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions.** The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site condition such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions.

- Special opportunities were identified for specific landscaping challenges on site: the screening of the proposed parking structure; the open space at the southwest corner of the site; and the space between structures interior to the site where a melding of building entries and the experience of arrival sequences would be an important component of a successful design.

## **Northgate Urban Center & Overlay District Design Guidelines**

The following neighborhood guidelines supplement the *Citywide Guidelines* and are applicable to the design proposal.

### **1.1 Respond to Site Characteristics**

Try to match the grade of abutting public rights-of-way where properties meet. If there is a significant grade difference, create an attractive transition, using creative grading and landscaping. Be sure to incorporate pedestrian access, including walkways, stairs or similar features that can help build greater pedestrian connectivity (also see guideline 3.1).

### **1.2 Streetscape Compatibility**

#### **Streetscape Design**

Northgate's character as an urban place is influenced by the quality of its pedestrian environments, and therefore achieving high-quality design of streetscapes is essential. The community's vision of an enhanced, pedestrian-oriented urban center environment can only be achieved by improving pedestrian network connectivity throughout the neighborhood.

### **3.1 Incorporate Open Space**

The Northgate Plan places a high priority on open space, especially public spaces that are accessible, comfortable, and in proximity to or on routes to high activity areas. The Northgate Overlay District (Ch.23.71 of the Seattle Municipal Code) includes detailed and specific open space requirements, defining "usable open space" that are open to the public and abutting a sidewalk.

### **3.3 Parking Structures**

Parking structures merit the same quality materials and finishes as the principal buildings in a development.

- Site parking structures away from Major Pedestrian Streets.
- Design a well-proportioned and unified parking structure. Consider techniques specified in Citywide Design Guidelines – those relating to height, bulk and scale compatibility; architectural concept and consistency; and fostering a human scale – to achieve good scale and architectural design quality.
- Parking structure facades should be treated with high quality materials and given vertical articulation and emphasis similar to the principal structure. The facade should be designed to visually screen cars.
- Pedestrian entries should be clearly visible and architecturally expressed on the exterior of the building.

### **4.2 Use Landscaping Design to Enhance the Site**

Consider design strategies to create natural features or systems that can be incorporated into the site design. For example, consider incorporating rain gardens or drainage swales that are aesthetically pleasing, would emphasize natural features and can create a pedestrian friendly environment by providing landscape designed features or areas of interest. Landscaping features such as larger planting strips can enhance the site and can effectively separate pedestrians from the impacts of traffic.

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting the applicants did not identify any clear departure needs for their preferred development scheme, but they noted that departures could be identified as design development proceeded. The Board expressed a willingness to entertain these departure needs insofar as the design development would proceed in concert with the Board's identified Guidelines and guidance.

## **BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

**The recommendation summarized below was based on the proposal presented at the September 16, 2013, Early Design Guidance meeting, as contained in the EDG packet and other materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, and reviewing the materials, the four Design Review Board members present recommended that the project should proceed to further development and MUP intake .**

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