

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE
SOUTH WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Project Number: 3015371

Address: 3824 California Ave SW

Applicant: Radim Blazaj, Caron Architecture

Date of Meeting: Thursday, January 30, 2014

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

DPD Staff Present: Beth Hartwick

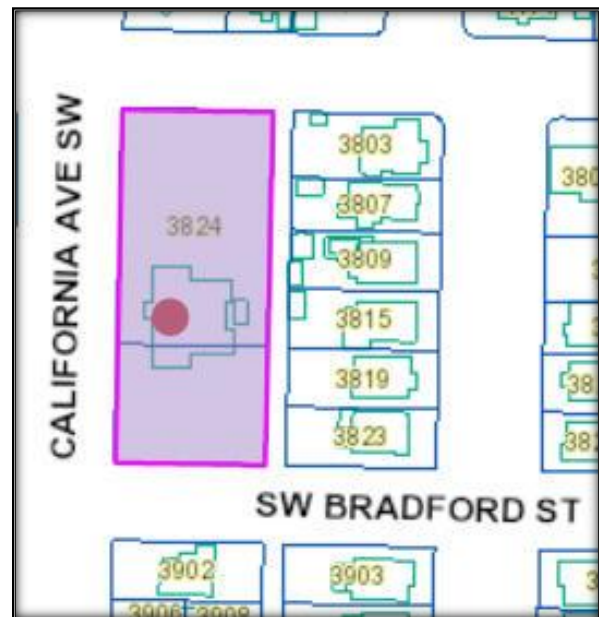
SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC1-30 (Neighborhood Commercial 1 -30)

Nearby Zones: North: NC1-30 & LR3 RC
South: LR3 RC
East: SF 5000
West: NC1-30, LR3 RC & SF5000

Lot Area: 31,050 sq. ft.

Current Development: The site is currently occupied by a single story commercial building and surface parking.



Access: The site has street frontage along California Ave SW, SW Bradford St., SW Charleston St. and the unimproved alley. There are currently three curb cuts along California Ave SW and one curb cut off of SW Bradford St.

Surrounding Development: Across SW Bradford St. to the south is a single family structure with a commercial use. East, across the alley are six single family residences built between 1914 and 1927. To the north across SW Charleston St. is a single story commercial structure built in 1995 and two single family residences. Across California Ave SW is a gas station with a convenience store, a brick single-story four-plex built in 1927, and townhouses built in the last decade. To the northwest of the site in the small NC1 zone is a two-story commercial building constructed in 2008.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: This section of California Ave SW is a busy arterial with a mixture of one to three story residential structures and lower scale commercial uses, that lack a consistent character due to the wide range of architectural styles and time of construction. In contrast, the grid of single family zoned blocks, east and west of California Ave SW provide a strong residential neighborhood character.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The half block site is 270 feet in length along California Ave SW, by 115 feet. The site is relatively flat except for the eastern portion where the site slopes upwards to the alley approximately two to eight feet. Overall grade rises about 16 feet from the lowest point near the southwest corner to the highest point near the northeast corner.

The proposed project is for the design and construction of 17-20 three-story live/work units and 10-13 three-story townhouses located behind the live/work units. Parking spaces provided range from 15 to 30. The parking being provided is for the residential townhouses and is required.

Early Design Guidance Meeting January 30, 2014

DESIGN PRESENTATION

The EDG packet includes materials presented at the EDG meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3015371) at this website:
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 3015371), 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

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

- Not opposed to development but stated the project should not diminish the livability of the existing neighborhood.
- Concerned about the proximity to the single family residences across the alley and the possibility of structures looming into the backyards.
- Stated that trees were planted on the project site with the permission of the previous property owner, and would like the trees preserved.
- Expressed concern about preserving the solar access into adjacent yards.
- Stated that they were glad the project was not a mixed use structure.
- Encouraged a thoughtful design that will relate to the neighborhood.
- Encouraged improvement of the alley but was concerned about a paved alley being hard to use given the grade changes.
- Concerned about potential noise from mechanical equipment.
- Concerned about the proposed location of the solid waste collection given the topography of the alley.
- Concerned about loss of privacy from east facing fenestration of the townhomes.
- Encouraged roof decks to face west.
- Concerned about the height and location of the stair penthouses.
- Concerned about head light from cars using the alley to park.
- Would like to see shadow studies from later in the day.
- Encouraged a design that respects the neighborhood character.
- Encouraged screening of alley uses.
- Encouraged a more craftsman style of architecture, and discouraged flat concrete like materials or metal siding.
- Stated the proposed development feels crammed into the site and suggested creating a central open space.
- Preferred the parking access be provided on the site via a central access drive verses the “suburban” surface parking off the alley.
- Stated the solid waste collection location is unimaginative and hostile and out of the scale with the proposed development.
- Stated the applicant did not submit three different massing options.
- Concerned the project is not following the intent of the commercial zoning designation and is instead proposing essentially a residential development.
- Concerned the proposed development is missing an opportunity to provide a true commercial use and is not developing the site to its full potential.

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:

1. **Massing and Design:** The Board felt that three different massing options were not presented and directed the applicant to return for a 2nd EDG showing massing options that follow the guidance below. (A-5, A-6, A-7, A-10, B-1, C-1, C-4)
 - a. Provide an option that transitions at the corner of California Ave SW and SW Charleston St. from a massing and design that compliments the existing commercial development to the northwest to a less “commercial” design along California Ave SW and SW Charleston St. (A-6, A-10, B-1, C-2)
 - b. Design the live/work units so that they may easily be converted to retail use in the future. (C-1)
 - c. The Board is not supportive of the proposed location of solid waste collection and wants to see other options. (A-5, D- 6)
 - d. Provide a design that represents the current neighborhood character and uses materials consistent with the neighborhood. (C-1, C-4)
 - e. Consider using brick along the street front and more traditional materials at the corners. (A-10, C-1, C-4)
 - f. Provide design concepts that are not so repetitive and that have movement and a variation of scale along California Ave SW. Consider a variation in the size of the units and massing of the buildings. (C-1)
 - g. Lay out the structures to allow for setbacks and create useable open space. (A-6,
 - h. The Board would like the applicant to consider an option providing residential uses over retail use at the street level. [*Note: the Board can make suggestions about uses and/or use locations to the applicant, but has no authority to dictate project uses.*]
2. **Height, Bulk & Scale:** The site is across the alley from single family residences. (B-1)
 - a. The Board encouraged lowering the height of, or grouping the stair penthouses on the townhouses to make them minimally intrusive. (A-5, B-1)
3. **Parking:** Parking was shown being located either off of and accessed by an improved alley or located with the townhouses and accessed by curb cuts and a parking aisle/driveway on site between the live/work structures and townhouses. (A-8)
 - a. Provide an option that shows the parking partially underground by taking advantage of the grade change at the back of the site. Ideally access would not extend through the length of the site. (A-8)
 - b. Provide screening of surface parking. (A-8, D-5)
4. **Open Space and Trees:** The Board felt the site was crammed and the proposed open space and landscaping at grade was not adequate. (A-6, A-7, D-12, E-2)

- a. Provide quality open space on the site that includes variety. (E-2)
 - b. Lay out the structures to allow for setbacks and create useable open space. (A-7, D-12)
 - c. Try to maintain the existing trees on site. (E-3)
 - d. Provide access through the site that transitions from the public to the private realm. (A-6, A-7, D-12)
5. **At the Second EDG meeting, the applicant should provide the following information:**
- a. Provide three different massing options responding to the guidance above.
 - b. Provide shadow studies of the proposed options at 5:00pm.
 - c. Provide a study along the alley showing the location and massing of the existing structures. Show the locations of all windows.
 - d. Provide sketches of the alley façade and appearance for the options using alley access.

The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

A. Site Planning

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

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.**

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.**

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

E. Landscaping

- 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.
- 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.

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.

1. **Access to Parking (SMC 23.47A.032.A.1.c).** The Code states that if access is not provided from an alley and the lot abuts two or more streets, access is permitted across one of the side street lot lines. Option B proposed two two-way curb cuts, one from SW Charleston St. and one from SW Bradford St.

The Board did not indicate whether they would grant this departure but they did want the applicant to investigate providing parking that would be accessed within the site by a curb cut. (A-8)

2. **Landscaping and Screening Standards (SMC23.47A.016.D.1.a):** The Code requires a certain amount of landscaping when surface parking is provided for 20 or more spaces. Option C does not meet this requirement.

The Board indicated they may not be inclined to grant this departure. (A-8, D-5, D-8, E-2)

3. **Landscaping and Screening Standards (SMC23.47A.016.D.1.b):** The Code requires trees in the surface parking when provided at a rate of one tree per 10 parking spaces. Options C does not meet this requirement.

The Board indicated they may not be inclined to grant this departure. (A-8, D-5, D-8, E-2)

4. **Landscaping and Screening Standards (SMC23.47A.016.D.1c.2):** The Code requires a 6' high screening and a 5' wide landscaped area inside the screening for surface parking abutting or across an alley from a residential zone. The Director may waive or modify this requirement for required parking. Option C is providing more parking than the 13 required spaces for the townhouses so does not meet this requirement.

The Board indicated they may not be inclined to grant this departure. The applicant should investigate ways to screen parking is provided along the alley. (A-8, D-5, D-8, E-2)

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should return for a second EDG meeting.