



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE QUEEN ANNE/ MAGNOLIA/WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3015522

Address: 901 W McGraw Street

Applicant: Andrew Miller, of Camwest – Toll Brothers

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, December 18, 2013

Board Members Present: Mindy Black (Chair)  
Katie Idziorek  
Jill Kurfirst  
Janet Stephenson

Board Members Absent: Boyd Pickrell

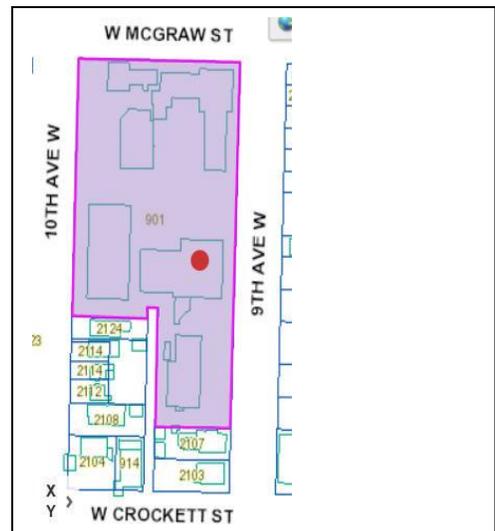
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, Senior Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Lowrise 1 (LR1)

Nearby Zones: (North) SF 5000  
(South) LR1  
(East) LR1  
(West) LR1

Lot Area: 107,997 sf, sloping, half-block rectangle



**Current Development:** Six existing 1-3 story institutional buildings for the former Seattle Childrens Home, plus two surface parking lots and landscaped courts. A small 2-story 'cottage' building from circa 1915 occupies the northwest corner of the parcel.

**Access:** The half-block fronts on 3 streets, which all provide pedestrian access. The truncated alley to the south, and 2 existing curb cuts provide vehicular and service access.

**Surrounding Development:** Surrounding blocks are predominantly single family homes, and several multi-family structures, typically 2-4 stories. Single family houses and garages occupy the rest of the block and alley to the south.

**ECAs:** ECA Steep Slope; site slopes down 43 ft overall from the northeast street corner to the southwest property corner.

**Neighborhood Character:** The neighborhood is mostly single family homes, with the LR1 zones transitioning from houses to scattered townhouses and multi-family structures. There are two small neighborhood commercial zones within walking distance to the east and south. West sloping topography and large trees characterize the vicinity.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for three story residential rowhouses and townhouses (in 11 new structures), with a total of 59 units. One existing structure (McGraw Cottage) is to remain and contain two proposed residential units (for a total of 61 residential units). Parking is to be provided within the structures, accessed off internal private drives, which link to the existing alley from W Crockett Street. Numerous exceptional trees occupy and are adjacent to the site, most to be retained.

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| <b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: December 18, 2013</b> |
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## DESIGN PROPOSAL

The EDG Design Proposal booklet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number 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). or by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**Address: Public Resource Center**  
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 120 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Noted all three massing options were very similar, and all showed a long wall of structures along 9th Avenue, contrary to the building rhythm on the opposite side of that street; encouraged more gaps on 9th and more mass shifted to the middle of the block and along 10th Avenue.
- Supported the retention of all exceptional and large trees, on and off site, and expressed concern for the root zones of the street trees being impacted by new foundations (numerous agreeing with this).
- Objected to the repetitive massing wall along 9th Avenue and the massing not stepping down to the SF zoning across McGraw, and possible shadow impacts on that steep street in winter conditions (numerous agreeing with this).
- Suggested more generous and direct through-block pathways for residents and neighbors, similar to other Queen Anne stairways, especially aligning with the east-west public ROW at the mid-block (numerous agreeing with this).
- Noted the long massing walls are not compatible with the bulk and scale of the vicinity, which is more fragmented and diverse, even by the recent multi-family structures.
- Discouraged the reduction of front yard setbacks, or any departures in that street yard zone, which is important for neighborhood compatibility and a social space for the residents.
- Encouraged more open space within the site - lushly landscaped, usable by residents, connected to the perimeter - and less pavement devoted to vehicles.
- Noted the rowhouse type is rare and foreign in this vicinity, and suggested the buildings be more fragmented and exhibit a wide diversity of architectural styles.
- Suggested some on-site visitor parking to avoid spill-over onto crowded on-street spaces.
- Promoted density in this LR1 location as achieving city sustainability goals, and suggested focusing on superior materials, design and quality.
- Concerned the proposed curb cut onto McGraw is too far east and creates safety and sightline issues at a steep portion of roadway.

## 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 (the Board) members provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the following **Citywide Design Guidelines** of highest priority for this project. Board comments are in **bold**.

The Priority Design guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text of Guidelines 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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed this topic at length and as a prime determinant of the project; how the site plan works with the slope, retains trees, and maintains a selectively permeable perimeter for incidental westward views by pedestrians. The Board requested numerous east-west site cross sections, showing tree canopies and sightlines to scale, and also requested view simulations from key site locations, including points along the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue sidewalks. A large format picture montage of the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue view looking west is requested, including all trees.**

- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility.** The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the length of masses along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue should be shortened, with larger gaps included, and the massing along 10<sup>th</sup> could be more continuous, because it is downslope and on an arterial. To improve the permeability on 9<sup>th</sup>, the Board is receptive to even more density on the west and in the middle of the site (see Departure # 2), but not if it prevents all sightlines to sea and sky beyond from the key gaps along the 9<sup>th</sup> sidewalk; this is what the view studies requested in A-1 must confirm.**

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

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board assumed rowhouses will obviously have visible entrances to the three streets, but reinforced how these must be designed with care to create diverse, sociable spaces, with high-quality landscaping and materials (see A-6 below). The Board also requested the internal units have clear and generous paths to the adjacent sidewalks for visitors, and to offset the large pavement areas proposed (even if they are reduced per comments under A-8).**

- 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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the proposed building at the southeast corner should be setback about 10 ft from the south property line to create a pathway from the alley to 9<sup>th</sup>, and a privacy buffer for the adjacent house.**

**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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the street edge transitions are crucial to make any long building masses (even if reduced per A-2) fit the street context and provide eyes on the street. The setbacks must be sized to afford sociable and quality landscaped spaces for project residents and neighbors to interact. The Board expects large scale cross sections and partial elevations to confirm such details at the next meeting. The 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue setbacks should be coordinated with the Exceptional tree grove and its required Protection Area (see E-3).**

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

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board applauded the northwest corner entry court, and the north/central interior court under the retained trees, both with lush landscaping. But the Board was concerned all other open spaces are narrow, residual and too small to afford usable space. At about 20 ft, the central north-south walkway between buildings appears too narrow, especially if filled with required stair transitions. The Board agreed some unit lengths and overall footprints might need to decrease to create pleasant and functional 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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the majority of the site interior is devoted to vehicle maneuvering driveways, and no matter how cleverly designed with pavers and patterns, these are basically dead spaces, fronted by continuous garage doors. The Board requested site studies that reduce the amount of paving area and increase landscaped area (see A-7), including one that explores a structured parking level with single access off 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the arterial. Shared parking for at least some of the units reduces garage door frontage, increases ground surface for open space, and shifts the curb cut off steep McGraw. A rowhouse precedent with shared parking was cited by the Board; individualized garages are not code required.**

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| <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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the basic LR1 zone density and 30 ft height as reasonable, provided the building forms, footprints and resulting ground plane treatment are refined to meet all the priority guidelines. The Board tentatively supported Option 3 as the better of 3 site plan schemes, but shorter building increments along 9<sup>th</sup>, deep modulations, and roofline breaks are the key to ensuring the bulk is mitigated. The Board stated the applicant-preferred FAR might be reduced, and that the code allowed FAR is a maximum depending on site specific design resolution, not an entitlement.**

**The Board agreed that retaining the 2-story house at the northwest corner is a superior bulk transition to the SF zone across the street, and any new structures along McGraw should follow a similar scale. The Board invited exploration of a building that intentionally turns the northeast corner (rather than a cut-off rowhouse) and steps down in height along McGraw, with any curb cut possibly more mid block.**

## **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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the neighboring context is widely diverse in style, and the project should draw from examples in the surrounding context, but not attempt to break down into exact 30 or 40 ft single family stylistic increments. Yet, the large site warrants more than one repetitive style on all streets and for all buildings.**

**The applicants should refine the ‘3 styles’ approach based on the revised building forms from A-2 and B-1 above, and devise a strategy informed by the patterns in this specific-context. The Board suggested that some traditional elements might focus on 9<sup>th</sup> and McGraw, and the more ‘contemporary’ character be found along the arterial 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Board was receptive to the two more contemporary expressions of the precedent images shown, but not the aggressively modern Galer 8 or Harbor Townhomes.**

- C-3 Human Scale.** The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements, and details to achieve a good human scale.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how this guideline must be achieved in a sophisticated, non-repetitive way during future design development. The Board cautioned that human scale is especially important when rebuilding a half block with three different street frontages, and impacting such a large portion of a**

neighborhood fabric. In this specific setting, human scale means a variety of street edge and architectural treatments, not the repetitive east-coast rowhouse language.

## 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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the through-block pathway shown at the north end on pg 23 of the booklet, and encouraged a similar pathway be developed at the mid-block near the 16 ft east-west right of way. Also see comments under A-3 and A-7.**

- 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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board requested a specific study of concealed trash locations (preferably not visible trash sheds) and the on-site pick-up routes.**

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

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board applauded the intention to not have a gated site, and discussed how a more permeable perimeter, more pronounced pedestrian paths and an activated building street frontage all provide added security. Typical lighting, sightline and CPTED principles will be essential throughout the project.**

## 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the project does not need to match a single-family character or setback condition, but the perimeter landscaping should be lush and create sociable transitions to the sidewalk, incorporating stoops and other layering techniques.

**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. [underline added]

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the steep slopes and Exceptional trees warrant special technical care, and should inform and drive the design, not simply be constraints. For example, the Board suggested tree canopies and groves should inspire where open space amenities and building gaps and deep setbacks should be located. The Board also requested more detailed plan and section drawings of the arborist recommended Tree Protection Areas (SMC 25.11.050) for all city-classified Exceptional trees and groves, and how all the proposed structures fully respect these areas for all Exceptional trees. The incidental westward views are also a special condition of this site (also see A-1 and A-2 comments).

The Board must consider all Exceptional trees, especially any proposed to be removed. At the next meeting the applicants must provide a site plan alternative that retains ALL Exceptional trees, for Board review. Also provide comparative documentation (plans, perspectives, sections) of retained vs proposed removed trees, showing the quantitative impact to development area, design guideline impacts, and any departures needed to allow Exceptional tree retention and recovering development area elsewhere.

## 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. Vehicle Access Width (SMC 23.53.025.D):** The Code requires any easement serving 10 or more units to be at least 24 ft wide. The applicant proposes the roadway width to be 20 ft wide.

**The Board indicated early support for a 20 ft wide roadway, as a traffic calming measure. (D-7)**

- 2. Structure Width in LR Zones (SMC 23.45.527 –Table A):** The Code requires a 60 ft maximum structure width for townhouses in LR zones. The applicant proposes the townhouse structures (located only in the middle of the site) to be 80, 100, 140, 160 and 200 ft wide.

**The Board indicated cautious support for increasing the interior townhouse widths, but only if the perimeter massing along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and McGraw Street is sufficiently permeable, with deep modulation, bulk adjustments, superior street edge transitions, and tree protection. The massing along 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue can be more robust, depending on cross-block public view opportunities outlines in Guideline A-1.**

- 3. LR Front yard Setbacks (SMC 23.45.518.A):** The Code requires a rowhouse front yard setback of 5 ft minimum. The applicant proposes a 0 ft setback for limited portions of the rowhouses, and greater than 5 ft in other locations.

**The Board indicated hesitation on reducing any front setbacks, given the concern for adequate front yard transitions (A-6, E-2), tree and root protections (E-3), and a site plan with too little open space (A-7). To evaluate any front setback reductions, the Board requested multiple perspectives, and large scale, dimensioned site plan drawings of all perimeter conditions, showing the following: curblines; trees, driplines and root protection zones; sidewalks; property lines; building ground floors; stoops and concept landscaping of all transition zones. The Board also requested a full site plan analysis of code-required open space, and any additional open space proposed. (A-7, E-3, A-6)**

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

**At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should return to the Board for an additional EDG meeting, responding to the specific concerns, requests, detailed drawings and studies described above.**