



City of Seattle

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



FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3015747

Address: 1141 Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Applicant: Andrew Russin for Martin Squared LLC

Date of Meeting: 8 April 2015

Board Members Present: Curtis Bigelow
Krystal Brun
Dan Foltz
Natalie Gualy
Christina Orr-Cahall

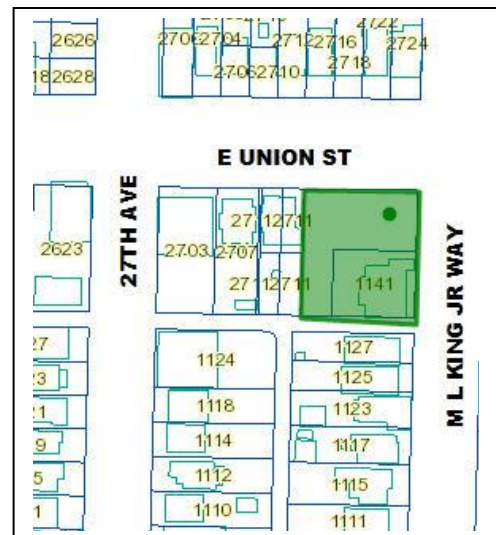
Board Members Absent: Kevin Price

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial Two with a 40' height limit.

Zoning Patterns: The NC2 40 zone forms a small node on the south side of E. Union St. between 29th Ave and the site's west property line. Multi-family Lowrise One and Two (LR1, LR2) zones flank E. Union from 29th Ave to a larger NC2 corridor along E. Union from 25th Ave. to 18th Ave. The larger surrounding vicinity possesses a Single Family 5000 zone classification.



Lot Area: 14,309 square feet comprising two parcels. According to city maps, the site contours slope inward by roughly six feet.

Current Development: A two-story apartment building on the southeast parcel. Vacant lot on the northwest parcel.

Access: East Union St., MLK Jr. Way and a T-shape alley configuration.

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: The E. Union and MLK Way intersection possesses a mix of uses and architectural sensibilities promoting a neighborhood pedestrian orientation. The largest development in the immediate vicinity, the Grocery Outlet, belies this character with its parking lot situated between the two streets and the structure. The rest of the neighborhood has a mix of single family houses, townhouses, two and three story apartment buildings and small commercial establishments facing the two arterials.

The two streets link several neighborhoods. E. Union connects Capitol Hill to Madrona and MLK runs from Madison Valley to the Rainier Valley and beyond.

ECAs: No mapped environmental critical areas

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a four-story mixed use structure containing 41 dwelling units and 6,091 sq. ft. of commercial space on the first floor, 3,000 sq. ft. of basement office space. Parking for 27 vehicles will be provided in a below-grade garage. The existing multi-family structure will be demolished.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant provided illustrations of three basic massing options. Scheme A, “L-Shape”, anchors the MLK Way and E. Union corner with a commercial use and a projecting upper level residential mass that accentuates the ground floor retail/office and live/work units. A residential entry on E. Union connects the streetscape to the circulation tower at the intersection of the two wings. The L-shape massing forms an open area at the southwest corner of the site along the alley. An enclosed garage entry and ramp leading to a below grade parking area comprises a portion of the open area. A terraced garden would sit above the enclosed garage ramp.

The building program for Scheme B consumes most of the site. Open space for the most part occupies the roof top. The three floors of upper level residential units facing east and west are arranged along a double loaded corridor. In this scheme, the residential floors project over the ground floor level. The residential and garage entries are in a similar location to Scheme A.

Scheme C forms an U-shape with the open space facing west. Combined with an upper level setback, the massing provides some relief for the adjacent townhouses. The garage entrance off the alley shifts closer to MLK Way than the other schemes.

By the Recommendation meeting, the applicant had refined Scheme A to include a raised exterior court above the garage entry and reduced the emphasis on horizontal datum lines delineating the tripartite scheme of bottom, middle and top.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Three members of the public affixed their names to the Recommendation meeting sign-in sheet. The speakers raised the following issues:

- The building is out of scale with the neighborhood. It is too tall, will cast shadows on the adjacent residential buildings and block light. All of the adjacent buildings are setback further from the street. The proposed building is not neighborly.
- The developer has done quality projects generally with whimsical attributes.
- Supports the departures especially the one specifically related to storefront heights.
- The projecting bay windows on the west side don't seem to fit the language of the overall building.
- It's already too dark in the area. The building will cast shadows.
- The natural landscape is a valley. The area suffers from less light. The proposed building will be out of scale and too tall.

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.**

- 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.
- 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.

The upper level box bays projecting into the west upper level setback did not receive Board support. See discussion at B-1.

The slightly set back, one-story commercial mass, which also required a departure request, appears demur in relationship to the adjacent townhouses and introduces the set of storefronts that anchor the corner. The Board recommended approval of departure for the placement of this element.

- 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.

See discussion at guideline E-2.

- 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.

The chamfered corner of the storefronts appears deftly handled as it provides a slight amount of extra walkway and eases the pedestrian transition between streets. See B-1 for discussion of the upper levels.

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.

Deliberation focused on both the corner massing at MLK Way and E. Union St. and the projecting bays on the west elevation facing the adjacent townhouses. The Board recommends a more prominent corner allowing for a slightly raised parapet or wall to distinguish it. Placement of a reveal on the upper east façade could also distinguish the

corner massing as well as a change in color. Other techniques could also place more emphasis on the corner.

The projecting wood, box bays on the west elevation above the second level courtyard, which would require a departure from the zoning code, possess an aesthetic or language variant from the rest of the building. The Board voted to deny the departure request and recommended their removal.

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-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.

Advising the staff planner to work with the developer from here on out, the Board recommended a simplification of colors, a clear and coherent architectural language and minimal changes in materials.

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

The storefronts, as presented, possess exposed concrete with horizontal scoring and wood frames around the large windows. The commercial tenants, according to the developer, would have the ability to paint the wood in colors appropriate to their businesses. The developer's mixed use building in Madrona (Bowling Green) has this very attribute. The Board noted its reluctance at the idea of the possibility of a cacophony of colors at the street level and recommended that the developer offer the tenants color options from a common palette.

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.

An entry off the alley leads to basement commercial space. The Board requested that the canopy over the alley door remain a part of the project and that the security of the area be ensured by adequate lighting.

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

The applicant provided a concept signage plan for the commercial uses. No comments regarding the signage were offered.

- 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 applicant provided cut sheets and a diagram of exterior lighting. The Board did not comment on the information.

- 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.
- 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.

The presentation of a semi-cylindrical, fabric canopy at the residential entrance on E. Union St. troubled the Board members as it appeared at odds with the language of a loft style structure. The Board recommended an entry canopy more in keeping with the style of the building.

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 proposed landscaping along the right of way received much praise.

- 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.**

No changes to the landscape design at the second level court were introduced.

Both the Board and the applicant appeared confused by whether the Board could recommend landscaping to the roof though the roof deck is not a code requirement. The guideline above is general enough that even spaces not required by the code are subject to design review. In this case after a clarification by the staff planner, the Board did not require revisions to the roof deck.

- 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.**

Recommendations: The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the April 8th, 2014 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings available at the April 8, 2014 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design with conditions and the requested development standard departure from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below). The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

- 1) Design a more prominent corner using potential techniques such as a slight raised parapet or wall, placement of a reveal on the upper east façade, a change in color or among others. (B-1)
- 2) Remove the non-code complying, wood, box bays on the west elevation above the second level courtyard. (B-1)
- 3) Ensure simplification of colors, a clear and coherent architectural language and minimal changes in materials. (C-2).
- 4) Offer the commercial tenants paint colors from a common palette for the storefronts. (C-4)

- 5) For the pedestrian entry off the alley ensure the construction of a canopy and the area's security by providing adequate lighting. (D-1)
- 6) Revise the entry canopy at the primary residential entrance on E. Union to appear more in keeping with the loft style of the building. (D-12)

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) are 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).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMENDATION
1. Setback Requirements SMC 23.47A.014B.1	15 by 15' triangle setback at side yard abutting a residential zone.	31 sq. ft. of a one-story commercial mass encroaches into the triangular setback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The one-story storefront façade provides a better transition between adjacent townhouses and commercial storefronts 	Recommended approval
2. Setback Requirements. SMC 23.47A.014B.3.a	15' setback at side yard above 13' in height to a maximum of 40' abutting a residential zone.	Three bays encroach 4' into setback for a total of 186 sq. ft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bays allow some windows to face the street rather than face directly to the adjacent townhouses for better privacy. 	Recommended denial
3. Setback Requirements. SMC 23.47A.014B.3.b	For structures above 40' an additional set back at the rate of 2' of setback for every 10' by which the height of such portion exceeds 40'.	Structure encroaches 15" into the setback at the roof level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allows the building's west wall to be aligned and straight. 	Recommended approval
4. Setback Requirements. SMC 23.47A.014E.1.a	Decks with open railings may extend into the required setback but are not permitted within 5' of a lot in a residential zone.	Parapet guard is 2' from the property line.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Along with adjacent landscaping, the parapet guard will provide privacy screening for the adjacent neighbors. 	Recommended approval
5. Structure Height SMC 23.47A.012A.1.a	13' floor to floor height at street level commercial.	At the NE corner of the structure the last three commercial units have between 12 and 12.8' floor to floor heights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In order to maintain a common floor level due to the incline of the grade, the storefront heights will be a maximum of 1' less than the required 13'. 	Recommended approval

