



FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3016093

Address: 7612 Aurora Avenue North

Applicant: Steve Bull of Workshop AD

Date of Meeting: Monday, November 17, 2014

Board Members Present: Eric Blank
Ivana Begley
Julia Levitt
Martine Zettle

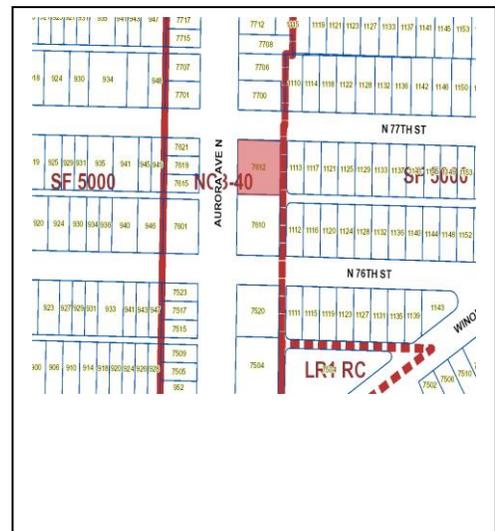
Board Members Present: Christina Pizana

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial Three with a 40 foot height limit. (NC3 40).

Nearby Zones: The NC3 40 zone flanks Aurora Ave N. from W. Green Lake Dr. N. to N. 80thSt, where it changes to a Commercial One zone with a 40 foot height limit (C1 4). In the immediate project vicinity, Single Family 5000 (SF 5000) embraces the Aurora corridor on the west and east.



10,020 square feet. The site fronts the southeast corner of Aurora Ave E. and N. 77th St. An alley borders the corner site on the east. Along with the greater topography in the vicinity, the terrain descends from north to south by approximately two to three feet. Aerial power lines and their required setback at the northwest corner of the site impacts the design.

Lot Area:

Above 25' in height, the property has views to Green Lake, Maple Leaf ridge and the Cascade Mountains. Partial views to the downtown skyline occur over the adjacent structure.

Current Development:

The site houses a two-story wood framed commercial building constructed in 1925. Behind the structure, a small parking lot borders the alley.

Access:

Alley access. The applicant will dedicate two feet on the west side of the alley for its widening.

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character:

The St. Germain Foundation, a religious organization, borders the subject site to the south. It possesses an ornate two-story entrance tower fronting Aurora and a larger horizontally oriented structure behind a parking lot. To the west across Aurora Ave lies a mix of single story commercial structures. On the northwest corner of Aurora and N. 77th St. is a single residential structure converted to a commercial use leading to the Greenwood/Phinney Ridge neighborhoods beyond. Occupying the northwest corner across Aurora and N. 77th St. sits a motorcycle sales and service business. On the northeast corner of the intersection, a two-story structure houses a holistic center and Aikido operation. The building has commercial storefront windows and awnings along Aurora and a portion of N. 77th.

East of the alley, behind the subject property, a neighborhood of single family one and two story homes generally possess pitched roofs, raised front porches and generous front lawns. Two traffic calming bulbs extend into N. 77th St augmenting the amount of landscaping into the right of way. The side yard of one home borders the alley across from the subject site.

Aurora Ave N., SR 99, serves as a principal arterial connecting the west side of Seattle to the north and south beyond. The city has designated N. 77th St. as a local or non-arterial street. An adjacent alley and its T intersection lies to the east of the property.

ECAs:

The project site does not contain a mapped environmental critical area.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to construct a four-story, 34 dwelling unit building with approximately 3,308 square feet of commercial at grade and parking for 17 vehicles located below grade and four spaces at grade. The existing building would be demolished.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented three design options or alternatives all of which represent variations on an internal courtyard scheme. Other commonalities of the three schemes include vehicular access from the alley, commercial uses fronting Aurora Ave., dwelling units on the upper three floors, and physical deference to the power lines at the corner of N. 77th St. and Aurora Ave. The building mass approaches the two streets and meets the north elevation of the St. Germain Foundation. The east façade sits slightly back from the alley. The three designs show a consistent approach to ensuring mostly glazed storefronts along the ground floor. In addition to a below grade garage, the three schemes provide at-grade parking off the alley.

Scheme A, “The Notch”, illustrates a subtraction from the upper corner building mass at the intersection of the two streets to ensure compliance with distance from the power lines. The design includes a primary residential entry on Aurora Ave., five foot projecting canopies above the commercial uses on Aurora, commercial uses extending along N. 77th St. and project balconies extending east toward the alley. The second scheme, “The Slice”, sets a portion of the north façade back from N. 77th St. and eliminates balconies from the east elevation. The upper building mass projects forward of the storefronts; the centrally located residential entry on Aurora provides a modest shelter for pedestrians. In this scheme the parking spaces directly facing the alley have doors to screen the vehicles.

In the “Inflected” scheme, Option C, the north wall cants away from the right of way at the Aurora and alley corners. The architect locates the primary residential entry at the mid-section of this façade opening to a grand staircase that eventually continues to the roof. The stairs lead to the courtyard that begins at the second floor. The inflection in the walls has several purposes: to accommodate the power line, to accentuate visually the corner at Aurora and to provide a larger pedestrian realm at the corner. The intention of the chamfer near the alley suggests deference to the larger setbacks in the single family neighborhood to the east. The scheme adds an at-grade live/work unit along N. 77th St closest to the alley. Canopies extend along both the west and north facades to cover a portion of the sidewalk. No balconies would overlook the east. A row of trees would modest screen the open parking spaces adjacent to the alley. At this concept stage, the most unusual design characteristic is the chasm through the north elevation revealing a wide, even dramatic, staircase and courtyard visually open to the pedestrian.

By the Recommendation meeting, the architect had refined Scheme C with its inflected walls and central courtyard.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Three individuals affixed their names to the Recommendation meeting sign-in sheet. Speakers raised the following issues:

Speakers commented on the following issues:

- Adding garage access from the alley isn't safe. There is considerable pedestrian traffic, especially children walking to and from school. Move the access to Aurora Ave or further north on the alley. The proposed garage access nearly lines up with the east/west bound alley creating poor sight lines especially with the adjacent building.
- Drivers will use the alley for high speed access to the nearby streets.
- The project does not contain enough parking spaces to accommodate the number of tenants. Tenants and their guests will park on overly crowded streets. (Mentioned several times by others.)
- The multiple metal garage doors will make too much noise.
- The proposal diminishes or kills the unique character of Aurora Ave. This project will be harmful to the neighborhood.
- Ensure that the roof top amenity area is kept away from the alley and the neighbors.
- There are too many windows on the east elevation to ensure the privacy of the neighbors.
- N. 77th St is a preferred bike lane.
- Ensure a sufficient amount of bike parking.
- Neighbors were sent the wrong the meeting notice.
- The building has nice attributes.
- The notion of community established by the courtyard is confusing.

DPD received numerous letters discussing most of the issues above including the location of the parking garage ramp, the insufficiency of parking spaces, the building bulk, and noise impacts.

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

Green Lake-specific supplemental guidance:

A continuous street wall is an important design consideration within Green Lake's commercial and mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented areas.

- **Aurora Avenue North:** A continuous street wall is less of a consideration on Aurora Avenue N, where numerous parking lots punctuate the streetscape. In this area, a more pleasant and consistent streetscape can be achieved by reinforcing the rhythm of alternating buildings and well-landscaped vehicle access areas. Parking lots should be placed at the rear and to the sides of buildings, and the buildings should be located near the street. Parking lot landscaping and screening are particularly important in improving the appearance of the Aurora Avenue North corridor.
- **Multifamily Residential Areas:** Landscaping in the required front setbacks of new multifamily development is an important siting and design consideration to help reinforce desirable streetscape continuity.

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

The picket fence type gate at the primary residential entry into the building appealed to the Board; however, rather than just a single door opening into the foyer, add double doors for the full breadth of the opening.

A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

Green Lake-specific supplemental guidance:

Pedestrian activity is a high priority in the Green Lake business areas. It is recognized, however, that within commercial zones, the appropriateness of traditional storefronts may depend upon location, adjacent properties and the type of street on which the development fronts. In the case of a mixed-use building, for example, at the intersection of an arterial and a residential street, it might be more appropriate to place non-storefront commercial facades on the quieter residential street. In such cases, the following can contribute to a commercial facade that exhibits a character and presence that achieves a sensitive transition from commercial to residential uses:

- slightly less transparency than a standard storefront window;
- recessed entries;
- landscaping along the building base and entry; and
- minimized glare from exterior lighting.

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.

Ensure that the location of the roof top amenity area remains in the same location as shown in the Recommendation booklet (p. 32). The habitable area of the deck should not advance or expand toward the eastern property line. This will help to reduce noise and privacy impacts upon the neighbors to the east.

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.

Green Lake-specific supplemental guidance:

- **Residential Buildings:** Residences on the ground floor should be raised for residents' privacy, if allowed by site conditions. Well landscaped, shallow front yard setbacks are also typical and appropriate.
- **Mixed-Use Buildings:** For mixed-use buildings with residential units over commercial ground floor uses, consider locating the primary residential entry on the side street rather than in the main commercial area. This maintains a continuous commercial storefront while increasing privacy for the residential units.

See guidance A-3.

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

Green Lake-specific supplemental guidance:

The Design Review Board may reduce the amount of open space required by the Land Use Code if the project substantially contributes to the objectives of the guideline by:

- **Creating a substantial courtyard-style open space (see sketch below) that is visually accessible to the public and that extends to the public realm.**
- **Setting back development to improve a view corridor.**
- **Setting upper stories of buildings back to provide solar access and/or to reduce impacts on neighboring single-family residences.**
- **Providing open space within the streetscape or other public rights-of-way contiguous with the site. Such public spaces should be large enough to include streetscape amenities that encourage gathering. For example, a curb bulb with outdoor seating adjacent to active retail would be acceptable.**

At the EDG meeting, the Board asked the applicant to locate the roof top open space away from the east side of the structure in order to reduce noise and privacy impacts on the neighbors. The Board noted its satisfaction with the roof deck's location and sought

to ensure that the applicant not move the deck closer to the roof's eastern edge. (See guidance A-5.)

- 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.**

See Board guidance for D-8.

- 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 architect reduces the visual impact of the northeast corner by wrapping a raised planter around the corner, setting the structure back from the alley property line and angling the wall of the street level corner unit. The extent of glazing helps visually to reduce the building bulk.

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.**

Green Lake-specific supplemental guidance:

Some properties adjacent to Green Lake's Neighborhood Commercial areas are zoned single-family, but have a small portion zoned Neighborhood Commercial. In general, these properties can only be developed with single-family houses. In such cases where a property with more-intensive zoning is adjacent to a property that contains such split zoning, the following design techniques are encouraged to improve the transition to the split-zoned lot:

- Building setbacks similar to those specified in the Land Use Code for zone edges where a proposed development project within a more intensive zone abuts a lower intensive zone.
- Techniques specified in the Citywide Design Guidelines A-5 and B-1.

Along a zone edge without an alley, consider additional methods that help reduce the potential 'looming' effect of a much larger structure in proximity to smaller, existing buildings.

- One possibility is allowing the proposed structure's ground floor to be built to the property line and significantly stepping back the upper levels from the adjacent building (see sketch below). The building wall at the property line should be designed in a manner sympathetic to the existing structure(s), particularly regarding privacy and aesthetic issues.

The Board praised the overall design intent. The project exhibits a sensitivity toward the neighborhood to the east by setting back from the property line and by the use of landscape at the northeast corner to create a restrained yet potentially sophisticated façade.

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.

Green Lake-specific supplemental guidance:

- **Distinct Architectural Themes and Styles: Aurora Avenue North Corridor - Recognize Aurora's 1920-1950 commercial character while making the area more friendly to the pedestrian.**
- **Signage: The design and placement of signs plays an important role in the visual character and identity of the community. While regulatory sign review is not in the purview of design review, integration with the overall architectural expression of a building and appropriate scale and orientation are important design considerations. Franchises should not be given exceptions to these guidelines. Except within the Aurora Avenue North corridor, signage should be oriented to pedestrians.**
- **Facade Articulation: Multi-family residential structures - The façade articulation of new multifamily residential buildings (notably in Lowrise zones) should be compatible with the surrounding single-family architectural context. Neighborhood commercial structures - Modulation in the street-fronting façade of a mixed-use structure is less important when an appropriate level of details is present to break up the facade.**

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.

Overall the Board appreciated the architect's ability to realize a strong concept presented at the EDG meeting. The design exhibits both restraint and complexity, avoiding an overreliance on multiple colors and excessive shifts in the vertical planes.

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

The mix of wood and concrete finishes, the angled walls and the layering of materials produces a scale that relates to both the pedestrian and the vehicular oriented Aurora corridor at the same time.

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.

Green Lake-specific supplemental guidance:

- **Special material requirements and recommendations**
 1. **Metal siding**
 2. **Masonry units**
 3. **Wood siding and shingles**
- **Discouraged Materials**
 1. **Mirrored glass**
 2. **Sprayed-on finish**

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.

Green Lake-specific supplemental guidance:

- **Make Aurora More Pedestrian Friendly:** Although Aurora Avenue North is likely to retain its automobile-oriented character, new development should make the entire Aurora corridor more friendly to pedestrians by encouraging: Street-fronting entries, Pedestrian-oriented facades and spaces and overhead weather protection.
- **Streetscape amenities:** New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm. The Board would be willing to consider a departure in open space requirements if the project proponent provides an acceptable plan from, but not limited to: curb bulbs adjacent to active retail spaces, pedestrian-oriented street lighting, and street furniture.

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.

Based on public comment during the EDG meeting, the applicant added roll-up doors in front of the alley parking spaces. The Board recommended installing sound dampening devices on the doors to reduce the noise impacts on the neighbors to the east.

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.

See guidance for D-5.

The Board encouraged the expansion of bicycle storage for the project.

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

Dwelling units on the east side of the three upper floors have a small niche or exterior foyer between their doors and the walkways. The design poses potential security concerns. Redesign the residential entries in these locations to either widen the nooks in the courtyard or eliminate the solid wall enclosing the niche to provide improved visibility.

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

After listening to public comment, staff input and reviewing drawings of vehicle movement in the alley, the Board recommended adding a mirror at the garage entry to ensure greater safety in the alley.

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 at the Recommendation meeting. The Board did not comment on it.

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 submitted a concept lighting plan for the exterior of the structure that included lighting in the alley. The Board did not comment on the effort.

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.

Deliberation focused on the merits of the residential unit and the raised planter fronting N. 77th St. The corner unit with its wrap around planter, angled walls and mix of concrete and wood exterior provides an appropriate transition to the single family neighborhood to the east and endows the project with a charmingly idiosyncratic character.

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.

Green Lake-specific supplemental guidance:

- **Celebrate the Olmsted heritage: Green Lake Park, Ravenna Boulevard and Lower Woodland Park are visible and accessible examples of the Olmsted brothers' design. New development should build on this character by employing informal groupings of large and small trees and shrubs. A mix of deciduous, evergreen, and ornamental plant materials is appropriate. Continuous rows of street trees contrasting with the informal, asymmetric landscaping of open spaces are also typical.**

Discussion focused on the viability of the plantings beneath the canopy at the northeast corner. Installing irrigation would be one of several techniques to ensure that the plants thrive.

Recommendations: The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the November 17th, 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 November 17, 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) Add double doors at the primary residential entry on N. 77th St. for the full breadth of the opening. (A-3)
- 2) Ensure that the location of the roof top amenity area remains the same distance from the east property line as shown in the Recommendation booklet (p. 32). (A-5, A-7)

- 3) Add sound dampening devices to the garage doors to reduce the noise impacts generated by the metal doors on the neighbors to the east. (D-5).
- 4) Redesign the residential entries on the east side units of the three upper floors either to widen the nooks in the courtyard or to eliminate the solid wall enclosing the niche. This should ensure improved visibility. (D-7)
- 5) Add a mirror at the garage entrance to ensure greater pedestrian and vehicular safety in the alley. (D-8)

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. Residential Uses at Street Level SMC 23.47A.008D.2	Residential uses located along a street-level street facing façade shall have a prominent pedestrian entry and the floor of a dwelling unit located along the street level street facing façade shall be at least 4’ above or below sidewalk grade or set back at least 10’ from the sidewalk.	Allow the floor of a sidewalk level dwelling unit to be located at sidewalk grade and less than 10’ from the sidewalk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design of the dwelling unit and the raised planter at the streetscape create an inviting corner transition to the residential neighborhood beyond the alley. 	Recommended approval
Setback Requirements. SMC 23.47A.014B.3.b	For each portion of a structure above 40’ in height, additional setback at the rate of 2’ for every 10’ of height.	Maintain 15’ setback at portions of the structure above 40’.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed design maintains the continuity of the east façade. 	Recommended approval
Parapet Extension Above Height Limit SMC 23.47A.12C.7.f	Non-firewall parapets shall be located at least 10’ from the north edge of the roof unless a shadow diagram is provided that demonstrates that locating a non-firewall parapet with 10 of the north edge of the roof would not shade property to the north on Jan. 21 st at noon more than would a structure build to the maximum permitted height and FAR	Allow a non-firewall parapet to extend 25.5 inches above the height limit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parapet mitigates views from the roof top deck to the adjacent single family neighborhood. Maintains a consistency building roof form on all facades. 	Recommended approval
Screening Surface Parking Areas SMC 23.47A.016D.1.c.2	Surface parking abutting or across an alley from a lot in a residential zone must have 6’ high screening along the abutting lot line and a 5’ deep landscaped area inside the screening.	Allow parking spaces adjacent to the alley and within the proposed structure with each stall to have direct ingress/egress from the alley.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides convenient parking for commercial uses. Three trees proposed near the alley between parking spaces will act as a screen for the larger building mass. 	Recommended approval