



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3017093

Address: 1516 Northwest 51st Street

Applicant: Lucas Branham

Date of Meeting: Monday, May 12, 2014

Board Members Present: David Neiman (chair)
Marc Angelillo
Ellen Cecil
Jerry Coburn
Dale Kutzero

Board Members Absent: None

DPD Staff Present: Tami Garrett, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial 1 (C1-65)

Nearby Zones: (North) C1-65
(South) C1-65
(East) C1-65
(West) Lowrise 3 (LR3)

Lot Area: 14,270 square feet (sq. ft.)



Current Development:

The project site contains a one-story commercial warehouse building with attached carports. There is one tree (Sawara Cypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera*) that is identified as a potential Exceptional Tree.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

Surrounding development includes a mix of townhouse developments, apartment buildings and single family residences north, south and west of the subject property. Commercial uses (retail, office, car wash) are south and east of the of the project property.

This urban infill site is located in the Ballard Hub Urban Village and situated on the north side of Northwest 51st Street. The site sits on the western edge of the C1 zone adjacent to Lowrise zoning to the east. Industrial zoning is found one block southeast of the site. It is a very eclectic and diverse neighborhood. The general character of this block along Northwest 51st Street is predominately residential in nature to the west of the site. The neighborhood is moderately pedestrian-oriented due to its proximity to multiple commercial businesses (retail, restaurants, grocery stores, etc.) and King County Metro bus stops concentrated along 15th Avenue Northwest (major Arterial Street): all within walking distance of the site. A hospital campus (Swedish Ballard Medical Center) is located two blocks northwest of the site.

Access:

Vehicular access to the project site is possible from Northwest 51st Street.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

The site’s existing topography is characterized with have grades descending approximately 7.5’ from north to south. There are no Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) mapped on or adjacent to the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for the design and construction of a mixed-use commercial/residential building with approximately 80 residential units above one ground-level live-work unit. All parking for the proposed development (approximately 40 stalls) to be provided in an at-grade garage accessed via the street.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3017093) at this website:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp.

The packet is also available to view in the file, 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

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three alternative design schemes were presented to the Board. Additionally, the architect's presentation included visual information (site photos, design option enhancements, material and color palette, etc.) that was not included in the EDG design packets initially provided to the Board. The project team's development stated goals were to create a residential/commercial "modern warehouse box with large glazed openings" building proposal that will be designed in context with the distinguished character of the surrounding neighborhood in architectural elements. All three options included a six-story structure with 80 residential units and upper-level outdoor residential amenity areas above a residential lobby/office/indoor amenity area, a live-work unit and onsite parking at grade. Vehicular access to the enclosed 40 parking stalls was proposed to occur from Northwest 51st Street.

The first scheme (Option 1) described as the "shifted box" code-compliant option, showed the building's upper floor massing pushed to the site's easternmost boundary line. The vehicular entrance to the enclosed ground level parking garage was proposed at the east end of the property with the live-work unit and residential entrance shifted to the central and west end of the property respectively.

The second scheme (Option 2) was labeled as the "Setback Urban Infill" option. This scheme showed upper level massing centrally sited on a podium base with some massing shifted to the site's north property line. The ground-level vehicular garage entrance is planned at the west end of the proposed structure. This design would also not require a code departure.

The third and applicant preferred scheme (Option 3) was described as an "Urban Infill" option. This scheme massing was similar to the second scheme with the exclusion of the massing shifted towards the north boundary line. This design option emphasized minor horizontal modulation at the upper level wall facades (north, south and east). This design would necessitate a design departure for residential setback.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

- Excited that the design will include vehicular parking onsite.
- Asked about the typical residential unit's type and square footage.
- Encouraged a design that includes energy efficient "green" features that are sustainable.

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.

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1. Design Concept, Consistency and Massing: The design of the new building should respond to specific site conditions, establish a positive context, respect adjacent properties and represent an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design.

a. The Board felt that key information wasn't provided in the design packets and was disappointed that no design schemes that illustrated alternative podium options were offered for the Board's review. As a result, the Board debated the merits of requesting additional schemes at an additional EDG meeting. Ultimately, the Board suggested the preferred design scheme Option 3 should move forward to the Master Use Permit (MUP) submittal with the following guidance:

- i. The Board expressed support of the "modern warehouse box with large glazed openings" design concept presented by the applicant and noted that that the design would establish a positive context in a neighborhood where the architectural character is evolving. However, the Board voiced strong concerns about how the height, bulk and scale of the podium base lot-line-to-lot-line, the central placement of the upper massing and minimal modulation detract from the aforementioned design concept and establishing a continuous strong street edge. (CS2.A.1, CS2.A.2, CS2.C.2, CS2.D.3, CS2.D.4, CS2.D.5)
- ii. The Board understood that the design of the upper massing is predicated on a daylighting strategy to maximize access to light and air to the residential units. The Board questioned if the amount of fenestration illustrated for the preferred design concept in the design packet will meet applicable energy code requirements. The Board expects the applicant to demonstrate that this concern has been addressed at the Recommendation meeting. (CS1.A.1, CS1.B.2, CS1.B.3)
- iii. The Board acknowledged that the project site is a mid-block property where no continuous street-edge is present and commented that the new development should establish an appropriate datum line that responds to the neighboring buildings and establishes a desirable context for future development. (CS2.C.2, CS3.A.4)
- iv. The Board stated concern with the monolithic appearance of the building's south-facing façade abutting Northwest 51st Street.

- It is important that the Board understands more clearly how the design has been developed to the presented architectural design concept (“modern warehouse box with large glazed openings”) that will result in a cohesive design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings. At the Recommendation meeting, the Board expects to review a design that focuses on modulation that effectively establishes a third or fourth story scale for the building and/or modulation that projects from a simple planned mass and provides relief from a simple massing. Effective use of secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived massing is requested. The Board cautioned a second Recommendation meeting may be necessary if these concerns aren’t addressed. (DC2.A, DC2.B, DC2.C.1)
- b. It is imperative that the design be respectful to adjacent properties, particularly the neighboring residential properties to the north and the west. The Board commented that detailed analysis of the adjacent properties and their functionality requirements needs to be explored further. The Board expects the applicant to explain and demonstrate how the new building will respond to those adjacency pressures (i.e. privacy, light, outdoor activities, etc.). Providing a cross elevation to the overall overlay of the existing residential buildings’ elevations with the proposed design to illustrate how they juxtapose was noted by the Board as one method to illustrate how the design meets this guidance. (CS2.D.4, CS2.D.5, PL3.B.1)
 - c. The Board acknowledged that blank walls visible at the ground level will need to be addressed. The Board expects to review details pertaining to any landscaping (green screening) or design treatments proposed to address this concern at the Recommendation meeting. (DC1.C.2, DC2.B.2)
 - d. The applicant explained that onsite parking is not required for the commercial/residential proposal. The Board appreciated that the proposal included onsite parking and encouraged the applicant to continue to include onsite parking as the project evolves its design with the guidance provided. (DC1.C.1, DC1.C.2)

- 2. Northwest 51st Avenue Street Frontage:** The building design should incorporate features that encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges and reinforce the spatial characteristics of Northwest 51st Street.
- a. At the Recommendation meeting, the Board expects to review an ensemble of elements (doors, garage entrance, canopies, hardscape, landscaping, glazing, etc.) that encourage interest and activity at the street-level and clarify building entries/edges. (PL3.A.4, PL3.B.3)
 - b. The Board understood that the building massing was sited in a manner to accommodate the code-required setbacks due to the proximity of the residential zone adjacent to the west property line. The Board observed that the grade-level area located at the site’s southwest corner would create a void along the public way and stated that this space should have a purpose. The Board also stated that this area would be an opportunity to create an open space for the benefit of the public and the residents and asked that this concept be explored. At the Recommendation meeting, the Board expects to review a design that incorporates design elements (visitor bike parking, etc.) and architectural features appropriate for the void along the public way that would create interest at street-level, is designed for pedestrians and achieves a successful fit with the neighboring residential property to the west.

The Board commented that it could support a future code departure request to allow for portions of the building mass to encroach into the setback in order to better address this concern and also address potential safety and security concerns appropriately. (PL2.B, DC1.C.2, DC2.A.1, DC2.B.2, DC2.C.1)

- c. Conceptual residential and commercial lighting and signage designs proposed for the building's street facing and surrounding façades should be presented at the Recommendation meeting. (DC4.B, DC4.C)
- d. The Board supported a design that screened the trash/recycling, utilities and services within the structure and away from the pedestrian right-of-way. The Board stated further analysis of the access by residents and non-residents (trash collection) and review of best practices in terms of trash/recycling removal is necessary. The Board expects a diagrammatic demonstration on the circulation concept for trash access at the Recommendation meeting. (DC1.C.4)

3. Public and Residential Open Spaces:

- a. At the Recommendation meeting, the Board stated that they expect to see elements (outdoor furniture, trees, landscaping, etc.) included in the landscape design that activate the proposed residential exterior open spaces. (DC3.B.4, DC4.D.4)
- b. The Board encouraged a design that incorporates bike facilities in the public realm. Design elements within the right-of-way are within the purview of the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). Therefore, the applicant is directed to address this Board request directly with SDOT during the initial MUP review process and provide street improvement design specifics (including landscaping) at the Recommendation meeting. (PL4.B.2, DC4.D.4)
- c. At the EDG meeting, the Board inquired about the status of the existing mature tree (25" Sawara Cypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera*) on the site. The applicant explained that, prior to the EDG meeting; an arborist had inspected the tree and determined that the aforementioned tree was not deemed an Exceptional Tree. The applicant also confirmed that this tree would not be retained. The Board's expectation is that the applicant will provide feedback from DPD concerning the Exceptional Tree status determination at the Recommendation meeting. (CS1.D.1, DC4.D.4)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

CONTEXT & SITE

CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.

CS1-B Sunlight and Natural Ventilation

CS1-B-2. Daylight and Shading: Maximize daylight for interior and exterior spaces and minimize shading on adjacent sites through the placement and/or design of structures on site.

CS1-B-3. Managing Solar Gain: Manage direct sunlight falling on south and west facing facades through shading devices and existing or newly planted trees.

CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

CS2-A Location in the City and Neighborhood

CS2-A-1. Sense of Place: Emphasize attributes that give a distinctive sense of place. Design the building and open spaces to enhance areas where a strong identity already exists, and create a sense of place where the physical context is less established.

CS2-A-2. Architectural Presence: Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly.

CS2-C Relationship to the Block

CS2-C-2. Mid-Block Sites: Look to the uses and scales of adjacent buildings for clues about how to design a mid-block building. Continue a strong street-edge and respond to datum lines of adjacent buildings at the first three floors.

CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale

CS2-D-3. Zone Transitions: For projects located at the edge of different zones, provide an appropriate transition or complement to the adjacent zone(s). Projects should create a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zone and the proposed development.

CS2-D-4. Massing Choices: Strive for a successful transition between zones where a project abuts a less intense zone.

CS2-D-5. Respect for Adjacent Sites: Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy of residents in adjacent buildings.

CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes

CS3-A-4. Evolving Neighborhoods: In neighborhoods where architectural character is evolving or otherwise in transition, explore ways for new development to establish a positive and desirable context for others to build upon in the future.

PUBLIC LIFE

PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

PL3-A Entries

PL3-A-4. Ensemble of Elements: Design the entry as a collection of coordinated elements including the door(s), overhead features, ground surface, landscaping, lighting, and other features.

PL3-B Residential Edges

PL3-B-3. Buildings with Live/Work Uses: Maintain active and transparent facades in the design of live/work residences. Design the first floor so it can be adapted to other commercial use as needed in the future.

PL4 Active Transportation: Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.

PL4-B Planning Ahead for Bicyclists

PL4-B-2. Bike Facilities: Facilities such as bike racks and storage, bike share stations, shower facilities and lockers for bicyclists should be located to maximize convenience, security, and safety.

DESIGN CONCEPT

DC1 Project Uses and Activities: Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

DC1-C Parking and Service Uses

DC1-C-2. Visual Impacts: Reduce the visual impacts of parking lots, parking structures, entrances, and related signs and equipment as much as possible.

DC1-C-4. Service Uses: Locate and design service entries, loading docks, and trash receptacles away from pedestrian areas or to a less visible portion of the site to reduce possible impacts of these facilities on building aesthetics and pedestrian circulation.

DC2 Architectural Concept: Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

DC2-A Massing

DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects.

DC2-B Architectural and Facade Composition

DC2-B-1. Façade Composition: Design all building facades—including alleys and visible roofs— considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned.

DC2-B-2. Blank Walls: Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians.

DC2-C Secondary Architectural Features

DC2-C-1. Visual Depth and Interest: Add depth to facades where appropriate by incorporating balconies, canopies, awnings, decks, or other secondary elements into the façade design. Add detailing at the street level in order to create interest for the pedestrian and encourage active street life and window shopping (in retail areas).

DC3 Open Space Concept: Integrate open space design with the building design so that they complement each other.

DC3-B Open Space Uses and Activities

DC3-B-4. Multifamily Open Space: Design common and private open spaces in multifamily projects for use by all residents to encourage physical activity and social interaction.

DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

DC4-A Exterior Elements and Finishes

DC4-A-1. 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.

DC4-A-2. Climate Appropriateness: Select durable and attractive materials that will age well in Seattle’s climate, taking special care to detail corners, edges, and transitions.

DC4-D Trees, Landscape, and Hardscape Materials

DC4-D-4. Place Making: Create a landscape design that helps define spaces with significant elements such as trees.

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, the following departure was requested:

1. **Residential Building Setback (SMC 23.47A.014.B.3):** The Code requires a structure containing a residential use with a side lot line abutting a lot in a residential zone be setback as follows:
 - a. 15’ for portions of structure above 13’ in height to a maximum of 40’; and
 - b. for each portion of structure above 40’ in height, an additional setback at the rate of 2’ of setback for every 10’ by which the height of such portion exceeds 40’.

The structure’s west wall façade is parallel with the side lot abutting property in a residential (LR3) zone. The applicant proposes to maintain the 15’ setback for the entire portion of structure above 40’ and not provide any additional setback.

The Board indicated they would not be inclined to support this departure as proposed. The Board stated that a stronger representation of the proposed architectural concept is necessary to demonstrate that the building design warrants this departure. (CS2.D.3, CS2.D.4, CS2.5, DC2.B.1)

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.