



# City of Seattle

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



## FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3017177

Address: 1506 NW 61<sup>st</sup> St

Applicant: Jay Janette, architect, for Tyson Alexander

Date of Meeting: Monday, August 25, 2014

Board Members Present: David Nieman, Chair  
Marc Angelillo  
Jerry Coburn  
Dale Kutzero

Board Members Absent: Ellen Cecil

DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC3-40

Nearby Zones: (North) NC3-40  
(South) NC3-40  
(East) NC3-40  
(West) LR1

Lot Area: 4,753 SF



**Current Development:**

Uninhabited Single-family residence

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

The Lot to the east is developed with a commercial building housing a Taco del Mar restaurant, with angled surfaced parking running along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW. Access to the parking is from a widened curbcut on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW adjacent the alley with a curbcut for exiting onto NW 61<sup>st</sup> St. A narrow strip of commercial uses, several lots with surface parking, runs north and south along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW coincident with NC3-40 zoning. Immediately to the west, the site is abutted by LR1 zoning and single-family, duplex and triplex development on a large swath that runs north and south and a mile to the west. A single-story single-family residence is located directly west of the development site. The building currently on site, as well as those directly west of the proposed development, are sited so as to sit atop elevated ground that rises a good four feet above the sidewalk level of NW 61<sup>st</sup> Street.

There are two large fir trees near the west property line of the property to the west. The grand fir located near the southwest property line of the development site has been identified as a City of Seattle “Exceptional Tree.” A substantial portion of the root systems of each of the trees extends into the development site.

**Access:**

The site abuts a 10-foot wide alley to the north.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

There are no ECAs on the site.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes a 4-story residential apartment building, with 30 or more units. The units are described as “workforce housing” affordable to workers who would rely on the proximity to public transportation rather than private vehicles for getting around.

**Choose an item. Choose an item. February 13, 2014**

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3017177) 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).

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](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Since the commercial structure to the east abuts its west property line and since the single-family structure on the lot to the west of the development site sits well to the east property line of its lot, there was little massing differentiation in the three schemes presented to the Board. Each was a four-story rectangular box, without any openings on the east side. There was some differentiation in the amount of fenestration proposed for NW 61<sup>st</sup> Street, but the west side of the box was solid, without any fenestration or openings. The west side of all three schemes showed transparency and openings and decks, single and combined, that extended well into the interstitial space lying between the south façade and the west property line. Where the schemes differed was primarily in terms of access. Option A ramped up. Option B ramped do, while the preferred Option C was referred to as the “Switchback.” This option showed the main entry at mid point of the south-facing façade atop a flight of stairs rising straight up from the NW 61<sup>st</sup> Street sidewalk and conjoined at the landing by a ramp that took rise from the sidewalk where it met the west property line. Option C allowed for “a continuous deck along the west side.”

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment included the following:

- The proposed building was inconsiderate of existing residents.
- The proposed stacked 30+ units overwhelms and dwarfs the surrounding neighborhood.
- The proposal indicates alley trash and recycle pick-up, but there is no existing alley pickup to make this work.
- There is not much for landscaping as proposed; there should be a courtyard to balance out the open space of the eliminated front yard.
- The balconies overwhelm the neighboring building and strongly impose on the privacy relationships of the neighboring structure.
- The architect’s presentation used the term “sensitive” several times, but the decks, to mention one item, show no sensitivity to their neighbor to the west.
- The front of the building conveys no sense of real interest.
- The large blank wall on the east side, behind the existing commercial structure will have great visibility up and down 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW.
- The project needs a shadow study that deals with the property to the west and to properties north, northwest and northeast across the alley,

## 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 recognized the difficulties inherent in the narrowness of the site juxtaposed to the lowrise residential zoning to the west and the commercial structure on the east, but were disappointed that basically only one alternative was explored with minor variations.
- The architectural gestures that should manifest the announced “*transitioning*” to the LR1 zone were not clearly evident.
- The basements units did not come across as livable units or good architectural planning; a 10-foot deep light well was not a convincing feature as shown, since it did not deal realistically when the presence of the trees to the west or air and light for the serviced units;
- The proposal badly needed a comprehensive light and shadow study, to ascertain with some accuracy how the proposed options shadowed themselves as well as neighbors;
- The project badly needed a better sense of arrival and entry and should not just provide a pragmatic answer to the question “How do I get to my unit?”
- The preferred option needs to address the issue of how some semblance of privacy, quiet and respect is acknowledged for the neighbor to the south;
- The Board would like to see more information regarding the interface of structure and construction, location of window wells and landscaping and pathway, and how this would affect retention of the large trees on the neighboring site to the west;
- The Board would like to see more analysis regarding key features of the existing streetscape along both sides of NW 61<sup>st</sup> Street;
- The preferred option, with a main entry from NW 61<sup>st</sup> Street showed the most promise, but the relationship of sidewalk, entry, plinth needed to be worked out in a more convincing fashion (front setback or no setback? plinth or no plinth?).

## DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. *Guidelines in italic are particularly related to the Board’s guidance above.* 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-1. Sun and Wind:** Take advantage of solar exposure and natural ventilation. Use local wind patterns and solar gain to reduce the need for mechanical ventilation and heating where possible.

**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-C Topography**

**CS1-C-1. Land Form:** Use natural topography and desirable landforms to inform project design.

**CS1-C-2. Elevation Changes:** Use the existing site topography when locating structures and open spaces on the site.

**CS1-D Plants and Habitat**

**CS1-D-1. On-Site Features:** Incorporate on-site natural habitats and landscape elements into project design and connect those features to existing networks of open spaces and natural habitats wherever possible. Consider relocating significant trees and vegetation if retention is not feasible.

**CS1-D-2. Off-Site Features:** Provide opportunities through design to connect to off-site habitats such as riparian corridors or existing urban forest corridors. Promote continuous habitat, where possible, and increase interconnected corridors of urban forest and habitat where possible.

**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-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces**

**CS2-B-2. Connection to the Street:** Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and public realm.

**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-1. Existing Development and Zoning:** *Review the height, bulk, and scale of neighboring buildings as well as the scale of development anticipated by zoning for the area to determine an appropriate complement and/or transition.*

**CS2-D-2. Existing Site Features:** Use changes in topography, site shape, and vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent properties.

**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-1. Fitting Old and New Together:** Create compatibility between new projects, and existing architectural context, including historic and modern designs, through building articulation, scale and proportion, roof forms, detailing, fenestration, and/or the use of complementary materials.

**CS3-A-2. Contemporary Design:** Explore how contemporary designs can contribute to the development of attractive new forms and architectural styles; as expressed through use of new materials or other means.

**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**

### **PL1 Connectivity: Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.**

#### **PL1-A Network of Open Spaces**

**PL1-A-1. Enhancing Open Space:** Design the building and open spaces to positively contribute to a broader network of open spaces throughout the neighborhood.

#### **PL1-B Walkways and Connections**

**PL1-B-1. Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Connect on-site pedestrian walkways with existing public and private pedestrian infrastructure, thereby supporting pedestrian connections within and outside the project.

**PL1-B-3. Pedestrian Amenities:** Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian oriented open spaces to enliven the area and attract interest and interaction with the site and building should be considered.

#### **PL1-C Outdoor Uses and Activities**

**PL1-C-1. Selecting Activity Areas:** Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.

### **PL2 Walkability: Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.**

## **PL2-A Accessibility**

**PL2-A-1. Access for All:** Provide access for people of all abilities in a manner that is fully integrated into the project design. Design entries and other primary access points such that all visitors can be greeted and welcomed through the front door.

**PL2-A-2. Access Challenges:** Add features to assist pedestrians in navigating sloped sites, long blocks, or other challenges.

## **PL2-B Safety and Security**

**PL2-B-1. Eyes on the Street:** Create a safe environment by providing lines of sight and encouraging natural surveillance.

**PL2-B-2. Lighting for Safety:** Provide lighting at sufficient lumen intensities and scales, including pathway illumination, pedestrian and entry lighting, and/or security lights.

## **PL2-C Weather Protection**

**PL2-C-1. Locations and Coverage:** Overhead weather protection is encouraged and should be located at or near uses that generate pedestrian activity such as entries, retail uses, and transit stops.

**PL2-C-2. Design Integration:** Integrate weather protection, gutters and downspouts into the design of the structure as a whole, and ensure that it also relates well to neighboring buildings in design, coverage, or other features.

**PL2-C-3. People-Friendly Spaces:** Create an artful and people-friendly space beneath building canopies by using human-scale architectural elements and a pattern of forms and/or textures at intervals along the façade..

## **PL2-D Wayfinding**

**PL2-D-1. Design as Wayfinding:** Use design features as a means of wayfinding wherever possible.

## **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-1. Design Objectives:** Design primary entries to be obvious, identifiable, and distinctive with clear lines of sight and lobbies visually connected to the street.

**PL3-A-2. Common Entries:** Multi-story residential buildings need to provide privacy and security for residents but also be welcoming and identifiable to visitors.

**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.*

### **PL4-B Planning Ahead for Bicyclists**

**PL4-B-1. Early Planning:** Consider existing and future bicycle traffic to and through the site early in the process so that access and connections are integrated into the project along with other modes of travel.

**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-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-1. Site Characteristics and Uses:** Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space.

**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-3. Fit With Neighboring Buildings:** *Use design elements to achieve a successful fit between a building and its neighbors.*

#### **DC2-D Scale and Texture**

**DC2-D-1. Human Scale:** Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept

**DC2-D-2. Texture:** Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or “texture,” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

#### **DC2-E Form and Function**

**DC2-E-1. Legibility and Flexibility:** Strive for a balance between building use legibility and flexibility. Design buildings such that their primary functions and uses can be readily determined from the exterior, making the building easy to access and understand. At the same time, design flexibility into the building so that it may remain useful over time even as specific programmatic needs evolve.

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

#### **DC3-A Building-Open Space Relationship**

**DC3-A-1. Interior/Exterior Fit:** Develop an open space concept in conjunction with the architectural concept to ensure that interior and exterior spaces relate well to each other and support the functions of the development.

**DC3-B Open Space Uses and Activities**

**DC3-B-1. Meeting User Needs:** Plan the size, uses, activities, and features of each open space to meet the needs of expected users, ensuring each space has a purpose and function.

**DC3-B-2. Matching Uses to Conditions:** Respond to changing environmental conditions such as seasonal and daily light and weather shifts through open space design and/or programming of open space 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.

**DC3-C Design**

**DC3-C-2. Amenities/Features:** Create attractive outdoor spaces suited to the uses envisioned for the project.

**DC3-C-3. Support Natural Areas:** *Create an open space design that retains and enhances onsite natural areas and connects to natural areas that may exist off-site and may provide habitat for wildlife.*

**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-C Lighting**

**DC4-C-2. Avoiding Glare:** *Design project lighting based upon the uses on and off site, taking care to provide illumination to serve building needs while avoiding off-site night glare and light pollution.*

**DC4-D Trees, Landscape, and Hardscape Materials**

**DC4-D-1. Choice of Plant Materials:** Reinforce the overall architectural and open space design concepts through the selection of landscape materials.

**DC4-D-2. Hardscape Materials:** Use exterior courtyards, plazas, and other hard surfaced areas as an opportunity to add color, texture, and/or pattern and enliven public areas through the use of distinctive and durable paving materials. Use permeable materials wherever possible.

**DC4-D-3. Long Range Planning:** Select plants that upon maturity will be of appropriate size, scale, and shape to contribute to the site as intended.

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

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

At the time of the FIRST Early Design Guidance no departures were requested:

The Board indicated that a carefully selected set of departures might help to resolve some of the complex issues of the site and would be willing to entertain a request for departures if they could be shown to make for a better design that served both the inhabitants of the building and improved the structure's relationships to neighbors of the building.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board requested (5-0) that the project return for a second Early Design Guidance meeting.

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