



FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3018378

Address: 5201 Rainier Avenue South

Applicant: Hugh Schaffer, S+HWorks, LLC

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, August 11, 2015

Board Members Present: Drew Hicks (Chair)
Carey Dagliano Holmes
Charles Romero
David Sauvion

Board Members Absent: Julian Weber

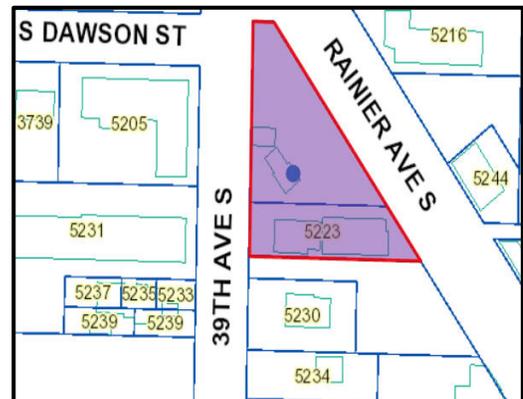
DPD Staff Present: Tami Garrett, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 2 (NC2-40)

Nearby Zones: (North) NC2-40
(South) Lowrise 2 (LR2) and NC2-40
(East) NC2-40
(West) Commercial 2 (C2-65) and LR2

Lot Area: 24,408 square feet (sq. ft.)



Current Development:

A vehicle repair garage, used car sales area and accessory detached structures exist on the project site.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

Surrounding development includes residential uses (single family residences, townhouses and apartments) to the west and south; and commercial uses (retail, restaurants, offices, etc.) east and north of the subject property.

This urban triangular-shaped corner site is located within the Columbia City Residential Urban Village and the Southeast Seattle Reinvestment Area (SESRA), situated on the west side of Rainier Avenue South. There are a variety of institutional and commercial uses in immediate vicinity of the project along the Rainier Avenue South corridor, north and south of the project. The Columbia City Historic Landmark District is approximately a half block north of the proposal site. The neighborhood is evolving with blocks of significant development of residential and commercial development in the past several years. The site is situated in an area that is moderately pedestrian and transit oriented due to its proximity of bus transit along Rainier Avenue South.

Access:

Vehicular access to the subject property is possible from both Rainier Avenue South and 39th Avenue South.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

The project site slopes upward gently towards the southwest, rising approximately 12'. There are no Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) mapped on the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for the design and construction of a six-story mixed-use commercial/residential structure with five stories of residential (115-121 units) above ground-related commercial (1,888-2,057 sq. ft. of retail), live-work units (3-7 units) and enclosed parking area. A total parking quantity of 25-55 stalls is planned within the structure.

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This project includes a request to rezone the project site from NC2-40 to Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-65). The applicant has outlined this information in the design packet.

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3018378) 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 concepts were presented to the Board. The presentation began by showing three large and distinct massing moves. Additionally, the architect's presentation included supplementary information (massing articulation sketches of the preferred scheme) that was not included in the EDG design packets initially provided to the Board. The project team's goals were to design a project that represents the residential and commercial nature of the area; responds appropriately to adjacent residential uses; and, creates a strong, attractive and pedestrian-friendly design. All three options included a six-story structure with partially below grade parking, commercial space, live-work space, and approximately 120 +/- residential units. Outdoor amenity areas were also proposed in all of the schemes presented to the Board.

The first scheme (Concept A) identified as the code-compliant option, illustrated an L-shaped massing facing Rainier Ave South. This scheme included a triangular-shaped elevated courtyard amenity space overlooking Rainier Ave South; and reduced upper-level massing facing Rainier Avenue South with the bulk of the structure pushed towards the south and west boundary lines. This option included 115 residential units, seven live-work units, 2,057 sq. ft. of commercial area and 25 parking stalls.

The second scheme (Concept B) was identified as an interior courtyard ("doughnut") option. This scheme showed a simplified massing with an interior courtyard that would be flanked by single loaded corridors around its perimeter. The majority of the massing bulk of this scheme was pushed to the perimeter of the site, creating impacts to both the Rainier frontage and the adjacent Lowrise-zoned properties to the south and to the west. This scheme was comprised of 120 residential units, 4 live-work units, 2,057 sq. ft. of commercial area and 48 parking stalls. This design would require several design departures from residential setback requirements, non-residential street-level transparency requirements, parking location standards, and parking sight triangle requirements.

The third, and applicant preferred, scheme (Concept C) was described as the "bar and townhome" option. This scheme showed the majority of the project massing along and

following Rainier Avenue South, with a plaza separating smaller scale townhomes toward the south and west ends of the site. The intent of this scheme was to reduce the project scale from the NC zoning along Rainier Avenue South to the LR2 zoning on 39th Avenue South. This option included 121 residential units, three live-work units, 1,888 sq. ft. of commercial area and 55 parking stalls. This design would also require several design departures from residential setback requirements, non-residential street-level transparency requirements, street-level non-residential use depth provisions, parking sight triangle requirements, and parking location standards.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Many members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised (with applicant/planner response in *italics*):

- Concerned about the safety and the site lines of the parking entrance relative to its proposed proximity to the intersection of Rainier Avenue South and 39th Avenue South.
- Voiced support of a design that is compatible with the architectural character of Columbia City.
- Encouraged the Board to not support code departures requests for sight triangles and residential setback requirements. Discouraged a design that would create a large wall abutting the project site's south boundary line.
- Stated that the proposal would not meet the frequent transit requirements and would be required to provide more parking onsite.
The planner explained that Frequent Transit requirements are reviewed during the Master Use Permit (MUP) phase and was not part of the Board's purview.
- Stated that the proposed parking layout was "unrealistic" and would not adequately accommodate vehicular maneuvering on the site.
- Requested the future design incorporate elements that enhance the pedestrian connection between Columbia City and Hillman City. Asked that the Rainier Avenue South façade be softened with green space, nice seating areas and not allow the project to create a "canyon-like" setting at the street.
- Encouraged the applicant to incorporate green solutions such as a green roof and pervious paving in the design.
- Voiced support of the onsite parking quantity and encouraged a design that would support the usage of alternative modes of transportation (walking, light rail, bus transit, bicycling).
- Asked about the building's setbacks abutting the east and west property lines.
The applicant clarified the setback for the garage wall along 39th Avenue South is 4' from the property line, and 7' from the sidewalk edge. Along Rainier there will be approximately 1' setback from the property line, with planting and entry areas along that façade.
- Requested that the Rainier Avenue South façade be softened with green space, nice seating areas and not allow the project to create a "canyon-like" setting at the street.
- Glad to see the site developed and appreciated the pedestrian and transportation considerations.

- Asked that the applicant incorporate amenities for a range of incomes and lifestyles.
- Requested that the following design changes in order to emphasize the attributes of the buildings in the Columbia City District:
 - The Rainier Avenue South façade height should be kept low.
 - Incorporate more modulation along the east façade in order to break down the façade massing.
 - Incorporate timeless, high quality exterior materials throughout the project.
 - Enhance the corner by providing gathering space and good landscaping.
- Expressed concern that the blank façade along 39th Avenue South would be problematic and pose a crime/safety issue.
- Inquired if street improvements (sidewalks, curbs, landscaping, etc.) are proposed along 39th Avenue South.

The applicant clarified that new curbs and sidewalks will be provided along 39th Avenue South.
- Would like affordable housing to be considered. Did not agree that bicycles were a viable mode of transportation in this neighborhood which is currently very auto-oriented.
- Felt that that parking should be located below grade as stated in the design guidelines.
- Observed that a large expanse of blank wall would face the property south of the project site and at grade along 39th Avenue South. Felt that design that negatively impacts the qualities and characteristics of the streetscape should be discouraged.
- Concerned that the proposed massing’s height, bulk, and scale does not meet Columbia City neighborhood plan design goals.

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, Architectural Composition and Massing:

- a. The Board discussed each design scheme (Concept A, B and C) and offered feedback. In reviewing the three concepts, the Board felt that Concept A was successful in modulation along Rainier Avenue South but commented the elevated exterior amenity space abutting Rainier was not appropriate. The Board was also concerned with the transition of the massing to the Lowrise-zoned property south west of the project site along 39th Avenue South.

The Board voiced that Concept B was the least preferred because the elevated courtyard would not be beneficial to the units and would create long continuous facades abutting all of the subject site’s boundary lines.

The Board appreciated that the preferred Concept C illustrated a better courtyard orientation and the potential for a strong urban frontage along Rainier Avenue South.

However, members of the Board noted that the arrangement of the massing blocks appeared to be disjointed and not unified.

Overall, the Board concluded that the proposed schemes did not adequately address the site context; lacked sufficient façade articulation and did not effectively transition to the surrounding lower-scaled residential properties to the south and to the west. Therefore, the Board directed the applicant to return for a Second Early Design Guidance meeting to further explore all three schemes presented relative to the following guidance:

- i. The Board noted that the massing options should better transition to the adjacent LR2 property. (CS2.D)
- ii. Analysis of the second level exterior plaza, including its relationship to adjacent residential uses and the street was requested by the Board. (CS2.D.5, PL3.B, DC3.A)
- iii. The Board appreciated the supplementary information (massing articulation sketches of the preferred scheme) distributed to the Board at the meeting but voiced a preference that this information be illustrated for each option. Therefore, the Board requested that further development of the massing and articulation perspectives for all of the schemes be provided at the next EDG meeting. The Board also requested the applicant show further context and adjacent buildings to better illustrate the existing scale and adjacency relationships. (CS2.A.2, CS2.C.1, CS2.D, DC2.A, DC2.B)

2. Rainier Avenue South Frontage:

- a. The Board expressed support for a design that provided a strong urban frontage along Rainier Avenue South. (CS2.B, CS2.C.1, CS2.D)
- b. The Board recognized that the configuration and size of the live-work units will add to the viability of the development and noted that the currently proposed configuration of the live-work units would be problematic. Thus Board requested diagrammatic floor layout plans of the live-work units at the next meeting. (PL3.B)

3. 39th Avenue South Frontage and Vehicular Access:

- a. The Board stated that the 39th Avenue South street-level façade needs further study with regards to transparency, blank walls, pedestrian/resident safety and vehicular access and expects these concerns to be resolved in the next design iteration. (PL2.B.1, PL2.B.3, PL3.B, DC1.B, DC2.B)
- b. The Board felt that the elevated access to the townhouse units sited above the podium base was awkward, and requested the applicant explore a design that enhances the relationship of the townhomes to the grade. (PL3.A, PL3.B)
- c. The Board observed that the location of the parking entrance abutting 39th Avenue South could be a safety issue due to its proximity to the intersection and stated detailed analysis is necessary. The Board suggested the applicant explore relocating the parking entrance farther south along this street as a method to address this concern. (DC1.B.1)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide 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

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-1. Site Characteristics: Allow characteristics of sites to inform the design, especially where the street grid and topography create unusually shaped lots that can add distinction to the building massing.

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

CS2-B-3. Character of Open Space: Contribute to the character and proportion of surrounding open spaces.

CS2-C Relationship to the Block

CS2-C-1. Corner Sites: Corner sites can serve as gateways or focal points; both require careful detailing at the first three floors due to their high visibility from two or more streets and long distances.

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.

PUBLIC LIFE

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

PL3-B Residential Edges

PL3-B-1. Security and Privacy: Provide security and privacy for residential buildings through the use of a buffer or semi-private space between the development and the street or neighboring buildings.

PL3-B-2. Ground-level Residential: Privacy and security issues are particularly important in buildings with ground-level housing, both at entries and where windows are located overlooking the street.

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.

PL3-B-4. Interaction: Provide opportunities for interaction among residents and neighbors.

PL3-C Retail Edges

PL3-C-1. Porous Edge: Engage passersby with opportunities to interact visually with the building interior using glazing and transparency. Create multiple entries where possible and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.

PL3-C-2. Visibility: Maximize visibility into the building interior and merchandise displays. Consider fully operational glazed wall-sized doors that can be completely opened to the street, increased height in lobbies, and/or special lighting for displays.

PL3-C-3. Ancillary Activities: Allow space for activities such as sidewalk vending, seating, and restaurant dining to occur. Consider setting structures back from the street or incorporating space in the project design into which retail uses can extend.

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-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.

PL4-B-3. Bike Connections: Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project.

DESIGN CONCEPT

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

DC1-B Vehicular Access and Circulation

DC1-B-1. Access Location and Design: Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists wherever possible. Emphasize use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

DC1-B-2. Facilities for Alternative Transportation: Locate facilities for alternative transportation in prominent locations that are convenient and readily accessible to expected users.

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-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).

DC2-C-2. Dual Purpose Elements: Consider architectural features that can be dual purpose— adding depth, texture, and scale as well as serving other project functions.

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.

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.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based on the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guidelines priorities and achieve a better overall project 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 **FIRST** Early Design Guidance, the following departures were requested:

1. **Non-Residential Street-Level Transparency Requirements (SMC 23.47A.008.B.2):** The Code requires 60% of the street-facing façade between 2' and 8' above the sidewalk be transparent. The applicant proposes reduced transparency of the street-facing façade abutting 39th Avenue South. The applicant explained that in order to utilize the sloping topography to partially locate parking below the grade, a portion of the façade abutting the west property line will be opaque.

The Board indicated they would not be inclined to support this departure as proposed. The Board stated they could consider support if the treatment of the blank façade area is further developed and thoughtfully treated. Art patterning, landscaping or transparency into the garage were methods that were suggested by the Board to the applicant. The Board also encouraged the applicant to explore a design that showed lowering the townhouses to the street level. (PL3.B, DC1.B, DC2.B)

2. **Street-Level Non-Residential Use Depth Provisions (SMC 23.47A.008.B.3):** The Code states that non-residential uses in new structures shall extend an average depth of at least 30' and a minimum depth of 15' from the street-level street-facing façade. The applicant proposes that each of the structure's ground-level live-work units and a portion of the commercial space all facing Rainier Avenue South have an average depth less than 30' and a minimum depth less than 15'. The applicant stated that this departure would allow the parking layout to be efficiently configured for this triangular-shaped site.

The Board indicated a willingness to entertain this requested departure, provided that the proposed live-work units and commercial space are configured to be viable spaces. The applicant will need to provide detailed space floor layout plans for the Board to make a determination. (PL3.B.3, DC1.A)

3. **Residential Building Setback (SMC 23.47A.014.B.1):** The Code states that a setback is required where a lot abuts the intersection of a side lot line and front lot line of a lot in a residential zone. The required setback forms a triangular area. The applicant proposes the development encroach into the required setback area.

In regards to Concept C, the Board indicated that a stronger justification other than the townhomes relationship to the adjacent LR2 zoned properties was necessary to justify this departure. The Board encouraged the applicant to resolve this concern by the next EDG meeting. (CS2.D, DC2.A)

4. **Residential Building Setback (SMC 23.47A.014.B.3):** The Code requires a structure containing a residential use with a side or rear 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 south wall façade is parallel with the side lot line-abutting property in a residential (LR2) 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 would not be inclined to support this departure as proposed. The Board stated further mitigation or modulation should be explored for this façade to demonstrate that the building design warrants this departure. (CS2.D, DC2.A)

5. **Parking Location (SMC 23.47A.032.B.1.b):** The Code states that street-level parking within a structure shall be separated from street-level, street-facing facades by another permitted use. The applicant proposes parking stalls within the garage area to abut the street-level, street facing façade along 39th Avenue South without separating it from the street with another permitted use. The applicant explained that this departure would allow the arrangement of the interior uses to be primarily along Rainier Avenue South rather than 39th Avenue South which is more residential in character.

The Board stated that this departure request is related to the departure request for street-level transparency (#1) and indicated they would not be inclined to support this departure as presented. (PL3.B, DC1.B, DC2.B)

6. **Sight Triangle (SMC 23.54.030.G.1):** The Code requires for two way driveways, a sight triangle on both sides of the driveway or easement to be provided. The driveway shall be kept clear of any obstruction for a distance of 10' from the intersection of the driveway with a sidewalk or curb intersection if there is no sidewalk. The applicant proposes a reduction of the 10' sight triangle distance from the intersection of the driveway and the sidewalk abutting 39th Avenue South. The applicant explained that a reduced sight triangle area would minimize the width and visual prominence of the garage entry along 39th Avenue South.

The Board indicated they would not be inclined to support this departure based on the location of the vehicular access as proposed. The Board commented that the safety and security for the pedestrians and residences is imperative and felt that Board support for this departure is dependent on additional analysis of the garage entry location in relationship to adjacent intersections. The applicant will need to provide more feedback from SDOT/DPD staff (Land Use Planner, Transportation Planner) regarding the traffic analysis for this proposal. (DC1.B)

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided.