



City of Seattle

Department of Construction and Inspections
Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN
REVIEW

DESIGN GUIDANCE STREAMLINED DESIGN REVIEW

Project Numbers: 3018806

Address: 1622 Aurora Ave N

Applicant: Scot Carr of Public47 Architects

Date of Report: Friday, April 15, 2016

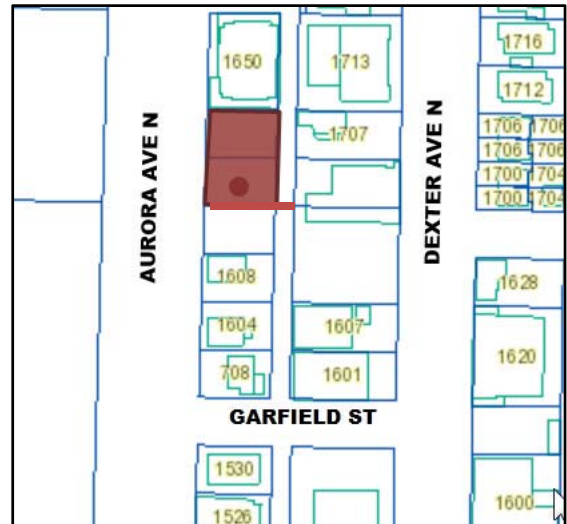
SDCI Staff: Magda Hogness

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial (C1-65)

Nearby Zones: (North) C1-65
(South) C1-65
(East) Neighborhood Commercial (NC3P-40)
(West) Lowrise (LR2)

Lot Area: 7454 sf



Current Development:

The site is currently vacant.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The project sites lies within the north part of the Dexter Neighborhood, which is characterized by the close proximity to Lake Union and a mixture of housing and commercial office uses with a scattering of earlier maritime support businesses.

Mixed use and residential structures of various scales are located along Aurora Avenue. Substantial new development includes a mixture of residential, commercial and mixed-use buildings that have been recently constructed or are under review for this area. Across the alley to the east, a proposal for a 4-story building containing 62 residential units is currently being constructed under project 3015186.

Dexter Avenue N. is an established major bike route from the northern part of the city to downtown. Aurora Ave N., also known as State Route 99, is a heavily traveled road that cuts off the neighborhood from the Queen Anne Neighborhood to the west. The closest pedestrian crossing is located at Galer St, two blocks to the south. Bus routes run on Aurora Ave N and Dexter Ave.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a 5-story structure containing 42 apartment units and 3 live-work units and parking for 30 vehicles to be provided below grade.

BACKGROUND

The subject site was granted Relief From Prohibition On Steep Slope Development by the SDCI Geotechnical Engineer on November 14, 2014 and an updated approval was granted on March 30, 2015 under project number 6439228:

“ECA review is required. The November 14, 2014 decision was based on information pertaining to a property to the north of the subject property. Additional information was submitted on March 20, 2015 that included site-specific explorations and sections developed by Hart Crowser, Inc. Based on a review of the submitted information, and the City GIS system, DPD concludes that the ECA Steep Slope Area on the property appears to have been created by previous legal grading. Consequently, the project qualifies for the Relief From Prohibition On Steep Slope Development criteria, as described in SMC 25.09.180 B2b. An ECA Steep Slope Area Variance, or an Exception, is not required to develop this property. The ECA General, and Landslide-Hazard Development Standards and criteria still apply.”

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following public comment was received:

- Would like to see more parking incorporated; at least one parking spot per apartment/live-work unit.
- Adequate space for loading and deliveries should be included. At this time the tenants of the Summit Apt. load and unload in the slow down lane on Aurora Ave. which causes many collisions at the juncture; the slow down lane should be extended further south.
- Noted that another new building across the alley has taken a couple of feet from the alley and made it difficult to reach their parking garage; would like to see access provided during construction.
- Many people will come via Dexter or ride their bikes; an entry for people on the alley side should be incorporated.

PRIORITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and public comment, the Design Review Planner provided the following siting and design guidance. The Planner identified the Citywide Design Guidelines of highest priority for this project.

- 1) **Natural Systems and Site Features:** The proposed siting of the structure requires the removal of an existing Exceptional Tree. Staff reviewed the applicant's analysis of the existing Exceptional Tree, a 24" Maple, on the property and the Exceptional Tree retention building footprint scheme. Staff agrees the retention of this scheme would significantly compromise the siting of the building, massing and architectural concept due to the central location of the tree and significant slope. This removal of the tree would provide an overall design that would better meet the intent of Design Review Guidelines CS2 Urban Pattern and Form and DC2 Architectural Concept by strengthening the most desirable forms and patterns of the streets and blocks in the surrounding area and. The proposed location of the replacement trees should be visible to the public and use the opportunity to add interest to the frontage along Aurora, potentially with small sculptural trees. Along with the Master Use Permit, provide more information on efforts and design intent for the replacement canopy. (CS2, DC2-A, DC2-B)
- 2) **Massing and Respect for Adjacent Sites:** The massing composition provides a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.
 - a. The massing has a strong presence, breaks down the perceived scale and bulk of the entire structure and provides a compelling composition. Each massing shift is further reinforced by material applications and fenestration patterns and should be carried forward in the final design. (DC2-B-1, DC2-C-2, DC2-D-2)
 - b. The recessed balconies along the alley façade provide depth to the facade and should be carried forward in the final design. (DC2-A-2, DC2-B-1, DC2-C-2, DC2-D)
 - c. More information is needed to demonstrate how the east facade is an appropriate response to the zoning transition. A window overlay diagram for the east elevation should be provided to demonstrate a negligible window overlap. (CS2-D-5 , DC2-B-1)
- 3) **Walkability and Wayfinding:** Developing the transition from the lobby and live/work units entries and site circulation is important to provide opportunities for interaction and improve wayfinding.
 - a. Staff strongly supports a planted buffer and elevated connection for the live/work units and lobby entry. These design elements should be carried forward in the final design. (PL2-D-1, PL3-A-3, PL3-A-4, PL3-B-4)
 - b. All primary entries should be obvious, identifiable, and distinctive and not rely just on accent color. Explore a façade reveal where the plane shift occurs or another subtle way to demarcate the lobby. As the design develops, show how lighting and addressing will be incorporated. (PL2-D-1, PL3-A)

- c. Include lighting where appropriate to give a sense of security to walkways, parking areas, and entries without glaring lights. Provide a lighting plan. (PL2-B-2, DC4-C)
- 4) **Architectural Concept and Materials:** The treatment of the proposed materials further breaks down the perceived bulk and scale and improves the overall composition.
- a. The corten metal panel and ribbed metal cladding provides scale and texture to the facades and should be maintained. (DC2-B-1, DC2-D-2, DC4-A-1)
 - b. The soffit of the cantilevered massing will be highly visible. Consider the material treatment of this surface as well as the balcony surfaces to strengthen the design concept. (DC2-B-1, DC2-C-2, DC2-D-2)
 - c. Resolve the blank wall conditions shown on the lower portion of the north and south, and east facades with texture and material treatment; study extending down the ribbed metal siding down to break up the frontage. Refine and provide more information on the green screen proposed along the alley. Relate the height and width of the screen to another datum to avoid a tacked on appearance and provide information on the type of planting proposed. (DC2-B, DC2-C, DC2-D)
 - d. The rooftop elevator overrun and stair tower should be minimized to the greatest extent possible. Study the potential to strengthen and unify the overall composition, potentially by angling the form. (CS2-D, DC2-B-1, DC2-C-2, DC2-D)
 - e. For the upper building mass, study and revise the thickness of the framed wrapped expression along the alley frontage to read as a unified composition. (CS2-D, DC2-B-1, DC2-C-2, DC2-D)
 - f. Material joints relate to fenestration patterns and should be maintained. (DC2-A-2, DC2-B-1, DC2-D-2, DC4-A-1)
- 5) **Landscape and Open Space Concept:** Add trees to soften the Aurora street frontage area and contribute to a more pleasant pedestrian experience. Provide more information on specific planting, fencing and the proposed improvements in the right of way. Resolve how the lower level massing and setback create a cohesive design. While further developing the design, provide an inviting transition from the street to unit entries and create opportunities improve wayfinding. (CS1-D-1, CS2-D-2, PL1-B, PL1-C, DC3-A-1, DC3-C-2, DC4-D)

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

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-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-D Height, Bulk, and Scale

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

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

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.

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

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-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-3. Individual Entries: Ground-related housing should be scaled and detailed appropriately to provide for a more intimate type of entry.

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.

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-B Architectural and Façade Composition

DC2-B-1. Façade Composition: Design all building façades—including alleys and visible roofs— considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all façades 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 façades 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 façades 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-D Scale and Texture

DC2-D-1. Human Scale: Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building façades, 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 Building Materials

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.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD ADJUSTMENTS

Design Review Staff's recommendation on the requested adjustment(s) will be based upon the adjustment's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the adjustment(s).

At the time of Design Guidance, no adjustments were requested for the design scheme that proposes removal of the Exceptional Tree.

STAFF DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the Design Guidance, the DPD Staff recommended the project should move forward to building permit application in response to the Design Guidance provided.

1. Please be aware that this report is an assessment on how the project is meeting the intent of the Design Guidelines. This review does not include a full zoning review. Zoning review will occur when the MUP plans and/or building permit is submitted. If needed and where applicable, SDR adjustments may be requested in response to zoning corrections.
2. If applicable, please prepare your Master Use Permit for SEPA review with a thorough zoning analysis listing the 23.45 and SMC 23.54 code section criteria, showing both required and proposed information (include page number where you graphically show compliance). You may want to review Tip 201 (<http://web1.seattle.gov/dpd/cams/CamList.aspx>) and may also want to review the MUP information here: <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/permittypes/mupoverview/default.htm>
3. Along with your building permit application, please include a narrative response to the guidance provided in this report.
4. All requested adjustments must be clearly documented in the building permit plans.