City of Seattle

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

DESIGN REVIEW

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

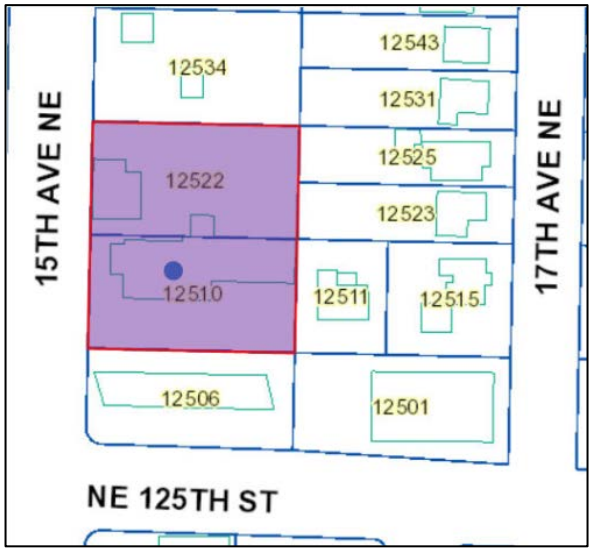
Project Number:	3019514
Address:	12510 15th Avenue NE
Applicant:	Erin Kelly, H+dlT Collaborative
Date of Meeting:	Monday, June 8, 2015
Board Members Present:	Ivana Begley, Chair Eric Blank Christina Pizana Martine Zettle
Board Members Absent:	Julia Levitt
DPD Staff Present:	Katy Haima

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-40)

Nearby Zones: (North) NC3-40
(South) NC3-40
(East) Single Family (SF5000)
(West) NC3-40

Lot Area: 36,400 SF



Current Development:

The site currently contains two 1-2 story commercial buildings and paved surface parking. The site drops approximately eight feet from the southwest corner to the northeast corner. Three non-exceptional trees are located along the north of the site.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The site is located within a commercial node surrounding the intersection of 15th Ave NE and NE 125th Street. The small commercial node is at the convergence of three neighborhoods: Pinehurst, Olympic Hills, and Victory Heights. The immediate site context consists of smaller commercial and retail structures, a grocery store, multi-family developments including apartments and townhouses, and single family housing. The surrounding area is largely single family housing.

Immediately to the north of the site is a 3 story condominium building. To the south of the site is a gas station and car wash. To the east are single family houses; one structure, near the south end of the site, is approximately 20' from the property line. All other residences are located at least 100 feet away.

15th Ave NE is a principal arterial and connects the site to Northgate and UW to the south, and Shoreline to the north. NE 125th Street is also a principal arterial and connects the site to I-5 to the west, and Lake City to the east. A bus stop located adjacent to the site provides access to UW, Lake City, Northgate, and Downtown. On-street bicycle lanes are located on NE 125th St.

Access:

There are three curbs cuts from 15th Ave NE. There is no alley.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

There are no designated ECAs on site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a multi-unit development approximately 12 structures containing a total of 8 live-work units and 32 townhouse units. Surface parking for 10 vehicles and garages for 28 vehicles is to be provided. Existing structures are to be demolished.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3019514) 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 Address: **Public Resource Center**
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant provided context for the project, noting the vehicle-oriented character of the area, adjacent residential structures, and the location of the site in the Northgate Overlay Area. The applicant discussed that recent development in the area is working to create a stronger connection to the streetscape and create a more pedestrian-oriented character.

The applicant presented three options at EDG. Scheme 1 (code compliant) utilizes a single access point, adjacent to the proposed urban garden, at the southwest corner of the site. A circuitous drive is located around the edge of the site, with the massing pulled in to the center. Live-work units front 15th Ave NE in an unbroken row. Scheme 2 provides separate access points for vehicles and pedestrians. Units are arranged around a T-shaped drive. The urban garden is located at the southwest corner of the site. The row of live-work units is broken into two masses on either side of the drive. Scheme 3 is organized around two east-west drives, each with separate access from 15th Ave NE. The urban garden is located adjacent to 15th Ave NE, mid-site, combined with the main pedestrian access. The live-work units are broken up into four clusters of two units each. Al three schemes have two locations for consolidated trash.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

- Concerned over the amount of setback provided along the north side of site and impact on adjacent structure and units, due to shading/light access, and privacy impact.
- Would like to see lush landscaping and trees along north property line for buffering, and throughout site for wildlife habitat.
- Noted the massing of 4 story structures appears out of scale with existing development.
- Appreciated shorter units towards the edges of the site for reducing bulk and height impacts.
- Concerned over urban garden receiving too much shade for successful plant growth and creating comfortable space for users.
- Noted the lost views from the adjacent structure to the north.

- Encouraged the applicant to limit access to one curb cut to minimize impacts on the pedestrian environment and streetscape.
- Encouraged the applicant to design the live-work units to be flexible, as to accommodate commercial/retia uses in the future.
- Concerned over the location of the bus stop. Noted that if the bus stop is moved north, riders may have to walk further to the commercial uses at the intersection of 15th Ave. NE and 125th Street, and encouraged the location to be moved towards the south of the site, closer to the intersection.
- Preferred the consolidated massing of live-work units, as it expresses a more commercial character than units in smaller clusters.

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. **Massing Options and Design Concept.**
    a. After considerable discussion, the Board generally preferred Scheme 1 due to the advantages of larger setbacks that the exterior drive provided. The Board especially appreciated the large setbacks at the north and south property lines, as this lessens the visual and privacy impacts to the existing residential structure to the north, and allows for mitigation of impacts of potential new development on the site to the south. The Board was less concerned about the setback to the east, as the existing structures are currently set back from the property line. (CS1-B, CS2-B, DC1-B, DC1-C, DC2-A)
    b. The Board also noted the potential for a hybrid of Scheme 1 and 2, which would use an L shaped drive, accessed at the north end of the site, to retain the larger setback on the north and allow the applicant more flexibility to arranging the units in response to site characteristics. (CS1-B, CS2-B, DC1-B, DC1-C, DC2-A)
    c. The Board appreciated the variation in height of the structures as presented in Schemes 2 and 3 that locate lower heights near the site boundaries, to lessen visual and privacy impacts on adjacencies (CS1-B, CS2-B, CS2-D)
    d. The Board requested more information demonstrating how the massing and unit design works with the topography and proposed grading. (DC2-A)
    e. The Board appreciated the consolidated trash collection areas. (DC1-C)
2. **Circulation and Unit Orientation.**
    a. The Board preferred a circulation pattern that utilizes one curb cut, to minimize the impact on the pedestrian environment along 15th Ave NE. (PL4-A, DC1-B, DC1-C)

b. The pedestrian corridor, as presented in the preferred alternative, was supported in concept by the Board. The Board was concerned that as proposed, the width of the walkway in relation to the height of the adjacent buildings was not adequate to create a welcoming and functional space. (PL1-A, PL1-B, PL1-C, CD3-B)
c. The Board was supportive of Scheme 1, and encouraged the applicant to design the drives as "woonerven" or shared streets, to accommodate pedestrians and vehicles, and to function as a shared open space instead of voids within the site. The design should integrate landscaping and green features into the design of the space. (CD3-A, PL1-B, PL1-C, PL2-B, DC1-C)
d. The Board indicated preliminary support for departures that would decrease the width of the drive to provide more space for creating usable open spaces. (PL1-C, DC1-C, DC2-A, DC3-A, DC3-B, DC3-C)
e. The Board requested sections and elevations that demonstrate the relationship of unit entries (both vehicular and pedestrian) with the drives and open spaces.
f. The Board requested more detail about the design and character of the woonerf, including landscaping, hardscaping, and the how the units establish a relationship with the space. (PL3-A, DC3-B, DC4-D)

3. Urban Garden & Open Space Concept

a. Overall, the Board was concerned that a successful open space concept, with spaces large enough to be functional as intended, was constrained by the number of units proposed. Units should be eliminated or rearranged to provide an opportunity for strengthening the overall building-open space relationship, and providing quality open spaces. (PL1-B, PL1-C, DC2-A, DC3-A, DC3-B)
b. Design and locate the urban garden to be the focal point of the overall open space concept and to make a gesture towards the public realm. The Board discussed the location of the urban garden at length. Schemes 1 and 2 have the garden located to the north of the drive, allowing for maximum sun access. However, in both of these Schemes, the urban garden appears disconnected with the overall concept. In addition, the Board was concerned that if located at the south end of the site, the garden could be shaded by potential future development. (CS2-B, PL1-A, PL1-B, PL1-C, DC3-A, DC3-B, DC3-C)
c. The Board encouraged activating the urban garden through design and integration with the surrounding uses. The Board supported the location of the urban garden in Scheme 3, as it functions as a semi-public space by providing an entry to the pedestrian corridor, and has the potential to tie into the programming of the adjacent structures. (PL1-A, PL2-B, DC3-A, DC3-B, DC3-C)
d. The Board supported the idea of multi-use spaces, especially safe and defensible places for kids to play. The Board noted that removing or relocating the central units in Scheme 1 would provide an opportunity for a shared courtyard. (PL1-C, PL2-B, DC3-B)

4. Streetscape and Live-work Units

a. The Board supported consolidating the live-work units, as opposed to breaking up the units into small groupings. The Board noted that the continuous edge as

presented in Scheme 1 and Scheme 2 holds a strong street edge, and expresses a commercial/retail character. (CS2-C, CS3-A, PL3-B, DC2-A, DC2-E)

b. The location of the live-work units should be pushed towards the south of the site to tie into and continue the commercial activity the intersection of 15th and 125th and help to establish the emerging commercial streetwall. (CS2-C, CS3-A, PL3-B, DC2-A, DC2-E)

c. The Board was concerned about the 30' depth of the live-work units. The design and layout of the live-work units should demonstrate the ability to be viable as retail spaces. The Board suggested deeper units, and designing the interior so all living spaces are located in the upper floors. (PL3-B)

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.

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

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-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

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-A-2. Adding to Public Life: Seek opportunities to foster human interaction through an increase in the size and quality of project-related open space available for public life.

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.

PL1-C-2. Informal Community Uses: In addition to places for walking and sitting, consider including space for informal community use such as performances, farmer's markets, kiosks and community bulletin boards, cafes, or street vending.

PL1-C-3. Year-Round Activity: Where possible, include features in open spaces for activities beyond daylight hours and throughout the seasons of the year, especially in neighborhood centers where active open space will contribute vibrancy, economic health, and public safety.

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.

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

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.

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

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

PL4-A Entry Locations and Relationships

PL4-A-1. Serving all Modes of Travel: Provide safe and convenient access points for all modes of travel.

PL4-A-2. Connections to All Modes: Site the primary entry in a location that logically relates to building uses and clearly connects all major points of access.

PL4-C Planning Ahead For Transit

PL4-C-1. Influence on Project Design: Identify how a transit stop (planned or built) adjacent to or near the site may influence project design, provide opportunities for placemaking.

PL4-C-2. On-site Transit Stops: If a transit stop is located onsite, design project-related pedestrian improvements and amenities so that they complement any amenities provided for transit riders.

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-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-3. Multiple Uses: Design parking areas to serve multiple uses such as children's play space, outdoor gathering areas, sports courts, woonerf, or common space in multifamily projects.

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-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-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-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-1. Reinforce Existing Open Space: Where a strong open space concept exists in the neighborhood, reinforce existing character and patterns of street tree planting, buffers or treatment of topographic changes. Where no strong patterns exist, initiate a strong open space concept that other projects can build upon in the future.

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

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

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-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 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 Early Design Guidance the following departures were requested:

1. **Rear Setback (SMC 23.71.030.D.1):** The Code requires a rear setback of 20 feet for multifamily structures, or the minimum required by the standards of the underlying zone for multifamily structures, whichever is greater. The applicant proposes a reduced setback of 10'.

The Board was open to considering the departure, given the conditions of the site, noting that the massing may change as the design evolves. The Board expressed a higher favorability to the departure if used to create usable open spaces on site or to improve the layout of the units. (CS2-D, DC2-A, DC3-A, DC3-B)

2. **Rear Setback (SMC 23.71.030.D.2):** The Code requires a rear setback of 10 feet for all portions of a commercial or mixed-use structure 20 feet or less in height. The applicant proposes a reduced setback of 10' for the portion of the structure over 20'.

As the two departures achieve the same intent, the Board was open to considering the departure. Again, the Board noted that the massing may change as the design evolves. (CS2-D, DC2-A, DC3-A, DC3-B)

3. **Urban Garden, Solar Exposure (SMC 23.71.014.C.8.a):** The Code requires a minimum of 75% of the garden area to receive solar exposure from eleven a.m. until two p.m. PDT, between the spring and autumn equinox. The applicant proposes locating the urban garden on the north side of a three-story live-work unit, which would not meet this minimum.

The Board indicated preliminary support for the departure, given the design and location of the urban garden fits into the overall design concept, and is activated by the surrounding uses. The Board also noted that if located at the south end of the site, the urban garden could be shaded by potential future development.(CS2-B, PL1-A, DC3-A, DC3-B, DC3-C)

BOARD DIRECTION

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