



# City of Seattle

Department of Construction and Inspections  
Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN  
REVIEW

## FIRST RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3019569

Address: 9309 Aurora Avenue N

Applicant: Raymond Gamo, Jackson Main Architecture  
Date of Meeting: Monday, March 21, 2016

Board Members Present: Dale Kutzera, Chair  
Marc Angelillo  
Chris Bell  
Keith Walzak

Board Members Absent: Ellen Cecil

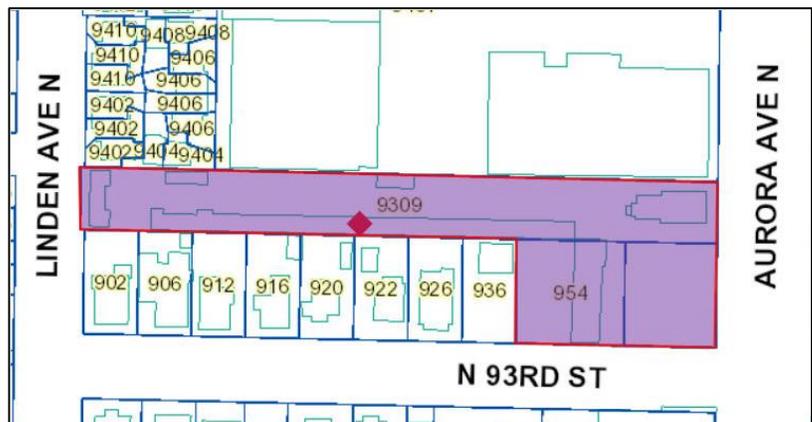
DPD Staff Present: Katy Haima

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: C2-65; LR2

Nearby Zones: (North) C2-65  
(South) C1-40  
(East) C1-65  
(West) LR2;  
SF5000

Lot Area: 51,331 SF



**Current Development:**

The site is L-shaped, located at the corner Aurora Ave N and N 93rd Street; the northern portion of the site is long and narrow, fronting both Aurora Ave N and Linden Ave N. The southern portion of the site contains an auto wrecking yard, consisting of a single one-story commercial building and surface parking. The northern portion of the site contains a motel, consisting of five one-story structures and surface parking.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

In this area, Aurora Ave. N is a six-lane commercial corridor characterized by 1-2 story buildings with varying setbacks and numerous surface parking lots. Immediately to the north of the site are two large 2 story warehouse structures with blank facades facing the site and a surface parking lot. A row of single-family homes abut the site to the south, along N 93<sup>rd</sup> Street. To the south of the site across N 93<sup>rd</sup> Street is an auto wrecking yard, consisting of two commercial structures and surface parking. To the east across Aurora is a lumberyard, with two commercial structures located along Aurora Ave N.

The immediate area is served by numerous bus routes on Aurora Ave N.

**Access:**

The site is accessed by two curb cuts on Aurora Ave N, and 4 curb cuts along N 93<sup>rd</sup> Street. There is no alley adjacent to the site.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

None.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is for a four-story self-storage mini warehouse building with 14 surface parking spaces. The existing structures are to be demolished.

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE June 15, 2015**

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3019569) 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

The applicant provided context for the project, noting the zone transition to the adjacent single family homes, Exceptional Trees, and the lack of desirable design cues in the immediate context. The applicant presented a study on successful commercial and self-storage building typologies, noting that a goal of the project is to set a precedent in transplanting design cues to enhance the Aurora Ave corridor. The design intent for the project included appropriate treatment of the corner location, displaying the building use through design, and using high-quality and durable materials to make the building an asset to the neighborhood. The applicant explained the zoning envelope with the required 10' setback above 13' adjacent to the SF zoned sites. The applicant also noted the generally low-volume of traffic generated by self-storage uses.

The applicant presented three massing options at EDG. All three options utilize a drive aisle along the north end of the site, under the upper stories of the structure. Option 1 utilizes a 65' foot structure and minimal modulation. The first two stories pull back at the northeast corner of the site at the vehicle entry. Surface parking is located in between the structure and Aurora Avenue. Option 2 is a four-story structure, which pulls the entire first floor back from Aurora Ave to create an overhang with the upper stories. This option features a transparent corner and surface parking along Aurora. The south wall is modulated with three indentations that correspond to tree protection areas. Option 3, the preferred option, is a four story structure, broken into two distinct masses along Aurora, demarcated by a vertical recess. The structure is located closer to the street, and all parking is internalized. The façade is highly transparent along the street-level.

All three options do not propose any structure to be located on the portion of the site zoned LR2. In addition, all three options do not propose any transparency on the south wall facing the single family homes. The applicant proposes to explore options for a large green wall, and/or interest with materiality along this façade.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

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

- Concerned over the design and treatment of the LR2 zoned portion of the site in regards to security, egress, and fire access.
- Supported the massing presented in Option 3 as the preferred option.
- Noted the opportunity to capitalize on views and frequent transit.

- Supported new use as an overall improvement, but would like to see a mixed-use development.
- Concerned about height and proximity of south wall to single family homes.
- Appreciated that the applicant is proposing four stories, as opposed to the full 65' allowed by zoning.
- Noted safety issues in the area and encouraged thoughtful sensitivity of how the project is designed.
- Encouraged the applicant to consider curb bulbs to slow traffic on 93<sup>rd</sup>.
- Opposed to location of curb cut on 93<sup>rd</sup>, stating that customers may use residential driveways as turn-arounds.
- Supported a greenwall and upper level planting terrace for improved air quality and visual relief.
- Preferred upper levels to be set back rather than modulated for reducing perceived height and bulk.
- Concerned about traffic impacts to 93<sup>rd</sup>, especially in regards to large trucks.
- Would like to see some transparency on south façade.

<b>RECOMMENDATION March 21, 2016</b>
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**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

- Concerned about livability issues for the adjacent properties.
- Felt the mix of modern and traditional styling was not aesthetically pleasing.
- Would prefer less landscaping along Aurora to provide a wider sidewalk with awnings.
- Felt that the design of the north façade was lacking.
- Felt the proposal was not adequately addressing the LR2 zoned area at the west of the site, and requested a use such as a garden or usable green space.
- Did not support the large signage, and felt that they were larger than necessary.
- Supported the use of a blade sign, noting that it should be more directional.
- Would like to see sidewalk planting between the sidewalk and Aurora Ave.
- Would like to see mixed-use project developed on site.

- Supported the breaking up of the east façade into two distinct masses.
- Did not support the blank wall on the north façade, noting that it may be visible for some time.
- Emphasized the importance of intentionally designing the LR2-zoned area to prevent security issues.
- Encouraged moving the emergency egress walkway and easement to the south side of the LR2-zoned area to put a buffer in between the future new development and the single-family residences.

## 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.

### **EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE June 15, 2015**

#### **1. Massing and Context Response:**

- a. The Board generally preferred Option 3, noting the composition of the eastern façade showing two portions with distinct design languages and a slight step in height. (CS2-D, CS3-A, DC2-A)
- b. The massing should remain pushed towards the Aurora, with internalized parking, to establish a connection with the street. (CS2-D, CS3-A, DC1-B, DC1-C)
- c. The massing and architectural composition should provide clear wayfinding to direct traffic towards the entry at the north end of the site, away from the single family residences. (PL2-D, PL3-A, DC1-B, DC1-C)
- d. The Board supported the intended treatment of the north façade with no modulation and minimal emphasis, due to the adjacent structures and underlying zoning. The Board felt this façade would not be highly visible, and that more emphasis should be placed on the south and east facades. (CS2-D, DC2-A, DC2-B,)
- e. The western portion of the site (the area zoned LR2) should be designed with sensitivity to safety and security concerns. The Board was concerned that this portion of the site would be “empty”, and requested additional information regarding how this area will be considered in the overall site layout, façade composition, and any interim use or design. (CS2-D, PL2-B)

#### **2. Architectural Composition:**

- a. The Board supported the contrasting relationship between the traditional and modern design languages, expressed in materials and composition of the eastern façade. The design concept is appropriate to the site context and proposed programming. However, the Board noted that the design of the façade should not mimic the precedent studies presented, but draw cues from them to establish a unique expression. (CS3-A, DC2-A, DC2-B, DC2-E)
- b. The structure should not be designed to appear historic, but should interpret historic elements into a contemporary design language. (CS3-A, DC2-B)

- c. Materials will be crucial to achieving the intended design language, and the Board requested more detail regarding the proposed materials for each façade treatment and design language. (DC2-B, DC4-A)
- d. The Board discussed an appropriate corner treatment, and noted that the treatment of the east façade should turn the corner to the south façade. The Board agreed that while some emphasis of the corner location may be expressed, it does not necessarily need to be a focal point. (CS2-A, D2-A)
- e. The location of the office should be carefully considered and the architectural composition should be designed for wayfinding purposes, so that the entry point is easily discernable. The Board was concerned that if the office is moved to the corner, it may misdirect traffic onto the side street. (PL2-D, PL3-A, DC2-A)

### **3. South Façade and Zone Transition:**

- a. The Board was concerned over the impacts on the single-family residences to the south, and encouraged the applicant to reduce the perceived bulk of the south wall. The Board supported modulating the wall as an appropriate response. (CS2-A, CS2-D, DC2-A, DC2-B)
- b. The concept of a green wall was supported, but the Board expressed concern over the viability and effectiveness of this strategy. The Board was concerned about the potential impacts of the wall as the plants grow in, and if the plants do not survive. The Board requested more information regarding the plant choice, maintenance, and seasonal appearance. (DC2-B, DC2-A, DC4-D)
- c. The Board requested more information regarding the to the west façade facing a single family home, and encouraged the applicant to apply the same treatment as the south façade. (CS2-D, DC2-A, DC2-B)
- d. The Board appreciated the proposal to retain the existing exceptional and non-exceptional trees to help lessen the impact on the adjacent residences. (CS1-D, DC2-A, DC4-D)

## **RECOMMENDATION March 21, 2016**

The Board noted that the packet had some discrepancies from the presentation, and that overall there was not enough detail to convey the solutions to the issues raised at EDG. The Board indicated that the proposal needs refinement to execute the intended concepts and design intent, and provided guidance for improving the response to context.

### **1. Streetscape Design & Pedestrian Experience.**

- a. The Board expressed concern about the sunken entry as it does not establish a strong relationship with the street, and appears to be creating security issues. The entry should be relocated if necessary to provide an entry at grade, and make any ramping internal to the building. (PL2.B, PL2.D, PL3.A)
- b. The Board expressed concern with the proposed location of the monument sign that appears to block views to the entry from the sidewalk, and recommended relocating it to provide adequate sightlines. The Board also noted that the sign

could be smaller, as noted by the public, but was not as concerned as it appears to be appropriately scaled for the traffic conditions on Aurora. (PL2.B, PL2.D)

- c. The Board acknowledged the public comment regarding the location of the landscape buffer, and would prefer to see a planting strip abutting the street, to provide a buffer from Aurora and enhance the pedestrian experience. The Board also noted that switching the locations of the sidewalk and planting strip would then allow the sidewalk to utilize the overhead weather protection. (CS3.A, PL2.B)
  - d. The garbage entry should be revised to use the garage door, as opposed to having a separate door to the street, to minimize the impact of service uses on the pedestrian experience. (DC1.C)
- 2. Architectural Composition & Design Concept.** While the Board supported the overall quality and selection of the proposed material palette, the application and composition of the materials as it relates to the design concept and reducing the bulk and scale of the structure requires further refinement. (CS3.A, DC2.A, DC2.B)
- a. The Board supported the composition and proportions of the brick corner mass.
  - b. The expression and scale of the “hovering box” mass facing Aurora is appropriate for the context and design intent. The Board discussed the design approach of using varied fenestration and panels, and agreed that a subtle randomness in the façade would not disrupt the unity of the façade to read as a cohesive elevation.
- 3. North Façade.**
- a. The Board agreed with public comment regarding the lengthy, unbroken north façade, and recommended additional vertical modulation or vertical expressions to reduce the bulk and break up the mass. The Board suggested that the north and south facades adopt a similar approach of using vertical modules, or “hinges”, to further unite the overall expression. (CS2.D, CS3.A, DC2.A, DC2.B)
  - b. The modern expression of the north mass facing Aurora should turn the corner to resolve the mass at the north façade. (DC2.A, DC2.B)
  - c. The Board supported the use of CMU at the base. (DC2.B, DC4.A)
- 4. LR2 Zone.** More information is required regarding the plans for the western portion of the lot zoned LR2, including any lighting, landscaping, fencing, etc. The Board repeated their previous concerns and echoed public sentiment regarding security and safety, and noted that “future development” is not an appropriate solution for the current proposal. After hearing comment from the public the Board suggested moving the access pathway (emergency egress) to the south edge of the site, therefore providing a more permanent buffer to the south at the SF zone transition. (CS2.D, PL2.B, DC4.C, DC4.D)
- 5. Southern West Façade.** The Board agreed with the public comment that the proposed development could better transition to the neighboring properties and questioned the minimal setback of the southwest corner of the east mass, noting that this is the point which will cast shadows on the adjacent property. The Board recommended the corner be pulled in to match the rest of the faced and provide some relief to the adjacent site. (CS2.D, DC2.A)

- 6. Context Response & Architectural Composition, South Façade.** The Board expressed concerns regarding the detailing of this façade and the design choices that impact adjacent single-family homes, as was noted by public comment. Overall, the Board recommended exploration of the strategies used to break down the façade and provide relief to the massing, and requested more detailed information and perspectives that illustrate the modulation and relationship to adjacencies and the vegetation retained on site. (CS1.D, CS2.D, CS3.A, DC2.A, DC2.B, DC4.A, DC4.C, DC4.D)
- a. The Board noted that recessing the green wall areas resulted in the top floor to appear as a looming mass, as opposed to reducing the perceive height, bulk and scale.
  - b. Overall, the Board was concerned with the viability of the vegetation on the proposed green wall, and felt that the relief from massing at this façade should be integrated into the architecture and composition, as opposed to treatment affixed afterwards.
  - c. The parapet height should be the minimal height possible to reduce the overall height of the structure.
  - d. The Board questioned bringing the metal panel to the ground as it did not appear to be at an appropriate scale or texture for interfacing with the single-family residences to the south, and suggested the use of CMU or masonry.
  - e. The Board questioned the use of metal siding behind the green wall, and was especially concerned about how this material might impact the growing environment.
  - f. The Board supported the intention to reuse storm water collected from the use for irrigation of the green wall.
  - g. Provide more details regarding the green wall that ensure its success and longevity, including the structural component of the green wall and including a detailed planting plan.

## 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](#).

<b>CONTEXT &amp; SITE</b>
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**CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.**

**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.

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

**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**

**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-B-3. Street-Level Transparency:** Ensure transparency of street-level uses (for uses such as nonresidential uses or residential lobbies), where appropriate, by keeping views open into spaces behind walls or plantings, at corners, or along narrow passageways.

**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-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.

**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-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-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.

**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-B Signage**

**DC4-B-1. Scale and Character:** Add interest to the streetscape with exterior signs and attachments that are appropriate in scale and character to the project and its environs.

**DC4-B-2. Coordination with Project Design:** Develop a signage plan within the context of architectural and open space concepts, and coordinate the details with façade design, lighting, and other project features to complement the project as a whole, in addition to the surrounding context.

**DC4-C Lighting**

**DC4-C-1. Functions:** Use lighting both to increase site safety in all locations used by pedestrians and to highlight architectural or landscape details and features such as entries, signs, canopies, plantings, and art.

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

**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 Recommendation no following departures were requested:

**BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the RECOMMENDATION meeting, the Board recommended the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided.