



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3019613

Address: 4730 32nd Ave S

Applicant: Mahlon Clements of VIA architecture

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, May 26, 2015

Board Members Present: Stephen Yamada-Heidner
Drew Hicks
Amoreena Miller
Julian Weber
David Sauvion

DPD Staff Present: Magda Hogness

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: The site is zoned Lowrise 3 (LR3) and is located in the Columbia City Residential Urban Village and the Edmunds Station Area District.

Nearby Zones: The blocks north and south of the site are zoned Single Family (SF 5000). West of the site, half of the block is within the same zone. Further west, parcels are zoned Lowrise 2 (LR2) and Neighborhood Commercial (NC1P-40). The blocks east of the site are zoned Lowrise 2 (LR2).



Lot Area: 67,947 sq ft

Current Development:

The site is currently vacant.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The 67,947 sq ft site is mid-way between the Columbia City Light Rail station and the main street commercial heart of Columbia City. The vicinity includes a variety of uses from single family residences to commercial. The neighborhood character is largely single family houses, transitioning to multifamily residential structures, three to four stories in height.

The immediate context is a mix of single family structures and newer developments. This project is a second phase of development; a 244 unit residential project, under project number 3015157, is currently under construction to the south. Across 32nd Ave S to the west are predominantly single family houses. Single family houses are also located across the street on S Alaska Street to the north. Current development also includes several townhouse structures, project numbers 3013340, 3014815, 3014412, east of the site.

The area is well served by transit and higher density multifamily residential structures are being developed. The Columbia City Light Rail station is located one block west of the subject property.

Access:

Existing vehicular access is from 32nd Ave S on the west, and a driveway from S Alaska St to the north. There are no alleys adjacent to the site. Pedestrian access is from the adjacent 32nd Ave Sand S Alaska Street sidewalks.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

The site is a mapped Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA), due to Steep Slope.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is proposing a four story residential building containing 156 units and parking for 145 vehicles.

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3019613) 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

The architect presented three massing options, all propose similar square footage and use; a four story structure containing 156 residential units over parking for 145 parking spaces, accessed from 32nd Ave. on the west, and a driveway from S Alaska Street to the north. All options take into account the existing topography, which includes an approximately 18 foot grade difference along S Alaska Street.

Referred to as the code compliant version, massing Option One is influenced by retaining an Exceptional Tree and configured with two south facing courtyards. The architect noted that in order to provide a building plan close to the number of units seen in the other massing concepts, a portion of the massing is shifted to S Alaska St, resulting in a monolithic north facade. Another disadvantage of this option is the significant setback on the west façade disrupts the rowhouse vernacular consistent with the first phase.

Massing Option Two is identifiable by two double loaded buildings separated by an open pedestrian pathway connection. The east structure contains a courtyard facing north toward Alaska St. This concept allows a greater articulation of the rowhouse vernacular along the 32nd Ave S street front.

Referred to as the preferred scheme, massing Option Three is similar to massing Option Two. For this scheme, the east structure's courtyard is rotated to face south. The applicant explained the south courtyard increases access to daylight, privacy and reduces audible street noise for future residents. This scheme also refined the approach to hold the existing topography along S Alaska St, with the proposed individual ground floor unit terraces. For this option, the lobby entries are located inside the open pedestrian pathway connection, directly opposite each other. The entry plaza is intended to be welcoming from the sidewalk, providing a meandering walk with views across the site.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following comments were offered at the EDG meeting:

- Would like to see the Alaska street frontage be more active.
- Preferred the open pedestrian pathway off of Alaska towards the light rail.
- Appreciated the landscape berm treatment of the driveway.

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 May 26, 2014

- 1) **Massing & Relationship to Context:** The Board deliberated the merits of the first massing option, which preserves the Exceptional Tree, and the third massing option. The Board agreed that preservation of the Exceptional Tree results in adjusted massing that would eliminate the transition stoops and the consistent treatment of the street edge along 32nd Ave S. Ultimately the Board preferred massing Option Three, as the break in the north façade and open pedestrian pathway connection is more successful in creating a pedestrian oriented streetscape. (Guidelines CS2-A-1, CS2-B-2, CS2-C-1, DC2-A-1)
 - a. The Board acknowledged that S Alaska St is in many ways the front door to both phases of the development. The massing and ground level treatment along 32nd Ave S seems successful in creating a pedestrian oriented street edge. The Board would like to see the S Alaska St frontage developed as well to respond to the streetscape. (Guidelines CS2-B-2, DC2-A-1)
 - b. The Board noted that this development will be the first major development between the light rail station and the commercial heart of Columbia City, and directed to applicant to refine the northwest corner massing. Develop the corner massing and treatment to serve as a gateway to Columbia City. (Guidelines CS2-A-1, CS2-C-1, DC2-A-1)
- 2) **Street Level Uses & Entries:** The Board gave direction regarding the street level uses and entries.
 - a. The Board discussed the lobby entry locations and ultimately preferred the locations shown in the preferred scheme. In developing the design for the entries, focus on the connection to the street and create clear lines of sight. (Guidelines PL2-A-1, PL2-B-3, PL2-D-1, PL3-A-1, PL3-A-2)
 - b. The Board was concerned with the lack of active uses at the northwest corner and noted that a physical and/or visual connection with active uses is critical to

making the streetscape successful. Explore and refine the northwest corner; show the floor plate level with the streetscape. (Guidelines CS2-B-2, CS2-C-1, PL2-B-3)

- c. The Board was also concerned with the character of the elevated terraces facing Alaska and urged the applicant to develop the scale and transition of these private spaces well. Consider repeating the townhouse vernacular along S Alaska St. (Guidelines CS2-B-2, PL2-B-1, PL3-B-1, PL3-B-4)

3) **Adjacent Sites and Open Spaces:** Recognizing that the relationship between the different phases is especially important, the Board directed the applicant to develop an open space concept showing the relationship between both phases. (Guidelines CS2-B-3, PL1, DC3)

- a. The Board would like to see more information on the entire development's site circulation and open spaces. Explore opportunities to connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby open space where appropriate. (Guidelines CS2-B-3, PL1-A-1, PL1-B, PL1-C, DC3-B-3)
- b. The south side of the building and courtyard space about surface parking. Concerned with this condition, the Board directed the applicant to thoughtfully refine the design; ensure that interior and exterior spaces relate well to each other. (Guidelines CS2-D-5, DC1-C-2, DC3-A-1)
- c. In developing the courtyard space, the Board noted that the proposed courtyard width is narrow and recommended looking at the proportions of the courtyard space to create access to light and air. The Board would like to see solar studies of the courtyard and detailed studies of the window locations. The Board also strongly suggested the applicant consider creating two story units at the ground level, to better connect to the open space and provide privacy for the future residents. (Guidelines CS2-D-5, PL3-B-1, PL3-B-4, DC1-C-2, DC3-A-1)

4) **Plants and Habitat:** The Board discussed the massing options and ultimately agreed the Exceptional Tree retention scheme would compromise the consistent treatment of the street edge along 32nd Ave S and had too many significant guideline impacts. (Guidelines CS2-A-1, CS2-B-2, CS2-C-1, DC2-A-1) Aside from the Exceptional Tree, the Board observed mature planting onsite and directed the applicant to study if any of mature trees could be retained. (Guideline CS1-D-1)

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-C Topography

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

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

CS1-D Plants and Habitat

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

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

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-2. Pedestrian Volumes: Provide ample space for pedestrian flow and circulation, particularly in areas where there is already heavy pedestrian traffic or where the project is expected to add or attract pedestrians to the area.

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-A Accessibility

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

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

PL2-B Safety and Security

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

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

PL2-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-2. Common Entries: Multi-story residential buildings need to provide privacy and security for residents but also be welcoming and identifiable to visitors.

PL3-A-3. Individual Entries: Ground-related housing should be scaled and detailed appropriately to provide for a more intimate type of entry.

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.

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-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-B Planning Ahead for Bicyclists

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.

DC1-C Parking and Service Uses

DC1-C-1. Below-Grade Parking: Locate parking below grade wherever possible. Where a surface parking lot is the only alternative, locate the parking in rear or side yards, or on lower or less visible portions of the site.

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-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-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.

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

DC3-A Building-Open Space Relationship

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

DC3-B Open Space Uses and Activities

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

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

DC3-B-3. Connections to Other Open Space: Site and design project-related open spaces to connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby public open space where appropriate.

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-A Exterior Elements and Finishes

DC4-A-1. Exterior Finish Materials: Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

DC4-A-2. Climate Appropriateness: Select durable and attractive materials that will age well in Seattle’s climate, taking special care to detail corners, edges, and transitions.

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

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

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

DC4-E Project Assembly and Lifespan

DC4-E-1. Deconstruction: When possible, design the project so that it may be deconstructed at the end of its useful lifetime, with connections and assembly techniques that will allow reuse of materials.

EXCEPTIONAL TREE DISCUSSION:

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board reviewed the applicant's analysis of the existing city-classified Exceptional Tree 14" Strawberry Tree, Arbutus Unedo, on the property near the 32nd Ave S property line, and had the following discussion:

The applicants presented information from an ISA Certified Arborist; the tree has a wide spreading and low crown and the lower trunks contain some decay. Massing Option One shows that preservation of the tree and its feeder root radius results in adjusted massing that would eliminate the transition stoops and the consistent treatment of the street edge.

The Board indicated initial support, unanimously agreeing the tree-retention scheme had too many significant guideline impacts.

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 Early Design Guidance the following departures were requested:

1. **Rear Yard Setback (SMC 23.45.518.A):** The Code requires a 15' - 0" minimum setback without an alley. The applicant proposes a rear yard setback of 12'-3".

The Board noted they would like more information before considering the departure.

2. **Structure Width (SMC 23.45.527):** The Code requires a structure width limit of 150'. The applicant proposes a limited area of the building to expand outside the boundary of the 150' building width limit.

The Board noted they would like more information before considering the departure.

BOARD DIRECTION

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