# City of Seattle

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

DESIGN REVIEW

**FINAL EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

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| Project Number: | 3019997 |
| Address: | 5001 Brooklyn Av NE |
| Applicant: | Ginger Garff, Johnston Architects, for Tyson Alexander |
| Date of Meeting: | Monday, June 29, 2015 |
| Board Members Present: | Ivana Begley, Chair<br>Eric Blank<br>Laura Lenss<br>Blake Williams |
| DPD Staff Present: | Michael Dorcy |

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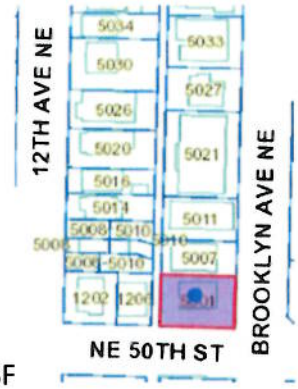
**SITE & VICINITY**

Site Zone: LR3

Nearby Zones: (North) LR3
(South) NC3-65
(East) LR3RC
(West) LR3




Lot Area: 5,008 SF

**Current Development:**

The site is occupied by a two-story single-family structure.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

The immediate neighborhood is a mix of single family and multi-family structures, with many of the older single-family structures converted into rooming houses with multiple units. In recent years There has been a marked trend toward multi-family developments in the neighborhood, in newer and older structures. There is a 19-unit apartment three doors to the north of the site and a recently constructed four-story multi-unit apartment on the same side of the street at the end of the block on NE 52nd Street. The entire block to the east of the site, between Brooklyn Avenue NE and University Way NE, the former site of the University Height School and grounds, is occupied by the University Heights Community Center. There is no predominating architectural character in the area.

The site lies within the University District Northwest Urban Center Village.

**Access:**

Access to the site is from both Brooklyn Avenue NE and NE 50th Street. There is a narrow alley intervening between Brooklyn Avenue NE and 12th Avenue NE, a half block to the west.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

None.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The goals of the project, as explained by the applicant team, is to provide 60 efficiency housing units in a seven-story building for those relying on transportation modes other than individual automobiles. Such a structure would require a re-zone, and the project is being designed as if the site has already been rezoned to NC3-65. The site is part of a wider area which is being proposed for a legislative rezone to NC3-65 , and the applicants are prepared to apply for a contract rezone to the same zoning designation.

A challenge to the proposed development of the site, in addition to the need for a rezone of the property, is the presence on the site of a large European beech tree, a tree designated by the City of Seattle as an "Exceptional Tree." The developer intends to protect and maintain the tree which is located near the northeast corner of the property.

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE June 29, 2015**

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3019997) 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 design team presented 3 schemes, two of which did not retain the European beech tree. Scheme "A" provided a primary pedestrian residential entry at the southwest corner of the property from NE 50th Street and adjacent the alley. It would also provide nearly 1,500 square feet of retail space on the ground floor aligned with both NE 50th and Brooklyn Avenue NE. Six upper floors of units would yield 60 total units. Scheme "B" would align the retail along NE 5oth Street, providing slightly more than 1,700 square feet, and a reduced number of residential units on the six upper floors.

Like Scheme "B," scheme "C," the preferred solution, arrayed the retail space (approximately 1,500 square feet) along the NE 50th Street frontage, providing for an entry at the southeast corner of the site. A residential entry was located just to the north of the retail space, off NE Brooklyn Avenue. The distinctive part of this scheme was the sizable niche at the northeast portion of the site given over to the European beech tree. Since the provision for the keeping of the tree would mandate a setback of nearly 30 feet along one third of the north property line, the applicants would seek a departure from the required setback above 13 feet in height along the remaining two-thirds of the north property line. Scheme #3 would require a departure, from SMC 23.47A.014.B.3. (See "Development Standard Departures," below, p.8).

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

The owner of the small ten unit apartment just north of the proposed project presented a request, signed by each of his tenants, not to save the tree and to provide the setback required by the present zoning, since, it was stated, a zero setback would diminish sunlight available to the property to the north. Further, it was noted, the tree intended for saving currently prevented sunlight from reaching the same property during the spring and summer months, while leaves from the tree in fall and winter were messy and provided unsafe conditions when wet.

Another member of the public questioned the wisdom of providing no parking since some tenants inevitably would own motorized vehicles.

## 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.

The Board identified the following r areas of focus for their deliberations: the tree, the courtyard and stair, the retail space and building entries, the overall massing and exterior design, and the departure request from the setback requirement for a setback from the adjacent residential zone.

The tree, courtyard and stair: The Board agreed that saving the exceptional tree, despite the demurrage of the immediate neighbors to the north, was the right move. It provided a large green area adjacent to the structure to the north and opened up possibilities for a striking residential entry and open stair that could play off the tree in a creative way.

The retail space: The retail entry at the corner of Brooklyn Avenue NE and NE 50th Street seemed the proper arrangement, although the exact relationship between retail and residential entries would require additional thought and attention to detail, as would the relationship between the exterior open circulation stair and residential entry sequence.

Massing and structural articulation: The Board was intrigued by the conceptual suggestion of "a stack of books" and were eager to see how that would be worked out in the preferred scheme. They encouraged the design team and developer to allow themselves to be bold in pursuing and developing that concept. The integration of the courtyard stair with both tree and stacked books concept could result in something at once playful and elegant.

Departure: If the development site were to be re-zoned to NC3-65 as a contract rezone, and the property to the north remain zoned LR3, SMC 23.457A.014.B.3 would be in play, requiring a setback of 15 feet for portions of the structure above 13 feet and up to 40 feet in height. An additional setback of 2 feet for every 10 feet of additional height (for a total setback of 21 feet at the 65 foot line) would be required by the Land Use Code. As pointed out by the design team, preserving the exceptional tree and maintaining a proper root zone for the tree would mean a setback of approximately 27.5 feet from the north property line along a third of the (25 feet in distance) proposed structure's north façade.

While sympathetic to the loss of developable space due to the tree's retention, the Board indicated a strong desire for the design team and developer to study and explore modulation and setback combinations that would allow for both increased fenestration along that north face of the proposed building and a friendlier aspect presented to the north. Although the setback may not be required were a legislative rezone designating both properties as commercial sites,

even in that instance a friendlier aspect and countenance to that portion of the north façade might be in order as a dictate of better design. The Board's approval of the requested departure must await their approval of the overall design at the Recommendation Meeting.

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-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.

***University Supplemental Guidance:***

**CS1-II Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions**

**CS1-II-i. Existing Trees:** Retain existing large trees wherever possible. This is especially important on the wooded slopes in the Ravenna Urban Village. The Board is encouraged to consider design departures that allow retention of significant trees. Where a tree is unavoidably removed, it should be replaced with another tree of appropriate species, 2 ½ inch caliper minimum size for deciduous trees, or minimum size of 4' height for evergreen trees.

**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-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-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.

***University Supplemental Guidance:***

**CS2-III Corner Lots**

**CS2-III-i. Special Site Features:** For new buildings located on a corner, including, but not limited to the corner locations identified in Map 3 of the full Guidelines, consider providing special building elements distinguishable from the rest of the building such as a tower, corner articulation or bay windows. Consider a special site feature such as diagonal orientation and entry, a sculpture, a courtyard, or other device. Corner entries should be set back to allow pedestrian flow and good visibility at the intersection.

**CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.**

**CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes**

**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

**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-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.

**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-C Weather Protection**

**PL2-C-1. Locations and Coverage:** Overhead weather protection is encouraged and should be located at or near uses that generate pedestrian activity such as entries, retail uses, and transit stops.

**PL2-C-2. Design Integration:** Integrate weather protection, gutters and downspouts into the design of the structure as a whole, and ensure that it also relates well to neighboring buildings in design, coverage, or other features.

**PL2-C-3. People-Friendly Spaces:** Create an artful and people-friendly space beneath building.

**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.

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

**PL4-B Planning Ahead for Bicyclists**

**PL4-B-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.

## DESIGN CONCEPT

**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-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-C Secondary Architectural Features**

**DC2-C-3. Fit With Neighboring Buildings:** Use design elements to achieve a successful fit between a building and its neighbors.

**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.

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The following Departure from development standards was requested:

**SMC 23.47A.014.B.3 ( Setbacks):** The Code requires a rear setback of 15 feet from rear lot line above 13 feet up to 40 feet, and an additional 2 feet for each 10 foot increment above 40 feet. The applicant proposes no setback of the structure along a major portion of the north façade.

As indicated in the discussion above (see pages 4 and 5), the Board wanted the design team and developer to study and explore alternatives which would provide a combination of setbacks and modulation along the north façade abutting the north property line that would allow for increased light and ventilation into the proposed structure while providing a transition in height, bulk and scale to the property north of the development site (as called for in Guidelines CS2-D-1, CS2-D-3, DC2-A-2. DC2-B-1, and DC2-C-3). Approval of the requested departure, as requested or modified, would be addressed at the Recommendation Meeting in response to

## BOARD DIRECTION

- Pursue the overall massing indicated in Scheme #3
- Further explore and mine the "stacked book "motif for inspiration .
- Develop the interplay of the stair structure and the exceptional tree in the courtyard
- While the Board is open to a massing shift that pushes out the bulk of the structure outside the tree court area toward the north property line, they would like to see evidence of a serious exploration of a better perceived transition in height, bulk and scale at the north property line.

At the conclusion of the Early Design Guidance meeting , the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.