



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3020795

Address: 8820 Aurora Avenue North

Applicant: Mark Heavland, Twist Design

Date of Meeting: Monday, October 19, 2015

Board Members Present: Ellen Cecil (Chair)
Mark Angelillo
Christopher Bell
Keith Walzak

Board Members Absent: Dale Kutzera

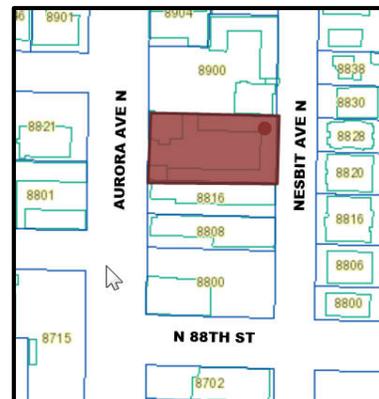
DPD Staff Present: Tami Garrett, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial 1 (C1-65)

Nearby Zones: (North) C1-65
(South) C1-65
(East) Lowrise 3 (LR3)
(West) C1-40

Lot Area: 20,600 square feet (sq. ft.)



Current Development:

The project site is vacant property.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

Commercial uses (office, motels, restaurant, auto sales, etc.) are west, north and south of the project site along Aurora Avenue North. There is an abrupt transition to residential uses (single family residences and apartments) east of the subject site across from Nesbit Avenue North.

This mid-block property is located on the east side of Aurora Avenue North, west side of Nesbit Avenue North and within the Aurora-Licton Springs Residential Urban Village. This neighborhood is evolving. The general character of this block along Aurora Avenue North is lower-scaled commercial buildings with surface parking areas abutting the street.

Access:

Vehicular access to the subject property is possible from both Aurora Avenue North and Nesbit Avenue North. Nesbit Avenue North is a one-way street in the north direction.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

The project site slopes downward towards the east. There are no Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) mapped on the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for the design and construction of a four-story mixed-use commercial/residential structure with two stories of residential (22-24 small efficiency dwelling units (SEDUs)) above two levels of commercial (10,000 sq. ft. of warehouse/office); and exterior parking and storage yard areas (6,600 sq. ft.). A total parking quantity of 5 stalls is planned within the surface parking area.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3020795) 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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Many members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised (with DPD Staff/applicant responses in *italics*):

- Glad to see the site developed and hope that it is a gateway for more development along the Aurora corridor in the near future.
- Concerned about the proposed vehicular access and traffic circulation associated with large commercial vehicles along Nesbit Avenue North.
- Appreciated the landscape buffering of the external storage yard area abutting Nesbit Avenue North but voiced concern that future screening may encourage criminal activity.
- Inquired about proposed fencing material and measures to secure the site.
The applicant explained that fencing is planned to surround the external storage yard area and various fencing options are being explored. The property owner commented that as his current facility, it is his experience that an opaque chain link fence allows visibility onto the site works best to deter onsite criminal activity.
- A representative of the Aurora-Liction Urban Village Coalition (ALUV):
 - Appreciated the rooftop deck and garden amenity space for the residents and employees.
 - Requested future rooftop lighting is appropriately shielded to avoid light and glare spillage onto surrounding residential properties.
 - Preferred a design that includes uses that activate the streetscape and is pedestrian-oriented.
 - Encouraged weather protection (awnings/canopies) to be included along the building's Aurora frontage.
 - Encouraged a strong design treatment to mitigate excessive blank walls.
 - Discouraged the allowance of an outdoor storage yard and suggested all storage activity be located within the structure. Also requested that barbed/razor fencing not be allowed on the subject site. Encouraged quality decorative (wrought/cast iron, graffiti-proof, etc.) be required.
 - Requested that the Board not support the proposed code departure and discouraged vehicular access be allowed via Nesbit Avenue North.
 - Stated that the roofline design treatment is "weak" and requested that the roofline design include prominent cornices and more dramatic design elements.*[Staff Note: Additional design comments were itemized in a written comment letter that was distributed to the Board at the meeting and added to the electronic DPD file for this project.]*

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. Design Concept and Massing: The siting and design pattern of the new commercial/residential development should establish a positive context, respond to specific site conditions, provide an appropriate transition to a less intensive zone and be compatible with the anticipated scale of development. (CS2.D, CS3.A.4)

a. The Board voiced support for the preferred design scheme Option C and proposed that design scheme Option C should move forward to Master Use Permit (MUP) submittal with the following guidance:

i. The Board discussed the north façade massing and voiced concern with the 2' gap between the building and the northernmost property line. The Board expressed that this "leftover space" could be an area conducive to unsafe activities. The Board encouraged the applicant to site the building closer to the north property line or set the building farther south from the north property line to allow for programming of that space. (CS2.D.5, DC2.A)

ii. The Board acknowledged that visible blank walls (north, east and west (stair towers)) will need to be addressed due to their prominence and visibility from the public realm and surrounding existing commercial/residential developments. The Board expects to review details pertaining to any landscaping and/or design treatments (texture, pattern, glazing, colors, etc.) proposed to address this concern at the Recommendation meeting. (DC2.B, DC4.D.1)

2. Aurora Avenue North Frontage and Streetscape:

a. The Board stated the building design should engage the Aurora Avenue North streetscape in a meaningful way to create a safe and positive pedestrian environment. At the Recommendation meeting, the Board expects to review an ensemble of elements (doors, weather protection, canopies, hardscape, landscaping, glazing, etc.) that encourage interest at the street-level and clarify building entries/edges. Conceptual residential and commercial lighting and signage designs proposed for the building's street facing and surrounding façades should also be presented at the Recommendation meeting. (PL2.B, PL2.C, PL3.A, DC2.C, DC4.B, DC4.C, DC4.D)

3. Nesbit Avenue North Frontage and Streetscape:

a. The Board voiced concerns about safety in the proposed storage yard area and the remote location of the external waste collection area. The Board stated that it is imperative that the storage yard area be appropriately secured and that the waste storage area is located within closer proximity to its residential users. The Board expects these concerns to be resolved in the next design iteration. (PL2.B, DC1.C)

- b. The Board stated that the screening of the storage area along Nesbit should be designed with some opacity and varying heights to enhance security; and be constructed of durable and attractive materials. At the Recommendation meeting, the Board expects to review details pertaining to the potential landscaping/screening treatments relative to the zone edge condition. Fencing constructed of chain link material was discouraged by the Board. (PL2.B, PL3.B, DC1.C, DC4.D.3)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

CONTEXT & SITE

CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

CS2-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces

CS2-B-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-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-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-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.

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-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.

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-1. Early Planning: Consider existing and future bicycle traffic to and through the site early in the process so that access and connections are integrated into the project along with other modes of travel.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

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 departure was requested:

1. **Vehicular Parking Access (23.47A.032):** The Code requires structures in Commercial (C) zones with residential uses or across the street from residential zones meet the requirements for parking access for Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zones as provided in SMC 23.47A.032.A.1. SMC 23.47A.032.A.1.c states if access is not provided from an alley and the lot abuts two or more streets, access is permitted across one of the side street lot lines pursuant to subsection 23.47A.032.C and curb cuts are permitted pursuant to subsection 23.54.030.F.2.a.1. The applicant proposes having vehicular access from both Aurora Avenue North and Nesbit Avenue North. The applicant explains that by allowing vehicular access from both streets, the vehicle circulation within the storage yard will happen separately from the vehicle circulation for the surface parking area.

The Board indicated a willingness to entertain this departure, provided that a stronger argument based on the design guidelines is presented to demonstrate that the building design warrants this departure. The applicant will need to provide more information about access/circulation cues that maximize pedestrian safety (especially on Nesbit Avenue North) and feedback from DPD staff (Land Use Planner, Transportation Planner).

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

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