EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3021477
Address: 215 1st Ave N
Applicant: Sharon Rubin, Neiman Taber Architects
Date of Meeting: Wednesday, November 16, 2016
Board Members Present: Katherine Idziorek (Chair)
Christine Harrington
Homero Nishiwaki
Boyd Pickrell
Board Members Absent: Janet Stephenson
SDCI Staff Present: Abby Weber

SITE & VICINITY
Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 3-65 (NC3-65)
Nearby Zones: The site is surrounded by the NC3-65 zone to the immediate north, south, east and west.
Lot Area: 7,187 SF

Existing Development:
Existing uses on site include a surface parking lot and one-story office structure. The site is currently being utilized as a construction staging area for development on the adjacent site to the north. The existing structure is proposed to be demolished.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:
The site is located in the Uptown Urban Center, approximately one block south of Key Arena and one block west of Seattle Center. Surrounding development consists of a variety of uses, including multi-family apartments, small retail, office, and surface parking pay-lots. Existing
apartment buildings on the immediate block include two 3-story flat-roofed apartment buildings built in 1908, one characterized by its use of brick with an ornamented parapet and the other by its window bays. Pottery Northwest, a ceramic arts studio and classroom space, is located in a single-story brick structure built in 1923 on the opposite block at the north end of 1st Ave N. These structures are representative of the historic architectural context.

The Uptown neighborhood is experiencing rapid redevelopment in the form of mid-rise mixed-use structures. Recent and proposed new development is contemporary in design. The adjacent site directly north of the subject site is undergoing development of a 6-story mixed-use structure with ground floor retail and residential above.

**Access:**
Existing vehicular access is from the alley and 1st Ave N. There is no proposed vehicular access; the existing curb cut is to be removed. Proposed primary pedestrian access will be from 1st Ave N.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**
There are no mapped Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs).

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**
Early Design Guidance for a 5-story apartment building with 71 small efficiency dwelling units. Two live-work units will be located at street level. Review includes removal of one exceptional tree. No parking is proposed. Existing structure is proposed to be demolished.

The design packet includes information presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number at this website: [http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/aboutus/news/events/DesignReview/SearchPastReviews/default.aspx](http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/aboutus/news/events/DesignReview/SearchPastReviews/default.aspx)

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at SDCI:

**Mailing Address:**
Public Resource Center
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**Email:**
PRC@seattle.gov

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**PUBLIC COMMENT**
The following public comments were offered at this meeting:
- Concerned about fit with existing buildings and neighborhood character, and future development.
• Concerned that the proposed development, particularly the blank wall conditions and penthouse location shown in Option 3, overshadows and negatively impacts the courtyard and rooftop amenity space of the future building to be constructed to the north.

• Would like to see the proposed development take advantage of the open space created by the courtyard of the future building to the north to allow a larger, combined open space and increased access to light and air.

• Supported Option 3, the preferred option, if the development was reoriented 180-degrees to locate the penthouse on the south side and a larger, open courtyard along the north side.

SDCI staff also summarized design related comments received in writing prior to the meeting:

• Did not support the project; the proposed development is not consistent with the character of Lower Queen Anne.

All public comments submitted in writing for this project can be viewed using the following link and entering the project number: http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/edms/

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.

1. Architectural Context & Massing: The Board discussed the three massing options and adjacency issues raised by public comment. The Board expressed general support for Option 3, the applicant’s preferred massing option, provided response to the following guidance and increased reciprocity with the site to the north.

   a. The Board appreciated Option 3, the preferred option, which observes the ground level street facade setback established by the development to the north as it creates a strong, continuous street edge. (CS2-C-2)

   b. The Board expressed support for the barbell site plan of Option 3, however, the Board agreed with public comment that a blank wall and deep lightwell was not an appropriate or sensitive response to the adjacent site to the north. (CS2-D-5, DC2-B-2)

   c. The Board agreed with public comment and directed reconfiguration of the building mass along the north façade to be more sensitive to the adjacent site by minimizing blank walls and maximizing access to light. The Board directed further study of opportunities for reconfiguration, including shifting stairwells, units, and mass, to allow for a longer, shallower courtyard along the north property line which better responds to the courtyard and amenity spaces of adjacent development. (CS2-B-3, CS2-C-2, CS2-D-1, CS2-D-5)

   d. The Board generally supported the south façade of massing Option 3 as presented. The Board particularly supported the terraced window wells and encouraged robust landscaping, however, the Board was concerned about maintenance access. (DC2-B)

   e. The Board was concerned with the height of the ground level street façade setback as it appears “squished” and the overhanging mass appears “heavy”. The Board
encouraged consideration of Uptown Guideline CS2-IV-I, Reducing Visual Bulk, and indicated they would be inclined to support a departure for increased height if some of the height bonus is applied to the ground level, thereby improving the proportions of the street-facing façade. (CS2-IV-i)

2. Facade Composition, Materials & Detailing: The Board discussed the expression of the proposed development as a “fabric building” and agreed this was an appropriate approach.
   a. Responding to public comment, the Board indicated they would like a better understanding of the context and relationship with neighboring buildings, and strongly encouraged a high-level of materiality and deep set windows reflective of the historic architectural context. (DC2-B-1, DC4-A-1)
   b. The Board generally supported the proposed material precedents and noted materials should be high-quality and honest, as well as contribute to a fine-grained façade texture. (DC2-B-1, DC4-A-1)
   c. The Board was concerned about the building being designed from the inside-out and directed consideration the overall façade composition as a logical, hierarchical expression of interior uses and legibility of program. (DC2-B-1)
   d. The Board discussed treatment of blank facades and encouraged the design of the building as a whole, rather than as separate facades. The Board agreed that the street-facing façade, particularly at the pedestrian street-level, should strive for a fine-grained material treatment and detailing that wraps around the corners onto the blank walls of the north and south façade. (DC2-D)
   e. The Board encouraged thoughtfulness in the design of the upper level railing, noting the railing should either be set back so as not to be visible from the street or better integrated with the overall architectural expression. (CS2-D-1, DC2-B-1)
   f. The Board encouraged activation of the stairwells with daylighting in manner that promotes use, which would also alleviate exterior blank wall conditions. (CS1-B-2, DC2-B-2)

3. Street Level Uses & Pedestrian Realm: The Board discussed street level uses, entries and architectural features, and the importance of making a strong connection to the pedestrian realm.
   a. The Board directed the applicant to pay special attention to how the building interfaces with the public realm and the ground level street-facing façade, particularly how the different functions are expressed. The street-facing edge of the building should read as public space. The design should strive for a fine-grained scale in the pedestrian realm, and entries, landscaping, weather protection and other secondary elements should be cohesive and well-integrated. (PL2-C, PL2-I, PL3-A, PL3-B, DC2-D-2, DC4-A-1)
   b. The Board would like to see pedestrian level perspective views at the Recommendation phase, as well as elevation and sectional studies of the proposed development in the context of neighboring structures. (DC2-D)
   c. The Board did not support the proposed weather protection (canopies) and second-story overhang as they are redundant, create a space for debris to collect, and creates a shadow. The Board directed incorporation of weather protection into the massing moves. (CS2-C-2, PL2-C-3, DC2-D-1)
d. The Board was concerned with the lack of entry hierarchy and encouraged further study of the entry sequence, noting that entries should be generous and activate the street. (PL3-A)
e. The Board requested consideration of grouping live-work units to allow for future commercial flexibility. (PL3-B-3)
f. The Board encouraged the applicant to be thoughtful and intentional in locating utilities on site. (DC2-B-1)
g. The Board identified safe and convenient access to bike storage as a priority. The Board did not support the basement location of bike storage, and requested further study of ground floor alley-accessed bike storage. (PL4-B)

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES
At the time of the Early Design Guidance, no departures were requested.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES
The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the Design Review website.

CONTEXT & SITE

CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.
CS1-B Sunlight and Natural Ventilation
   CS1-B-2. Daylight and Shading: Maximize daylight for interior and exterior spaces and minimize shading on adjacent sites through the placement and/or design of structures on site.

CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.
CS2-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces
   CS2-B-2. Connection to the Street: Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and public realm.
CS2-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-5. Respect for Adjacent Sites: Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy of residents in adjacent buildings.
Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

CS2-IV Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility
  CS2-IV-i. Reducing Visual Bulk: Throughout Uptown, a departure would be supported for 3’ of additional height for projects that step back the top floor of the structure a minimum of 6’ from the street. This has the effect of reducing the impact of the structure height on the sidewalk below as well as reducing the length of shadows over the street. Where the Code regulates podium height, the additional 3’ applies to the podium.

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

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

PL2 Entrances Visible from the Street
  PL2-I-i. Prominent Entrances: Throughout Uptown, major entrances to developments should be prominent. The use of distinctive designs with historical references is strongly encouraged. Design, detailing, materials and landscaping may all be employed to this end. Building addresses and names (if applicable) should be located at entrances, tastefully crafted.
  PL2-I-ii. Street Life: Streets throughout Uptown should be sociable places that offer a sense of security, and residential building projects should make a positive contribution to life on the street.

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.
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-3. **Buildings with Live/Work Uses**: Maintain active and transparent facades in the design of live/work residences. Design the first floor so it can be adapted to other commercial use as needed in the future.

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

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

**PL4-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.

PL4-B-3. **Bike Connections**: Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project.

**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-1. **Site Characteristics and Uses**: Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space.

DC2-B Architectural and Facade Composition

DC2-B-1. **Façade Composition**: Design all building facades—including alleys and visible roofs—considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned.

DC2-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-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.
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.

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