



**INITIAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE
NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Project Number: 3021767

Address: 13281 Aurora Avenue North

Applicant: Kathryn Jerkovich, BCRA

Date of Meeting: Monday, August 29, 2016

Board Members Present: Dale Kutzera , Chair
Christopher Bell
Emily McNichols
Keith Walzak

Board Members Absent: Marc Angelillo

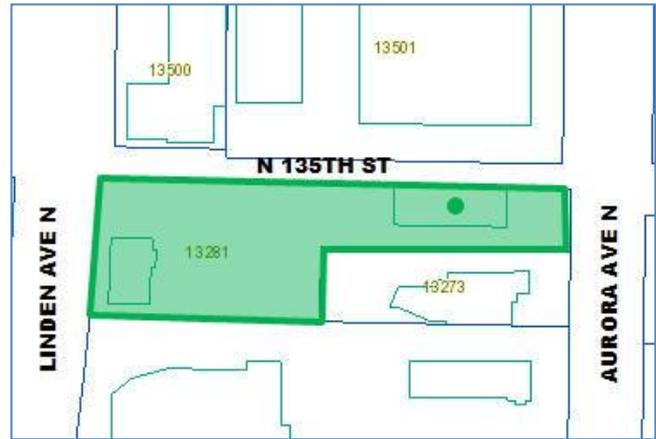
DPD Staff Present: Carly Guillory, Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial 1 – 65-Foot Height Limit (C2-65)

Nearby Zones: (North) C1-65
(South) C1-65
(East) C1-65
(West) Midrise (MR)

Lot Area: 67,710 square feet



Current Development:

The subject site currently contains a 5,240-square foot commercial structure and surface parking.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The development immediately surrounding the project site generally consists of one-story commercial structures with surface parking, and multiple-family residential to the north. A row of existing trees lines the south property line.

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Access:

The preferred design proposes vehicular access via one curb cut on N 135th with a garage entrance on the east façade of the structure. The main residential lobby is proposed at the northwest corner, and the non-residential spaces have direct access to Linden Ave N.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

None.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Design Review Early Design Guidance application proposing a six story structure containing 170 residential units. Parking for 116 vehicles to be provided. Existing building to be removed.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE December 7, 2015

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3021767) 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

The following comments were received:

- Described the neighborhood has having a parking shortage;
- Encouraged sidewalk improvements and lighting along N 135th St.;
- Encouraged effective improvement and design;
- Concerned about large truck turning movements and access to the property to the north (from N 135th);
- Encouraged no parking on N 135th;
- Noted that visibility is constrained at the intersection of N 135th and Linden Ave N, resulting in intrusion into the bike lanes;
- Noted that recent improvements to Linden Ave N created steep grades on the east and west sides;

- Supported sidewalks on N 135th;
- Referenced the Bitter Lake Urban Design Framework currently under development:
 - The framework designated this site as commercial;
 - Property north of N 135th is designed residential;
 - Linden Ave N should be an active street, one that could accommodate parades;
 - Encouraged a mix of housing types;
- Noted the diversity of the neighborhood;
- Supported the conceptual massing and programming of the structure;
- Supportive of affordable housing and noted that the project will provide support services the neighborhood needs; and
- Noted the neighborhood does not yet have a vibrant commercial core, and the neighborhood is in transition.

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 December 7, 2015

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](#).

1. **Site Planning and Public Realm.** The Board supported the preferred option, Concept 3, with vehicular access at the east portion of the structure and the residential lobby on Linden Ave N.
 - a. The Board noted that this is a neighborhood in transition, and this project will contribute to a positive design context. The project was encouraged to explore ways to establish a positive and desirable context for others to build upon in the future (CS3-4).
 - b. The Board supported the courtyard on the south of the site, noting this location will allow for increased access to sunlight and use. The Board noted that screening may be necessary to enhance privacy for the residential units. (CS1-B, PL3-A)
 - c. The conceptual floor plan illustrated the main residential lobby at the northwest corner of the site at the intersection of Linden Ave N and N 135th St. The Board supported this location, noting Linden Ave N is a preferable front to N 135th St. (CS2-C, PL1-B, PL3-A)
 - d. The Board recommended clear and efficient design of the northeast corner as it relates to solid waste storage and pick up and vehicular access. The solid waste should not be staged in the street, and should be picked up to the east of the structure (DC1-C)
 - e. The conceptual floor plan illustrated a bike storage room at the northeast corner of the site. The applicant noted opportunity for this room to be accessed directly from N 135th St. The Board supported this direct connection. Detailed building elevations describing this condition should be presented at the Recommendation meeting (PL2-A, DC2-B, DC2-B).
 - f. The Board recommended the placement of bicycle racks along the Linden Ave N frontage. A detailed landscape plan illustrating bike racks should be presented at the Recommendation meeting (PL2-A, PL4-B)

- g. Non-residential spaces were proposed along Linden Ave N. The Board recommended these spaces be designed with the flexibility to be converted to commercial spaces in the future (DC1-A).
2. **Architectural Concept.**
 - a. Overhead weather protection should be provided along Linden Ave N and N 135th St. (PL1-C, PL2-C, PL3-A)
 - b. The N 135th St elevation was identified as important. The Board recommended the use of transparency, materials, and landscaping to create human scale and lessen the perceived height of the structure. Detailed elevations, landscape plan, materials board, and lighting plan should be presented at the Recommendation meeting (DC2-A, DC2-B, PL2-B).

FIRST RECOMMENDATION August 29, 2016

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following comments were received at the Initial Recommendation meeting:

- Encouraged retail and/or restaurant uses along Linden Ave, consistent with the Bitter Lake Urban Design Framework.
- Noted that 135th functions like an alley, providing vehicular and pedestrian access from Linden to Aurora.
- Commented that 135th would be difficult to activate.
- Noted that the neighborhood needs more retail, and retail at the northwest corner would help activate the sidewalk.
- Supported the treatment of the Linden façade.
- Disappointed that there are office spaces on Linden rather than retail.
- Noted that 135th is very busy and dangerous.
- Supported the project.
- Supported the lobby location.

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 design guidance.

FIRST RECOMMENDATION August 29, 2016

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](#).

1. **Architectural Concept: Architectural and Façade Composition.** The applicant described the architectural concept as including large arches or borders with recessed areas of vertical bands and windows. The Board agreed the north, east, and south façades contained interesting volumes, but found the facades to contain too many concepts with competing horizontal and vertical elements and arches that were too subtle with colors that did not clearly support the volumes.

- a. The Board recommended use of contrasting colors that more clearly articulate the arch/border concept to clearly articulate the architectural concept (DC2-B).
 - b. The Board noted that the scattered window pattern within the recessed areas provided interest, but felt this pattern should be applied consistently among the recesses to simplify the façade composition. The Board recommended a consistent window placement strategy (DC2-B).
 - c. The Board agreed the large arch/border concept on the north façade along 135th failed to provide a well-proportioned composition, or incorporate architectural elements, features, or details of human scale. Providing human scale elements along 135th was identified by the Board, and echoed by the public, as a priority and the Board recommended the applicant reconsider the hierarchy of volumes and add smaller arches to provide and reinforce the human scale (DC2-D).
 - d. The Board recommended a strong podium expression on the north elevation along 135th to create a stronger street edge and provide opportunity for the use of elements to create greater human scale and texture, such as overhead weather protection or lighting (DC2-D).
 - e. The Board agreed with public comment and supported the location of the residential entry at the northwest corner facing Linden (PL3-A).
2. **Arrangement of Interior Uses and Relation to the Public Realm.** The residential lobby and two classroom spaces are proposed along Linden, while the 135th façade contains no direct access to the structure. The Board supported the location of these uses on Linden, but agreed that 135th needed more activation and interest to encourage an active street life.
- a. The applicant described the non-residential spaces on Linden Ave NE as classroom spaces for use by the community. Public comment expressed concern about the activation of Linden Ave NE and encouraged retail uses in these spaces rather than classrooms. The Board agreed that retail is most desirable, but surmised that classroom space will still activate the street. The Board supported the design of the spaces as they met the depth and height requirements for retail space (DC1-A) and thus conveyed a somewhat commercial character.
 - b. The Board discussed the location of the fitness room and bicycle storage in the garage, and expressed strong disappointment that these sought-after spaces were only accessible via the garage door at the east façade. The Board recommended these interior uses be in visible or prominent areas such as along the street front to assist with the priority of street level activation. The Board recommended the applicant explore providing direct access from 135th to the interior of the building. (DC1-A)

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

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

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-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-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.

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-C Retail Edges

PL3-C-2. Visibility: Maximize visibility into the building interior and merchandise displays. Consider fully operational glazed wall-sized doors that can be completely opened to the street, increased height in lobbies, and/or special lighting for displays.

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-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-A Arrangement of Interior Uses

DC1-A-3. Flexibility: Build in flexibility so the building can adapt over time to evolving needs, such as the ability to change residential space to commercial space as needed.

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-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.

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-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.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the First Recommendation the following departures were requested:

1. **Street Level Residential, Linden (SMC 23.47A.005.A.1.b.):** The Code requires that residential uses occupy no more than 20% of the street-level street-facing façade. The applicant proposed an increase to 35%.

The Board indicated support for the departure request, agreeing that the treatment of the plaza on Linden Ave NE allows for ancillary activities such as seating and the residential lobby at the northwest corner acts as bookend to the block and provides a clearly identifiable entry (CS2-C, PL3-C).

2. **Street Level Residential, 135th (SMC 23.47A.005.A.1.b.):** The Code requires that residential uses occupy no more than 20 percent of the street-level street-facing façade. The applicant proposed an increase to 100 percent.

The Board indicated concern with this departure as the treatment of the north façade fails to activate 135th. The Board identified activation of 135th as a high priority and suggested secondary architectural elements and a direct entrance to the fitness room at the northeast corner of the structure (DC2-C, DC2-D) – see related guidance,

3. **Blank Walls, 135th (SMC 23.47A.008.A.2.):** The Code requires uninterrupted blank facades to not exceed 20 feet in width or exceed 40 percent of the façade, between two and eight feet. The applicant proposes an increase to 66.1 percent.

The Board indicated support for the departure request, acknowledging that the slope of the site posed obstacles to meeting the blank wall requirement, if architectural elements of human scale

are added to the north façade to reduce perceived bulk, create interest for the pedestrian, and encourage active street life (DC2-B, DC2-C).

4. **Façade Transparency, North Facade (SMC 23.47A.008.B.2.):** The Code requires a minimum of 60 percent transparency between two and eight feet above the sidewalk. The applicant proposes a decrease to 33.9 percent.

The Board indicated support for the departure request, acknowledging that the slope of the site posed obstacles to meeting the transparency requirement, if interior spaces were arranged 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-A).

5. **Dwelling Unit Floor Levels, 135th (SMC 23.47A.008.D.2.):** The Code requires floor of a dwelling unit located along the street-level street-facing façade to be at least four feet above or four feet below sidewalk grade or set back 10 feet from the sidewalk. The applicant proposes no direct access to residential units along 135th.

The Board indicated support for the departure request provided that the shared interior uses and activities at the garage level are located to take advantage of views and physical connections to exterior spaces and uses along the sidewalk (DC1-A).

BOARD DIRECTION

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