City of Seattle

Department of Construction & Inspections
Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN REVIEW

DESIGN GUIDANCE
STREAMLINED DESIGN REVIEW

Project Number:	3022119
Address:	111 26th Ave E
Applicant:	Jonathan Lemons, Lemons Architecture PLLC
Date of Report:	Tuesday, May 24, 2016
SDCI Staff Present:	Katy Haima

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Lowrise (LR2)

Nearby Zones: (North) LR2
(South) LR2
(East) LR2
(West) LR2

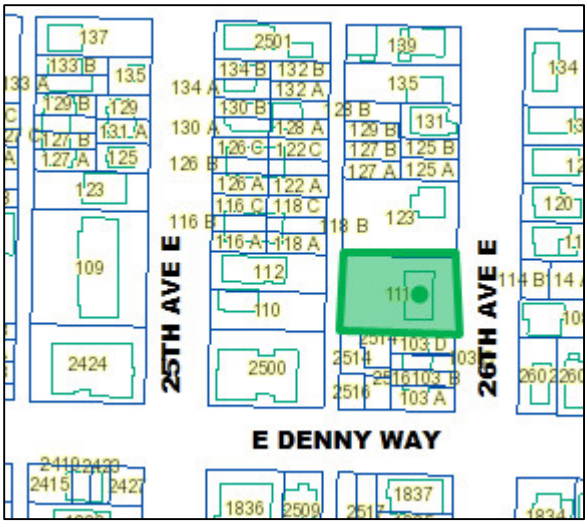
Lot Area: 9,600 SF

Current Development:

The site is currently occupied by a single-story residential structure.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The surrounding area is developed with a mix of single and multifamily residential developments, ranging in height from one to three stories. A combination of architecture design styles, including older craftsman



Access:

There is currently no direct vehicular access to the site. The alley ROW is largely unimproved.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

ECA Steep Slope.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is to allow two, 2 unit, townhouse and one, 4 unit, townhouse (total 8 units). Parking for 8 vehicles to be provided. Existing structure to be demolished.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following concerns, issues, and comments were raised:

- Concerned about the height of the structure and the loss of private views.
- Concerned about relocation of existing tenants.

PRIORITIES & STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Planner provided the following siting and design guidance. The Planner identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

1. **Site Plan & Massing Response.** Staff supports the proposed layout of units comprised of 4 rowhouses fronting 26th Ave E and two grouping of townhouses in the rear. Continue to refine the site plan to create pedestrian-friendly walkways, improve wayfinding, reduce perceived bulk and scale, and to sculpt and define purposeful open space.
    a. Staff supports stepping the structures up the hill in response to the existing topography. (CS1.C, CS2.D, DC2.A)
    b. Lower the garage as much as possible to further reduce height bulk and scale and strengthen the connection to the street. (CS2.D, DC2.A)
    c. Retain or increase the upper level setback on the rowhouses fronting 26th Ave E, as this significantly reduces the perceived height, bulk and scale from the street. (CS2.D, DC2.A)
    d. Explore shifting the rear units to provide room for landscaping along the north access path. (CS2.D, PL3.B, DC2.A, DC3.A)
    e. Include small patios at the rear entries of the rowhouses to provide a usable space. Staff recommends including a small seat wall or terrace to increase usable outdoor areas and provide opportunities for personalizing space. (DC3.A, DC3.B)

f. Minimal detail was provided regarding the design of the stairs to the underground garage. Widen the stairs to appear less constrained and more welcoming. This entry should be integrated into the site plan, as opposed to being driven by the location of the parking. Consider privacy impacts to adjacent units from those entering and exiting the stairs. (PL2.D, PL3.A, DC3.A)
g. Minimal detail was provided regarding the "north access path." This path should be designed into the overall circulation plan and appear as a purposeful design element, as it is the only pedestrian access to the rear units. See more under Item 2. (PL2.D, PL3.A, DC2.A, DC3.A)
h. Minimal details regarding the landscape plan were provided. The landscaping should be layered and lush, define spaces and establish a sense of place, and respond to the conditions for each microenvironment. Include trees along the west end of the site, and wherever possible throughout the site. (DC3.A, DC3.B, DC4.D)

2. **Streetscape Compatibility & Connection to the Street.** Strengthen the connection to the street by working with topography create transitional spaces. Integrate the design of the landscaping, stairs, and building form to create a gracious gesture to the pedestrian realm.
    a. Revise the planters along the streetscape to create a more gradual transition in scale. Work with the grade to create smaller terraced steps that break down the grade change. The landscaping should be lush and layered, and work to soften the rectilinear forms above. (CS1.C, CS2.B, CS2.D, CS3.A, DC2.D, DC3.A)
    b. There is a discrepancy between the site plan, which does not show decks at the front rowhouses, and the perspectives (P.15) which do. Include the decks with metal rails in the final design, as these enhance the transition in scale and establish a relationship with the street. (DC2.C, DC2.C, DC3.A, DC3.B)
    c. Staff supports the large amount of glazing at the street-facing facades. Include strategies to prevent frequent use of window coverings that diminish the connection to the street.
        i. Retain the specimen trees as indicated on the perspectives (p. 15). Explore using trees with a more columnar form or less dense foliage (such as a birch, as shown) to complement and soften the architecture while providing a permeable buffer for the units. (CS2.B, PL3.B, DC4.D)
    d. As proposed, the stairs do not appear integrated into the design of the units or the overall structure. Revise the stairs to establish a relationship with the landscaping, and to appear more structurally integrated into the overall design. Consider adding terraces or a small landing to the side, midway up the stairs, to enhance the connection to the street and improve the transition in scale. (CS2.B, CS3.A, DC2.C, DC2.D, DC3.A)
    b. The garage door should be custom designed, and relate to the overall design concept. The materials should be durable and high-quality, and have a positive impact on the pedestrian realm. (DC2.C, DC4.A)

2. **Entries & Wayfinding.** Enhance the design of unit entries and shared entries to provide inviting and secure transitional spaces that help announce the entry and provide a welcoming experience.
    a. Include small landings at back units that provide defensible transitional space and contribute to a welcoming entry. Staff recommends a minimum of a 5' x 5' pad. A 6' wide pad is preferable, as it allows for two standing abreast. (PL3.A, DC2.B)
    b. The design of the entry sequence for the rear units does is not easily identifiable. Enhance the design of the "north access path" to appear more welcoming, and to improve wayfinding. This path should be easily identifiable as the access to the back units. Use the same material or scoring pattern from the street to the back units to distinguish the pathway. (PL2.D, PL3.A, DC2.C, DC3.A)
    c. Provide a small landscape buffer on the south side of the "north access path", along the structure, to soften the space and create a more pedestrian-friendly walkway. (PL2.D, DC2.C, DC2.D DC3.A, D4.D)
    d. Incorporate signage for the back units into the design of the pathway at the streetscape for effective wayfinding. (PL2.D, PL3.A)
    e. Demonstrate how each unit has a unique quality that aids in wayfinding. As proposed, the front and back units are mirror images, respectively. Each unit should be distinguishable by more than an address. See items under Item 3. (PL2.D, DC2.B, DC2.D)

3. **Architectural Composition.** Strategies should be used to reduce the perceived mass, establish a pedestrian scale, reinforce the massing concept, create open and airy spaces, and reflect a residential character.
    a. Staff supports the material palette, including the gray and blue fiber cement lap siding, wood composite, metal rail, and cast-in place concrete. Staff supports the variation in tone of the lap siding, as it further breaks down the bulk of each façade. (CS3.A, DC2.D, DC4.A)
    b. Retain large amounts of glazing on all facades. (CS2.B, DC2.A, DC2.B)
    c. As noted above, revise the design composition to strengthen the demarcation of units. Strategies could include unique secondary elements, use of materials and colors, hardscape materials, landscape materials, etc. These can be subtle features, but should aid in wayfinding and provide layers of detailing for a rich pedestrian experience. (PL2.D, DC2.B, DC2.C, DC2.D)
    d. Include additional secondary elements, such as canopies, that relate to context and reinforce the residential character of the structures. (DC2.C)
    e. The elevation on page 23 shows the north unit along the street as having a wood composite panel. Please demonstrate how this is related to the overall design concept. (DC2.B)
    f. It appears that wood composite is being used at three situations: as an indented L shape around windows; as a box that protrudes from the structure around windows; and as vertical elements on the rear units. This many interpretations has created an overwrought expression. Consider simplifying to two applications, and using these to strengthen the cohesiveness of the overall design concept. If the change in expression of the composite wood is meant to demarcate units, consider instead revising the field color. (PL2.D, DC2.A, DC2.B)

g. There are a number of different windows used, further muddling the clarity of the massing and design intent. Consider limiting the types of windows provided, and apply each type in a manner that reinforces the massing and design concept. (DC2.B)
h. The south elevation of the northwest building and the north elevation of the southwest building appear the most unsuccessful at creating a cohesive design language. Revise the material application of these facades. Revise a portion of these façades to the white fiber cement panel to reflect light into the space and to create the perception of a larger space. This may also help to demarcate the units in back. (CS2.D, PL2.D, DC2.B, DC2.C)

4. **Service Uses.** The waste area is located at the farthest point from street access, which requires traversing the entire site. Locate the waste area in a more convenient location that minimizes impacts to the adjacent uses. Staff recommends locating the waste area in the garage. (DC1.C)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines are summarized below. 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-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-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-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-1. Fitting Old and New Together: Create compatibility between new projects, and existing architectural context, including historic and modern designs, through building articulation, scale and proportion, roof forms, detailing, fenestration, and/or the use of complementary materials.

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-3. Established Neighborhoods: In existing neighborhoods with a well-defined architectural character, site and design new structures to complement or be compatible with the architectural style and siting patterns of neighborhood buildings.

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

DESIGN CONCEPT

DC1 Project Uses and Activities: Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

DC1-A Arrangement of Interior Uses

DC1-A-1. Visibility: Locate uses and services frequently used by the public in visible or prominent areas, such as at entries or along the street front.

DC1-A-2. Gathering Places: Maximize the use of any interior or exterior gathering spaces.

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.

DC1-A-4. Views and Connections: Locate interior uses and activities to take advantage of views and physical connections to exterior spaces and uses.

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

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-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 Building Materials

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-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-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.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD ADJUSTMENTS

Design Review Staff's recommendation on the requested adjustment(s) will be based upon the adjustment's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the adjustment(s).

At the time of Design Guidance, no adjustments were requested.

STAFF DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the Design Guidance, SDCI Staff recommended the project should move forward to building permit application in response to the Design Guidance provided.

1. Please be aware that this report is an assessment on how the project is meeting the intent of the Design Guidelines. This review does not include a full zoning review. Zoning review will occur when the MUP plans and/or building permit is submitted. If needed and where applicable, SDR adjustments may be requested in response to zoning corrections.

2. If applicable, please prepare your Master Use Permit for SEPA review with a thorough zoning analysis listing the 23.45 and SMC 23.54 code section criteria, showing both required and proposed information (include page number where you graphically show compliance). You may want to review Tip 201 (http://web1.seattle.gov/dpd/cams/CamList.aspx) and may also want to review the MUP information here: http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/permittypes/mupoverview/default.htm

3. Along with your building permit application, please include a narrative response to the guidance provided in this report.

4. All requested adjustments must be clearly documented in the building permit plans.