City of Seattle

Department of Construction and Inspections
Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN REVIEW

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number:	3023118
Address:	3500 NE 125th St.
Applicant:	Paul Pierce for Playhouse Design Group
Date of Meeting:	Monday, July 11, 2016
Board Members Present:	Ivana Begley Eric Blank James Marria
Board Members Absent:	Blake Williams
SDCI Staff Present:	Josh Johnson

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Low Rise (LR2)

Nearby Zones:
(North) LR2
(South) LR2 & SF 7200
(East) Single Family (SF 7200)
(West) Neighborhood Commercial with a Pedestrian Overlay (NC2P-40), (NC2-40), LR2

Lot Area: 46,625 sq. ft.

Current Development:

The site is occupied by a church and associated parking lot.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The proposed development is located 2 blocks to the east of Lake City Way and at the edge of the pedestrian zoned commercial area. There is an abundance of mixed-use development along Lake City way with a wide variety of restaurants, retail, grocery and services within blocks of the site. Some downtown amenities include the Public Library, Lake City Mini Park, Albert Davis Park and Virgil Flaim Park. Surrounding uses include multi-family to the north, south, and west with single-family to the east.

Access:

There are access points present on NE 125th St. & 35th Ave. NE. Sidewalks are present on both streets as well.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

No ECA conditions are present on site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for eleven 3-story buildings containing 44 residential units. The project is comprised of two parcels, one near the street intersection and an L-shaped property that makes up the remainder of the project. Parking for 44 vehicles to be provided below grade. Existing structure to be demolished.

The design packet includes materials 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

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

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE July 11, 2016

PUBLIC COMMENT
Members of the public offered the following comments at the EDG meeting:

- The three story buildings may negatively impact privacy.
- Buildings should not be too close to the sidewalk.
- The 125th Street facades will be a gateway to the Lake City urban hub.
- Street trees should protected and preserved.
- Doors and entries need to address the street.
- Favored Option 3 for the underground parking and large central open space
- Rooftop spaces need to respect the privacy of existing neighbors.
- Each townhome should be unique.

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.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE July 11, 2016

1. **Pedestrian Experience:**
    a. Pedestrian oriented views should be included at the Recommendation phase for perspectives at the street and amenity areas. Vignettes at the Recommendation phase showing pedestrian entrances along 35th and 125th are essential as well. (PL1-B,C, & PL3-A)
    b. The Board acknowledged public comment regarding the trees and noted that the four Raywood Ash trees proposed for preservation on 35th Street are a large part of the area's identity. The modulation shown to stay out of their root zones was commended by the Board. A forthcoming arborist report for the MUP will detail preservation measures. (CS2-B)
    c. Dumpster loading and move in/move out spaces needs to be depicted and analyzed at the Recommendation meeting. (DC1-C)

2. **Massing Options:**
    a. The Board agreed with public comment and favored the third option for the underground parking, the large central amenity space, and the amount of modulation present. (DC2-B and DC3-A&B)
    b. Groups of townhomes should have unique character broken up into groups of two or three. (DC2-B)

3. **Central Amenity Space:** The Board favored the large central open space and commended the precedent images shown in the packet. The Board provided the following guidance related to the integration and activation of the open space.
    a. There should be an elevator from the garage or a well-designed ramp for accessibility. Both should be integrated into the open space and not hidden. (CS1-C)
    b. Board stressed that consideration of the walkways and amenity space for universal accessibility i.e. wheelchairs, strollers, bikes is critical. Since there is substantial grade change from the sidewalk, individual unit access from the amenity area should be considered. (DC3-C, PL1-A, PL2-A)
    c. Explore opportunities to create a sense of community through shared space such as location of the mail boxes. (PL1-C)

4. **Roof Decks.** The Board provided the following guidance related to the stair towers and roof:
    a. No detail of individual roof decks was provided at EDG. Stair towers are evident in the axonometric drawing and should not obstruct views. Penthouse stairs should be minimized to reduce perceived height. (CS2-D)
    b. Echoing public comment regarding privacy impacts, the Board agreed that screens or planters should be added to the roof decks to keep residents from the north and east property lines. (DC3-B)

5. **Material and Color:** The Boards encouraged the creation of unique groups of townhomes to assist in wayfinding and expressing individuality. They suggested bold colors servicing the modulation of the units.
    a. At the Recommendation phase, the Board wants to see details of fences, gates, lighting, and guardrails. (DC4-A)
    b. Landscaping needs to be durable and appropriate for residential use. (DC4-D)

6. **Corner Treatment**
    a. The Board did not support the erosion of the corner as the overall development is modulated enough to reduce the sense of bulk at the corner. No formal element or node is needed, simply a sense of careful design. Different material or signage could highlight the corner element.
    b. The Board noted that a unique gate or deck may be appropriate. The corner unit could aid in wayfinding for the project.
    c. The fenestration should be unique and thoughtfully composed. (DC-2)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

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-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.

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-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.

PUBLIC LIFE

PL1 Connectivity: Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.

PL1-A Network of Open Spaces

PL1-A-1. Enhancing Open Space: Design the building and open spaces to positively contribute to a broader network of open spaces throughout the neighborhood.

PL1-A-2. Adding to Public Life: Seek opportunities to foster human interaction through an increase in the size and quality of project-related open space available for public life.

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-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.

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.

PL1-C Outdoor Uses and Activities

PL1-C-1. Selecting Activity Areas: Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.

PL1-C-2. Informal Community Uses: In addition to places for walking and sitting, consider including space for informal community use such as performances, farmer's markets, kiosks and community bulletin boards, cafes, or street vending.

PL1-C-3. Year-Round Activity: Where possible, include features in open spaces for activities beyond daylight hours and throughout the seasons of the year, especially in neighborhood centers where active open space will contribute vibrancy, economic health, and public safety.

PL2 Walkability: Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

PL2-A Accessibility

PL2-A-1. Access for All: Provide access for people of all abilities in a manner that is fully integrated into the project design. Design entries and other primary access points such that all visitors can be greeted and welcomed through the front door.

PL2-A-2. Access Challenges: Add features to assist pedestrians in navigating sloped sites, long blocks, or other challenges.

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-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.

DESIGN CONCEPT

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

DC1-C Parking and Service Uses

DC1-C-1. Below-Grade Parking: Locate parking below grade wherever possible. Where a surface parking lot is the only alternative, locate the parking in rear or side yards, or on lower or less visible portions of the site.
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-3. Multiple Uses: Design parking areas to serve multiple uses such as children's play space, outdoor gathering areas, sports courts, woonerf, or common space in multifamily projects.
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-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.

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-2. Matching Uses to Conditions: Respond to changing environmental conditions such as seasonal and daily light and weather shifts through open space design and/or programming of open space activities.

DC3-B-3. Connections to Other Open Space: Site and design project-related open spaces to connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby public open space where appropriate.

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.

DC3-C Design

DC3-C-1. Reinforce Existing Open Space: Where a strong open space concept exists in the neighborhood, reinforce existing character and patterns of street tree planting, buffers or treatment of topographic changes. Where no strong patterns exist, initiate a strong open space concept that other projects can build upon in the future.

DC3-C-2. Amenities/Features: Create attractive outdoor spaces suited to the uses envisioned for the project.

DC3-C-3. Support Natural Areas: Create an open space design that retains and enhances onsite natural areas and connects to natural areas that may exist off-site and may provide habitat for wildlife.

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-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.

DC4-D-4. Place Making: Create a landscape design that helps define spaces with significant elements such as trees.

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 departures were requested:

1. **Front and Street Setbacks (SMC 23.45.518):** The Code requires front and street side setbacks of 7 feet average and 5 feet minimum. The applicant proposes reductions to down to 5' min, 5' 9" average. The project is broken up into two parcels so the departures are needed at the streets and at the borders of the interior of site. These departures allow for additional open space in the interior of the project.

   The Board indicated early support for these departures as they felt the large central open space present in Massing Option 3 was a desirable design element that strengthens the overall site plan. They advised that close attention to building spacing with respect to window openings should be provided as the design progresses. (DC3-B)

2. **Façade Length (SMC 23.45.526):** The Code requires a maximum combined façade length within 15ft of property line is 65% depth of lot. The applicant proposes to exceed this standard in two locations in between the rowhouses and townhomes locations 88.6% at the north boundary and 70.5% at the west boundary. The only external façade length departure is along the east property line and is 68.2%. These departures result in maximized internal open space.

   The Board favored these departures and had no concerns about the departures internal to the overall project area. They accepted the eastern façade length departure as it increased the amount of central open space. In addition, the change in topography between the subject property and the adjacent parcel to the east helps mitigate the impact of the development. (DC3-B)

BOARD DIRECTION

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