



City of Seattle

Department of Construction & Inspections
Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN
REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3025193

Address: 4726 15th Avenue NE

Applicant: Matt Driscoll for d/Arch LLC

Date of Meeting: Monday, March 12, 2018

Board Members Present: Eric Blank, Chair
Ivana Begley
James Marria
Brian Bishop

DPD Staff Present: Holly J. Godard, planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 2-65 (NC2-65) with a 65 foot height limit and Lowrise 3 (LR3)

Nearby Zones: (North) Neighborhood Commercial 2-65 (NC2-65)
(South) Neighborhood Commercial 2-65 (NC2-65)
(East) Lowrise 3 (LR3)
(West) Neighborhood Commercial 2-65 (NC2-65)

Lot Area: 12,960 square feet



Current Development:

Current development on the site is three single family dwellings.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The site is located within the University District Northwest Urban Center Village which is largely a mix of single family dwellings, townhouses, and multifamily buildings. The University Christian Church is opposite the site. University Presbyterian Church is on the next block south and owns the parking lot south of the subject property. Major shopping and entertainment is nearby. A large mixed use development is under construction on the adjacent property to the north, a former parking lot and tow residential structures.

Access:

Vehicle access to the site is via a platted alley.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

No Environmentally Critical Areas are mapped at the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicants propose a mixed use building with residential (Small Efficiency Dwelling Units - SEDU, studio units, and two bedroom apartments) and commercial space at the ground floor. Parking is proposed with access from 15th Avenue Northeast

The packet includes information presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number 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

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE January 9, 2017

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public were present at this meeting.

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. Relationship of Building to Street and Alley:** The Board considered the massing alternatives presented by the applicant and determined Option C was the unanimous choice for its interesting street side architectural frame for the center bay of the project. The Board asked the applicant to consider the proposed building to the north which has a good architectural rhythm and to design this building with an equally strong and balanced approach.
 - a. The Board preferred the center “bay” option, with the solid frame, pointing out its strong street presence and strong form-giving qualities. The Board appreciated the 1-2-1 rhythm along the street front and asked the applicant to retain the “bookend” language as the design develops. (CS2-A-2, CS2-C-2, DC2-B)
 - b. The Board felt that the commercial spaces need to relate directly to the street without steps. The one or two steps shown in the early design guidance packet should be graded out for a sidewalk-to-commercial safe and easy access. Avoid “dying steps” for safety and better street/building relationship. (CS1-C-2, CS2-B-2, PL2-A-2)
- 2. Relationship of Building to Alley:**
 - a. The Board felt the building crowded the back units, light well, and alley right of way. They asked the applicant to widen the light well and add interesting landscaping. The Board suggest a tall, evergreen, and lacey plant like bamboo. For safety, the back level two units should not have a balcony unless another safety measure is designed so unintended access from the alley is thwarted. (PL2-B)
- 3. Residential Entry:**
 - a. The Board directed the applicant to create a residential entry that is more recognizable and apparent. (CS2-A-2, CS2-B-2, PL3-A, PL3-B)
- 4. Materials:**
 - a. The Board directed the applicant to specify high quality materials as presented at the early design meeting. (DC4 A)

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following public comments were offered at this meeting:

- There is a lot of transparency on the 15th Avenue façade which may be a good thing, but the resulting look is not in keeping with the new Bellwether building to the north which has less transparency.
- The proposed front façade cantilever is good to help with overheard weather protection and provides a sense of shelter and welcome to the entry.

One purpose of the design review process is for the Board and City to receive comments from the public that help to identify feedback and concerns about the site and design concept, identify applicable citywide and neighborhood design guidelines of highest priority to the site and explore conceptual design, siting alternatives and eventual architectural design.

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 recommendations.

- 1. Relationship of Building to Street and Alley:** The Board supported the direction of the building concept development and the three-part façade language presented by the applicant.
 - a. The Board thought that the three-part building was well sited on the property and continued the multifamily rhythm and language set by the Bellwether building to the north. (CS2-A-2, CS2-C-2, DC2-B)
 - b. The applicant responded to early design guidance and designed the building entries to be accessed at grade from a central entry. The retail, lobby, residential leasing and bicycle entry share a common entry point that is uncluttered and recognizable. The Board was supportive of the ground level organization of the building and changes the applicant has made to create transparency and visual connections to the street (CS1-C-2, CS2-B-2, PL2-A-2)
- 2. Relationship of Building to Alley:**
 - a. The applicant proposed the rear units and light wells with as much space as possible for increased gardens and patios on the alley. In response to guidance the applicant widened the light wells and added landscaping. The Board discussed security and decorative fencing along the alley and asked the applicant to pay special attention to creating a fence and green screen that is durable, can support plants, is attached to planters built to code requirements for soil depth on structure, or better. The Board encouraged the applicant to pay attention to building details for the fence and greenscreen which would not invite passers-by to climb or scale the fence. (PL2-B)

3. Residential Entry:

- a. The Board supported the proposed residential entry stating it was more recognizable and inviting. In response to entry landscaping the Board asked the applicant to revise the entry dry landscape (kare-sansui "dry landscape") to a landscape that looks like a dry landscape, but is in fact set in mortar for longevity, durability, and maintenance and conditioned the project to provide it as they noted. (CS2-A-2, CS2-B-2, PL3-A, PL3-B)

4. Materials:

- b. The Board approved the applicant's choice of materials. (DC4 A)

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 Recommendation the following departures were requested:

1. **SMC 23.47A.014B3a and b (Building Setbacks):** The Code requires fifteen feet above 13 feet and 2 feet for every 10 feet above 40 feet across from residentially zone properties. The applicant proposes encroaching into the required setback above 40 feet.

The Board supported the setback stating that the intrusion into the required setback was minimal and broken into separate parts along the building façade. The Board commended the applicant for providing more than code required building setback at the base and at a substantial area of the rear façade which will help the applicant provide a creative and modulated rear façade at this zone edge. Additional landscaping will be very welcome in the setback provided by the applicant and will make a better building relationship to the public realm. (CS2B, CS2D)

2. **SMC 23.47A.032A.1 (Access to Parking):** The Code requires alley vehicle access for lots with an alley. The applicant proposes access to the parking garage off 15th Avenue Northeast.

After thoughtful discussion three members of the four members present indicated that they support vehicle access off 15th Avenue Northeast. The Board noted that they support a parking use at the site to benefit the neighborhood. Some members of the Board noted that the topographic slope of the site inhibits locating a vehicle access off the alley and would cause the applicant to consider less desirable parking configurations in the building or abandon the idea. (parking is not required.) The alley elevation is too high to accommodate underground parking. The Board considered the impacts of a driveway crossing the sidewalk on 15th Avenue northeast and thought that the applicant would be able to choose mitigation measures like signage, lights,

paving and other elements to help indicate a driveway entry to pedestrians and remind drivers to slow down as they enter and exit, but no conditions were imposed on the project. (CS1, CS2B, C)

3. **SMC 23.54.030 (Sight Triangle):** The Code requires two sight triangles at either side of the driveway. The applicant proposes one sight triangle at the exiting (north) side of the driveway.

The Board indicated they support the departure and note that the south sight triangle still exists in the proposal, but that a building pole is in part of the sight triangle. The Board mentioned that mitigation measures as noted in departure #2 will help pedestrians recognize the driveway. The Board agreed with the applicant that sight lines are good at this location for entering and exiting cars. (PL3 C3, DC2)

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-C Topography

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.

CS1-D-2. Off-Site Features: Provide opportunities through design to connect to off-site habitats such as riparian corridors or existing urban forest corridors. Promote continuous habitat, where possible, and increase interconnected corridors of urban forest and habitat where possible.

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-2. Architectural Presence: Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly.

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.

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-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.

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.

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-C Retail Edges

PL3-C-1. Porous Edge: Engage passersby with opportunities to interact visually with the building interior using glazing and transparency. Create multiple entries where possible and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.

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.

PL3-C-3. Ancillary Activities: Allow space for activities such as sidewalk vending, seating, and restaurant dining to occur. Consider setting structures back from the street or incorporating space in the project design into which retail uses can extend.

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-B Architectural and Façade Composition

DC2-B-1. Façade Composition: Design all building façades—including alleys and visible roofs— considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all façades 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 façades 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-2. Dual Purpose Elements: Consider architectural features that can be dual purpose— adding depth, texture, and scale as well as serving other project functions.

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.

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.

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.

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

The recommendation summarized above was based on the design review packet dated Monday, March 12, 2018, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the Monday, March 12, 2018 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, the four Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and departures with the following condition:

The Board conditioned the project to provide a set in mortar “dry garden” at the entry of the building where the sand dry gardens are shown on the plan. (The north and south gardens do not need to be set in mortar.) (DC4D2, PL3A4)