



City of Seattle

Department of Construction & Inspections
Nathan Torgelson, Director



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3025501

Address: 937 N 96th St

Applicant: Scott Starr, SMR Architects for DESC

Date of Meeting: Monday, November 21, 2016

Board Members Present: Dale Kutzera (chair)
Marc Angelillo
Christopher Bell
Emily McNichols
Keith Walzak

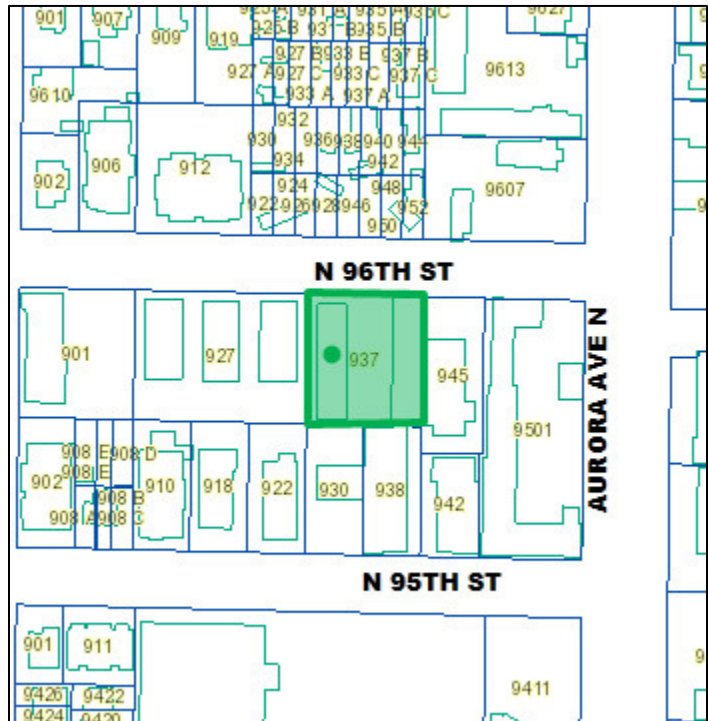
SDCI Staff Present: Abby Weber

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial 2-65 (C2-65)

Nearby Zones: The C2-65 zone continues east and south of the site along the Aurora corridor. Lowrise 3 (LR3) zone is located north and west of the site. Single Family 5000 zone begins at the western edge of the N 96th St block.

Lot Area: 16,200 SF



Current Development:

Existing uses onsite include automotive repair services. Existing development consists of two single-story structures which contain small offices and garages.

The two long, parallel structures are oriented onto a shared drive and parking. Existing structures are proposed to be demolished.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The site is located in the Aurora-Lichton Urban Village, one half-block west of the Aurora Ave N/Highway 99 corridor. Surrounding development consists of a variety of uses and is generally observed to transition from commercial and light industrial/warehouse along Aurora, to multi-family apartments and townhomes mid-block, to single family residential approximately one block west of the site. Immediately adjacent to the site, there is a commercial warehouse to the east, a brewery to the south and 2-story apartments building to the west. The auto-oriented neighborhood character is anticipated to change as new development occurs.

Access:

Existing vehicular access is from N 96th St. Proposed vehicular and pedestrian access will be from N 96th St. There is no alley.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

There are no mapped Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Early Design Guidance for a 6-story building with approximately 99 units and ground floor commercial use to accommodate onsite support services. Parking for 3 vehicles to be provided at ground level. 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>

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

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 November 21, 2016

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following public comments were offered at this meeting:

- Concerned about the open design of the courtyard and the high potential for “urban campers”; the proposed courtyard in Option 3 appears to be open to the public. Would like to see the courtyard relocated to a more central position or at the rear of the site, or gated if it remains in its current location.
- Identified safety and security as a priority, would like to see the design and programming provide “eyes on the street”.
- Would like to see the building entry moved forward to the street.
- Concerned that the garage location, as proposed in Option 3, lessens visibility.
- Concerned about the proposed east facing lower-level units and livability, several units are fronting a solid blank wall.
- Concerned about the proposed south facing units; the site to the south is a brewery which produces odors that may impact livability.
- Concerned about existing drug use and prostitution in the neighborhood, and is concerned that the proposed open space (courtyard, setbacks, etc.) will provide space where these activities may occur.

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

- Concerned about safety and security as a result of drug activity, vehicular crimes, and prostitution in the area, cited Guideline PL2-B as a priority.
- Supported the proposed design of ground level large store front windows as it provides “eyes on the street”, and would also like to see the main entrance facing the street as it will also provide “eyes” and orient activity away from the less intense residential zone to the west.
- Would prefer the massing and zoning analysis be based on current zoning rather than the proposed zoning changes associated with HALA.
- Concerned that the proposal overstates the walkability of the neighborhood and proximity to commercial amenities, and notes that the lack of pedestrian infrastructure, poor lighting and topography can be barriers to pedestrian activity.
- Does not support the inclusion of priority guideline CS3-A, “emphasizing positive neighborhood attributes”, and the applicant’s response, as it should not be assumed that being sensitive to the area’s industrial history is desirable.
- Does not support the rationale for the requested departure as it is not clear how it results in a better design and the resulting design negatively impacts the properties to the west. Identified CS2-D-4 and CS2-D-5 as priority guidelines.

The Office of Housing (OH) provided the following comments in writing prior to the meeting since the project has applied to receive Housing Levy funds for the project. OH supports the Option 3 requested departure to allow the building to encroach into the required upper level setbacks since it would allow units to be located away from the street and from the residential building to the west. Additionally, OH supports the location of the NW corner courtyard as it provides amenity space and buffers adjacent residential buildings.

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. Massing & Relationship to Adjacent Sites:** The Board did not state a specific preference for a one of the proposed massing options, rather they discussed the merits associated with each option and agreed a hybrid of Options 2 and 3 would be most successful.
 - a. The Board was in support of the L-shaped massing options as it is an effective zone transition, however, the Board did not support the rationale for the requested departure which would reduce the side setback. It is unclear how the requested departure results in a design that better meets the intent of the guidelines and promotes respect for adjacent sites. (CS2-D-3, CS2-D-4)
 - b. The Board suggested minimizing the front setback to better engage with the street and pedestrian realm. (CS2-D)
 - c. The Board supported the façade modulation as proposed in Option 2, particularly the rear façade, as it better responds to adjacent sites and breaks up the building mass. (CS2-D-3, CS2-D-4)
 - d. Responding to public comment, the Board agreed that the layout of residential units should better respond to adjacent site conditions and anticipate future development. Further consideration should be given to adjacent uses as it impacts the arrangement of interior uses, for instance, where proposed unit windows are facing blank walls and how the design shall respond to odors from the adjacent brewery to the south. (DC1-A-4, DC2-B-2)
 - e. The Board was concerned with the 6-foot rear setback as the amount of glazing that can be achieved at 6-feet is minimal. Furthermore, the Board was concerned about future development on neighboring sites which may block access to light and create quality of life concerns for units along the rear façade. At the Recommendation phase, the Board would like to see window studies that explore the relationship of the proposed development to adjacent sites. (CS1-B-2, DC2-B-1)

- 2. Entries, Street Level Uses & Safety:** The Board discussed safety and security concerns as they pertain to building entries, the courtyard, setbacks, and location of services.
 - a. In agreement with public comment, the Board was concerned with the recessed front door and felt that an entry closer to the street would create a stronger connection with the pedestrian realm. The Board requested further study of relocating the entry closer to the street as a means to activate the street and pedestrian realm. (PL3-A, DC1-A-1)
 - b. The Board supported the programming of common spaces along the street as proposed in Option 2 to activate the street frontage and promote safety through “eyes on the street”. (PL2-B, DC1-A-1, DC1-A-4)
 - c. In agreement with public comment, the Board was concerned about the open appearance of the courtyard, as proposed in Option 3. However, the Board agreed safety concerns could be mitigated with proper lighting, landscaping, low fencing and

- by promoting eyes on the courtyard with 24-hour staff. The Board was similarly concerned with spaces created by the side and rear setbacks, as well as the long driveway and side walkway, and would like to see further study of the treatment of these spaces to reconcile safety and security concerns. (PL2-B, DC1-A-1, DC1-A-4, DC4-C-1)
- d. The Board encouraged activation of the courtyard through the programming of adjacent ground-level interior spaces. The Board supported the program/courtyard relationship as proposed in Option 3 because the interior uses create a strong connection and promote eyes on the courtyard space. The Board would like to see this relationship carried over in a hybrid massing option at the Recommendation phase. (PL2-B, DC1-A-1, DC1-A-2, DC1-A-4, DC4-D)
 - e. In agreement with public comment, the Board was concerned about the parking garage entry as proposed in Option 3 as it is a prominent feature on the street-facing façade, fails to activate the street and limits visibility where eyes on the street is a priority concern. If a hybrid massing option continues to include a parking garage, the Board was in support of the garage as proposed in Option 2 as it creates a stronger street frontage and more visible street frontage. (PL2-B, DC1-B-1, DC1-C-2)
 - f. The Board requested further study of the trash and utility room locations. The Board suggested these services be located closer to the street to provide accessibility and minimize side yard spaces which may foster unwanted congregation. The reconfiguration of trash and utility rooms should be considered with any changes to the proposed parking garage. (DC1-B-1)

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 departure was requested:

1. **Setback Requirements (SMC 23.47A.014.B.2):** The Code requires a setback along any rear or side lot line that abuts a residentially zoned lot of 10-feet for portions of structures between 13-feet and 65-feet in height, and an additional setback at the rate of 1-foot per 10-feet in excess of 65-feet. The applicant proposes to encroach 9-feet within the required side setback for a portion of the west-facing façade, creating a 6-foot setback from the property line between 13-feet and 42-feet.

The Board did not support the rationale provided for the departure as a design based rationale was not compelling. The Board indicated, however, that they would be open to a departure that results in a design that better meets the guidelines.

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-D Height, Bulk, and Scale

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.

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-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-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-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-B Vehicular Access and Circulation

DC1-B-1. Access Location and Design: Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists wherever possible. Emphasize use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

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.

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-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.

DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

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

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, four of the five Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.