



RECOMMENDATION OF THE SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3025493 & 3025781 (see map)

Address: 5236 Rainier Ave S & 5217 42nd Ave S

Applicant: Johnston Architects PLLC

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, January 23, 2018

Board Members Present: Julian Weber (Chair)
Carey Dagliano-Holmes
Sharon Khosla
Charles Romero
David Sauvion

Board Members Absent: None

SDCI Staff Present: Holly Godard, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial
NC2-40

3025493: Proposed Contract rezone to NC2-65
3025781: Proposed Contract Rezone to NC2-65, with
voluntary restriction to 55ft height.

Nearby Zones: (North) NC2-40, partial LR2
(South) NC2-40
(East) NC2-40
(West) NC2-40

Lot Area: 3025493: 18,423 sq ft
3025781: 21,886 sq ft



Current Development:

The 3025493 site is occupied by three, 1 story structures. The 3025781 site is occupied by an abandoned house and a garage structure.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

To the south of both sites is a newer 4-story residential structure that fills out the acute corner of Rainier Avenue and 42nd avenue S. A 2-story commercial structure is to the north of 3025493, and a 3 story, semi-circular apartment is located north of both sites, set back from 42nd Avenue and not running parallel to the east-west shared property line. Predominantly commercial uses exist along both sides of Rainier Avenue, 2-4 stories of mixed styles and vintage. Along 42nd Avenue there are 2-3 story apartments near Rainier, and single family houses opposite the northeast corner of 3025781, and extending north into Columbia City.

Access:

Pedestrian access from the adjacent sidewalk of Rainier Ave S for 3025493; and from the adjacent sidewalk of 42nd Ave S for 3025781. Vehicular access for both sites from the alley.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

3025493: Steep Slope; 3025781: Steep Slope

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The two sites share a platted but unimproved public alley between them. Both projects were reviewed at one design review meeting to provide a holistic and complementary evaluation, while they remain two distinct projects separated by the public alley right-of-way; there is no alley vacation.

#3025493: A 6-story building consisting of 81 residential units, and 6,000 sq. ft. of ground level retail. Parking to be provided for 67 vehicles within the structure. Project includes a contract rezone. Existing structures to be demolished.

#3025781: A 5-story building containing 85 residential units. Parking to be provided for 48 vehicles within the structure. Project includes a contract rezone. Existing structure 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 January 24, 2017

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following public comments were offered at this meeting:

- Supported Option 3 because it maximizes public access through the site and breaks the building forms with major entrance recesses.
- Supported multiple entrances along the Rainier ground floor to activate the street.
- Whatever option is pursued, strongly suggested the street walls on both sites be broken into shorter lengths.
- Supported offices/small business along this stretch of Rainier Avenue, rather than retail.
- Advocated quality, durable materials, and rich architectural expression (booklet p 47).

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 (the Board) provided the following siting and design guidance.

All [page references] below are to the EDG booklet dated 1/24/17; (guideline citations):

1. Site Plan, Massing & Context Response (Both Sites):

- a. The Board endorsed the applicant-preferred Option 3, as the most promising to develop, in response to the following guidance.
- b. The Board supported the linear axis through the site [31/41], and the high pedestrian porosity and path following that axis, through both buildings and connecting Rainier to 42nd. The Board also endorsed full public access from Rainier to the central alley courtyards on this axis, as stated by the applicants. (DC1; PL1-B)

- c. The Board supported the primary linear access path as shown at 15 ft minimum width at the narrowest points, and about 30 ft at the Rainier street front, and level with the Rainier sidewalk as shown on section pg 38. The Board recommended integrated, universal design approaches to accommodate disabled access to the different levels on both sites. In this regard, the “ADA ramp” off 42nd shown on pg 41 deserves refinement. (PL1-B; PL2-A1)
- d. The Board supported the carved out central courtyards as shown on pg 39/left, 41 and 43, and recommended they be checked for sunlight penetration, and then activating uses such as amenity spaces be deployed at the adjacent floors, including the two walls that define the 3025781 courtyard. Besides amenity uses, the Board supported offices, work studios, or other similar activating uses on the central facades. (CS3-B1; DC3-B4)
- e. The Board supported the one-way driveway proposed along the north property line [35] as a shared vehicular/pedestrian route, and recommended a clearly demarcated pedestrian path parallel to that driveway, and continuing west to Rainier Avenue (as this link will be a pedestrian short cut). The Board supported this drive in a 19 ft wide setback zone, which is a critical massing transition to the adjacent LR zone. (DC1-B)
- f. The Board recommended all vehicle movements in the north-south alley fragment, be pushed as far north as possible, to minimize conflicts with the amenity courtyards and pedestrians crossing on the linear axis [P2 on 32; P2 on 35]. (DC1-C2)
- g. Recognizing the south portion of the alley may not be needed for vehicles, the Board recommended an attractive landscape treatment be developed with SDOT approval, preferably augmenting the adjacent courtyards on private land, and accommodating pedestrian movements from 42nd Avenue. The Board recommended the vehicular portion of the alley south of the east-west driveway have a distinctive paving treatment and/or scoring, and a demarcated pedestrian walking zone. (DC1-B)
- h. Since all building facades will be visible – the internal ones from gaps in the street walls – the Board recommended careful composition, quality materials and secondary elements be employed on all visible facades. (DC2-B)
- i. The Board concurred with public comment and strongly recommended high quality, durable materials for all sides of both structures, particularly along the two street facades and their four, visible end-wall returns. (DC4-A1)

2. Massing & Comments for #3025493 (Building on Rainier Avenue):

- a. The Board strongly supported the wide, top-floor step backs on all sides of the structure [33], including the large roof deck at the northwest corner along Rainier Avenue [32/lower center], as a means to reduce visual bulk in context. (DC2-A2)

- b. The Board concurred with public comment that the approximately 200 ft building length along Rainier should be legibly broken into at least two forms on the street. The Board agreed the entry recess shown only at level 1 was not sufficient [34], and recommended that recess or a notch be carried full height, or be a pronounced crease in the building, to clearly express the east-west pedestrian axis. (DC2-C3)
- c. The Board agreed the two end walls will be visible from various street views [34/right], and they should contain windows, secondary features and façade compositions consistent with the street façade. (DC2-B)
- d. The Board concurred with public comment that offices or similar non-retail uses should occupy the entire ground level along Rainier [32/upper right] and supported the highly transparent ground floor shown on 39/center. (DC1-A)
- e. The Board agreed the ground level uses along Rainier do not need access doors directly onto the sidewalk, and supported the central doors shown [41], but recommended the entire street edge have low sills, continuous weather canopies and other features that engage and activate the adjacent sidewalk. The Board agreed this location should reinforce a connection to the commercial core of Columbia City, and provide similar pedestrian features, even if the adjacent uses are not retail. (PL2-C)
- f. The Board supported the wide planter buffer with regular street trees along Rainier Avenue, and the widened sidewalk (16 ft was stated) which laps onto private property, as shown on pg 41. (DC4-D)
- g. The Board supported the staggered balconies and fenestration shown for levels 2-5 as shown on the preliminary sketch [39/center], and endorsed the concept of rhythm and energy for this building on the busy arterial street. (CS3-B2)

3. Massing & Comments for #3025781 (Building on 42nd Avenue):

- a. The Board strongly supported the top-floor step backs on all sides of the structure [37], including the large roof deck at the northwest corner [35/lower center]. Considering the abutting lowrise (LR) zone and single family zone across the street [37/right], the Board discussed at length the proposed 5 ft stepback depth at the east and north facades. The Board tentatively accepted 5ft as a minimum, but recommended more modulation of the top floor and the entire north wall be studied, and the entire length of the north facade (perspectives and elevations) be shown to staff and at subsequent meetings. (CS2-D4)
- b. The Board supported the stepped back and distinctive, transparent character of the top floor [39/right] as a means to reduce building scale in the transitioning zoning context. (CS2-D4; DC2-A2)

- c. The Board supported the setback ground floor and top floor, as shown on pg 37, but concurred with public comment that the middle horizontal band of floors 3 and 4 should be modulated with more vertical elements, and/or broken into at least two legible forms, to better harmonize with the nearby residential scales. (CS3-A3)
- d. The Board discussed the proposed sunken units and the street edge along 42nd Avenue at length [38,41]. The Board agreed more detailed and large scale sections, including all landscape, through all the conditions along this street are needed at subsequent meetings, to confirm adequate light penetration and livability of those units. The Board agreed 4 ft is the maximum height for level 2 above the sidewalk. (CS2-B2; PL3)
- e. Assuming the design of the sunken units is resolved, the Board supported the concept of shared stoop/bridges along the sidewalk, as they enhance sociability and possible light penetration to the windows below. (PL3-B)
- f. The Board supported the exploration of 2-story townhouse units along this street edge, with living rooms providing eyes on the sidewalk, and sleeping rooms in the darker, sunken portions. (PL3-B)
- g. The Board supported the wide planter strip with regular street trees along 42nd, as shown on pg 41. (DC4-D)
- h. The Board supported the inset balconies and fenestration shown on the preliminary sketch [39/right], and endorsed the concept of a quiet, calm composition for this building on the slower, residential street. (CS2-A2; DC2-C3)

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the above guidance, the Board explicitly recommended the following studies and drawings be provided to staff and at subsequent meetings:

- 1) Study alternatives of more modulation of the top floor and the entire north wall of 3025781, and the entire length of the north facade should be shown in all perspectives and elevations. (CS2-D4)
- 2) More detailed and large scale sections (3025781 building and lower 3 levels with sidewalks), including all landscape, through all the conditions along 42nd Avenue are needed to confirm adequate light penetration and livability of the sunken units.

POTENTIAL EXCEPTIONAL TREE DISCUSSION

As of the Early Design Guidance (EDG) meeting, preliminary arborist reports submitted by the applicants indicate three on-site trees appear to qualify as Exceptional Trees per city standards. One is located near the sidewalk on 42nd Avenue of project #3025781, and two are next to each

other, approximately 10 feet inside the Rainier Avenue property line on project #3025493. However, SDCI must verify the Exceptional status pending receipt of more detailed arborist information from the applicant. To anticipate possible Exceptional designation by SDCI, the Board evaluated the 'courtyard/tree retention' Option 1 [17-23; 45] at this EDG.

The Board agreed tree retention for this option places the majority of the Rainier Avenue façade 30 or more feet back from the street property line [45], and portions of the 42nd Avenue façade 20 ft back, resulting in façades that do not support Design Guideline CS2-B2; Connection to the Street. Additionally, the Board agreed the trees would require a sunken pit around their trunks and possibly larger root zone, which would create a retaining wall and guardrail at the sidewalk edge, a condition contrary to Design Guideline PL3; Street-Level Interaction, and in a neighborhood location the Board agreed should not have deep setbacks. (CS2-B2; PL3)

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, no departures were identified.

RECOMMENDATION January 23, 2018

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following public comments were offered at this meeting:

- The project is headed in a good direction, but the community context is absent. The applicant should add more small retail areas where small business incubators and community owned business could thrive.
- Local art work should have a strong presence in the public areas. School and community groups could be contacted to provide interesting and local artwork.
- Keep the sidewalks wide for easy pedestrian access and comfort.

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 (the Board) provided the following recommendations.

1. Site Plan, Massing & Context Response (Both Sites):The Board endorsed the applicant-preferred Option 3, and its iterations at the recommendation meeting.

The Board supported the linear axis through the site and the high pedestrian porosity and path following that axis, through both buildings and connecting Rainier to 42nd. The Board also endorsed full public access from Rainier to the central alley courtyards on this axis, as stated by the applicants. (DC1; PL1-B)

The Board supported the integrated, universal design approaches to accommodate accessible routes to the different levels on both sites and thought that the applicant had resolved any previous questions. (PL1-B; PL2-A1)

The Board felt the applicant has provided for sunlight penetration and activating uses as discussed in the early design guidance. The Board focused on the alley courtyard uses and reiterated their suggestion for small retail areas in response to public comment and to further activate the internal area. (CS3-B1; DC3-B4)

The Board thought the south alley right of way landscaping was appropriate for the site. (DC1-B)

Since all building facades will be visible – the internal ones from gaps in the street walls – the Board supported the proposed composition, quality materials and secondary elements. (DC2-B, DC4-A1)

2. Massing & Comments for #3025493 (Building on Rainier Avenue):

The Board confirmed support for the proposed wide, top-floor step backs on the structure, including the large roof deck at the northwest corner along Rainier Avenue, as a means to reduce visual bulk in context. (DC2-A2)

The Board supported the entry on Rainier located at the break in the building facades. Members thought that the entry was noticeable, large scale but not gaping and recommended approval of the design. (DC2-C3)

Members recommended the entire street edge and confirmed that this location should reinforce a connection to the commercial core of Columbia City, and provide similar pedestrian features, even if the adjacent uses are not retail. The Board did not condition the project for this. The Board supported the location of the retail uses and access to the uses. (PL2-C)

The Board confirmed support for the wide planter buffer and street trees along Rainier Avenue. (DC4-D)

3. Massing & Comments for #3025781 (Building on 42nd Avenue):

The Board supported the building façade and setback proposal as it relates to the zone across 42nd while create a strong street presence. Issues from early guidance were addressed to the Board’s satisfaction. Additional information from the applicant showed that the sunken units should receive adequate light. The entry was clear and accessible, and the façade treatment aided in reducing a sense of bulk along 42nd. (CS2-D4) Members tossed around ideas regarding the public path along the north edge of the building. Support for the path was unanimous once they conditioned the project to straighten the sight line along the path to the alley below. The Board thought that the access was a positive element and clear sight lines would enhance a sense of security (PL2 B, PL3-B)

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

No development standard departures were requested.

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-1. Sun and Wind: Take advantage of solar exposure and natural ventilation. Use local wind patterns and solar gain to reduce the need for mechanical ventilation and heating where possible.

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.

CS1-B-3. Managing Solar Gain: Manage direct sunlight falling on south and west facing facades through shading devices and existing or newly planted trees.

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-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.

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.

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-B Local History and Culture

CS3-B-1. Placemaking: Explore the history of the site and neighborhood as a potential placemaking opportunity. Look for historical and cultural significance, using neighborhood groups and archives as resources.

CS3-B-2. Historical/Cultural References: Reuse existing structures on the site where feasible as a means of incorporating historical or cultural elements into the new project.

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-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.

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-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-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.

PL2-C Weather Protection

PL2-C-1. Locations and Coverage: Overhead weather protection is encouraged and should be located at or near uses that generate pedestrian activity such as entries, retail uses, and transit stops.

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-B Residential Edges

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-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.

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-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-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-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 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.

BOARD DIRECTION

The recommendation summarized above was based on the design review packet dated Tuesday, January 23, 2018, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the Tuesday, January 23, 2018 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, the five Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and departures with the following conditions:

For the life of the project

1. Use the materials presented at the meeting and as shown in the packet drawings. (DC4A)
2. Create a clear visual path from the 42nd sidewalk entry to the alley along the north edge pedestrian pathway.(PL2B)