



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3026708
Address: 320 North 85th Street
Architect: Melissa Wechsler, Runberg Architecture Group, PLLC
Date of Meeting: Monday, February 26, 2018
Board Members Present: Dale Kutzera (chair), Christopher Bell, Emily McNichols, Keith Walzak
Board Members Absent: Marc Angelillo
SDCI Staff Present: Carly Guillory, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 2 with a 40-foot height limit and pedestrian overlay (NCP-40), NC2-40, and NC2-65

Nearby Zones: (North) NC2-40, (South) NC2P-40, (East) NC2P-40 and Lowrise 2 (LR2), (West) NC2P-65

Lot Area: 45,725-square feet

Current Development:

The subject site is currently occupied by a one-story commercial building and surface parking lot. The site is approximately 118-feet wide (along N 85th St) by 363-feet deep (along Phinney Ave N), and slopes downward from the northeast corner to the southwest corner approximately 16-feet.



Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

Surrounding development consists of a mix of retail and residential uses of various forms and architectural styles. Commercial uses line 85th St, while Phinney Ave N is better characterized as having a residential character, with two- to five-story multi-family structures.

Existing small-scale commercial development in the area of the subject site (the Greenwood Avenue North/Northwest 85th Street corridors) is characterized by utilitarian, non-flamboyant, traditional architectural styles. Some important characteristics include: small-scale architectural details at the ground level, including: color, texture/patterns, materials, window treatment, sculptural elements, and personalization of individual businesses. Residential development showcases punched windows, balconies, and varied roof forms.

Access:

Access to the site is proposed from a number of entries: the primary retail entrances are proposed from N 85th St; the residential lobby faces Phinney Ave N; and vehicular access to the parking garage is proposed at the northeast portion of the site, from Phinney Ave N. Preliminary feedback from the Seattle Department of Transportation notes support for vehicular access from Phinney Ave N, and right-of-way improvements.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

None.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The preferred option proposed a six-story mixed-use structure containing approximately 220 residential units, 5,000-square feet of commercial space at grade, and 130 vehicular parking spaces below grade. One departure was introduced, which would allow a residential unit at grade to be closer than 10-feet to the sidewalk.

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 SDCI:

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 February 26, 2018**PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following public comments were offered at this meeting:

- Supported open spaces at grade along Phinney Ave N.

- Recommended careful attention to the zone transition to the east, noting Design Guidelines CS2-D.3 and 4, *Zone Transitions* and *Massing Choices*.
- Recommended further modulation of the mass to break down the scale along Phinney Ave N, such that the building appears as many separate volumes. The proposed open spaces at grade were described as not effective and were not supported (Design Guidelines CS2-C.2, *Full Block Sites*, was referenced).
- Supported Option 3, the preferred option.
- Recommended against three separate buildings.
- Supported open space at grade and at the roof.
- Recommended using lighting for safety, noting existing crime in the area.
- Recommended treating the west elevation with texture or color (such as a mural) to avoid blank wall conditions.
- Encouraged the integration of ecological principles into the design and site.
- Recommended as many trees as possible.
- Encouraged the design to respond to the neighborhood context and be a community asset and partner.
- Supported upper level setbacks at the south elevation to mitigate a perceived canyon effect along N 85th St.

The following design related comments were received in writing prior to the meeting:

- The Sandelwood Home Owners Association expressed concern about the mass and scale of the proposal, its proximity to nearby residential development, and impacts to the availability of light and air. Careful attention to the zone transition to the east was recommended. Public meeting places, a mid-block connection, bicycle friendly design, and the use of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles were suggested. A design that preserves the existing character of Greenwood is desired.
- Concerned that a 65-foot tall structure would not be consistent with the existing character of the neighborhood as it would be taller than existing buildings nearby.
- Concerned about the length of the structure along Phinney Ave N, describing the proposal as a *massive wall*.
- Concerned the structure will greatly impact the availability of light for existing development along Phinney Ave N.
- Other comments received that were outside the scope of this Early Design Guidance phase of review included concerns about the impacts to the availability of on-street parking and increases in density and traffic, and a recommendation against a rezone to increase the allowable height from 40-feet to 65-feet.

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.

Concerns outside the scope of this Early Design Guidance review might include concerns about impacts to the availability of off-street parking, increases in traffic, construction impacts such as noise, building height, setbacks, or number of parking spaces. These impacts and development standards are analyzed through environmental review and zoning compliance, during review of the Mater Use Permit (MUP).

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. Options A through C:** The applicant presented four massing options. The first option, not labeled (page 30, EDG packet), was a code compliant option meeting the maximum height requirements of the current NC2-40 zone¹ (40-feet). The three remaining options (A through C), proposed a maximum 65-foot height, consistent with the intended future application to request a rezone to allow a maximum height of 65-feet. The three options shown were similar in program, with retail facing N 85th St, a pedestrian lobby entrance on Phinney Ave N, but varied in massing moves, vehicular access, and open space. After discussing Options A through C, the Board supported the massing of the preferred Option C (pages 40-48, EDG packet). The Board's discussion of Options A through C is summarized as follows:
 - a. Option A was described as emphasizing shared open space and modulation at the west property line with a strong wall condition abutting Phinney Ave N at the east (page 32, EDG packet). The Board discussed the merits of this massing option, agreeing that of the three options, it offered the most relief at the west elevation which was later identified as an area of concern and importance (see additional guidance below under *West Elevation*). (DC2-A *Massing*, DC2-III *Mass and Scale*)
 - b. Option B similarly focused open space at the west and a strong wall condition along Phinney Ave N at the east. The Board did not support Option 2, particularly due to the proposed vehicular access from Phinney Ave N near the intersection with N 85th St, at the southeast portion of the site (page 37, EDG packet). This location for vehicular access was not preferable due to the possible negative impacts to pedestrian safety and mobility. Moreover, the Board described the massing at the east, facing Phinney Ave N, as lacking modulation sufficient to break down the perceived height, bulk, and scale of the structure (see additional guidance below). (DC2-A *Massing*, DC2-III *Mass and Scale*, DC1-C *Parking and Service Uses*)
 - c. Option C, the applicant's preferred option, began to erode the mass at the east property line by proposing massing moves described by the Board as *projections* and *recesses*. The three projecting volumes were set back from the east property line approximately five-feet, while the recesses were set back 30- to 35-feet (page 41, EDG Packet). Open space at grade was proposed in these recessed areas fronting Phinney Ave N. In opposition to Options A and B, the Option C massing proposed a strong edge at the west property line. The Board supported the Option C massing and ground level solution at Phinney Ave N with the guidance relative to massing, vehicular access, open space, and architectural concept guidance in items 2, 3, and 4 of this report. (PL3-B *Residential Edges*, DC2-A *Massing*, DC2-III *Mass and Scale*)

¹ The site contains the following three zoning designations: NC2-40, NC2P-40, NC2P-65 (see pages 4-5 of EDG Packet).

- 2. Massing.** The Board supported the massing concept of Option C, and after focused discussion of this Option, the Board offered the guidance for further development in response to the east and west conditions.
- a. *At the East.* Site topography and a zone transition are two considerations the Board noted as important. (CS2-II *Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility*)
 - i. The topography of the site slopes down approximately 15-feet from north to south along a stretch of nearly 360-linear feet, and the east side of Phinney Ave N is occupied by multi-family structures in a Lowrise zone. In response to the topography and zone transition, the Board agreed with public comment and recommended the mass be further eroded (at the east) to reduce perceived height, bulk, and scale such that the project appears as three separate structures (along Phinney Ave N). (CS2-II *Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility*)
 - ii. More specifically, the Board discussed the projecting and recessed moves at the east. While the Board supported this massing response, they agreed the broad planes at the recessed moves resulted in an unsuccessful projection – as the scale of these projections then appeared too small, related to the overall facade. Larger, wider projecting masses were suggested as a means of achieving a strong expression of three separate structures. (DC2-A *Massing, DC2-II Mass and Scale*)
 - iii. The center projection at the east elevation was set back 14.5-feet from the east property line and provided the location of the primary pedestrian access to the residential lobby. The Board agreed this projection required further development to achieve better proportionality with the overall massing facing Phinney Ave N. Develop this center projection to strengthen the overall massing expression of three separate structures. (DC2-A *Massing, DC2-II Mass and Scale*)
 - iv. The Board also noted that the topography of the site offered opportunity for the building to respond with a stepping down in height. Studies showing stepped massing should be included in the Recommendation packet. (DC2-A *Massing, DC2-II Mass and Scale*)
 - v. The Board requested the following be presented at the Recommendation meeting: street level perspectives from the intersection of N 85th St and Phinney Ave N, facing north. Design the proposal to emphasize the perception of three separate buildings as viewed from N 85th St. (DC2-A *Massing, DC2-II Mass and Scale*)
 - b. *At the West:* The depth of the site and existence of a shared access easement at the west property line were two conditions that informed the Board’s discussion.
 - i. The depth of the site is approximately 360-feet from south to north. The massing responded to the west property line with a flat one-story elevation and upper level modulation and setbacks ranging up to 13-feet in depth. Responding to the proposed mass, the Board recommended careful consideration of the treatment of the ground floor facade, and greater modulation at the upper floors. (See further guidance below related to the treatment of the west elevation). (DC2-A *Massing, DC2-II Mass and Scale, DC1-I Blank Walls*)
 - ii. Abutting the site to the west is an existing shared access easement providing vehicular access to a number of the properties abutting to the west and northwest. The Board agreed this condition, combined with the distance to the existing structure to the west (approximately 85-feet) resulted in a condition in which the west elevation will be highly visible from N 85th St and further west. The Board emphasized

that careful treatment of this façade is important and recommended that blank walls be avoided where possible. (See further guidance below related to the treatment of the west elevation). (DC2-A *Massing*, DC2-II *Mass and Scale*, DC1-I *Blank Walls*)

- iii. The Board requested perspectives of the west elevation as viewed from N 85th St. (CS2-I *Streetscape Compatibility*, CS2-II *Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility*)

3. Vehicular Access and Open Space. The Board supported the location of the vehicular entrance as well as the ground level open space along Phinney Ave N as proposed in Option C.

- a. The Board supported the vehicular access of Option C, at the north end of the site, accessed from Phinney Ave N, and agreed with public comment that the driveway should be as far from the intersection with N 85th St as possible. As noted above, the location of the driveway proposed with Option B was not supported. (DC1-C *Parking and Service Uses*)
- b. The modulation of Option C, supported by the Board, resulted in ground level setbacks able to accommodate landscaping at sidewalk grade. Proposed setbacks ranged from five- to 33.5-foot (page 41, EDG Packet). The conceptual landscape plan (page 50, EDG Packet) suggested ground level residential patios separated from the public realm by raised planters and layered landscaping. The Board supported this design response and offered detailed guidance regarding the Phinney Ave N design in the context of the departure request (see discussion below). (PL1-I *Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances*, PL3-B *Residential Edges*)

4. Architectural Concept. The EDG Packet (pages 20-21) describes the architectural concept as emphasizing the scale of the existing buildings by breaking down the scale of the project's massing, emphasizing a commercial base on N 85th St by responding to existing datums of the commercial structures along Greenwood Ave N, and by reflecting the historic pattern of storefronts in the neighborhood. The Board supported this approach and offered the following guidance.

- a. Respond to existing datums and the historic pattern of storefronts in the neighborhood was supported by the Board (CS2-I *Streetscape Compatibility*, CS2-II *Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility*).
- b. The existing N 85th St corridor was described as having a commercial character, and the Board supported direct pedestrian access from this sidewalk to the ground floor retail space. The ground level setback of one-foot combined with the existing sidewalk width, however, was considered insufficient to accommodate pedestrians safely; therefore, the Board recommended a wider sidewalk condition along N 85th St. (CS2-I *Streetscape Compatibility*, CS2-II *Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility*)
- c. The ground level fronting N 85th St was set back slightly from the property line, with an additional upper level setback for floors two through six. The Board agreed an upper level setback is a successful response to the context as it reduces the dominance of the mass on the street and respects the existing small-scale historical pattern of storefronts in the neighborhood. The Board recommended the ground level setback be maintained and the upper level setbacks be enhanced to further mitigate the height, bulk, and scale along N 85th St (CS2-I *Streetscape Compatibility*, CS2-II *Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility*).
- d. Due to the existing condition at the west, with driveway and distance to the adjacent building, the Board again emphasized the importance of careful treatment of the west elevation. The Board suggested wrapping the architectural expression from the south elevation over to the west elevation or treating the corners with glazing. Ultimately the Board recommended that the architectural language be carried from the south elevation to

the west elevation. Include in the Recommendation packet studies of the materiality of the south and west elevations and the transition between the two. (CS3-I *Architectural Concept and Consistency*, DC1-I *Blank Walls*)

- e. As noted above, the massing responded to the west elevation with a one-story base and upper level modulation and setbacks. Due to the depth of the site, the Board noted the importance of the treatment of this base and recommended avoiding blank walls where possible. Include in the Recommendation packet studies of this material treatment and solutions to mitigate the blank wall condition at the ground level. (CS3-I *Architectural Concept and Consistency*, DC1-I *Blank Walls*)
- f. Page 58 of the EDG Packet included diagrams suggesting a highly glazed residential lobby at the center projection at the east elevation. The Board supported this suggested treatment. (CS3-I *Architectural Concept and Consistency*)

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 meeting, the following departures were requested:

1. **Street-Level Use Requirements (SMC 23.47A.008.D.2.):** The Code requires the floor of a dwelling unit located along the street-level street-facing façade to be at least four-feet above or below sidewalk grade, or be set back at least 10-feet from the sidewalk. The applicant proposes a dwelling unit at sidewalk grade with a reduced setback of 5-feet.

The Board indicated preliminary support for the floor plate and massing projection at this location; however, questioned the appropriateness of the use (a residential unit). In lieu of a residential unit, the Board discussed the possibility for this space to be an extension of the corner retail space, with opportunity for the retail use to spill out onto and engage the sidewalk along Phinney Ave N (see page 49 of the EDG Packet). While the Board agreed that Phinney Ave N should have a residential scale, the retail use at this space was encouraged. (PL1-I *Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances*, PL3-B *Residential Edges*, PL3-C *Retail Edges*)

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

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.

Greenwood/Phinney Supplemental Guidance:

CS2-I Streetscape Compatibility

CS2-I-i. Reinforcement of Commercial and Residential Development Patterns:

- a. Build commercial development up to the sidewalk where possible. Along North/Northwest 85th Street, new commercial buildings should be set back sufficiently to provide 12-foot minimum sidewalks (including street trees and other plantings). Commercial buildings may be setback off the street if pedestrian-oriented space is provided that is enhanced with humanizing components such as trees and other plants, site furnishings and high-quality, well detailed pavements between the sidewalk and the building.
- b. Residential buildings (on Greenwood Avenue North and North/Northwest 85th Street) should be setback where possible five to 15 feet from the sidewalk to provide extensive landscaping in the front yard. When possible, first floor residential units facing Greenwood Avenue North or North/Northwest 85th Street should be located at least three feet above the sidewalk level to provide a sense of privacy and surveillance over the street.

CS2-I-ii. Treatment of Side Streets: Some treatment of side-streets off of Greenwood Avenue North and 85th Street is important to create an effective transition to residential neighborhoods. Some options to consider include:

- a. setbacks with view-framing landscaping (see CS1)
- b. arbors with hanging plants
- c. small outdoor spaces with trees and landscaping.

CS2-II Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

CS2-II-i. Impact of New Buildings on the Street: Consider the setback of upper stories of new mixed-use development on Greenwood Avenue North and North/Northwest 85th Street to reduce the dominance of new buildings on the street. Also, new commercial development should respect the small-scale historical pattern of storefronts on Greenwood Avenue North. Typically, the older storefronts are about 50 feet in width and feature brick, stone or other masonry units. Some also feature architectural details that provide interest and a human scale to the buildings.

CS2-II-ii. Zone Edges: Careful siting, building design and massing are important to achieve a sensitive transition between more intensive and less intensive zones. Consider design techniques including:

- a. increasing the building setback from the zone edge at the ground level;
- b. reducing the bulk of the building's upper floors nearest to the less intensive zone;
- c. reducing the overall height of the structure; and
- d. using extensive landscaping or decorative screening.

CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

Greenwood/Phinney Supplemental Guidance:

CS3-I Architectural Concept and Consistency

CS3-I-i. Architectural Styles: The Greenwood Avenue North/Phinney Avenue North and North/Northwest 85th Street corridors are characterized by their utilitarian, non-flamboyant, traditional architectural styles (except for churches). Some important points to consider in making new development consistent and compatible with existing development include:

- a. small-scale architectural details at the ground level, including color, texture/ patterns, materials, window treatment, sculptural elements, etc
- b. landscaping is an important component of the overall character, particularly for residential development

c. personalization of individual businesses is a key feature of both corridors.

CS3-II Compatibility

CS3-II-i. Existing Pattern: Consider using the human-scale historical pattern of storefronts on Greenwood Avenue North as a guide in developing new structures abutting TownCenter streets. New development should respond to Greenwood’s existing context by matching window and opening proportions, entryway patterns, scale and location of building cornices, proportion and degree of trim work and other decorative details, and employing a variety of appropriate finish materials.

PUBLIC LIFE

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

Greenwood/Phinney Supplemental Guidance:

PL1-I Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

PL1-I-i. Pedestrian Open Spaces: Small, usable open spaces are an important design objective. Open spaces incorporating the following features are encouraged with new commercial and mixed-use development:

- a. Good sun exposure during most of the year
- b. Located in areas with significant pedestrian traffic
- c. Storefront and/or residential windows face onto open space, at or above the ground level
- d. There are a variety of places to sit
- e. Pedestrians have something to look at, whether it is a view of the street, landscaping, a mural, etc.

PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

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-B-3. Buildings with Live/Work Uses: Maintain active and transparent facades in the design of live/work residences. Design the first floor so it can be adapted to other commercial use as needed in the future.

PL3-B-4. Interaction: Provide opportunities for interaction among residents and neighbors.

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.

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.

Greenwood/Phinney Supplemental Guidance:

DC1-I Blank Walls

DC1-I-i. Storefronts: Storefronts are encouraged to be located at the sidewalk edge, particularly in neighborhood commercial districts, and should be continuous, minimizing blank walls. Where unavoidable consider treating blank walls with one or more of the methods suggested in the Seattle Design Guidelines, including:

1. installing vertical trellis in front of the wall with climbing vines or plant material;
2. employing small setbacks;
3. employing different texture, colors, or materials;
4. providing art or murals.

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.

Greenwood/Phinney Supplemental Guidance:

DC2-III Mass and Scale

DC2-III-i. Perceived Mass: Consider reducing the impact or perceived mass and scale of large structures by modulating upper floors; varying roof forms and cornice lines; varying materials, colors and textures; and providing vertical articulation of building facades in proportions that are similar to surrounding plat patterns.

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.

BOARD DIRECTION

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