



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning & Development

D. M. Sugimura, Director

CITY OF SEATTLE ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Application Number: 2404670
Applicant Name: Tess Wegier for Seaquest Homes, LLC
Address of Proposal: 306 Summit Ave. East

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Master Use Permit to establish the use for the future construction of a four-story four unit townhouse structures. Parking for four vehicles is to be provided in a detached garage. Existing structures are to be removed. Project includes grading of 40 cubic yards of material.

The following approvals are required:

Administrative Design Review – Chapter 23.41 SMC -

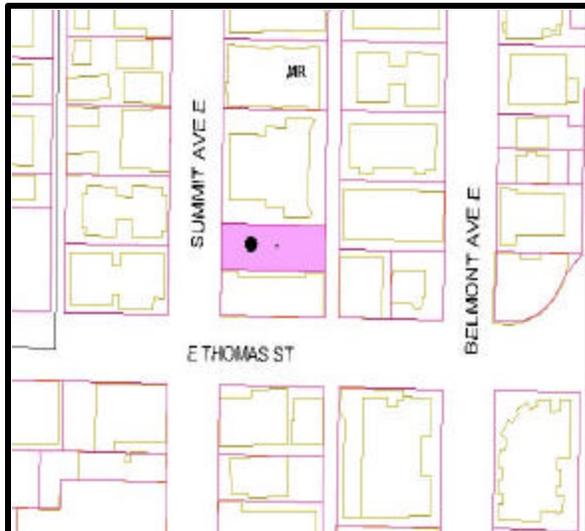
SEPA DETERMINATION: Exempt DNS MDNS EIS

DNS with conditions*

DNS involving non-exempt grading, or demolition, or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

* Early DNS Notice published March 17, 2005

BACKGROUND DATA



Site and Proposal Description

The applicant proposes a four unit, four-story, multifamily building with a detached garage. Located in a Midrise Residential (MR) zone on Summit Avenue East near East Thomas Street, the parcel comprises 4,800 square feet and currently houses a three unit structure (circa 1906) mostly likely built as a single family residence. The site has a steep embankment along its 40 feet of street frontage and an improved alley at the rear. Overall the site rises approximately 12 feet most of which occurs near the street.

The three concept schemes presented varied in unit count and approach to the site. The preferred option (#1) illustrated a long rectangular building, mirroring the shape of the site. Vehicular access occurred from the alley where an adjacent detached garage housing four parking spaces connects to the main structure by a narrow elevated walkway. The eastern half of the structure, closest to the garage and alley, rose slightly above the lower western half. The articulation would be most noticeable at the roof lines and at the ground plane where retaining walls and stairs accentuate the split floor levels. Alternative #2 proposed three building masses housing five units. Vehicular access occurred both at the alley and along Summit Ave. E. The full Midrise code complying option (#3) contained 12 units and rose six stories above the street. An underground parking garage has its access from Summit Ave. E.

The applicant developed option #1 based on early design guidance. The basic parti remained the same with four units with front doors facing the north and small back yards or patios facing south. The bridge to a deck above the garage was eliminated. Proposed land use code departures focused on open space and structure depth. The applicant proposed more overall open space and plantings than required but requested a variation to allowing averaging among units. By narrowing the structure's width, the designers created more open space but requested four additional feet for the building's depth.

Vicinity

Within this portion of Capitol Hill, near I-5, there exists a plethora of building styles reflecting varying periods of construction and design. Along Summit Ave. E., most properties house multifamily structures built from the early part of the 1900s to the century's end. At the northwest corner of Summit Ave. E. and East Thomas St., an apartment building was recently constructed in 1997. Close by the subject property lies Thomas Mini Park at the northeast corner of Bellevue Ave. E. and E. Thomas St. One block to the east lies a landmark structure, the San Remo apartments on E. Thomas and Belmont Avenue East.

The area immediately surrounding the project site lies within the Midrise zone which allows a sixty foot height limit.

Public Comments

DPD received four letters addressing aspects of the proposal. Issues included loss of view from condominiums behind the building, location of parking, placement of dumpsters and recycling bins, and the quality of lighting in the alley. One correspondent and neighbor expressed his displeasure at "how far forward the project is on the property, as well as how narrow the building will look from the street." He requested that the front unit's open space be placed in the front of the building rather than the side and the unit's entry door face Summit Ave.

ANALYSIS-DESIGN REVIEW

Design Guidelines Priorities

The project proponents presented their initial ideas in the form of an Early Design Guidance packet January 11, 2005. After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, DPD staff identified the following Citywide Design Guidelines as high priorities to be considered in the final proposed design.

A. Site Planning

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

The design should provide a clearly defined walkway from the sidewalk and add canopies or other architectural expression in order to announce the unit entrances. The proposed west elevation ought to project a civic presence on the street that acknowledges the important relationship between the street and the residential structure. The design should include higher quality materials, a higher level of detailing surrounding apertures and other architectural features to acknowledge the street façade's importance.

A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites. Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

The apartment building to the north has balconies and units overlooking the north façade of the proposed building. Show how the design of the north elevation and the interior spaces respond to this relationship. Please submit studies of the north façade in light of this relationship.

A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.

The loveliness of the Summit Ave. streetscape has been diminished by newer construction since WWII. The project's design should contribute to the restoration of the pedestrian oriented streetscape by using a combination of quality fencing or garden walls, gates, lush and mature landscaping, interesting paving materials, and excellent detailing near the Summit Ave. front.

A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

The proposed retaining walls will separate open spaces from one unit to another while maintaining privacy; however, the design also should provide for the privacy of the units from the adjacent multifamily buildings.

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access. Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.

The Department strongly encourages the placement of the garages off the alley.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

C-1 Architectural Context. New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

An eclectic mix of multifamily buildings line the block; however, the three to four story brick apartment buildings on the north end of the block and on the adjacent streets comprise the street's dominant and quite elegant character. The newer buildings on the block, which occupy most of its **southern** portion, lack the integrity of the older structures. Herein lays the opportunity for the proposed project to enhance the urban fabric in a manner in which the newer buildings fail to do. The Department requests that the architect's proposal should reflect this older neighborhood sensibility. Although the proposed building should not necessarily mimic the massing of the brick structures, the selection of materials and design of details should add to rather than subtract from the urban streetscape.

C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency. Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its façade walls.

C-4 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.

The insertion of apartment buildings on Summit Ave. with exterior cementitious materials, shoddy cladding, and concrete block has greatly diminished the best qualities of the neighborhood. High quality materials should be selected and the detailing should be superior.

D. Pedestrian Environment

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

Custom made fences, gates, light fixtures and other architectural elements add to the street's ambiance. The personalization of these features, reflecting the building's name, neighborhood or the individuality of the designer or owner, should be incorporated in the design.

D-3 Retaining Walls. Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where high retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscape.

The same consideration of a well designed building façade should be given to retaining walls. Provide a design for the retaining walls that reflects or incorporate the same ideas as the building façades.

Because proposed retaining walls should in part define the gardens and open spaces their appearance should be of a higher quality than a poured concrete slab or CMU.

E. Landscaping

E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites.

The sketch of the architect's preferred scheme (Option #1) appears to maintain or modify the existing high bank along the right of way. With past removal of the embankment, most of the newer buildings have disrupted the continuity of the streetscape. The department prefers that the embankment remain; however, if grading must occur, a densely planted landscape should be recreated between the building face and the sidewalk.

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site. Landscaping including living plant material, special pavement, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

The high embankment should separate the activity in the front unit from the action on the street. Elsewhere on the site the proposed design should incorporate garden walls, iron fences, trellises and plantings to create small urban gardens to ensure privacy from the adjacent buildings and from other units on site.

E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions. The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.

See E-1 and E-2.

MASTER USE PERMIT APPLICATION

The applicant revised the design and applied for a Master Use Permit with a design review component on March 17, 2005.

Public Comments

Public comments are included above in the Background Data section.

DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

DPD staff conducted a review of the applicant's formal project proposal developed in response to the previously identified priorities. The applicant submitted site plans, elevations, floor plans, and landscaping plans for staff's consideration.

Development Standard Departures

The applicant requested departures from the following standards of the Land Use Code:

1. Open Space. A minimum of 300 square feet of open space per unit.
2. Structure Depth. Maximum structure depth limited to 65 percent of lot depth.

Recommendations

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

The proposed address signage, low garden wall, generous amounts of plants and widened stair closest to the sidewalk provide a suitable front yard to the townhouses.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

Although the entrance to the unit closest to the street does not front onto Summit Ave., the applicant has provided a clearly defined walkway from the sidewalk and added a canopy to announce the unit's entrance. Entrances facing the side yard are not uncommon in single and multifamily neighborhoods and often provide the terminus to gracious entry pathways.

A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites. Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

The proposed building would be ten feet from the property line. The adjacent apartment building to the north is setback between approximately six feet and 20 feet adding considerable distance between the structures. Although small bathrooms are proposed on the first floor of each unit facing the neighboring structure, landscaping and higher windows would ensure privacy for the new units. Drawings of the upper floor glazing for the proposed structure specify kalwall, a translucent, fiberglass window system.

A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.

In response to staff's request for a pedestrian oriented streetscape, the applicant has provided a garden wall, gate, and generous amounts of landscaping in the right of way. These landscape elements should provide an attractive transition between street and residence. The applicant should widen the steps in the portion of the stairway closest to the sidewalk as shown on the west elevation. This would enhance the sense of arrival and make for a more attractive landscape.

A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

Each open space along the south side of the proposed building would have six foot retaining walls and fence separating them. This should provide some privacy. The project's urban context does not ensure seclusion due to the proximity of surrounding buildings.

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access. Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.

The DPD welcomes the location of the garage off the alley.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility. Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less-intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

A four-story townhouse, while uncommon in Seattle, is a housing type found in other parts of the country. The narrowness of the proposed west façade recalls many of the skinny houses in Seattle's single family neighborhoods. The proportions often seem disconcerting. In this case, the height will seem accentuated from the sidewalk due to the embankment; however, unlike most of the skinny houses, the garage and its access will be located on the alley and not from Summit Ave. The sloped roof, the changes in materials, the bay windows and the landscaping will help to relieve the proposed structure's narrow proportions. The building's proportions should mediate the size of the bulkier three and five story buildings adjacent to it.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

C-1 Architectural Context. New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

The assertiveness of the design will not likely detract from the neighborhood's context. Capitol Hill remains full of interesting juxtapositions between styles, materials and sometimes massing. The design's clean lines, variations in fenestration, and introductions of bold color represent an important and thriving aspect of the modern movement in architecture. In sum, this building will do a better job of connecting to the older more gracious aspects of the neighborhood than those buildings constructed in the decades following WWII.

C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency. Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its façade walls.

See C-1.

C-4 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.

The applicant has proposed a contemporary style building with durable materials. The materials complement the design's clean lines and well proportioned geometries which will add to the already eclectic character of the neighborhood.

Earlier in the design process the architect proposed mirrored windows for portions of the façade. The use of reflective glazing would not resemble window treatments used in other multifamily housing. The design should ensure the exclusion of this window type. Glazing should be highly transparent with the exception of the windows specified as kalwall.

D. Pedestrian Environment

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

The designers have added an attractive gate and signage to enhance the project's ambiance. The project should consider further personalizing these features, reflecting the building's name or neighborhood.

D-3 Retaining Walls. Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where high retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscape.

For the retaining walls, the applicant has specified a rough faced CMU topped with a metal corrugated fence. The contrast in these materials should prove interesting.

E. Landscaping

E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites.

The applicant responded to the early design guidance by proposing to preserve both the embankment and the existing trees as well as providing a densely planted landscape.

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site. Landscaping including living plant material, special pavement, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

Preservation of the high embankment should separate the activity in the front unit from the activity on the street while maintaining a sense of openness and continuity. The design has incorporated garden walls,

a metal gate, and plantings to create small urban gardens to ensure privacy from the adjacent buildings and from the other units.

Department Recommendations: The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans submitted on June 15th, 2006. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings dated June 15th, 2006. After considering the site and context, reviewing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, DPD staff recommended approval of the subject design and the requested development standard departures from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	ACTION
1. Open Space. SMC 23.45.058A1a	A minimum of 300 square feet of open space per unit.	Average of 320 sq. ft. per unit. Range between 244 and 548 sq. ft. for four units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The narrow building footprint allows attractive garden at front of and to the side of the project. • Project exceeds planting requirements. 	Approved
2. Structure Depth SMC 23.45.052B	Maximum structure depth is 65% of lot depth. Approx. 78' for property.	Increase allowable lot depth by 4' to 82'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two bay windows at the front and rear provide modulation to the facades. 	Approved

DPD staff recommended the following **CONDITIONS** for the project. (Authority referenced in the letter and number in parenthesis):

1. Widen the portion of the staircase closest to the sidewalk as shown on the west elevation of sheet A201. (A-6)
2. Windows not designated as kalwall should be transparent without a mirrored or highly reflective surface. (C-4)

DIRECTOR’S ANALYSIS - DESIGN REVIEW

The Director finds no conflicts with SEPA requirements or state or federal laws, and has reviewed the City-wide Design Guidelines and finds that DPD staff neither exceeded its authority nor applied the guidelines inconsistently in the approval of this design.

DECISION - DESIGN REVIEW

The proposed design is **CONDITIONALLY GRANTED.**

CONDITIONS-DESIGN REVIEW

Prior to Issuance of the Master Use Permit

1. Revise the landscape plans to widen the portion of the staircase closest to the sidewalk as shown on the west elevation of sheet A201.
2. Windows not designated as kalwall should be transparent without a mirrored or highly reflective surface.

Non-Appealable Conditions

3. Any proposed changes to the exterior of the building or the site or must be submitted to DPD for review and approval by the Land Use Planner (Bruce P. Rips, 615-1392).
4. Compliance with all images and text on the MUP drawings, design review meeting guidelines and approved design features and elements (including exterior materials, landscaping and ROW improvements) shall be verified by the DPD planner assigned to this project (Bruce P. Rips, 615-1392), or by the Design Review Manager. An appointment with the assigned Land Use Planner must be made at least (3) working days in advance of field inspection. The Land Use Planner will determine whether submission of revised plans is required to ensure that compliance has been achieved.
5. Embed the MUP conditions in the cover sheet for the MUP permit and for all subsequent permits including updated MUP plans, and all building permit drawings.

Signature: (signature on file) Date: September 7, 2006
Bruce P. Rips, AICP, Senior Planner