



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

D. M. Sugimura, Director

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

Application Number: 2409062
Applicant Name: Ned Nelson, Architect, for Joon Min
Address of Proposal: 12201 Aurora Avenue N

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Master Use Permit to establish use for future construction of a three-story mini storage building (40,000 sq. ft.), with 5,525 sq. ft. ground floor retail. Surface parking for 25 vehicles will be provided at grade.

The following proposals are required:

Design Review: pursuant to Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 23.41.
No Design Departure Requests.

SEPA Environmental Determination: pursuant to SMC Section 25.05.

SEPA DETERMINATION: Exempt DNS EIS
 DNS with conditions
 DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

*Early Notice DNS published November 3, 2005.

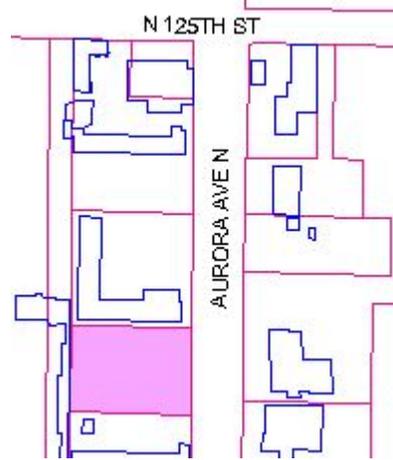
PROJECT AND VICINITY DESCRIPTION

The site is located at 12201 Aurora Avenue N on the west side of the street approximately 497 feet from the intersection of Aurora Avenue N and N 125th Street in the Broadview-Bitter lake-Haller lake Neighborhood Plan Area. The rectangular-shaped site is approximately 31,500 square feet. The site is currently vacant and undeveloped with approximately 165 feet linear frontage on Aurora Avenue N. The property is located in a Commercial 1 zone with a 65-foot height limit (C1-65).

The site abuts an auto tire retail store (Less Schwab) to the north, a motel to the south and Evergreen Washelli Cemetery to the west. The C1-65 zone abuts L-3 to the west and C1-40 zone across Aurora Avenue N to the east. Other commercial uses within this area are restaurants, a gas station and general retail stores on both sides of Aurora Avenue N.

Project Description:

The proposed project is to construct a three-story building with 40,000 square feet of mini storage and 5,525 square feet of ground floor retail. The building is located near the rear (west) property line, with parking for twenty-five vehicles to be located in front of the building. There is a proposed ten-foot wide landscape strip between the parking lot and Aurora Avenue N. Street trees will be planted within the landscape strip to provide additional screening of the parking lot from Aurora Avenue N. The west façade consist of a solid blank wall facing the cemetery to the west. The project proposes to soften the west elevation with climbing vines. A chain link fabric fence will be used to screen this portion of the site from the public.



Public Comment

One member of the community attended the Early Design Guidance meeting. Comments and concerns offered were as follows:

- The public comment supported the Board’s idea of providing trellises to soften the blank wall facing the cemetery because treatment of this blank wall will enhance visitors’ comfort and interest while in the cemetery. In addition, the respondent stated that color should be used on the building to help soften the scale of the façade. The respondent requests that the architect use attractive colors.
- The architect should provide a design that takes advantage of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED).
- The architect should provide a design that will benefit the Broadview/Bitter lake Community. Provide street trees on private property for better care and maintenance rather than on the public right-of-way.

No members of the public attended the recommendation meeting held on May 28, 2006. No public comments or issues were raised.

ANALYSIS – DESIGN REVIEW

Design Guidance

Three schemes presented in the EDG meeting, were tied to the proposed use scenarios. The three schemes explored the location of the building footprint on the site in relation to the existing development pattern along Aurora Avenue N, while considering the size and shape of the building within the required five-foot setback from the front property line. The architect’s presentation focused mainly on the preferred scheme shown in the early design guidance

package. The preferred scheme contained a site plan with the proposed building located towards the rear of the lot with parking occupying the front portion of the lot facing the street. Specific site design ideas presented by the architect include the provision of street trees and additional landscaping to screen the parking from Aurora Avenue N, and continuation of the street improvement from the auto tire store (Les Schwab) property line to the south of the site. The design shows a common access driveway with the motel to the south through a 30-foot curb cut along the Aurora Avenue N. The architect identified several of the Multifamily and Commercial Design Review Guidelines as high priority in the design efforts. An important goal is to create a commercial space that is appealing and enhance pedestrian activity and add to the character and vitality of Aurora Avenue N and its immediate surroundings.

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comments, the Design Review Board members provided the siting and design guidance and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidance found in the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily & Commercial Buildings*" of highest priority to this project.

On May 8, 2006, the Design Review Board reviewed the project design, at which time site, landscaping and floor plans, as well as elevation sketches and renderings, were presented for members' consideration. The design presented has evolved since the first meeting to include a building façade along Aurora Avenue N with a strong commercial character. The proposed project design is predominantly a metal and concrete building with two tower elements rising above the rest of the building, one on the northeast portion and the other on top of the main entrance to the mini storage. The building design consists of brick at the base of the columns with a curved metal canopy above the anodized aluminum store front below. The entrance to the mini storage is through a covered walkway located directly below the tower element on the southern portion of the building. The tower elements are tied to the rest of the building by metal rib siding, creating a distinction between the retail storefront and the mini storage. The proposed building will consist of high quality materials and architectural details that will include a variety of features along the length of the building that integrates the top level with the rest of the building.

A - SITE PLANNING

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics

The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities.

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.

A-5 Respect for Adjacent sites

Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their site to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent 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.

A-9 Location of parking on Commercial street fronts

Parking on a commercial street front should be minimized and where possible should be located behind a building.

The design continues the existing pattern to the north along Aurora locating parking at the front of the lot towards Aurora Avenue N. Street improvement would continue in front of the site to match the street improvement to the north in conformance with the requirements from the Land Use Code. The entrance into the mini storage has been visually separated from the retail storefront using strong design elements constructed from ribbed metal sheets. A rib metal roof of the same color and brick wainscot ties the two uses together. The architect has provided a building setback from the auto tire retail store. The design features varying depth overhangs to provide architectural relief and interest. The Board indicated that the west façade along the rear property line should respect the existing nearby cemetery by minimizing the amount of blank wall visible from the cemetery. The architect has proposed wire fence trellis with climbing vines to soften the wall appearance on the entire façade facing the cemetery. The Board thinks that the fence may not achieve the desired effect as intended. The Board wants the architect to provide a better solution to the character of the west façade.

The Board encouraged the architect to also use landscaping to minimize the apparent blank wall on the west façade.

1) At the Recommendation meeting: the Board discussed that the design should consider using narrow evergreen trees covering a minimum of forty percent (40%) of the façade by breaking and modulating the height and scale of the façade (B-1, D-2).

B – HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE COMPATIBILITY

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale

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.

The architect indicated that the building height allowed by the Land Use Code has been used to create an identity between the mini storage portion and the retail. The tower element at the northeast corner and at the southern portion over the main entry will contain the signage and varying building overhangs will further define the two uses. Masonry wainscot will add to the scale and tie the building together at the sidewalk level. The Board noted that the west façade with the appearance of the blank wall should be modulated to break the height and scale of the façade. The tower element provides a distinctive character in terms of how the building relates to the surrounding developments along Aurora Avenue N. The Board was supportive of the distinction made on the east façade to separate the retail storefront from the mini storage.

2) At the Recommendation meeting: the Board recommended that the design reinforce the tower element on the northeast corner by the use of color and/or materials to show continuity from top to bottom on that side of the building. The material and color should wrap around the corner to the west side of the element (B-1).

C - ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS AND MATERIALS

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-3 Human Scale

The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.

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 Board reviewed a design using high quality materials and architectural detailing that includes a variety of features along the length of the building that connects the retail to the mini storage. The Board's discussion at the recommendation meeting was centered on the two tower elements, one at the building northeast corner and the other at the main entrance to the south. The Board noted that the tower element on each section of the building should consist of either the same color or the same material and should be carried all the way from the top to the base of the building to form a uniform design at those sections of the building.

3) At the Recommendation meeting: the Board recommended that on the east façade, the tower element with signage on the southern portion of the building should consist of the same color preferably (blue) as the arch and be carried down to the ground to finally define the whole tower and entry to read as one. Similarly, at the north end of the east façade, the brick veneer at the base should be carried up to the top to reinforce material and color on the north end of the building to form a continuous relationship from top to the base at that building corner. This color element should also wrap round the corner of the building (C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4).

D – PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

Provide convenient, attractive and protected pedestrian entries.

D-2 Blank Walls

Building should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.

D-4 Design of Parking Lots near Sidewalks

Parking lots near sidewalk should provide adequate security and lighting, avoid encroachment of vehicles onto the sidewalk, and minimize the visual cluster of parking lot signs and equipment.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Services Areas

Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security

Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

The Board briefly discussed the signage and stressed the importance of keeping the signage at human scale that respects the quality and detail of the proposed building design. Essentially, the Board would like the signage to be more discreet and void a typical oversized lettering and placement found in more urban locations.

4) *At the Recommendation meeting: the Board indicated their support for the signage as proposed on the two tower elements (sheet 5). The Board noted that making the letters larger would not fit into the quality and details on the proposed building design (C-1, C-2).*

E - LANDSCAPING

E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites

Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or site

Landscaping, including living plants, special pavement, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

The architect indicated that landscaping has been designed as a continuation of the neighborhood to the south. In the design, the architect indicated that street trees would be planted in the planting strip and not on the sidewalk. Landscaping including trees, shrubs, and ground cover, within and climbing vines especially along the west property line have been proposed in the design. The Board noted that the landscaping plan should include some trees within the site especially in the parking and additional landscaping along Aurora Avenue N to further screen the parking lot from the street.

5) *At the Recommendation meeting: the Board recommended that landscaping should be used to screen the parking lot from the street (E-1, E-2).*

DESIGN REVIEW DEPARTURES

There were no development standard departures requested by the applicant.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION

After considering the proposed design and the project's context, hearing public comments and reconsidering the previously stated design priorities, the five Design Review Board members agreed that the applicant addressed the design guidance provided in their previous meeting. The Design Review Board **recommends approval** of the design as shown in the updated Master Use Permit Plans. (*Based on Guidelines – A-1, A-2, A-3, A-5, A-8, A-9, B-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, D-1, D-2, D-4, D-6, D-7, E-1, E-2,*)

ANALYSIS & DECISION – DESIGN REVIEW

DPD has reviewed the recommendations of the four Design Review Board members present at the Design Review meetings and finds that their recommendations are consistent with the City of Seattle Design Review Guidelines for Multifamily Buildings. The Master Use Permit (MUP) plans should be updated to incorporate the Board's recommendations. In addition to the guidance noted above, the Board recommended that:

- 1) Applicant should use narrow evergreen trees to cover a minimum of forty percent (40%) of the façade to help break and modulate the height and scale of the west façade (B-1, D-2).
- 2) The design should reinforce the tower element on the northeast corner by the use of color and/or materials to show continuity from top to bottom on that side of the building. The material and color should wrap around the corner to the north side of the building (B-1, C-1).
- 3) On the east façade, the tower elements with signage on the southern portion of the building, should consist of the same color (preferably blue), as the arch and carried down to the ground to finally define the whole tower and entry to read as one. Similarly, at the north end of the east façade, the brick veneer at the base should be carried up to the top to reinforce material and color on the north end of the building to form a continuous relationship from top to the base at that building corner. This color element should also wrap round the corner of the building (C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4).
- 4) The size of letters on the signage should be of comparable size to fit into the quality and details on the proposed building design (C-1, C-2).
- 5) Landscaping should be used to screen the parking lot from the street (E-1, E-2).

DECISION – DESIGN REVIEW

The Director of DPD accepts the Design Review Board's recommendations and **conditionally approves** the proposed design as presented at the May 28, 2006 meeting.

ANALYSIS - SEPA

The initial disclosure of the potential environmental impacts on this project was made in the environmental checklist prepared by Philip Investment LLC on September 26, 2005. The information in the checklist, the supplemental information submitted by the application, field inspection, public comments and the experience of the lead agency with similar projects form the basis for this analysis and decision.

The SEPA Overview Policy (SMC 25.05.665) clarifies the relationship between codes, policies, and environmental review. Specific policies for each element of the environment, certain neighborhood plans, and other policies explicitly referenced may serve as the basis for exercising substantive SEPA authority.

The Overview Policy states, in part, that "*Where City regulations have been adopted to address an environmental impact, it shall be presumed that such regulations are adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation*" subject to some limitations. Under such limitations/circumstances (SMC 25.05.665 D1-7) mitigation can be considered. Thus, a more detailed discussion of some of the impacts is appropriate.

Short – Term Impacts

The following temporary construction-related impacts are expected on this site: temporary soil erosion; increased noise from construction operations and equipment; increased traffic and parking demand from construction personnel; tracking of mud onto adjacent streets by construction vehicles; conflict with normal pedestrian movement adjacent to the site; and consumption of renewable and nonrenewable resources. Due to the temporary nature and limited scope of these impacts, they are not considered significant. Although not significant, these impacts are adverse, and in some cases, mitigation is warranted.

Several adopted codes and/or ordinances provide mitigation for some of the identified impacts. The Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code regulates site excavation for foundation purposes and requires that soil erosion control techniques be initiated for the duration of construction. The Street Use Ordinance requires debris to be removed from the street right of way, and regulates obstruction of the sidewalk. Puget Sound Clean Air Agency regulations require control of fugitive dust to protect air quality. The Building Code provides for construction measures and life safety issues. The Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance regulates development in all environmentally critical areas. Finally, the Noise Ordinance regulates the time and amount of construction noise that is permitted in the city.

Construction Noise:

Residential and commercial uses in the vicinity of the proposal will experience increased noise impacts during different phases of construction on the site. Compliance with the Noise Ordinance (SMC 25.08) is required and will limit the use of loud equipment registering 60 dBA or more at the receiving property line or 50 feet to the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. on weekdays and between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. on weekends and holidays. No additional mitigation is required.

Street and Sidewalks

The Street Use Ordinance includes regulations, which mitigate dust, mud, and circulation impacts on adjacent streets and sidewalks during construction. Any temporary closure of the sidewalk and/or traffic lane(s) is controlled with a street use permit through the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). It is the City's policy to minimize or prevent adverse traffic impacts which would undermine the stability, safety, and/or character of a neighborhood or surrounding areas (25.05.675 R).

Since the proposal site is located on the west side of Aurora Avenue N approximately 497 feet from the intersection of Aurora Avenue N and N 125th Street, large construction vehicles associated with excavation and materials delivery making left turns in and out of the construction site may cause traffic congestion on the street and may periodically impact both north bound and south bound traffic on Aurora Avenue N. However due to the relatively minor scope of work and limited duration of construction activities, no SEPA-related conditioning is warranted.

Long-Term Impacts

Potential long-term or use impacts anticipated by this proposal include: increased ambient noise associated with increased human activity and vehicular movement; minor increase in light and glare from exterior lighting, light from windows and from vehicle traffic (headlights); increased traffic and parking demand due to employees and visitors; increased airborne emissions resulting from additional traffic; increased demand on public services and utilities; and increased energy consumption. These long-term impacts are not considered significant because they are minor in scope, but some warrant further discussion.

Several adopted codes and/or ordinances provide mitigation for some of the identified impacts. The Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code regulates site excavation for foundation purposes and requires that soil erosion control techniques be initiated for the duration of construction. The Street Use Ordinance requires debris to be removed from the street right of way, and regulates obstruction of the sidewalk. Puget Sound Clean Air Agency regulations require control of fugitive dust to protect air quality. The Building Code provides for construction measures and life safety issues. The Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance regulates development in all environmentally critical areas. Finally, the Noise Ordinance regulates the time and amount of construction noise that is permitted in the city.

Traffic and Transportation

The project is expected to generate approximately 344 new weekday vehicular trips to the site, with somewhat smaller volumes on Saturday and Sunday. For the mini storage, approximately 6 trips would occur during the weekday AM peak hour, and 10 during the weekday PM peak hour. Similarly, for the retail approximately five trips would occur during the weekday AM peak hour and 15 trips during weekday PM peak hour. The busiest hour of the week would occur during the PM peak hour and considerable lower during the AM peak hour. Existing capacity of Aurora Avenue N is sufficient to accommodate this additional volume of traffic. Therefore, no mitigation for traffic impacts is necessary pursuant to the SEPA Transportation Policy (Section 25.05.675R, SMC).

Height, Bulk and Scale

The proposed three-story project will be located in a Commercial 1 zone with a 65 foot height limit (C1-65). The site is surrounded by Lowrise 3 zone to the west and C1-40 zone across Aurora Avenue N to the east. Other commercial uses within this area are restaurants, a gas station and general retail stores on both sides of Aurora Avenue N. The design proposed is a low building scale comparable to the height limit allowed in the zone. Therefore, the subject proposal is expected to be reasonably compatible with the surrounding anticipated development.

The SEPA Height, Bulk and Scale Policy (Section 25.06.675.G., SMC) states that “*the height, bulk and scale of development projects should be reasonably compatible with the general character of development anticipated by the adopted Land Use Policies...for the area in which they are located, and to provide for a reasonable transition between areas of less intensive zoning and more intensive zoning.*” In addition, the SEPA Height, Bulk and Scale Policy states that “*(a) project that is approved pursuant to the Design Review Process shall be presumed to comply with these Height, Bulk and Scale policies. This presumption may be rebutted only by clear and convincing evidence that height, bulk and scale impacts documented through environmental review have not been adequately mitigated.*”

The proposal was reviewed and approved through the Design Review process and conforms to the Citywide Design Guidelines. Design details, colors and finish materials will contribute towards mitigating the perception of height, bulk and scale in that these elements will break down the overall scale of the building. No further mitigation of height, bulk and scale impacts is warranted pursuant to SEPA policy (SMC 25.06.675.G.).

Other Impacts

Several codes adopted by the City will appropriately mitigate other long-term adverse impacts created by the proposal. Specifically these are: Grading and Drainage Control Ordinance (storm water runoff from additional site coverage by impervious surface); Puget Sound Clean Air Agency regulations (increased airborne emissions); and the Seattle Energy Code (energy consumption in the long term).

DECISION – SEPA

This decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and form. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21C), including the requirement to inform the public of agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

[X] Determination of Non-Significance: This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030 (2)(C).

CONDITIONS – DESIGN REVIEW

Non-Appealable Conditions

1. Any proposed changes to the exterior of the building or the site must be submitted to DPD for review and approval by Christopher A Ndifon, Land Use Planner, 206-684-5046, or by Vincent T. Lyons, Design Review Manager, 206-233-3823. Any proposed changes to the improvements in the public right-of-way must be submitted to DPD and SDOT for review and for final approval by SDOT.
2. Compliance with all images and text on the MUP drawings, design review meeting guidelines and approved design features and elements (including exterior materials and landscaping) shall be verified by Christopher A. Ndifon, Land Use Planner, 206-684-5046, or by Vincent T. Lyons, Design Review Manager, 206-233-3823 at a Pre-construction meeting. The proponent must retain the fenestration, architectural features and elements, and arrangement of finish materials and colors presented to the Design Review Board on January March 27, 2006.
3. An appointment with the assigned Land Use Planner must be made at least three working days in advance of the meeting. The Land Use Planner will determine whether submission of revised plans is required to ensure that compliance has been achieved. Embed updated colored elevation drawing in MUP plans and all subsequent Building Permit Plans.

