



City of Seattle

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: 3010470
Applicant Name: Megan McKay
Address of Proposal: 119 15th Avenue

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Land Use Application to allow a three-story, four-unit townhouse structure. Enclosed parking for four vehicles to be provided within the structure. Demolition of an existing single family structure.

The following approvals are required:

Administrative Design Review – Chapter 23.41 SMC.

*Early DNS Notice published March 17, 2011.

BACKGROUND DATA

Project Description

The applicant proposes a three-story, townhouse structure housing four units on Fifteenth Avenue between East Yesler Way and East Fir Street. The drawings illustrate four units with enclosed garages and entries facing the alley that connects 15th Ave. with 14th Ave. The townhouses would step down in height echoing the descending grade from the street. The applicant preliminarily requests eight potential departures from the city of Seattle Land Use Code for front, rear and side setbacks, structure depth, ground related open space, lot coverage, parking stall size and penthouse coverage. Units would have useable roof top open space and at grade private open spaces.

Site and Vicinity Description

The subject property lies within the Squire Park neighborhood. The lot fronts 15th Ave. to the east and a partially improved alley to the south. Shared property lines occur to the north and the west with single family houses. The site descends approximately ten feet from its northeast corner near the street to the southwest corner.

Possessing a multi-family Lowrise Three (L3) zone classification, the parcel borders a Neighborhood Commercial Two (NC2 40) zone across the alley to the south. The L3 zone extends along E. Fir St. with a parallel Lowrise One (L1) designed area flanking East Spruce St. to the north. Zoning classification varies along E. Yesler with commercial and lowrise multi-family zones predominate.

The immediate neighborhood has a mixture of land uses including traditional, brick apartment buildings, contemporary townhouses, single family residences, institutions, and commercial storefronts. These represent a variety of scales. Significant places and buildings include the Gatzert Elementary School, the Squire Park P-Patch, the Goodwill Baptist Church (across 15th Ave.), King County Youth Service Center, King County Records vault, and the Keiro Nursing Home and Daycare.

15th Ave. appears fully improved with sidewalk, curb and gutter. The alley has gravel and a substandard width.

ANALYSIS-DESIGN REVIEW

Public Comments

DPD received three comment letters. Issues raised by the authors include the excessive number of units for the site's size, the number of levels, the mix of departures requested by the applicant, the appearance that the townhouses front onto the alley rather than the street, and the lack of adequate parking. Recommendations include providing generously sized porches and balconies facing the street and alley, no fencing or see through fencing facing the street and alley, a central mail station in the planting strip, and stacking the units to provide western views for all units within the building.

Design Guideline Priorities

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

PRIORITIES

A. Site Planning

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics. The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on

prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

Staff endorses the idea of stepping the units with the sloping grade.

The rear unit's deck ought to face west forming a cover to the unit's entrance and capturing western views. The deck of the front unit closest to the street should face the street and, similar to the western unit, serve as overhead weather protection for the entrance.

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

Orienting the front unit's entrance and deck to face the street will create a stronger connection between the activity in the right of way and in the neighborhood with the proposed development.

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

See guidance A-1 and A-2. The applicant should explore using canopies to designate the entrances to the middle units as it will not be evident from the street how visitors approach the units.

Relocate the entries to Units #1 and 4 to the front and rear respectively. Given that the plans show entrances from within the garage and the unit size is small, there is little need for a redundancy of entrances. With a formal entry for Unit #1 facing 15th Ave., the townhouses will have a stronger connection or dialogue with the street.

A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

DPD prefers that the structure conform to established setbacks along 15th. At the edge of a Neighborhood Commercial zone, the proposed development, however, could be sited closer to the right of way. The design of the front facade, the landscaping in the open space along the street and the approach to the units should be thoughtfully designed and developed.

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.

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.

A fence may be warranted at the property line, but it should not obscure the yard, entrance and structure. Some of the fences along 15th Ave currently are too high and too opaque to create a vibrant connection.

Either in the right of way, if permissible by SDOT, or along the south property line, separate unit pavers should delineate a walkway from the sidewalk to the three western units. Along with including canopies at the entrances, the pavers would delineate a clear approach to these units.

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

Staggering the two middle units by placing them closer to the alley would provide a greater amount of ground related open space on the north and reduce the amount of open space departure requested.

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.

Consider grasscrete for the driveways similar to the parking stalls at the other end of the alley. The driveways should be more elegant than the complex to the west. The pathway from the sidewalk (see guidance A-6), the driveways and the improved alley should work as a coherent ensemble that creates a mews-like pedestrian experience.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

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.

The neighborhood has a few good, authentic Victorian houses and poorly designed contemporary townhouses with gables. The challenge is to ensure that the proposed structure has interesting modulation, form and detail that respect the Victorian era structure at Fir St.

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 patterns of neighboring buildings.

A nice Victorian house lies at the northeast corner of 15th Ave & Fir. Along Fir between 14th & 15th Ave and on 17th Ave. are some interesting contemporary townhouses.

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.

This is a high priority. Provide artistic elements --- custom-made gates, fence, doors, and railings for the balconies.

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.

Consider using colors and materials based on some of the Victorian houses in the neighborhood.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building

Minimize garage door widths along the alley. The garages should have doors along the alley that are in keeping with the idea of a mews. Consider angling the garages. Eliminating the pedestrian entrances off the alley for Units #1 and 4 should provide greater room for the vehicles and possibly more landscaping at the alley. This could also produce an interesting and desirable rhythm to the alley façade.

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 weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

DPD staff considers the relationship of the structure to the street as paramount. The design of the structure and landscaping should contribute to a sense of neighborhood or civic community in a way that does not occur now. The design should establish a precedent for the vacant parcel to the south and others nearby to be redeveloped.

D-2 Blank Walls. Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

The east façade should have enough fenestration to create a strong visual connection among the interior, the garden and the neighborhood.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures. The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

DPD staff prefers a fully enclosed garage. Consider using garage doors with glazing, translucent panels or more traditional bi-folds.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, utilities and Service Areas. Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.

Provide an enclosed or partially enclosed area near the alley for the residents to store trash/recycling.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

See guideline A-6 if considering a fence at the east property line.

Given that home owners often use garages for storage, the applicant should enclose the garages.

D-8 Treatment of Alleys. The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.

Create a mews for both autos and pedestrians. If room, provide landscaping along the alley. Since entrances for Units #1 and 4 can be located to the east and west facades, additional landscaping should occur at the alley. See guidelines A-6 and A-8.

D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions. For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and be visually interesting for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops, and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

The applicant has an opportunity to create a lovely garden setting between the structure and the right of way. Development of the planting strip to complement the garden should enhance the project's overall appearance.

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.

Provide quality landscaping along the planting strip at the sidewalk. The Victorian house at Fir St. and 15th Ave. has set a good example. Discuss with SDOT about selecting large shade trees that will help provide a canopy over the street.

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

A small grove of trees lies near the north property line. Consider preserving these trees or replanting with nicer trees. DPD staff understands the possibility that some of these trees may be on the neighboring property. Please indicate the species of existing trees on the survey.

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.

MASTER USE PERMIT APPLICATION

The applicant revised the design and applied for a Master Use Permit with a design review component on March 8, 2011.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Design Review staff conducted one Recommendation review on November 30, 2011 to assess the applicant's formal project proposal developed in response to the previously identified priorities. Site plans, elevations, floor plans, landscaping plans, and computer renderings of the proposed exterior materials were presented for staff's consideration.

Public Comments

DPD has not received comments since the MUP application.

A Site Planning

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics. The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

The applicant has stepped each of the four townhouses along the descending slope.

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

The front unit's entrance now faces 15th Ave. providing a stronger connection to the street.

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

See A-2.

A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

A continuous vertical bay on the east elevation projects into the front setback. The bay provides a larger entry at 15th Ave. and sitting areas on the upper floors of Unit #1. In the revised Lowrise section of the Land Use Code implemented after this MUP's application, the projection would be allowed outright. The front entry with its elegantly thin, horizontal canopy provides a stronger connection to the street and to the alley.

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 applicant has revised the plan to include a separate walkway parallel to the alley that links the units to the 15th Ave. right of way.

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

The roof houses a significant share of the open space providing tenants with views and privacy. Each of the units, however, has a small garden to the north of their units. Units #1 and #4 have larger amounts of space to the east and west respectively.

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.

Strips of ground cover will enhance the driveways as well as planters filled with rosemary. The gates and the plantings along the alley should create a pleasant walkway leading to the units' front doors.

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 anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

The structure's mass corresponds well to the cluster of townhouses on the same block to the west and those across the street to the northwest.

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 design appears complementary to the newer townhouses in the neighborhood.

C-3 Human Scale. The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements, and details to achieve a good human scale.

The proposed design exhibits many small details that produce a sense of 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 architect derives some of the colors highlighting the bays from those of traditional Victorian structures.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

By removing the pedestrian entrances of Units #1 and # 4 from the alley elevation, the architect allows for more landscaping in the alley and greater room for vehicle maneuverability. The architect has kept the garage door widths to a minimum enhancing the alley and the façade facing it.

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.

A pedestrian entrance for Unit #1 now faces 15th Ave with two other units creating a desirable façade along the alley.

D-2 Blank Walls. Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

The east façade and the landscaping combine to provide a pleasant contribution to the streetscape.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures. The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

Responding to earlier guidance, the architect has secured the garages and added translucent panels.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas. Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.

The architect has provided an enclosure for the outdoor service area.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

The decision to enclose the garage will assist in ensuring a greater sense of security.

D-8 Treatment of Alleys. The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.

The proposed plantings, walkway and balconies over the garages ought to present a desirable frontage along the alley.

D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions. For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

The plantings in the right of way and the landscape design along the edge of the east façade combine to enhance the entrance to Unit #1 and complement the transition between entry and street.

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.

The proposed landscape design appears to meet the early design guidance.

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

The proposed landscape design appears to meet the early design guidance.

Recommendations: The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans submitted on November 17th, 2011. 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 available on November 17, 2011. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, Design Review staff recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and the requested development standard departures from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below). DPD staff recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. :

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

Staff's recommendation on the requested departure(s) are based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure(s).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMEND- ATION
1. Front Setback SMC 23.45.014	11'4" required.	8'3" at primary mass 6'3" at front entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The new Lowrise code allows 7' average and 5' minimum. ▪ Accommodates larger entry and a more pronounced connection to the street. 	Recommended approval.
2. Structure Depth. SMC 23.45.011.	52' allowed.	60' 9" requested.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New lowrise code does not have structure depth requirement. ▪ Project would comply with façade length regulation. 	Recommended approval.
3. Open Space SMC 23.45.015	300 s.f. per unit.	92 s.f. at grade 309 s.f. at roof deck.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One unit meets open space requirements. ▪ Total at grade open space exceeds 1,200 s.f. ▪ Roof deck open space provides views and privacy. 	Recommended approval.
4. Penthouse Coverage SMC 23.45.009	15% allowed	22.6% proposed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allows access to open spaces on north and south portions of roof. 	Recommended approval.
5. Rear Setback. SMC 23.45.014	15' setback.	Majority of mass is at 15'. Entry bay projects 2' into rear yard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The new Lowrise code allows 7' average and 5' minimum. ▪ Accommodates a more gracious entry. 	Recommended approval
6. Side Setback Projection. SMC 23.45.014	18" depth 6' height 8' width Beginning at 30" from floor.	9'5" height starting 9" from floor level for bays at 2 nd and 3 rd levels on north elevation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides architectural consistency on north and south facades of color coded projecting bays. 	Recommended approval
7. Lot Coverage. SMC 23.45.010	1826 s.f. allowed.	1,910 s.f. Exceeds by 84 s.f.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Lowrise code based on F.A.R. ▪ At grade open space exceeds 1,200 s.f. 	Recommended approval.
8. Parking Stall Size SMC 23.54.030	Large stall required. 8.5' by 19'	Medium stall requested. 8' by 16'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parking spaces enclosed within structure. 	Recommended approval.

DIRECTOR'S ANALYSIS - DESIGN REVIEW

The Director finds no conflicts with 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. The Director agrees with the conditions recommended by DPD staff and the recommendation to approve the design, as stated above.

DECISION - DESIGN REVIEW

The proposed design is **CONDITIONALLY GRANTED**.

CONDITIONS-ADMINISTRATIVE DESIGN REVIEW

During Construction

1. Arrange a pre-construction meeting with the building contractor, building inspector, and land use planner to discuss expectations and details of the Design Review component of the project.

Prior to Issuance of all Construction Permits

2. 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.

Prior to Issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy

3. Compliance with all images and text on the MUP drawings, design review guidance 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, 206-615-1392). An appointment with the assigned Land Use Planner must be made at least three (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.

For the Life of the Project

4. Any proposed changes to the exterior of the building or the site or must be submitted to DPD Design Review program for review and approval.

Signature: (Signature on File)
Bruce P. Rips, AICP, AAIA
Department of Planning and Development

Date: February 9, 2012