



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

D.M. Sugimura, Director

***EARLY DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES
OF THE
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD 4 SOUTHEAST***

Project Number: 3007279

Address: 3701 South Hudson Street

Applicant: Clayton O'Brien-Smith, GGLO, LLLC.
Harbor Properties, Owner

Meeting Date: October 9, 2007

Report Date: December 14, 2007

Board Members Present: Ann Beeman, Chair
Robert A. Mohn
Michele Wang
John Woodworth

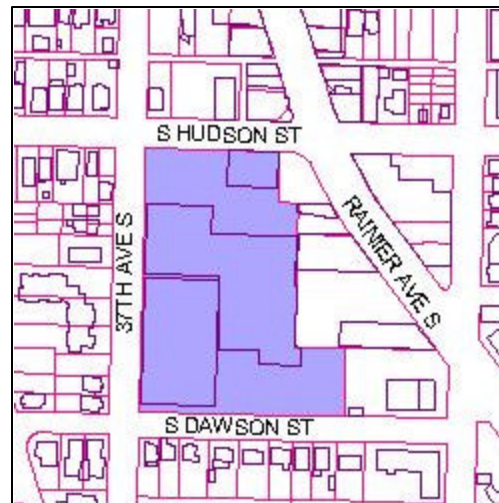
Board Members Absent: Steve Sindiong

Staff Members Present: Bradley Wilburn, Land Use Planner

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Site Description

The development site occupies a total land area of approximately 164,175 square feet, in the Columbia City neighborhood of the South Seattle. The site is zoned Commercial Two with a height limit of 65 feet (C2-65) and occupies a significant portion of a trapezoidal shaped block, with street frontage on South Hudson to the north, 37th Avenue South to the west, and South Dawson Street to the south. The site is also located within the Columbia City Residential Urban Village and the Southeast Seattle Reinvestment Area Overlay District. Additionally, the northeast portion of the site is located in the Columbia City Landmark District. The site is not within a designated Environmentally Critical Area (ECA).



The site is fully developed with buildings, hard surface parking, loading areas, and perimeter landscaping. A number of the buildings are industrial warehouse styled structures, with one brick and masonry (façade) structure located at

the development site's northeast corner. Grade elevation of the site's interior is lower than the surrounding street grades, and is secured by perimeter fencing.

The site slopes abruptly downward from south property line then modestly to the north property line, approximately 24 feet over a distance of 513 feet, with a level area near the north half of the site. The abutting streets are fully developed rights-of-way with asphalt roadway; curbs, sidewalks and gutters, except for South Dawson which has a concrete surfaced roadway and soft shoulders.

Area Development

Rainier Avenue South is a primary arterial. Rainier Avenue is the life-blood of the commercial corridor for an area that supports a mix of retail, restaurant, office, and industrial uses to name a few. Zoning along Rainier Avenue includes C2, Neighborhood Commercial Two and Three with height limits of 40 and 65 feet (NC2-40, NC3-40, & C2-65). Vacant land, surface parking and buildings well under the area's zoned height limit predominates this area. This transportation corridor connects the south end of Seattle to Downtown, 23rd Avenue South with connection to University of Washington. To the west across 37th Avenue South and south across South Dawson Street are a number of residential zones, including a mix of Multifamily Lowrise Two (L-2) and Single family 5000 zones that supports a varied assortment of residential structures. This area is distinctly residential in character with a modest density of residential uses. To the north across South Hudson Street commercial uses dominate the street experience.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

Steve Orser, with Harbor Properties, Inc. opened the presentation with an overview of his company's commitment to the neighborhood, including program goals, mission statement, community assessment and their connection to the neighborhood. Clayton O'Brien-Smith and John Baldauf, project architects, followed the opening statements with the EDG analytic presentation. They provided a historic and site context analysis that featured a photo essay of the immediate area. They emphasized the contextual relationship of in-fill projects with adjacent structures in the immediate area. The architectural character of the proposed building will draw upon the trapezoidal block shape, topographic site conditions, and influences from abutting streets. The design objectives include: design a thoughtful pedestrian oriented development; maximize solar access for internal users; create an architectural image that is sensitive to Columbia City Landmark District; and be a good neighbor. The design team confirmed that the proposal will need to coordinate approvals from the Columbia City Landmark District and the Design Review program.

Three design schemes were presented, with massing studies oriented to take advantage of Harbor Properties program goals and orientation to external influences, i.e., solar exposure, street patterns, etc. The proposal would extend to the allowable height limit of 65 feet in underlying zone, and provide residential and commercial uses. Under all schemes, parking is proposed within an underground parking structure. No design departures have been identified or requested by the design team at this time.

After providing the context which informed the three conceptual design schemes Mr. O'Brien-Smith compared the schemes, noting the advantages and disadvantages each scheme. Design

Option “A” depicted a monolithic structure with an internal courtyard (106 feet by 320 feet). The conceptual goal is to establish a strong commercial presence meeting land use development standards. The design maximizes the subject site’s development potential. The building’s mass will be loaded adjacent to all property lines. As depicted, access to parking was not identified, access would be determined at a later date after consulting with DPD and SDOT. The design scheme allows for readable entries from abutting streets to the proposed uses, and the underground parking level. The design team identified some disadvantages including the buildings mass dominating presence across the street from residentially zoned lots. The building holds all property lines up to the 65 foot height limit. The location of the open space courtyard is internal that may prove problematic from a functional use perspective; direct natural lighting and conveying a sense of openness.

Design Option “B” features six building masses oriented along a north/south axis. The design features an alley-like character for vehicles and pedestrians cutting through the development site. The pedestrian alley or pathway would connect South Dawson Street to South Hudson Street. The design proposes a central courtyard around the pedestrian pathway. A vehicle alley or drive connects South Hudson and 37th Avenue at the northwest corner. Setbacks from street property lines along 37th and Dawson would vary between 5 to 15 feet to respect the adjacent residential zones. Additionally, the upper levels would be terraced to minimize the impact of bulk on the aforementioned zones. Under this scheme townhouses and lofts are proposed at the street-level along 37th and Dawson. The building’s mass attempts to be sensitive to the abutting residential zones, by creating opportunities for more pedestrian friendly street experience with stoops and perimeter landscaping. Most of the windows will look out onto quiet streets or on-site. The design enables a straight forward interior circulation pattern that is more pedestrian friendly. Disadvantages include less than an ideal building mass along Hudson and with removing an existing building with unique landmark characteristics in the Landmark District.

The “Preferred” Option (“C”) enhances Option “B” with some significant modifications. Under this scheme the existing structure located adjacent to Hudson will be restored to its original condition as documented in historical photos, with approval from the Landmarks Board. Detached townhouse units will be placed along Dawson. Greater modulations and articulation will be introduced adjacent to the abutting zones. Several design problems have been solved under this scheme: The building’s mass along all street frontages addresses concerns with the rhythm of solids and voids. Residential and commercial entries, scale, and open areas will be more readable and celebratory. All the advantages identified under the previous schemes will be included in the preferred design. One disadvantage cited was the visual openness of internal areas and the need to design a sense of security for occupants.

Departures may be requested depending on the final design configuration.

BOARD CLARIFYING COMMENTS

The Board generally supported the applicants’ preferred option but wanted to verify function, location and size of the structures and use areas. The Board initiated their inquiry with a clarification of the relationship of current grade to the proposed parking deck. The design team indicated the site’s perimeter slopes downward approximately 20 feet from Dawson to Hudson.

Internally, the development site sits below street grade and the parking lid is expected to be at sidewalk grade along Dawson.

The Board further inquired about the functionality of the parking garage. It appears that public circulation spaces are being introduced, the Board wanted additional clarity. The design team acknowledged that the north alley-like drive will be accessible to the public, but the pedestrian path to the south will be private. The design team acknowledged challenges with protecting internal privacy and activating the pedestrian street experience.

The Board questioned the location of the Landmark District demarcation at the development site. An approximately 100 X 100 foot parcel in the NE corner of the site is in the Landmark District.

The Board acknowledged the preferred scheme is dynamic but wondered if its street presence lacked sensitivity to the adjacent residential zones to the west and south. In particular, readability of entries, program areas of each building at street-level, and upper level setbacks need additional refinement. Next, the Board wanted to verify location of potential blank facades. The design team stated that blank walls would not be placed adjacent to street frontages, but would be located along east elevations. The Board inquired whether any live-work units are being proposed. In response, the design team confirmed that live-work units are anticipated on the north portion of the site, which is more commercial in character.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Most of the public members present had comments to offer. Thirty-eight public members in attendance filled out the sign-in sheet. Public comments and clarifying questions focused on the following issues with architect's response in italics:

- What is the proposed dominate use – *residential*
- What type of commercial use – *unknown at this time.*
- Any thought about providing low and moderate income housing, gentrification has taken hold in our neighborhood and has inadvertently contributed to decreasing diversity – *building programs have not been fully explored, there may be an opportunity.*
- Option “A” looks like a prison, how can you feasibly propose it as an option?
- The on-site elevation change may adversely impact height of building upon adjacent uses, especially at the southeast corner.
- Would encourage developer to look at the neighborhood context more closely.
- The alley feature is very interesting in its proposed location.
- Each building should express uniqueness but fit within a larger design composition; punched windows are one architectural example which could unify the development site.
- Greater sensitivity to impacts of height, bulk, and scale on adjacent residential uses is needed in the preferred Option “C.”
- Would like to see elevation drawings at next meeting to illustrate the sidewalk experience.
- Location of parking access may pose problems for adjacent residential uses.
- Would like to see light and shadow studies to document impacts both internal and external to development site.
- Welcomed Harbor Properties to neighborhood, but felt development is too large.

- If allowed to build to full height limit structure would block views to Lake Washington
- Just feels that the proposal is a little too much for the area in relation to height, bulk, and scale.
- Would like to see a view analysis of impacts upon Hit's Hill Park to Lake Washington from surrounding uphill areas.
- The proposed design for Dawson appears to have a greater impact along the streetscape.

Most of the public comments are incorporated into the guidance from the Board.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Southeast Board members 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 & Commercial Buildings*" of highest priority to this project.

Overall, the Board felt that the project was well conceived with design lapses adjacent to residential zones to the west and south. The proposed massing adjacent to residential zones seems too abrupt, lacking respect to the character of a zone that is lower in height by approximately 30 to 35 feet. Greater attention and care needs to be directed to providing greater sensitivity to zone transitions. Directed attention on upper level setbacks, modulation, and fenestration should seek to reduce the building's mass. Ensuring a well proportioned scale at the development site is a critical factor to successfully integrate the project into the neighborhood fabric that is more residential in character. Be mindful this building could influence future development in the area. The design team should incorporate design elements as necessary to create quality infill development; utilizing building materials and massing sensitive to Columbia City architectural vernacular. The Board generally supported Option "C" which included refurbishing an existing brick and masonry building adjacent to South Hudson Street. The Board feels that the South Dawson Street presence in Option "B" should be integrated into the preferred option with additional refinement addressed above. Softer edges are encouraged along 37th and Dawson.

Access to parking at grade should be designed with the highest level of effort to minimize visual presence. The street-level experience adjacent to the surface faux alley should be active.

The courtyard and pedestrian pathway is in a location that is appropriate with direct access to South Dawson Street and connection to South Hudson. The Board encourages the design team to pay particular attention to this area; if possible the pedestrian pathway should be open to the public to allow pedestrians to cut through the large block. The Board pointed out that the Columbia City neighborhood features a number of alleys that facilitate pedestrian mobility. Additionally, experience has shown that providing an access of this type may result in personal safety and security concerns, which should be taken into consideration in the layout and design.

The guidelines below were all chosen by the board to be high priority. The Board wants the developer to engage the streetscape wherever possible and scale the design to integrate itself into

area at a site with three street frontages; South Hudson, 37th Avenue South, and South Dawson Street.

A Site Planning

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics

The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as nonrectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

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-4 Human Activity

New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

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-7 Residential Open Space

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

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-10 Corner Lots

Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

- Parking at grade must be designed with the highest level of effort to minimize visual presence from abutting streets.
- Traffic circulation within development site should consider impacts upon surrounding streets and properties. The faux alley is a high value element that should be maintained.
- The town-homes in design option “B” along Dawson should be carried forward in the preferred scheme with further articulation. Each building design should also explore design options that establish readable entry points that are distinctive and attractive to the adjacent street systems.
- The design should optimize and activate interior areas through architectural detailing including balconies, etc, and should provide quality elements to encourage use.

B Height, Bulk and Scale

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 design should create a sensitive transition in height bulk and scale to the adjacent zones. Respectful transition between commercial and multifamily zones should be achieved through techniques such as terracing the upper floors away from the lower zoned areas. Thirty-Seventh Avenue street frontage needs additional refinement, more meaningful setbacks at the lower and upper levels may achieve the desired scale. Explore limiting portions of the structures height to five-stories along 37th Avenue.

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.

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.

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.

- The design should minimize canyon-like presence within internal outdoor use areas.

D Pedestrian Environment

D-1 Pedestrian Open Space 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.

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.

D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks

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

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.

D-6 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks

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

D-11 Commercial Transparency

Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.

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.

- Service area and function should recede from the visual field, access should be located off the interior road.

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-3 Landscaping 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.

- The design should optimize protecting the pedestrian experience within the right-of-way and attention should be directed towards developing a highly evolved landscape site plan in and around the parking structure with attractive landscaping flourishes.

Departure from Development Standards:

The applicant did not request or identify possible departures from the Land Use Code development standards. The Board will entertain future departure requests so long as the applicants can show clear evidence of how the overall design meets these priority guidelines.

Development Standard	Requirement	Proposed	Comment/Rational BY Architect	Board Recommendation
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

The architect should submit the Master Use Permit (MUP) application to DPD with the following:

- Include colored and shadowed elevation drawings, sketches, and landscape/site plan illustrating the visual and textural design elements of the proposed building in sheets labeled DR at front of MUP set.
- Well developed landscape plan and character sketches.
- Provide sections through the design schemes; cut in two different directions (N/S, E/W) to show levels, height dimensions, basic program elements, and structures adjacent to the west and south.
- Provide illustrative detail of the faux alley and how it relates to street level.
- Provide illustrative detail of how the dumpsters, utilities and service areas function.
- Provide a clear indication of vehicle and pedestrian ingress and egress patterns.

- Include a narrative and graphic rationale for granting any requested design departures.
- Include a narrative describing the design response to the design guidance priorities identified in this report, and graphics showing initial design response.
- Identify and illustrate any Green LEED elements.

Please call Bradley Wilburn at 206.615.0508, when you have determined the MUP application intake date.

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