

Livable Phinney

526 N 71st Street, Seattle WA 98103

COMMENTS CONCERNING: Permit #3020114
PROJECT ADDRESS: 6726 Greenwood Ave. N.
PROJECT NAME: "Phinney Flats"
DATE SUBMITTED: March 30, 2016

"Livable Phinney" is a voluntary association of people living in the Phinney Ridge neighborhood of Seattle.

Livable Phinney believes the Master Use Permit as proposed for this project should not be approved, for the following reasons:

Section 1: Site Development, Code & Construction

A. Setbacks & external effects:

More substantial setbacks are needed to maintain the residential character of the adjoining single-family and multi-family properties.

There should be greater setbacks for decks at all levels, to preserve the privacy of neighbors.

The proposed setbacks on the east side of the building are not sufficient for access for:

- Emergency access in case of fire, earthquake, or other urgent need,
- Maintenance and repair of the east wall of the building,
- Maintenance and repair by neighboring property owners of their buildings close to the property line.

Setbacks of 5 to 15 feet from the sidewalk are required for residential spaces. Two live/work units are sited with on N 68th St with entrances on this same residential street. The proposed setback for these residences is insufficient.

Second level setbacks from the residential lots on the east fail to comply with minimum setback requirements, as demonstrated in a series of exchanges between Phinney Ridge residents and DPD staff in the fall of 2015. See email exchanges between Esther Bartfeld and DPD staff between October 15 and November 16, 2015, which are incorporated by reference.

The height of the building will cause permanent shadow on neighboring properties.

A required shadow study was not done for a second design review after the building height increased significantly.

The ground level and roof garden spaces proposed as Green Factor Space are not usable nor do they address the requirement for open space in the residential urban village overlay.

B. Facilities in the building:

The proposed building provides inadequate amenities for residents of the building, including, for example:

- No laundry facilities
- No recreational or leisure space
- Minimal and inadequate bicycle storage.
- No parking for commercial or residential tenants (see also below)
- No personal storage space for residents.

There is no communal laundry facility, and individual units are not plumbed for laundry machines. The nearest laundromat is more than 1 mile away and not accessible via public transit, or otherwise easily accessible for tenants who are not (in theory) anticipated to have vehicles. Residents taking their laundry back and forth will cause increased congestion.

Ceiling height and adequate daylight should be required for all commercial spaces. Ceiling heights are unclear and seem low on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd floors.

The ground floor commercial spaces are not vented for restaurants yet application indicates the current restaurant at this address is a potential tenant.

The tiny live/work units are not big enough to accommodate real work plus living space.

Section 2 . Land Use & Neighborhood Effects

This “micro-housing” design is inconsistent with the traditional housing and commercial design of the southernmost part of the Phinney Ridge/Greenwood Urban Village residential zone.

Amenities associated with an ‘Urban Village’ are scarce in the neighborhood of the proposed building, there are no plans or funds to provide them, but they will be required by residents of the building.

High density development of the proposed kind creates increased demand on infrastructure and utilities, but no plan or funding source exists or is proposed to provide for the increased demand.

Section 3: Transportation

A. Reply to the GTC Traffic and Parking Analysis:

- The GTC Traffic and Parking Analysis dated November, 2015 was only made public on Friday, March 22, 2016. More time is needed to fully review and comment on this study.
- The GTC study extended well beyond the 800 ft defined limit and included areas of steep east-west grades to and from the Ridge summit on Greenwood Ave. N.
- The Developers are on record - SEPA Environmental Checklist, #14 (c) - as stating the project at 6726 Greenwood Ave. N. will have "no anticipated reduction to current on-street parking inventory". That statement is incorrect.
- Both the parking supply (measured capacity) and vehicle counts were taken off peak hours (after midnight) and are questionable. Peak on-street parking usage in this area would be in the evenings, when residents are returning from work and in search of parking space close to home or during the daytime when spillover from the business district goes to nearby residential streets. Also, during the evenings when customers seek street parking when dining at nearby restaurants and pubs, parking is increasingly scarce.
- The GTC study did not take into account 8 spaces eliminated by the 6726 project.
- The GTC study did not account for Protected Bike Lanes proposed on Phinney and Greenwood Aves. that will eliminate street parking on one side of the arterial.
- The GTC study used extremely high "at capacity" ratios, and failed to follow DPD tip 117, resulting in conclusions that the surrounding area can readily absorb spillover parking from the proposed project. The developer's conclusions are incorrect.
- The GTC study did not look at cumulative impacts of limited parking on local business; limited parking is already a limiting factor for many small businesses.

B. Parking and Traffic

No parking is provided for customers or employees of the commercial ground floor tenants.

The majority of parking along Greenwood Ave. N. and adjacent side streets is "Restricted" with 1 and 2 hour limits from 7 AM to 6 PM except Sundays/Holidays or with "Load Only" parking during business hours. This entire area is not suitable for residential parking.

The developer's parking study does not account for cumulative impacts from other higher density conversions planned along Phinney and Greenwood Aves. and higher density redevelopment of parcels in the Greenwood-Phinney Urban Village including significant density increases in all NC and Lowrise zones proposed under the HALA recommendations.

It is not realistic to assume residents of this development will park on the west side of the arterial at the building's location where there is no crosswalk and very poor sight lines. It is quite dangerous to cross in this location.

The City's agreement to exempt this development from the most minimal parking requirements is based on the faulty assumption that all future residential tenants will opt not to own cars because public transit adequately meets all transportation needs for work, daily living activities (e.g. grocery shopping, doctor visits, laundry, and leisure activities). Yet the developer proposes no means of precluding tenants from owning cars which they would, by necessity, need to park in the neighborhood.

Under SEPA, the decision to exempt the developer from a parking requirement should be considered a significant and irreversible impact to the community. Whereas parking can later be converted to other uses (storage) or made available as paid parking to customers of local business, construction of public parking at this site will be forever precluded by building design.

C. Other Traffic Issues: Load/Unload

Capacity for loading in and out of the building is inadequate (given the expected 12-18 month average length of residency), which will result in increased traffic, congestion, and safety hazards. Further, the load capacity requirement for live/work spaces is not addressed.

Using the center lane of Greenwood Ave. N for load/unload for building residents, in addition to existing commercial use, will aggravate limited visibility near the curve on Phinney Avenue in both directions and reduce safety.

If dedicated load/unload zones are created on the street, that will eliminate another 2-3 parking spaces per zone.

D. Public Transit Impacts

The #5 bus line that serves this site is already overcrowded, frequently bypassing people waiting for the bus at peak times because the buses are full. Increased density along this major north-south arterial together with current extensive high-density development of the Urban Village areas near 85th & Greenwood will add high numbers of riders to the already over-capacity bus line.

Even with recent levy approvals, proposed Metro bus route expansions on the #5 route are limited to peak hours and the bus service is skewed to north-south routes. No timetables for these bus service improvements are available.

The lack of cross town bus service is a major transportation shortcoming and a primary reason that individuals need and drive cars in the City of Seattle. There is no east-west public transportation service within 20 blocks north and south of the building, a serious impediment to access to the University of Washington, the City's greatest single draw of workers and students.

The nearest alternative transit route is 7 blocks up and down a very steep hill (on Aurora Ave. N) and primarily serves downtown commuters. The City has not asked the developer to contribute (proportional) fund needed to support transit expansion and additions.

The transit line on Phinney Ridge is at the top of a steep slope in both directions, making access to transit service difficult and impractical, in particular for:

- People carrying groceries,
- People needing to transport children on foot,
- People with disabilities, or using a walker or wheelchair,
- People riding bicycles.

Section 4: Design Review

The proposed design does not conform to the *Seattle Design Guidelines* and the *Greenwood/Phinney Neighborhood Design Guidelines*:

Context and Site

- CS1. Natural Systems and Site Features
 - Responding To Site Characteristics
- CS2. Urban Pattern and Form
 - Streetscape Compatibility
 - Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility
 - Mid-Block Connections, Street Pattern, Structure Orientation, Mass and Scale, Architectural Context/Building Entrances
- CS3. Architectural Context and Character
 - Architectural Concept and Consistency
 - Compatibility

Public Life

- PL1. Connectivity
 - Open Space
 - Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances
- PL2. Walkability
 - Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances
 - Pedestrian Lighting, Street Elements
- PL3. Street-Level Interaction
- PL4. Active Transportation

Design Concept

- DC1. Project Uses and Activities
 - Parking and Vehicular Circulation
 - Blank Walls

- DC2. Architectural Concept
 - Architectural Context
 - Human Scale
 - Mass and Scale
- DC3. Open Space Concept
- DC4. Exterior Elements and Finishes
 - Architectural Context
 - Exterior Finish Materials
 - Landscaping

Specific Deficiencies

The proposed design does not conform to the Greenwood/Phinney Neighborhood Design Guidelines, in the following ways, without limitation:

- The Greenwood/Phinney Neighborhood Design Guidelines emphasize the view from the ridge. This building will create a major obstacle to the view down N 68th St. Views define Phinney Ridge and corner treatments should pull back to allow the maximum view down the streets.
- No public plaza is provided.
- No open space is provided.
- No weather protection is provided.
- East side ground level plantings are barricaded to residents. Barricade prohibits access to maintenance of plantings. No irrigation is provided. The area will be heavily shaded. Plants will not survive more than a year.
- Many exterior Green Factor spaces are so small as to be practically unusable.
- No irrigation for Green Factor roof or ground plantings.
- No parking/traffic management.
- No setback from the sidewalk to provide space for landscaping.
- No human-scaled elements: no small-scale architectural details, no public streetscape landscaping to add character, other than a few street trees, no personalization of individual businesses.
- Facades are not pedestrian-oriented.
- No covered porches are provided.
- Pattern of the windows is repetitive and massive in scale, more like a high-rise than a low commercial building.
- No detailing of windows and no eave/cornice detail that promote human scaled elements.
- No corner orientation/entrance to commercial space at corner of N 68th and Greenwood as recommended in Greenwood/Phinney Neighborhood Design Guidelines.
- 13 foot cement block wall on south side is unattractive/inhospitable

- Dark colored blank south wall on property line needs mitigation as it affects neighboring property to the south and has significant visual impact at curve of 6700 Phinney Ave N. Fiber cement panels are not compatible with the Greenwood/Phinney Neighborhood Design Guidelines.
- The proposed building does not "respect adjacent property with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy and outdoor activities in adjacent buildings."

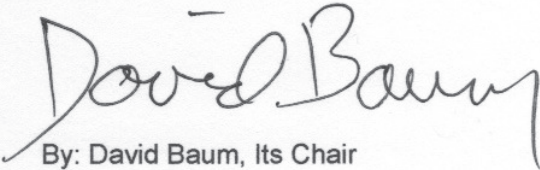
The proposed design does not provide for transition from existing buildings. The building is 4.5 stories high, next to a building that is 2 stories high. This is too abrupt a transition.

The architectural design of the building does not integrate with the style of development contemplated by the Greenwood/Phinney Neighborhood Guidelines.

The height and bulk of the proposed building are out of proportion with nearby properties. The building's design does not provide transitional features to preserve light and air space in the transition to the smaller, older residential properties adjacent.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments, which we look forward to supplementing once the traffic and parking study and design plans have been revised and corrected.

LIVABLE PHINNEY



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