



# City of Seattle

Department of Construction & Inspections  
Nathan Torgelson, Director



## SECOND EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3020114

Address: 6726 Greenwood Avenue N

Applicant: Jay Janette, Skidmore/Janette Architects, for Johnson Carr LLC

Date of Meeting: Monday, January 11, 2016

Board Members Present: Dale Kutzera, Chair  
Marc Angelillo  
Joe Hurley  
Keith Walzak

Board members absent: Ellen Cecil  
Chris Bell

DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC 2-40

Nearby Zones: (North) NC2-40  
(South) NC2-40  
(East) NC2-40/ SF 5000  
(West) NC2-40

Lot Area: 8,036 sf



**Current Development:**

The lot at the corner of Greenwood Avenue n. and N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street is occupied by a one-story commercial building, which will be demolished.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

The neighborhood is generally a mix of older commercial and residential buildings, several of distinguished character. New development, actual and proposed, generally has taken advantage of increases in allowable height. The development site is situated adjacent to two lots that are split by a zoning designation of NC2-40 to the west and Single Family 5000 to the east and currently occupied with single-family residences. The proposed site is a regularly shaped rectangle located adjacent to Greenwood and N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street. The site lies one half a block north of where the arterial that is Phinney Avenue N. jogs west to join Greenwood Avenue N. as a continuation of the arterial.

**Access:**

Vehicular access to the site is currently via a curb cut off N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street which allows access to a driveway and loading and parking space behind (to the east of) the commercial building that faces onto Greenwood Avenue N. In the applicants' preferred scheme, and in the other three massing options as well, there would be no parking or loading spaces located on site. The residential lobby would be located off N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street; pedestrian commercial entries would be located off Greenwood Avenue N.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

None. The site is relatively flat, with a slight rise from south to north. There is a pronounced declination, west to east, as one ventures east along N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street towards Green Lake. There are no environmentally critical areas on the site.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is a four story, mixed-use structure, with approximately 4,000 sq. ft. of ground-floor retail and approximately 57 residential apartment units. There would be no parking provided as part of the development.

**FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE October 19, 2015**

The Early Design Guidance packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3020114) at this website:  
[http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Project\\_Reviews/Reports/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**Mailing Public Resource Center**

**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**Email:** [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The project proposes a 4-story structure, 44 feet in height, with residential units located above a ground floor of 4,000 square feet of commercial space. Four options were presented at the meeting with minor massing differentiation. The first floor space running the full extent of the building parallel to Greenwood Avenue N. in each of the schemes occupied approximately one half the depth of the lot. Common to each was a residential lobby off N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street, bordered by a brace of live/work unit spaces, one directly against the east property line. Three small ground floor residential units and mechanical and garbage rooms filled out the rest of the ground floor and east half of the lot without variation in individual locations. The differentiation in schemes occurred above the ground level, with Option A providing a second level court partially along the eastern property line (and a confusing first level court that did not appear to be aligned with the proposed first floor residential units). Option B had a second level central court open to the south. Option C was characterized by a ground floor chamfered northwest corner and an amenity area in the southeast corner. Option D was “T”-shaped, with both the east and west facades tucked in for their southern halves. A rooftop amenity area was spoken of but not delineated, set back from Greenwood Avenue N. and oriented to eastern views, at least in Option A. No departures were needed for any of the proposed schemes, according to the presentation.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

More than fifty individuals attended the first EDG meeting, with 47 signing in to become parties of record. About 14 of those individuals signed in to speak at the EDG public meeting. The Department had received approximately 25 letters regarding the proposal prior to the public meeting. Among the primary concerns expressed, in both written and oral comments, was the lack of parking proposed for the development, a matter over which the Board has no jurisdiction. Among other concerns and issues were the following: loading and unloading for commercial and residential uses; fit within the neighborhood context; respect for residential neighbors’ privacy.

## **BOARD DELIBERATIONS**

The Board’s comments and discussion at the first EDG meeting were focused on these major points:

- The relationship of the project to the single family residences to the east: massing and setback issues;

- The differences between Greenwood Avenue N., a commercial street, and N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street, a residential street, and how the building should respond to each streetfront in different ways;
- The treatment of the northwest corner, both of the ground floor and the entire height of the structure;
- Options for servicing the building;
- Privacy of the neighbors, south and east;
- Garbage storage and considerations for neighbors to the south and east.

Board members suggested that the scheme of two discrete bars shown in Option A suggested a useful and promising *parti* for a successful building on this site. North 68<sup>th</sup> Street should then be conceived as a residential block, including ground floor residential entry and street-facing residential units, rather than live/work units. The Board also thought it more appropriate that any rooftop amenity space be pushed forward to Greenwood Avenue N. and away from the single family homes to the east.

Difficult issues remained regarding the proposed massing in relationship to the structures east of the site. Proper servicing of the site (loading and unloading space on site), locations of garbage storage, and appropriate division and appointments of the proposed retail commercial spaces were in need of further exploration and clarification.

The applicants were encouraged by the Board to meet with neighbors who were concerned about the impacts and design of the proposal

## **BOARD PRIORITIES**

At the conclusion of the First Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board recommended, by a vote of 4-0, that the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided, including the specific studies, revisions and drawings discussed above. Items needed for the next EDG meeting included: a site survey which includes elevational notations; three alternative designs, Code compliant (or with departures clearly identified) and responsive to the Board's guidance from the first EDG meeting; east/west sections of each alternative which should include the entirety of the lots immediately to the east; light/shadow comparisons prepared for the alternatives; a fuller streetscape analysis of existing commercial and mixed-use buildings in the area; at least a preliminary, but detailed, landscape plan for the preferred option.

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines were summarized and are included in the notes from the First EDG Meeting. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The Board's recommendation on any requested departure(s) will be based on the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guidelines priorities and achieve a better

overall project design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the **First** Early Design Guidance , no departures were requested.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the First Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board recommended the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided.

## **SECOND EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: January 11, 2016**

### **Responses by the Design Team to the Board's Guidance from the First EDG Meeting:**

- The preferred design had been further developed to provide a more sensitive transition to the single-family residential structures to the east;
- The rooftop amenity area, while still located on the eastern portion of the building, were said to respect the privacy of the adjacent properties to the east;
- An analysis of neighborhood patterns of setbacks had been included;
- An analysis of other mixed-use and commercial structures in the area had been undertaken and cues taken for determining types and sizes of modulation, fenestration patterns and use of various materials;
- An analysis of entries and service locations had been undertaken; the floor plans included location and amount of storage provided for bicycles;
- All options documented setbacks being proposed in relationship to setbacks recommended by the Board and comparisons to the setbacks proposed in the new structure underway on the north side of N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street.
- A shadow analysis showed that rights-of-way to the north and west mitigated much of the impact in those two directions; reduction of impacts of the proposed building on adjacent yards and houses to the east had been a major consideration in deriving the overall massing of the proposed structure.

The Early Design Guidance packet for the Second EDG Meeting includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3020114) at this website:

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The public comments at the 2<sup>nd</sup> EDG meeting held on Monday, January 11, 2016, included the following opinions and observations:

- The applicants had not been forthcoming in responding to the requests set out by the Board at the earlier EDG meeting, and the Board should require still another EDG meeting to resolve issues so far unresolved: these included, respect for the single-family residences to the east of the site; incongruity of the proposal with neighborhood context and vision—it is not fitted to the Phinney neighborhood. The 4-foot so-called “clerestory” adds to the already unwarranted inflated mass of the proposed structure.
- (Owner of building due south of proposed structure) Her building is mislabeled in the presentation materials as a 3-story structure; it is a 2 ½ story structure. The applicant has made no attempt to make a meaningful setback to allow for light and air between the buildings.
- (Owner of single-family residence due east on N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street) His garage abuts the east property line of the proposal site and his garage sits next to the property line; he would need a five foot setback west of the property line in order to repair or paint his garage. He had fire safety concerns as well.
- Thought that the general response to the site had been appropriate, but the chamfering of the northwest corner, advocated as a neighborhood-appropriate response in the Phinney guidelines, would detract from the desired presence on the street in this instance. The N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street façade, with residential entry and individual live/work units, was successful in concept if not in execution. The south façade too was in need of further work.
- The loading/unloading and garbage/recycle storage and pickup should take place internally, within the site.
- Brick (preferably red brick) should extend to the back side (east) of the building.
- Happy to see that the proposal envisions keeping existing commercial tenants; the lower portion of the west façade, the commercial spaces, seem

too squat in overall proportions; in general, calm down the modulation and overall façade; a chamfered northwest corner would be out of place.

- The proposal needs a better mix of unit sizes; a building of only *apodments* does not belong in this neighborhood.

Several members of the public made comments decrying the total lack of parking proposed to serve the proposed mixed-use structure, even though the Planner and Board chair had cautioned that parking-related issues were not within the Board's authority or purview.

## **BOARD'S DELIBERATIONS**

### TRANSITIONS

The Board members were agreed that the applicants' preferred Option C provided for the best arrangement of uses on the site and allowed for desirable transitions: 1) to the new mixed-use structure across N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street, 2) to the multi-family structure to the south, and 3) to the single-family structures to the east. While allowing for suitable transitions, those transitions had not yet been adequately conveyed nor provided for in the design team's packet, however.

While it could be argued that the proposed clerestory level at the northwest corner of the structure lent a certain gesture of deference to the tower element of the *Isola* tower on the corner across N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street, the clerestory cap with its added height along the south portion of the proposed structure contravened the clear need for some transition to the two-and-a-half story residential building due south on Greenwood Avenue N. Politeness and other massing considerations would seem to call for a doffing of the clerestory cap along the south portion of the top of the compositional bar facing onto Greenwood Avenue N. More generally, the south façade, facing the neighboring structure was in need of significant design attention and acknowledgement of a transition that was not in keeping with a clerestory addition there.

Likewise, the transition between the proposed mixed-use structure and the single-family yards and structures to the east needed further attention. One desirable move would be to set the easternmost live/work unit further back from the property line, or both set it back from the property line and recess it further from

the N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street sidewalk. At the very least, the bays above the two live/work units needed to be truncated well short of the prevailing cornice line atop the side wall. Elongation was not in order. No bay roofs; doff the building's "caps" altogether.

## THE COMMERCIAL STOREFRONT

The Board agreed with the comment made by a member of the public that the commercial front on Greenwood Avenue N. seemed "too squat." Although there had been some earlier talk of learning from the anatomy of existing Phinney/Greenwood storefront design, the proposed storefront design made no real analytic reference to extant examples and failed in themselves to convey any particular sense of place. At the kickplate level, the window base seemed disproportionately tall, the fenestration proportionately short and without any relief from vertical mullions. Likewise, the heavy continuous marquee received no relief from transom-level lites and resulted in a street-level frontage neither friendly nor welcoming and without the vigor to instill that sense of place or identity valued by businesses and their users.

## THE RESIDENTIAL ENTRY

The residential entry appeared too compressed, almost hidden, and in need of decompression, expansion and architectural definition. "Slide it over" was one Board member's comment.

## OTHER BOARD DIRECTIVES

"Make the northwest corner pop." Explore the use of other materials at the ground level and a broader range of materials generally. Use "residential materials" on the east-facing façade. "Don't be afraid to allow a couple of units to go away" if needed to make a better project.

At the conclusion of their deliberations, the Board voted (4-0) to recommend that the proposal be advanced to MUP application and returned to the Board with a proposal that clearly responds to the above directives and concerns.

**3020114** - EDG Report sent 11/2/15 KM  
Notice of 2<sup>nd</sup> EDG Meeting sent 12/24/15  
drm  
EDG2 report sent 2/8/16 KM

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