

Herbaugh, Melinda

From: Michael Richards <mikelrich@msn.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2015 7:39 AM
To: PRC
Subject: Project #: 3020114 / 6726 Greenwood Ave. N

To whom it may concern:

I'm not an architect, contractor, builder or developer. My concerns about this project are strictly those of a 30 year resident and property owner in the Greenwood/Phinney neighborhood. Only recently have many residents of this neighborhood become fully aware of the zoning and the "Urban Village" designation throughout the area of this project. It was a bit of a shock to learn that this area, zoned NC-40 (and enter into strictly Single Family areas) allows most any type of structure, built right out to the sidewalk, 4 stories high, with ground floor retail, and allows for "Small Efficiency Dwelling Units" (SEDUs or micro- housing), with NO PARKING! Then, we find out this all pretty much took place with minimal community involvement and/or input from the current resident population. No doubt, we have our City Council, planners and elected/appointed officials to thank for this. Thus, and unfortunately, I'm assuming this proposed project at least meets existing "minimum" city guidelines.

Given that, I'm strongly of the opinion that this project does NOT fit into the character of this particular neighborhood and it detrimentally affects the livability of current residents. I suggest that this project undergo a "neighborhood impact study", or call it a full SEPA Review, or whatever. There must be some means of requiring a large-scale project such as this to meet requirements of a specific neighborhood in addition to the requirements of very broad and far reaching City wide zoning regulations?

I'll address some specifics:

Appearance & Design: From the design drawings I've seen, this proposed building is a rectangular "box" that rises straight up from the street, and pretty much so with all 4 sides, 4 stories, completely devoid of character or innovation. I see virtually no "green space" or anything to do with space for relaxation, recreation or enjoyment - outside of one's 300+ sq.ft. mini-apartment. It appears to be designed to maximize profit for the developers - totally at the expense of its own residents as well as current neighborhood residents who must look at it every day. It reminds me of pictures I've seen of government housing projects in eastern European countries. What would 10 of these look like, side by side?

Additionally, a building of this size and shape will create a "canyon effect" in the immediate vicinity. A 4 story building is immediately across the street in two directions (one under construction). I'm concerned that allowing this "high-rise" development to continue, with such buildings side-by-side, will forever negatively alter the neighborhood feel, views, access to sunlight, and openness of the immediate area. Two such buildings in this small neighborhood space is enough. Some additional thoughts:

- This development offers no sensible transition to neighboring single family lots. It goes straight from massive Neighborhood Commercial-40 into 80-100 year old Single Family lots with minimal or non-existent set back.
- Landscaping seems to be put aside in favor of building structure and concrete.
- The small scale and historical pattern of storefronts and residential buildings currently in the neighborhood is ignored.
- Visual continuity is blocked for neighboring structures and residents. The only enhanced views would be for new project residents - probably for additional cost and profit to the developer.

- The mass and scale of this structure is imposing and only adds to the negative visual distraction of other new buildings in the area. More is not better - and could only lead to further deterioration of the neighborhood for current residents. The justification of having "similar" large scale buildings in the immediate area is counterproductive.
- This building offers nothing in the way of continuity, historical preservation, traditional materials, personalization or character to the existing neighborhood. It has a negative impact in all aspects except increased density.

Population Diversity. This neighborhood is currently quite diverse with a good mix of long term single family housing (with real families living in them - including young families with real children!), retired couples and singles, apartment and condo dwellers of all ages and professions/careers, etc.. Typically, these folks are invested in the neighborhood and actively contribute to its livability and culture. What will the effect be with a sudden increase of 60+ small efficiency dwelling unit residents on this neighborhood? My guess is that such residents are typically transient and don't spend all that much time living in a 320 sq.ft. living space. I'd speculate that they are for the most part single (can more than one live in such a space? Would there be more than 60 new neighbors?), and of a given age & social economic stature. There is nothing like this in the whole area. There would be an impact. This needs to be looked into further.

Parking: Whether or not a building meets the parking needs of its own residents (and visitors, commercial customers/employees) and impacts the parking needs of the immediate neighborhood is certainly a design issue! I believe it's known that at least some SEDU residents will have vehicles. I've heard that the estimate is from 35-45%. Not designing such a building with accommodation for those vehicles is a heavy and unacceptable burden for the neighborhood and current residents to bear. The immediate area is already at or above capacity for on-street parking. Sure, the City says "no parking required" if the area has good access to bus service. So, will all of these new residents work only downtown where all the buses go? Where would they park their vehicles when on the bus or working downtown? Where do they go for recreation on weekends? This needs to be looked at more realistically.

Affordability: The City, and certain City Council members, seem to be justifying the push for increased density, with projects such as this one, by advocating the projected need for increased affordable housing. Frankly, I haven't seen much in the way of new affordable housing in Ballard. Certainly, charging \$1,000/month for a 320 sq.ft. SEDU cannot be considered "affordable" for those with truly low or fixed incomes. What is certain is that bringing in that amount of money for 60 units will bring in a healthy investment profit for the developers - at the expense of current neighborhood residents! This project does nothing for low income residents in need of housing.

All told, this project needs to be stopped dead in its tracks so the real and long term effects on the neighborhood and current residents can be taken into account. Meeting the minimum zoning and design guidelines is not enough to assure the ongoing vitality and livability of this Greenwood/Phinney neighborhood. Thank you,

Michael Richards
6537 Greenwood Ave. N.