

Herbaugh, Melinda

From: Alice Cunningham <alice@alicecunningham.com>
Sent: Monday, May 15, 2017 5:43 PM
To: PRC
Subject: PROJECT 3020338

I am writing in response to the MUP application for project #3020338. I have concerns about a number of areas and ask that you withhold the permits for this project until the following concerns are adequately addressed.

Trees: The new Comprehensive Plan, Seattle 2035, states “Seattle’s trees, vegetation, and soils make up a vitally important system that manages water runoff, cleans the air, mitigates greenhouse gas emissions and impacts, improves human health, and reduces the heat island effect. This natural system also provides wildlife habitats, supports livable neighborhoods, and is integral to the essential character of the Emerald City.” One goal of the Comprehensive Plan 2035 is to seek to increase the amount of permeable surface by reducing hardscape surfaces; another goal is to promote the care and retention of trees and groups of trees that enhance Seattle’s historical, cultural, recreational, environmental, and aesthetic character.

In contrast, this development will completely remove a healthy urban forest that presently contains a thriving and sustainable mix of tree, and which currently creates a contiguous and healthy ecosystem that provides habitat to many species. In its place will be a massive structure, built out to a degree that will not leave room for replacement of a similar canopy of trees of mixed sizes.

In addition, please consider the following points about the folly of this proposed development.

WATER

- This proposal will significantly decrease the amount of permeable surface on the site and will maximize the hardscape surfaces. This disturbs the natural management of storm water runoff.
- This proposal doesn’t respect and respond to the very serious reality of severe problems with the combined sewer system and flooding in the area.
- The City of Seattle estimates that over 24 million gallons of untreated sewage are dumped into Lake Washington annually from overflow events. It is a very significant issue and this project will add to the problem.
- City People’s currently has 25% impervious surface and 75% permeable surface; the development project proposes 100% impervious surface. When groundwater and water from the springs comes up against the impervious concrete of the building, it will be displaced onto the street or other properties nearby, thus adding to the neighborhood storm water runoff challenges.
- There is a tragic history of serious flooding in this area. Seattle resident Kate Fleming died in 2006 when a flash flood trapped her inside her basement (neighboring this site).
- At times of intense weather, neither the retention ponds (at 30th Ave East and East John St. and at Washington Park Playfield) nor the sewer system can adequately discharge the storm water. Instead, raw sewage is discharged into Lake Washington between Madison Park and Leschi, and flooding can occur. It is clear that even with the City putting in 3 million-gallon overflow tanks in recent years to divert the water, with more and more impervious surfaces upslope, there are still times when there is local flooding because the system cannot handle the water.

- We request that SDCI put significant time and care into critiquing the developer’s claim that their currently proposed plan will adequately collect and discharge all water at the site.
- We request that SDCI require that the applicant reduce the overall height, bulk and scale of the proposed project in order to mitigate the runoff impacts from the site. Leaving a sizable portion of the existing tree canopy, or alternatively, replacing a comparable portion of the site with permeable surface (i.e., establishing a new and commensurate tree canopy) would reabsorb storm water and reduce the damming effect of water flow onto adjacent properties and Dewey Place East below.

HEIGHT AND BULK

- The developer has ignored the steep slope condition of the site by relying on the average grade taken from two dog ears on either side of the slope that are situated at the highest point of the plot of land.
- The method used to establish the height is intended to “permit the structure to respond to the topography of the lot.” In this case it does precisely the opposite – this is not a better way to respond to the slope - it began with the presumption that the slope didn’t exist.
- The building mass will looms over the Dewey residences in the single-family zone adjacent to the project site. The height, bulk, and scale of the proposal are completely out of sync with Design Guideline CS2-B.1, CS2-C.2, CS2-D.11 and CS2-D.4.
- The project site is immediately adjacent to a less intensive zone.
- The proposal fails to respond appropriately to the context and site per the Design Guidelines CS1-C and CS2-B.
- The building height and the removal of the tree buffer zone are inconsistent with the requirement for a transition between more and less intense zones in Design Guidelines CS2-D.3 and CS2-D.4.
- This building would be massively out of proportion to the surrounding area, especially on the eastern side where the project abuts SF 5000 residences.
- While the site itself is zoned NC2P-40 and NC2P-30, the project site is immediately adjacent to land that is zoned and developed as single family (SF5000).
- Residents who live in the one- and two-story homes adjacent to and on the blocks near this site, would live in the shadow of a six-story building towering above them.
- Where there are now tall trees that provide shade in summer and let in light in winter, there will be a 300-foot long, 70-foot high building mass.
- Under SEPA, the City can, and should, place an increased limitation on lot coverage, require a greater set back, and modify the height, bulk and scale of this project to address the significant adverse impacts that it will have. SMC 25.05.675.G makes it clear that DCI has regulatory power, and in fact, the responsibility, to modify the height, bulk and scale of this proposal beyond the limits set forth in the development regulations.

SLOPE

- The project does not respect the topography.
- The project does not use the site features to inform the design.
- This project eradicates the site topography and fabricates the “average grade” under the code’s height provisions in a manner that ignores the slope entirely and is inconsistent with Design Guideline CS1-C.2.
- The developer has ignored the steep slope condition of the site by relying on the average grade taken from two small points on either side of the slope that are situated at the highest point of the plot of land.

TRAFFIC

- A garage entrance on Dewey Street puts traffic on narrow neighborhood streets and through awkward intersections.
- Streets including Republican, and 32nd Ave., north of Lake Washington Blvd., are effectively single-lane streets and, along with one-way Arthur Pl., can't carry the additional vehicles without creating conflicts, longer back-ups and frustration for area residents.
- Access exclusively from Madison is the best option.
- From a transportation perspective, a grocery store is a high intensity use. Were the same floor area given over to specialty shops, much less traffic would result, and less parking would be needed. Conversely, the apartments generate relatively little traffic, but create much of the building's architectural bulk.

DUPLICATION of GROCERY SERVICES

Finally, from the Bert's Red Apple in Madison Park to the new Whole Foods at Broadway and Madison, a distance of 2.5 miles, there are already 3 supermarkets on Madison, putting a heavy traffic load on the street; namely, Safeway at 23rd & Madison, Trader Joe's at 1700 E. Madison and Central Co-op at 16th. Another market the size of the planned PCC is simply not needed.

Respectfully submitted,

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