

Seattle's Design Review Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings

December 16, 2008

List of concerns regarding the Kenney proposed redevelopment, Oct – Dec 2008
Pulled from the WS Blog coverage of the first community presentations, and notes from the Oct 23 first Design Review Early Guidance meeting (Blog, Herald, & meeting notes)
Last addition, Dec 4 2008 Community Meeting. Neighbors Concerns are listed under the most appropriate Design Review Guideline.

Guideline 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.

Explanation and Examples

One consideration is the views from upper stories of new buildings into adjacent houses or yards, especially in less intensive zones. This problem can be addressed in several ways.

Reduce the number of windows and decks on the proposed building overlooking the neighbors.

Step back the upper floors or increase the side or rear setback so that window areas are farther from the property line.

Take advantage of site design which might reduce impacts, for example by using adjacent ground floor area for an entry court.

Minimize windows to living spaces which might infringe on the privacy of adjacent residents, but consider comfort of residents in the new building.

Stagger windows to not align with adjacent windows.

Neighbors Concerns (October 23, 2008)

- Concern about privacy for neighbors across the street, with higher stories able to look down and into homes

Guideline 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.

Explanation and Examples

Techniques used to minimize the impacts of driveways and parking lots include:

- Locate surface parking at rear or side lots.
- Break large parking lots into smaller ones.
- Minimize number and width of driveways and curb cuts.
- Share driveways with adjacent property owners.
- Locate parking in lower level or less visible portions of site.
- Locate driveways so they are visually less dominant.

Neighbors Concerns (October 23, 2008)

- More cars parking on surrounding streets
- Narrow service entrance locations- on Othello would be a narrow street for large trucks
- Concern about the location of the underground parking – multiple entrances, not well understood yet by neighbors
- Concern about location and quantity of staff parking

Neighbors Concerns (December 4, 2008)

- Concerned about the whole issue of traffic congestion, especially with ferry traffic and a large number of independent residents who will have cars. Will there be a full traffic analysis done? Make sure it includes during peak summer ferry traffic.

- I have a concern about the whole issue of traffic congestion, especially with the ferry traffic and a large number of independent living units, who will all have cars.

Guideline B-1: Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility



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. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk, and scale between anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

Explanation and Examples

This guideline restates the City's SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) Policy on Height, Bulk and Scale. Development projects in multifamily and commercial zones may create substantial adverse impacts resulting from incongruous height, bulk and scale. For projects undergoing Design Review, the analysis and mitigation of height, bulk and scale impacts will be accomplished through the Design Review process. Careful siting and design treatment based on the technique described in this and other design guidelines will help to mitigate some height, bulk and scale impacts; in other cases, actual reduction in the height, bulk and scale of a project may be necessary to adequately mitigate impacts. Design Review should not result in significant reductions in a project's actual height, bulk and scale unless necessary to comply with this guideline.

Height, bulk and scale mitigation may be required in two general circumstances:

1. Projects on or near the edge of a less intensive zone. A substantial incompatibility in scale may result from different development standards in the two zones and may be compounded by physical factors such as large development sites, slopes or lot orientation.
2. Projects proposed on sites with unusual physical characteristics such as large lot size, or unusual shape, or topography where buildings may appear substantially greater in height, bulk and scale than that generally anticipated for the area.

Factors to consider in analyzing potential height, bulk and scale impacts include:

- Distance from the edge of a less intensive zone
- Differences in development standards between abutting zones (allowable building height, width, lot coverage, etc.)
- effect of site size and shape

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height, bulk and scale relationships resulting from lot orientation (e.g. back lot line to back lot line vs. back lot line to side lot line)

type and amount of separation between lots in the different zones (e.g. separation by only a property line, by an alley or street, or by other physical features such as grade changes).

In some cases, careful siting and design treatment may be sufficient to achieve reasonable transition and mitigation of height, bulk and scale impacts. Some techniques for achieving compatibility are as follows:

use of architectural style, details (such as roof lines or fenestration), color or materials that derive from the less intensive zone. (See also Guideline C-1: Architectural Context.)

creative use of landscaping or other screening

location of features on-site to facilitate transition, such as locating required open space on the zone edge so the building is farther from the lower intensity zone.

treating topographic conditions in ways that minimize impacts on neighboring development, such as by using a rockery rather than a retaining wall to give a more human scale to a project, or stepping a project down a hillside.

in a mixed-use project, siting the more compatible use near the zone edge.

In some cases, reductions in the actual height, bulk and scale of the proposed structure may be necessary in order to mitigate adverse impacts and achieve an acceptable level of compatibility. Some techniques which can be used in these cases include:

articulating the building's facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that conform to existing structures or platting pattern.

increasing building setbacks from the zone edge at ground level

reducing the bulk of the building's upper floors

limiting the length of, or otherwise modifying, facades

reducing the height of the structure

reducing the number or size of accessory structures.

Neighbors Concerns (October 23, 2008)

- Concern about impact to and loss of views
- New buildings would form a wall along Fauntleroy Way, cutting off from community
- Scale of 6 story buildings fitting into the surrounding SF neighborhood, transition questions
- Concern about honoring the setbacks along Fauntleroy (appears they are designing to 15 foot setbacks with little larger on Myrtle – belief that 20 ft setback is required in the LTD zone)
- Concern about overall visual impacts of height, bulk and scale proposed
- Concern about how Ballymena replacement building appears to rocket up from sidewalk, over 15 ft then straight up is a lot of mass

- Concern that we didn't get to see what a code compliant design would look like – how many units would that get them

Neighbors Concerns (December 4, 2008)

- Concern about the density that will be introduced to the Kenney facility – is it appropriate in the middle of all the surrounding SF5000 neighborhood
- Concern that the proposed height will block the view of the Sound and mountains from the children in Gatewood Elementary
- Concern that the requests represents a significant departure from current zoning, almost doubling the density & height. Neighborhood needs to make sure that whatever is approved gives benefit to the neighborhood.
- Concern about the environmental impacts of an expansion of this size, added impervious surfaces, block groundwater, tree preservation etc.

Guideline 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.

Explanation and Examples

Paying attention to architectural characteristics of surrounding buildings, especially historic buildings, can help new buildings be more compatible with their neighbors, especially if a consistent pattern is already established by similar:

- building articulation
- building scale and proportion
- or complementary architectural style
- or complementary roof forms
- building details and fenestration patterns

or complementary materials

Even where there is no consistent architectural pattern, building design and massing can be used to complement certain physical conditions of existing development.

In some cases, the existing context is not so well-defined, or may be undersirable. In such cases, a well-designed, new project can become a pioneer with the opportunity to establish a pattern or identity from which future development can take its cues.

Architectural Features

Below are several methods that can help integrate new buildings into the surrounding architectural context, using compatible:

architectural features
fenestration patterns, and
building proportions.

Building Articulation

Below are several methods in which buildings may be articulated to create intervals which reflect and promote compatibility with their surroundings:

modulating the facade by stepping back or extending forward a portion of the facade
repeating the window patterns at an interval that equals the articulation interval
providing a porch, patio, deck or covered entry for each interval
providing a balcony or bay window for each interval
changing the roofline by alternating dormers, stepped roofs, gables or other roof
elements to reinforce the modulation or articulation interval
changing the materials with a change in the building plane
providing a lighting fixture, trellis, tree or other landscape feature with each interval

Neighbors Concerns (October 23, 2008)

- Loss of the Seaview historic building
- Loss of the cupola
- Concern that new design will look “institutionalized” and lose the historic look that is a part of the Kenney
- Concern that doesn’t appear developers are really trying to re-use or re-purpose the Seaview building

Neighbors Concerns (December 4, 2008)

- Concern that a “recreation” of the Seaview/cupola won’t look like the original
- We came because of the cupola; it’s like the Space Needle to West Seattle.

- View impacts of the loss of the cupola, it's a part of my visual background and there should be an assessment done on the view loss for a 1 mile radius. They should also consider a massing study as part of this concern.
- I want the architecture to reflect the neighborhood, but can't see how they'd do it. I want sympathetic, enhancing architecture.
- The Seaview resurrection should look like the original Philadelphia inspired architecture, not a cheap knock off.

Guideline E-3: Landscape 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.

Explanation and Examples

The following conditions may merit special attention. The examples suggest some ways to address the issue.

High Bank Front Yard

Where the building's ground floor is elevated above a sidewalk pedestrian's eye level, landscaping can help make the transition between grades. Several techniques are listed below.

rockeries with floral displays, live ground cover or shrubs.

terraces with floral displays, ground covers or shrubs.

low retaining walls with raised planting strips.

stone or brick masonry walls with vines or shrubs.

Barrier-free Access

Where wheelchair ramps must be provided on a street front, the ramp structure might include a planting strip on the sidewalk side of the elevated portions of the ramp.

Steep Topography

Special plantings or erosion control measures may be necessary to prevent site destabilization or to enhance the visual qualities of the site in connection with a neighborhood improvement program.

Boulevards

Incorporate landscaping which reflects and reinforces .

Greenbelt or Other Natural Setting

- Minimize the removal of significant trees.
- Replace trees that were removed with new trees.
- Emphasize naturalizing or native landscape materials.
- Retain natural greenbelt vegetation that contributes to greenbelt preservation.
- Select colors that are more appropriate to the natural setting.

On-site Vegetation

- Retain significant vegetation where possible.
- Use new plantings similar to vegetation removed during construction, when that vegetation as distinctive.

Neighbors Concerns (October 23, 2008)

- Loss of old trees
- Loss of green space and park like look
- Shade impacts on park areas