



SUMNER DESIGN COMMISSION

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, January 8, 2004

6:00 p.m.

Sumner City Hall
1104 Maple Street

CALL TO ORDER

BISOM called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Bisom, Bennett, Abbott, Wolch and Hansen

Members Absent: Tobias and McMahan

Also Present: Ron Buckholt, Associate Planner
Bo Norbjerg, Applicant (PLN2003-60)

APPROVAL OF MINUTE

BENNETT motioned to approve the December 11, 2003 Regular Meeting Minutes as written. **BISOM** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

A. PLN2003-60 Norbjerg 4-Plex

BUCKHOLT reviewed for the Commission Staff's report on PLN2003-60 Norbjerg 4-Plex as follows:

The site is located at 317 Alder Street. Applicant is proposing a single 4-plex within the Low Density Residential District. A multi-family structure not exceeding 4 dwelling units is permitted through a conditional use permit per SMC 18.12. The conditional use permit for the 4-plex has not yet been approved by the City Hearings Examiner. A hearing date with the City Hearings Examiner has

been scheduled, pending design review approval, for February 2, 2004. The 4-plex is arranged in a block grid arrangement. The building is oriented toward Alder Avenue with shared open space in the front, rear and side yards. Parking is provided by double car garages for each dwelling unit with additional parking in front of each garage. Parking access is provided by a private driveway. The site is currently developed with a single family house and will be demolished in conjunction with this proposal. The vicinity of the site consists of mainly residential land uses and it is zoned Low Density Residential, allowing for multi-family projects that are 4 units or less under a conditional use permit in accordance with SMC 18.12.

STAFF recommended that project number PLN2003-60 be APPROVED subject to the following CONDITIONS:

- 1. The front elevation of the first unit (unit "A") facing Alder Avenue shall incorporate additional treatments to create pedestrian interest along the street. Porch railings shall be added along the outer perimeter of the porch. A window shall be added on the westerly elevation near the corner of the building (porch area) to create more architectural interest on the street front.*
- 2. The south elevation shall include additional weather protection over the doorways. Awnings shall be provided over the sliding glass doors so that the back patio areas are covered and additional wall modulation is provided on said elevation.*
- 3. The applicant shall maintain the proposed 12 off street parking stalls on the subject site in order to establish conformance with the parking standards per SMC 18.42.*
- 4. The applicant shall provide clarification on the intended color scheme of the proposed building. Perhaps different colors can be used for the individual units to help break up the appearance of blank wall.*
- 5. Additional plantings shall be incorporated in the front yard along Alder Street. Some flower beds and plant arrangements shall be added in the front of the railings to the porch and around the pedestrian bench area.*

BISOM asked the Commissioners for any questions prior to the applicant's description of his project. There were no questions at this time.

BISOM directed the applicant to further describe the proposed project.

BO NORBJERG, Applicant appeared. He noted that he has made a number of changes since the last plan. He felt the changes made were appropriate, however, he is frustrated with the request for additional changes. Had these requests been made previously, he

would have complied with them. With regard to Staff's Condition No. 1, he feels that it is fair, however, the window area in the downstairs is limited and if a window were added in that location, he would have to eliminate a window on the north/northwest elevation (front of the building). NORBJERG approached the site plan and further explained his problems with the window requested.

BENNETT asked what the width of the blank wall was? He suggested the possibility of adding a window in that area, over the range?

BUCKHOLT explained that it is about 12 feet wide.

NORBJERG noted that if it was changed to a down-draft range, it is a possibility. He brought the site plan up to the Commissioners to further illustrate the area and explain his dilemma. He felt that the window requirements were excessive. He stated that he could comply with it, and it would look good, however, nobody would see it. He also felt that having the kitchen against the staircase was not practical.

BISOM asked for further clarification of the architectural details and proposed colors.

NORBJERG stated that he had previously submitted a full-color chart, and that he is proposing that every unit be a different color.

BUCKHOLT advised the Commissioners that the color chart was provided to them at the previous meeting wherein they had to table this project.

BISOM asked if the applicant intended to use shingles on the first unit?

NORBJERG stated that he would be using shake. He further noted that he was attempting to provide variation to the windows, having shutters on some and grids on the others.

BISOM asked if the units would be two tone in color as to the upper and lower floors?

NORBJERG responded that that was the proposal.

BENNETT commented that he likes the variation, and BISOM commented that the applicant has made good changes and that the colors are subtle, yet bright enough.

BISOM asked if there are balconies on the upper floor?

NORBJERG indicated that there are balconies on the back unit and that at the end there will be a deck.

BISOM asked if there would be a six foot cedar fence?

NORBJERG responded that there would be a six foot cedar fence all the way around the site and a cedar hedge in front of the patio.

BISOM asked about the roofing material?

NORBJERG indicated that the roof would be composition. The color of the roofing will be black, which he feels will accommodate future color changes.

BISOM asked if there would be a skylight over the stairwell?

NORBJERG stated that the skylights would be over the bathrooms upstairs. He has designed it to have a lot of natural light in all of the rooms.

BISOM took note of the alternating grid panel and shutters on the windows and that each one appeared to have a little different detailing. BISOM asked if there would be windows in the upper portions of all the garages?

NORBJERG explained that there would be windows in the garages up high. He was initially reluctant to put windows there as he did not want the units looking into them, which is why they are up high. He further noted that he will be moving the door from the back to the side.

WOLCH asked Staff about the window requirement. Is there another way to add street interest without a window?

BUCKHOLT stated that the window was just his suggestion to enhance that elevation and that he would be happy to hear suggestions from the Commissioners.

BISOM asked about the storm drainage requirements for this small site?

BUCKHOLT noted that that would fall under civil review, not review for a building permit, however, the Commissioners were free to ask questions as to drainage.

NORBJERG responded that they have excellent soil. He believes that it can be dealt with on-site. He will have his civil engineer handle it. He is very close to 5,000 feet.

WOLCH asked whether the site plan had been reviewed for fire access?

BUCKHOLT noted that the fire inspector had reviewed the plan and approved it.

WOLCH asked about the additional off street parking stalls?

BUCKHOLT explained that the portion in front of the garages can be striped to add a parking stall. Twelve stalls are what is recommended, however the minimum requirement is 8 stalls. The goal is to control on street parking.

BISOM suggested with regard to the window treatments that the shutters be contrasting colors of consistent tones, possibly an earth tone with a darker earth tone, or a gray tone with a charcoal gray contrast.

NORBJERG stated that he could do that. He was thinking about going with vinyl windows and that they possibly be white.

BISOM asked if the garage doors would be aluminum, and noted that they may come in different colors.

NORBJERG stated that they are, however, they only come in white. They can be painted.

BISOM suggested, to avoid there being a lot of white, that the trim could be white, but the garage doors should be a different color, possibly matching the body of the house. He noted that these are suggestions, not necessarily conditions.

NORBJERG, upon further review of his plan, noted that the painter had matched the garage doors to the house colors.

BISOM suggested that the trim could possibly be wrapped. Also, depending on the entry door, the trim could be white. He further commented that the entry door and the garage door should not both be white.

NORBJERG responded that all the units would have different color doors, although he would accept the Commissioners recommendations in that regard.

BENNETT thought the entry door could be any color, but felt the garage doors should match the main building.

BISOM asked the applicant to further explain his outdoor lighting plan.

NORBJERG stated that he planned to have a light at each front door and probably an extra one at the corner; possibly a carriage type light next to the window.

BISOM asked if there would be lights on either side of the garage door, and if so, suggested two lights, one on each side. He further asked if there would be a small light on the back slider doors?

NORBJERG indicated there would be garage door lighting and that there would further be lights at all entry and exit points.

HANSEN had questions with regard to the site plan. He asked the applicant if all the plantings on site were identified?

BISOM stated that he planned to get into that in more detail later. He thought the applicant should submit a more refined planting plan at a later date for Staff's review and then possibly for design review. At this time they are more concerned with the actual structure. The applicant shows some good things, such as a cedar hedge and a fence. He may want to add a couple more trees. It is unclear whether the little circles on the site plan are shrubs or trees.

NORBJERG responded that there are a number of trees on site.

BISOM commented that one of the Commission's recommendations would be that the applicant submit a more detailed landscape plan as part of his final submittal package. He did note that the applicant had quite a bit of lawn and some foundation planting. He would suggest that, at the Alder Street (front) elevation by the pedestrian walkway and the porch, there be foundation planting to accent the front yard. He would suggest a four to five foot planting bed from the lawn out to the sidewalk and some plantings on the corners.

ABBOTT asked if there would be a cedar fence down the property line on the north side of the site?

NORBJERG stated that there would be.

ABBOTT asked Staff if it was required that the applicant landscape along the property line?

BUCKHOLT responded that a fence or hedge meets the requirement.

BENNETT asked the applicant if the driveway would be washed aggregate?

NORBJERG stated that he would be splitting it up and leaving three feet exposed to clearly identify the walkway.

BENNETT commented that he liked the break up without the curb, and asked if the washed aggregate would be at the same level as the driveway?

NORBJERG indicated that it would.

ABBOTT noted concern about being able to turn a car around in that area?

NORBJERG stated that he did not feel it would be a problem.

BISOM commented that, although it is a longer structure, the details in the site plan fit in with the adjacent neighborhood. He would, however, like to see a little bit more detailed planting plan. He noted the cedar hedge and the planting on the parameters.

HANSEN commented that the lot had a nice layout and suggested that tall cedars be planted in the back as a buffer. He suggested plantings tall enough to see from the other side of the fence.

NORBJERG stated that there is a six-foot tall fence in that area, however it was his intention to plant. He could plant fast growing trees.

BISOM stated that he is leaning toward possibly one tree per unit to break up the façade. He suggested a flowering tree or deciduous tree as it would let light in in the winter.

BENNETT suggested 10 foot breaks in the fence every 20 feet, and further suggested planting a couple of trees within the 10 foot breaks as there is not enough room to plant inside or outside the fence.

NORJBERG expressed concern about how the neighbors would feel about that. He thought they would rather see a fence.

BISOM noted that the fence should probably be there for kids and pets. His recommendation would be a more detailed plan, showing one tree per unit. He further suggested a smaller flowering tree on the other side to help break up the elevation by the porches, and also two street trees between the sidewalk and the street. In the past they have had applicants submitted more detailed planting plans in their final submittal packets.

HANSEN asked if Staff felt that the Hearings Examiner would support a break in the fence?

BUCKHOLT stated that he did not know, and thought that it may depend on the testimony of the neighbors.

HANSEN commented that he liked the look of the break up in the fence.

BUCKHOLT stated that Staff would support that.

BENNETT thought it may possibly make a difference if it were noted that these will be sold and not rented out.

ABBOTT suggested that the applicant take a good look at the storm drainage and utilities, as it would be a shame to go through all of this and then find out the requirement has not been met.

BENNETT asked if sprinklers were required for this number of units?

NORBJERG stated that they are a requirement as the access is 15 feet as opposed to 24 feet. As far as the other utilities, sewer and water are available to the site. He is now just dealing with the storm drainage.

BENNETT commented that in the Old Town area of Tacoma, he has seen driveways with grass planting squares in between them. It looks good and it helps reduce the storm water problem.

NORBJERG stated that that may be something he looks into, especially if it brings him under 5,000 feet.

WOLCH expressed concern that the applicant has not been given enough options for Item No. 1. He suggested that the applicant build a railing and add some additional foundation planting, possibly a planter or ornamental trees in the front of the porch as it is a prominent view from the street.

BISOM also suggested adding another light on the corner.

NORBJERG noted that he would put a light on that corner, in addition to a 4 or 5 foot planter in front of the walkway.

BISOM commented that there is no need for a window in that location with the planting there.

BENNETT suggested, as an option, a foe window with a planter box in front of it.

BISOM thought the area would be ideal for a couple of chairs.

WOLCH motioned that Condition No. 1 be approved as written with the exception of the window requirement, and that it should read as follows: the applicant is required to incorporate additional treatment to create pedestrian interest; this should include, a porch railing, additional foundation plantings and a light on the porch to create more architectural interest. Further the applicant has the option of adding a window for further architectural interest, however, it is not required. BISOM seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

BENNETT motioned that Condition No. 2 be approved as written. ABBOTT seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

BISOM asked Staff to further clarify the recommendation as to parking in Condition No. 3. Is that a design issue?

BUCKHOLT stated that it is a design issue in the sense that we are exceeding the minimum standard of eight. The goal is to avoid over-flow parking on the street.

NORBJERG thought that he could add a stall in front of each garage as suggested by Staff, however, his concern is that it should be re-worded to state that the applicant shall maintain a minimum of 8 off street parking stalls, however, a stall in front of each garage is suggested.

BUCKHOLT noted that it would be to the applicant's benefit to have 12 parking spaces.

ABBOTT motioned that Condition No. 3 be approved as written. BENNETT seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

BISOM commented that the color scheme showed nice exterior colors.

HANSEN motioned to approve Condition No. 4 as written, that the applicant should provide an intended color scheme as shown, and in addition should provide accompanying brochures. BISOM seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

BISOM suggested that Condition No. 5 be amended, and motioned as follows: that based on the Commissioners' discussions with the applicant, that additional trees should be added; at least one tree in each back garden, possibly a larger shade tree, hedging, a smaller flowering tree near the garages at the front and maybe one or two street trees on Alder. Further, to require the applicant to submit a formal planting plan prepared by a landscape architect showing the added planting requirements and sizes of plantings, and that it be submitted to Staff upon completion of the project as part of the project requirements. HANSEN seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

ABBOTT asked if the suggestion as to breaking up the fence should be motioned upon?

BENNETT motioned that it be suggested that the fence have a 10 foot break every 20 feet, and that the 10 foot area be filled with some sort of planting that would be appropriate for that spot, such as a couple of trees (cedar), incorporated with hedges, as discussed to break up the fence line. BISOM seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

BISOM declared Project PLN2003-60 approved.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

STAFF COMMENTS

A. Discuss & Review Possible Amendments to the Multifamily Chapter of the Design Guidelines

BUCKHOLT asked the Commissioners for any suggestions or possible changes to the Multifamily Chapter of the Design Guidelines.

ABBOTT commented that they often recommend color changes and/or banding. He noted that that was only addressed in the multiplex section, and was not addressed in

other sections of the guidelines. He felt it should be noted elsewhere. Further, awnings and weather protection around doors should also be mentioned elsewhere.

BUCKHOLT asked about off street parking and how the Commissioners felt about the standards. Should there be an increase? Should it be based on the number of bedrooms? At this time, it is 2 parking stalls for every 3 or more bedrooms, and 1.5 for a 2 bedroom apartment.

BENNETT stated that in single family he does not think the number of bedrooms should determine that requirement. The number of bedrooms has to do with sewers and septic tanks, understandably, but not cars.

BUCKHOLT also noted that he did not understand why that was used as a threshold.

BISOM commented that that could be better used for garden space.

BUCKHOLT asked, with the new multi-family, if the Commissioners are noticing more on street parking?

ABBOTT stated that typically most of the developers that he has worked with say there should be two per unit.

BUCKHOLT commented that one example of excessive on street parking is the Washington Court. Nobody parks in the garages there and it is a real mess.

HANSEN asked if the requirement was 1.5 there?

BUCKHOLT stated that it was 1.5 to 2. Bedrooms could be removed as the basis for that ratio.

BISOM asked if that applies when there is less than 8 units?

BUCKHOLT responded that it did apply.

BISOM suggested that it could be increased a bit, however, they do want to minimize it with infill projects. He thought that 2 per unit was a good suggestion.

BISOM asked Staff if they would be including in the changes to this chapter, examples of completed, successful projects.

BUCKHOLT stated that they are putting something together for that.

ABBOTT suggested also adding to the multifamily section, projects with different color schemes and banding.

BISOM added that a color sample board might be helpful in suggesting color variations as in the last project.

BUCKHOLT noted that they are typically running to problems with parking and open space. He asked for comments on the parking and open space issues. Is 50% enough as a minimum standard for open space or should they increase that?

WOLCH stated that he would be in favor of an increase. He further commented that in order for the buffer to be effective, there should be at least five feet of planting minimum.

BISOM asked if 60% or 65% would be too much?

BUCKHOLT stated that he considered going as high as 75%. They run into this problem a lot with cluster arrangements.

HANSEN expressed concern in increasing the open space standard as to the downtown situation, with town houses on the street. In some circumstances it is okay to be on the street, like if it is by a park.

BUCKHOLT noted that general commercial has an out in that they can pay mitigation. Multi-family does not have that option.

BENNETT asked what the requirement would be if there is open space near the site?

BISOM commented that it is an interesting option. Washington Court could use more open space to reduce their density.

WOLCH noted that another thing they consistently struggle with is the landscape plan. He would suggest that a nursery drawing up the plans be an option as opposed to a formal landscape architect in the interest of cost. WOLCH asked if Staff could refer applicants to a nursery, like the Norbjerg project?

BUCKHOLT stated that the City could not endorse any nursery.

WOLCH stated that he would like to advise applicants to take that step. It helps in Design review if the applicant comes in with a good landscape plan.

BUCKHOLT asked the Commissioners how formal they would like to see the proposed landscape plans?

BISOM noted that it is important to have a more prepared landscape plan. He would like to at least see the applicants add more information on their plans. Maybe staff could guide them in that direction.

BISOM stated that he felt the open space should be increased to 75%. They could then require that a formal landscape plan be prepared by a landscape architect or a certified nursery.

WOLCH asked if a landscape plan is a building permit requirement?

BUCKHOLT stated that it is a requirement for design review.

HANSEN suggested that open space be based on the zone; the higher the density, the less the open space requirement should be.

BUCKHOLT agreed with that suggestion. He further suggested 75% LDR, 60% MDR and 50% HDR.

DISCUSSION was had and the Commissioners agreed with the proposed percentages.

BISOM thought that the 50%, 60%, 75% requirement kept things flexible.

BENNETT thought that they should look into the numbers further to have a better understanding of the full impact of the suggested change.

BUCKHOLT stated that these recommended changes would eventually go before the Planning Commission.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

There were no Commissioner comments.

ADJOURNMENT

BISOM adjourned the meeting at 7:41 p.m.

Sarah M. Heckman
Minutes Taker