



Local Family Pitches 160-Unit Apartment Complex in Seattle's Ballard Neighborhood, Receives Praise for Design

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Courtesy of Public47 Architects

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By [Meghan Hall](#)

As new upzones take place around Seattle, some residents are leery to the changes development will bring, while others are wholeheartedly embracing new housing and proposed projects. For the owners of 904 NW Market Street in Ballard, the latter has held true as a local family who has lived in the neighborhood for years has pitched plans for a new, 160-unit apartment complex. At the development's first Early Design Guidance Meeting on Monday night, the Board was full of praise for the project, believing its designs were a solid start.

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"The owners are a local family who have lived in Ballard for about six decades and have a deep commitment to the neighborhood, and [they] helped shape the development objectives for the project," explained Scot Carr of Public47 Architects, who is working to develop the property along with ownership and FA Johnson Development. "The project intends to accomplish a broader range of city and neighborhood goals, including site specificity and site responsiveness, sustainability and pedestrian interest on Market Street."

The development team presented several different massing options to the Northwest Design Review Board, but the third option—also the applicant's preferred massing scheme—was found to be the most comprehensive. The third massing alternative showed plans for a six-story building with street level commercial and residential uses above. Below grade parking accessed from 9th Ave. NW is also planned.

The massing of NW Market Street will be divided into smaller, more dynamic blocks with varying heights. The ground floor commercial will anchor the corner, and light courts will be used to reduce open one-bedroom unit types. Vegetation and plantings within the light courts will work to create a connection between a number of oak trees that line the street and the facade of the building. The building will also be pulled back two feet along the upper levels to accommodate for the Oak Trees, and the North facade will be set back at level six for a better zone transition. Additionally, the design works around an existing 75-foot Fir tree, which will be preserved.

"[There is] a strong desire to create a strong and active urban corner and vibrant pedestrian environment," said Carr. "Using open space and landscaping to modulate this long site in an urbanistically interesting manner that is integrated into the building concepts."

The overall materiality of the project has yet to be determined, but the project team hopes to use cross laminated timber (CLT) as part of the development's construction.

Overall, the Board was impressed with the initial design schemes presented. One Board Member commented that the articulation was "fun" in the way that it mimicked the height of the trees. Another Board member noted that the massing provided whimsy and helped to break down the scale of the building from ground level. The Board also stated that given the long, skinny nature of the project site and the zone transition, the preferred scheme was very successful.

The Board did caution that the project team should remain careful and respect the neighborhood context at the pedestrian level moving forward, noting the two-story units in the complex could be used to add additional modulation. The Board expressed that it did appreciate the location of the lobby entry, and its visual and volumetric connection to the building, as well as the commercial space's corner location.

With little negative feedback to give, the Board voted unanimously at the end of the meeting to move the project forward. In the coming months, the development will return with updated—and more final schemes—to present to the community and Board.