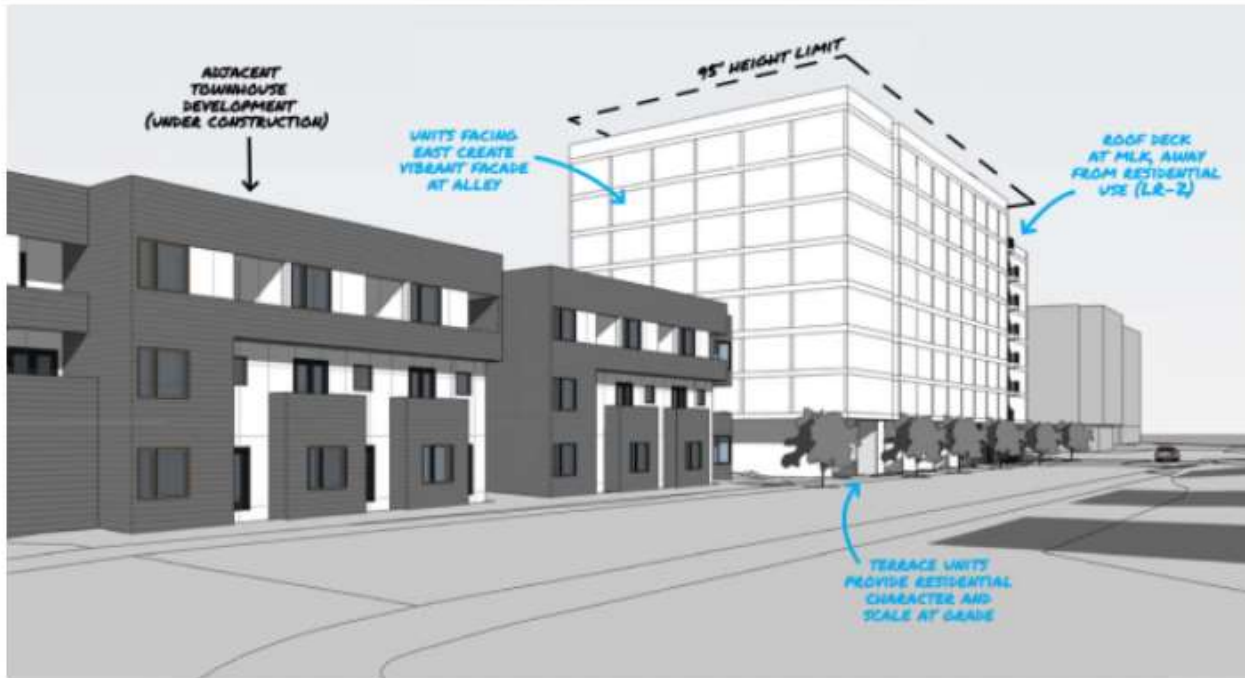


# OZ Navigator, Neiman Taber, Sail Through EDG for 197-Unit Residential Project in Seattle

September 23, 2021



*Courtesy of Neiman Taber*

By [Meghan Hall](#)

A development team has sailed through Seattle's early design review process and is well on its way to final review. In a meeting on Tuesday night, OZ Navigator and Neiman Taber Architects presented their plans for 4001 S. Willow Street in Seattle's Othello neighborhood. During the meeting, the project team presented a wide variety of project schemes for the 197-unit complex, which impressed both the Southeast Design Board and the community.

Plans for the project show that the residential units will be broken into 191 one-bedrooms and six SEDUs. 1,800 square feet of ground floor commercial space, as well as 14 parking stalls are also planned. Amenities such as a roof deck are also designated in the plans.

Overall, the goal of the development team is to create housing that is affordable to the surrounding community and a human-scaled building that will add to the character of the neighborhood.

“We want to create as much housing as we can and we want that housing to be financially attainable to as many people as possible,” explained David Neiman, partner at Neiman Taber Architects. “Second, we want the housing to be of high quality, with good access to natural light and air, and we want to have thoughtful privacy relationships with our neighbors. Lastly, we want a building that meets the street successfully so it contributes to a lively, attractive public way.”

The site is located on a major thoroughfare in the Othello neighborhood—Martin Luther King Jr. Way S—and is near a Safeway-anchored shopping center and John C. Little Sr. Park. Development in the surrounding area is mostly residential.

The design team came to the meeting well prepared. During its presentation, Neiman Taber presented six initial massing studies and three more-developed design schemes. Typically, during early design guidance meetings, a project team will present just a few schemes.

However, most of Tuesday’s meeting focused on the project team’s preferred option. The eight unit building would feature units rotated toward MLK and the alley, creating a secondary massing transition and activating all four facades. A large setback at the south property line works to improve privacy, while lowered massing along MLK and an exterior stair anchor the corner of the property.

A larger, prominent lobby is planned along Willow and will be flanked by unit terraces. The unit terraces will give a residential feel to the building and make its scale more pedestrian-oriented. The retail portion of the ground plane will also be recessed to add additional visual interest.

The thorough nature of the design packet and presentation impressed both the board and community. More than a dozen public comments were also offered—all in support of building higher-density housing at the site. With so much information in hand, even the Board’s clarifying questions were minimal, and a decision was quickly made to move the project forward to formal design review.

The Board's only negative remark was the scale of the project. In its presentation, the development team noted that it had gone for a mid-rise development, even though zoning permits high rises. The project team explained that its decision was driven by cost. One Board Member noted that it was "disappointing" to learn that height was being sacrificed because of expense, but others noted that as a high-rise, the cost of development is exponentially higher. Another Board member added that more than anything, the misalignment of the zoning code and the building code is to blame.

The Board really appreciated all other aspects of the project, specifically noting the complexity and thought put into the design of the development. The design evolution and site analysis was also applauded, and that the preferred option should continue to be refined in future iterations of the development. The Board also commended the project team on facade architecture and composition, the unique exterior stair, plaza and general layout of the project.

Therefore, with little to complain about, all four Board members present voted to move the project forward. The development team will come back in the coming months with more finalized plans for the Board to review.