



April 16, 2022

Sean Conrad, Land Use Planner
Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections
700 5th Ave, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: 9400 35TH AVE NE (SDCI PROJECT NO. 3032182-EG 3030258) AND ADMINISTRATIVE EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE REPORT

Hello,

We are writing in response to the development proposed by American Dream Realty Investment Group 2 LLC., as shown in the plans prepared by Jackson Main Architects for SDCI Project No. 3032182-EG and 3030258. Additionally, this letter addresses the Administrative Early Design Guidance Report (ADR Report) issued on April 8, 2022, prepared for the project. While we broadly welcome the proposed project and the addition of new housing units and commercial spaces to our neighborhood and the 35th Ave NE business district, we reiterate concerns put forward by the 35th Ave Committee in their October 19, 2020 public comments.

It is our opinion that the ADR Report does not acknowledge the primary concerns raised by the 35th Ave Committee and the community's desired commercial and public streetscape environment articulated in the [Future 35th Ave NE Plan](#). Namely, the 35th Ave Committee noted its concerns that the developer's preferred option (Option 3) limits commercial space to live-work units fronting 35th Ave NE, making Option 2 superior from the perspective of the Future 35th Ave NE Plan. Live-work units have a place in providing flexible commercial space for some forms of commercial uses if sighted appropriately, but these units when located along 35th Ave NE do nothing to activate the streetscape and create a more vibrant and walkable commercial district that our community aspires towards.

Further, the comments offered by the 35th Ave Committee within their October 2020 letter, which is included in the public comments received for this project, are not reflected in the summary of public comments reviewed by SDCI staff, as itemized on

Page 3 of the ADR Report. The only mention of live-work units within the ADR Report's summarized public comments was a mention that some public comments appeared to be "confused by the live/work unit description." It may be true that some are or were confused by the live-work unit description, but the public comments provided by the 35th Ave Committee were not confused on what they are. Their letter highlights their concern that all commercial use on-site would be limited to live-work units. Therefore, it is unclear if SDCI reviewed the public comments to the level of detail which is warranted for a community group which was speaking on



Image 1. Live-work units at 7321 and 7323 35th Ave NE.

behalf of a neighborhood plan developed over 3 years with city support, significant community outreach and engagement, and the unanimous endorsement of the Wedgwood Community Council. We hope this letter amplifies their comments further.

Live-Work Units

The Future 35th Ave NE plan envisions a more activated commercial business district at our commercial nodes – including our node at NE 95th Street – which support businesses that residents can walk to and enliven the business district as whole. The community seeks commercial uses and informal spaces along the streetscape which provide the opportunity for gathering, shared conversations, and personal connections (see Page 25 of the [Future 35th Ave Plan](#)). As shown in the Images 1-3 included herein, live-work units do nothing to create this desired streetscape environment and activated pedestrian experience in our business district. These opportunities to provide destination commercial uses which draw people to our business district and where they can linger and shop at other businesses, are lost with no opportunity for them to be retrofitted in the future. Instead, these live-work units present the appearance that our business district is closed for business and there is no commercial experience worth walking to.



Image 2. Live-work units at 8606 35th Ave NE.



Image 3. Live-work units at 8605 35th Ave NE.

As shown in Images 1-3, taken mid-day on a Tuesday early afternoon, virtually every single live-work unit in our business district (e.g., all but 1) have their doors shut and curtains perpetually drawn. And why wouldn't they want some privacy from those who walk past and look into their private residence? It's their home. It's not the fault of those who live or work there for detracting from the activated and vibrant commercial core aspired to by our community at these nodes. It's the fault of those who approved these live-work units fronting onto 35th Ave NE was an acceptable use.

Compromise

We believe that a compromise design is available that still maximizes the available livable space for the developer while providing all of the ground-floor commercial flood area as standalone commercial space. This is especially critical for the SW corner at 35th Ave NE and NE 94th St.

According to the ADR Report, SDCI staff recommended that the applicant design the SW corner of the development at 35th Ave NE and NE 94th Street to have a more "prominent commercial corner." We wholeheartedly agree with this comment as celebrating our corners is one of our Corridor Specific Design Guidelines, as shown on Page 34 of the Future 35th Ave NE Plan. However, rather than just designing this

SW corner to appear as though it's a more prominent commercial corner, the commercial space should actually be a more prominent standalone commercial space, separate from any residence built above.

In the event that on-site parking is too limited to satisfy the city's minimum parking requirements for these standalone commercial uses, we encourage the developer to focus on standalone at the SW corner, consistent with our 35th Ave NE Corridor Specific Design Guideline CS2.C1 on Page 34 of the Future 35th Ave NE Plan, and maximizing the commercial space and ceiling heights to the greatest extent per PL3.C on Page 35 of the Future 35th Ave NE Plan.

If live-work units must be included in the approved plan, these units should be concentrated to the NW corner of the development and along NE 94th Street. Further, these live-work units should be setback from 35th Ave NE in accordance with PL3.B2 on Page 35 of the Future 35th Ave NE Plan, providing a public/private barrier for those who live in these units and avoiding the appearance of a closed business district when the residents of these units ultimately close their blinds in perpetuity.

Much to Like

While our public comments focus on the proposed live-work units and our frustration that the public comments provided by the 35th Ave Committee do not appear to have been fully considered, there is much to like with the proposal as it has been revised.

- As noted in the ADR Report, we too appreciate the step-down in bulk and massing towards both 35th Ave NE and NE 94th Street and articulation of the building to provide architectural interest.
- We appreciate the absence of curb cuts along 35th Ave NE and vehicular access to/from provided by NE 94th Street.
- We appreciate the thoughtfulness in material selection and color palette.
- We appreciate the landscaping and street trees.
- And we appreciate the new residential units provided by this project and look forward to the new residents who will undoubtedly contribute positively to our community in the future.

On behalf of our 7-person board, we appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments and thank you in advance for fully considering them. We would be delighted to have a representative of the developer present this proposal to our community at an upcoming virtual board meeting on the evening of the first Tuesday in each month, if they would be willing to attend. Please feel free to contact me at president@wedgwoodcc.org if you would like to discuss further.

Respectfully,

Per Johnson (He, Him)
President
Wedgwood Community Council