



# **DESIGN REVIEW #2**







# **JOHN STREET APARTMENTS**

975 JOHN STREET LLC | ANKROM MOISAN ARCHITECTS

975 JOHN STREET, SEATTLE, WA 98109

**DPD PROJECT NO: 3007906** 

**SEPTEMBER 7, 2011** 





#### A-4: HUMAN ACTIVITY

New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

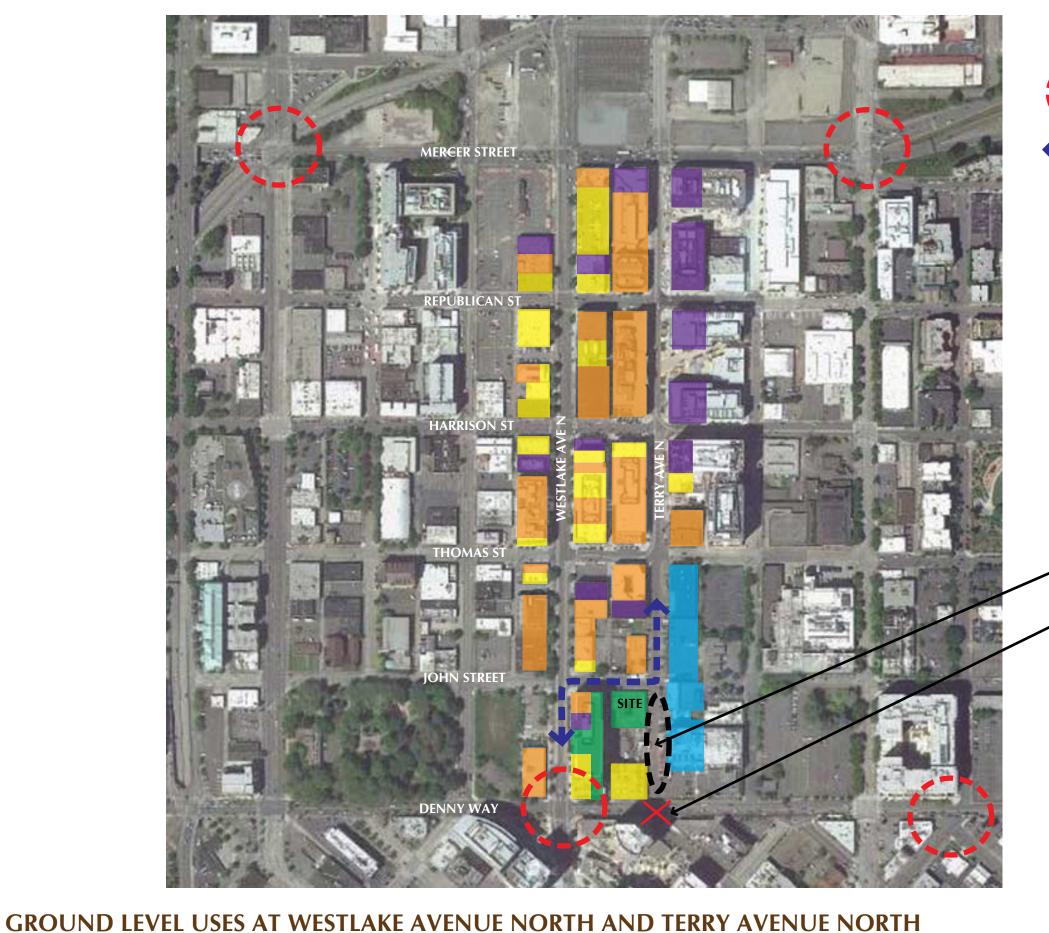
The Board noted that Terry Avenue North is a pedestrian street and provides a high level of pedestrian activity between Denny Way and Lake Union, as confirmed in the Terry Avenue North Street Design Guide-lines. Recent leasing activity in the area indicates that small retail spaces would be in high demand. It's important to provide an active and visually interesting street level use at this street frontage to respond to the context of the area and the development of the pedestrian corridor. The Board agreed that the proposed residential uses with private patios at the street level will not achieve the level of human activity and interaction needed at this street frontage. The Board recommended that the street level use on Terry include a more active use, such as commercial or at the very least, residential amenity space. The design of this street level use should be consistent with the glass storefront system shown at the residential corner entry, and may include interesting materials and colors for visual interest. The Terry Ave N street frontage should include continuous overhead weather protection for pedestrians. The Board also noted that the streetscape design on both Terry Ave N and N John St should be consistent with the approved Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines. The Board noted that the curbless design shown in these Guidelines could be appropriate at this site. The applicant should demonstrate how the proposed streetscape is consistent with these guidelines, and include any feedback about these details from SDOT through the Street Improvement Permit process.

#### **RESPONSE**

- 1
- Per the Terry Ave N Street Design Guidelines, Denny is not considered a viable gateway for Terry Ave N due to topography and vehicle speeds. Pedestrian crossing across Denny is difficult and should be discouraged. West-lake and John Street are more appropriate as the main pedestrian connections to Terry Ave N. (pg. 24-25)
- Per the SDOT Director's Rule 3-05 and DPD Director's Rule 11-2005, Terry is a 'heart location' and should be rich in pedestrian amenities including special paving and landscaping, art, and public open space. There are no specific requirements for retail or amenity space.
- The South Lake Union Design Guidelines state that where appropriate, consider a reduction in the required amount of commercial and retail space at the ground level, such as in transition zones between commercial and residential areas. Place retail in areas that are conducive to the use and will be successful. (pg. 10) We consider our project in a transition zone because we are between Denny and John Street and most of the major retail/commercial activity occurs North of John Street or on Westlake Ave. Therefore, retail is not appropriate at this site and will most likely be difficult to lease.
- According to an article published by the Seattle Times on July 30, 2011, leasing retail within the city is still extremely difficult and often not viable for developers.
- Our studies of moving the amenities to the street level of Terry Ave N do not improve the level of human activity or the visual appearance of Terry Ave N. Removing the patios and planters of the residential units and replacing them with storefront creates a more static facade and less lively pedestrian experience. Refer to the following elevation/perspective studies of amenity along Terry Ave N compared to the revised original design.
- The residential units could be converted to retail in the future when retail is more feasible. We have attached a plan study showing that option.
- Per A-6 of the South Lake Union Design Guidelines, for residential projects, the space between the building and sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors (pg. 5, 13). We feel that stepping the units back and providing planters and private decks along Terry Ave N meet the privacy requirements but also create spaces for residents to interact and engage the street, creating a transition between the public and private areas as stated in the guideline for a residential project. Also, additional landscaping and benches have been added along Terry Ave N, which provide more opportunities for human interaction.
- Refer to Recommendation E-1 for the proposed streetscape design concept and landscape design response to the Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines.
- Weather protection along Terry Ave isn't appropriate because we are not proposing retail at this location. The residential units are set back and additional canopies would reduce the amount of daylight the units receive.
- In conclusion, after studying options to locate retail or move the amenity spaces along Terry Ave N, it was determined our original design is the most viable and successful option for this site and provides the most human activity.

### **IOHN STREET APARTMENTS**

**DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS** 





#### **GATEWAY LOCATIONS**

(REFERENCED FROM PAGE 7 OF THE SOUTH LAKE UNION DESIGN GUIDELINES)

#### PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO TERRY

(REFERENCED FROM PAGES 24-25 OF THE TERRY AVE N STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES)

#### **GROUND LEVEL USES:**

**RETAIL / RESTAURANT** 

WAREHOUSE / BUSINESS

**BUSINESS / COMMERCIAL / OFFICE** 

RESIDENTIAL

VACANT SPACE

TRANSITION AREA BETWEEN DENNY WAY AND JOHN STREET

DENNY WAY IS NOT CONSIDERED A VIABLE GATEWAY FOR TERRY AVE N DUE TO TOPOGRAPHY AND VEHICLE SPEEDS AND PEDESTRIAN CROSSING SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED; WESTLAKE AND JOHN STREET ARE MORE APPROPRIATE AS PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS TO TERRY AVE N (PER PAGES 24-25 OF THE TERRY AVE N STREET **DESIGN GUIDELINES)** 

## The Seattle Times Winner of Eight Pulitzer Prizes

#### **Business / Technology**

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#### Developers struggle to get ground-floor retail leases

Developers and landlords throughout the region are still struggling to fill ground-floor retail space that sprouted up before the recession.

By Christine Harvey

Seattle Times business reporter



They're all over — newly constructed office and residential buildings sitting over a wealth of emptiness on the first floor. The signs in the windows read: "retail space for rent."

Developers and landlords throughout the region are still struggling to fill ground-floor retail space that sprouted up before the recession.

Finding the right occupants for such spots "is a lot of brain surgery for not a lot of return," said Tom Graff, president of the commercial office at Ewing & Clark.

He has been on the hunt for retail tenants since construction of Aspira Apartments, a 37-story high-rise at Terry Avenue and Stewart Street in downtown Seattle completed last year. Location, parking issues and costly tenant improvements, such as plumbing and

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bathroom installations, make ground-floor retail a challenging proposition, he said.

"If you're facing Nordstrom, your space is going to get leased. But what about the other hundred

blocks of downtown?" Graff said.

#### In heart of Seattle

In downtown Seattle, retailers and services account for 71 percent of all street-level businesses, according to the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA). It includes cafes, restaurants, yoga studios, hair salons, banks and boutiques that generate an active street life.

"Retailers are magnets for pedestrian foot traffic in downtown," said Kate Joncas, president at the downtown association. "They're the sizzle on the steak."

But with the retail market's slow recovery, empty ground-floor spaces are becoming a headache for landlords.

"We have more small-shop retail space than there are tenants for, and it will be that way for a few years," said Jeremy Moller, commercial real-estate broker with JSH Properties.

At the end of 2010, about 300 such retail spaces were vacant in downtown Seattle, the association reported. Jon Scholes, the association's vice president of advocacy and development, blamed the lack of market-rate housing in downtown Seattle for keeping retail down.

"Retail follows jobs, residents and tourism," he said. "We've seen lots and lots of jobs follow new development, but we need residents to round out the market for retail."

Scholes said the Downtown Seattle Association is most concerned about Pioneer Square, the Chinatown International District and Belltown, where retail vacancies are the highest and lack the most affordable housing. Over the next 12 to 18 months, new housing projects in areas such as South Lake Union should help to fill the void, he said.

#### Suburban woes

Vacancies outside the downtown core have prompted city leaders to propose eliminating the requirement that developers include ground-floor space for businesses in apartment projects for neighborhood commercial districts.

Roger Valdez, who writes a blog about Seattle's land-use codes, said current zoning constrains the natural supply and demand of what makes for a successful project. Outlying areas, where there are many streets with low volumes of foot traffic, are suffering most, he said.

"There are areas where commercial use doesn't make a lot of sense," said Bryan Stevens, spokesman for Seattle's Department of Planning and Development.

He said neighborhoods such as Capitol Hill, Green Lake and Fremont would benefit from the change because while some streets are zoned for commercial use, many others are residential.

Community land use and economic groups have recommended that the city keep shops clustered in shopping centers instead of spread out throughout a neighborhood.

That's why requiring retail space in neighborhood areas is the wrong strategy for both business and the city, said Steve Johnson, director of Seattle's Office of Economic Development.

"Businesses congregate where there is a synergy," he said. "By requiring them to spread out over large areas, we are reinforcing the development the city should be moving away from."

#### **Mixed reactions**

Developers building projects in neighborhood areas view the proposal as good news. "Having the

flexibility to decide what works for my project is something the zoning code hasn't included in the past," said Bruce Lorig, manager of Lorig Associates, developer of a mixed residential and retail project where Vitamilk Dairy once operated in Green Lake.

He said current rules require developers to create retail space, then find the right tenants or bear the expense if the space is left empty.

Not everyone welcomes the proposal, though.

Ellen Hewitt, a Green Lake homeowner, said she doesn't want any changes that would make it easier to build office or apartment buildings on quiet streets.

"Adding more construction to the unfortunate overbuilding that took place in the recent past would damage the neighborhood," she said. "We are a neighborhood community; we are not here to provide more density."

#### Some concerns

Charles Staadecker, owner of real-estate brokerage firm Staadecker Real Estate, said while he supports the idea, he too has concerns.

"The idea of a flexible policy is a good thing," he said. "But I hope the city would encourage developers to elevate retail as a priority rather than default into just creating another apartment building."

The Circa Green Lake Apartments, on East Green Lake Way, is one of the neighborhood projects that would be affected by the proposal. Its ground-floor space is currently about 20 percent vacant, according to CB Richard Ellis.

Zoëyogurt, a frozen-yogurt shop, leased a storefront in the building in March. Months later, the space next door still sits empty.

"Getting retail space filled up here is taking a little longer than we expected," said the shop's owner. Tom Hudson.

But he's hopeful the empty space will fill up and contribute to a vigorous neighborhood business scene. A restaurant or clothing store, rather than another apartment, would complement his shop and increase foot traffic, he said.

"Having residential above and commercial below is really the only way I would like to see things," Hudson said.

Dennis Meier, strategic adviser for Seattle's Department of Planning and Development, said a boost to vacant storefronts, especially in downtown Seattle, should follow increased leasing activity in the office and residential markets this year.

That was the story for Graff of Ewing & Clark, who said downtown strollers can soon expect to walk by Aspira Apartments and see a restaurant and a hair salon.

"Retailers on the ground floor are a much more delicate flower, because they are dependent on the whims of the shoppers," he said. "When you add strong office tenants and residents into the mix, that will help lease the empty space and keep it filled."

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VACANT RETAIL SPACE AT HARRISON ST



**INACTIVE OFFICE SPACE ALONG TERRY AVE N** 



VACANT RETAIL SPACE AT WESTLAKE AVE N



**INACTIVE OFFICE SPACE ALONG TERRY AVE N** 



VACANT RETAIL SPACE AT WESTLAKE AVE N



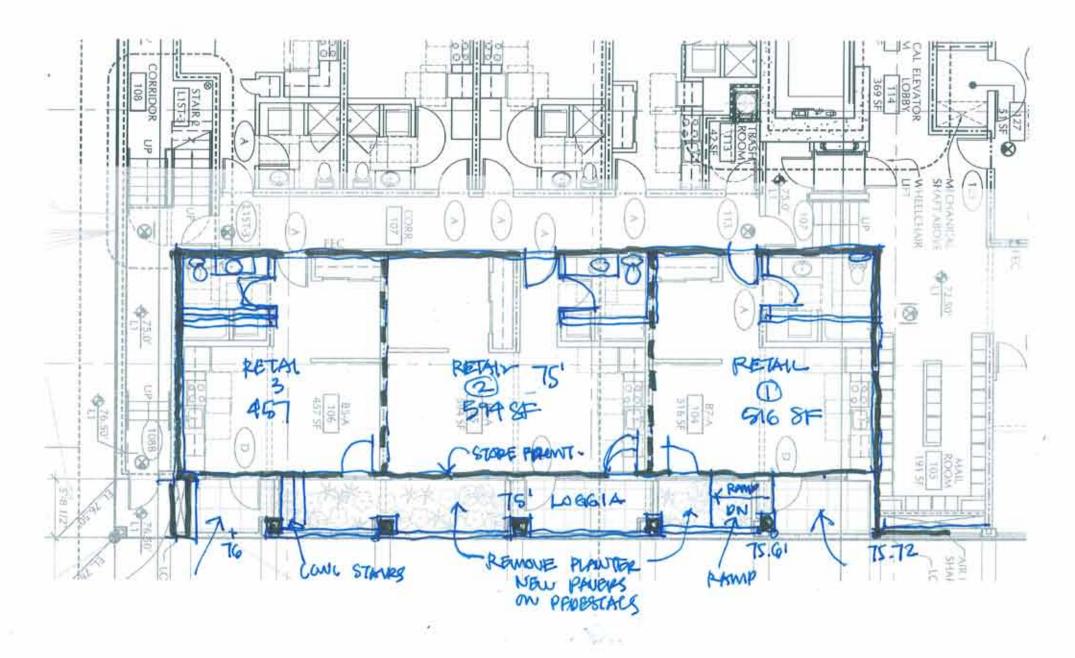
INACTIVE STOREFRONT DISPLAY ALONG TERRY AVE N







 $\left(3\right)$ 



This sketch shows how the 3 residential units could be converted to 3 small retail spaces in the future.





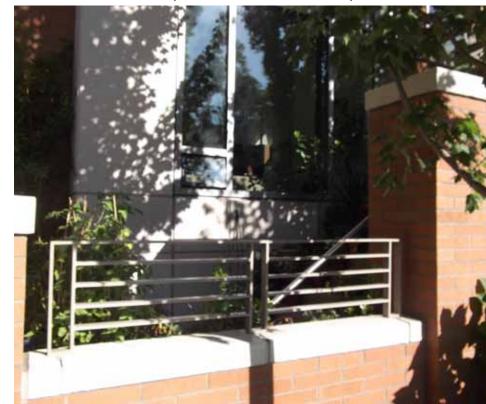
GROUND LEVEL PLAN WITH AMENITY SPACE ALONG TERRY AVENUE NORTH (NOT PROPOSED)



**GROUND LEVEL PLAN WITH RESIDENTIAL ALONG TERRY AVENUE NORTH (PROPOSED)** 



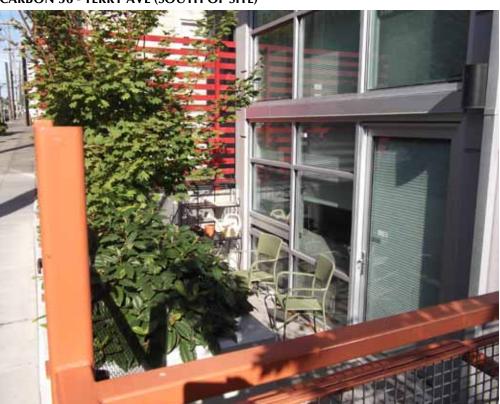
AMLI 535 - PONTIUS AVE (CASCADE NEIGHBORHOOD)



LIVE 2200 - LENORA ST (SOUTH OF SITE)



CARBON 56 - TERRY AVE (SOUTH OF SITE)



**VEER LOFTS - HARRISON ST (NW OF SITE)** 



**BAGLEY LOFTS - WALLINGFORD** 



LINK APARTMENTS - WEST SEATTLE TRIANGLE









VIEW OF GROUND LEVEL ALONG TERRY AVENUE NORTH (PREVIOUS DESIGN)











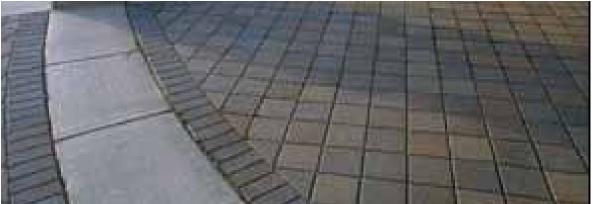
RANDOM OPENINGS ("CRACKS") IN PAVEMENT
TO ALLOW FOR GROUNDCOVER TO CREEP UNTO
PAVEMENT

CONCRETE WALK (FINISH TO MATCH JOHN ST)



**JOHN STREET APARTMENTS** 







**ACTIVATION OF TERRY AVENUE NORTH SIDEWALK** 

#### **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.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Board noted that the proposed rooftop mechanical equipment will be fully enclosed, and they responded positively to the overall massing and upper level facade treatment. The Board expressed concern about the proposed use and street level design at Terry Ave N. The Board recommended a street level use at Terry Ave N that will generate human activity, and revise the street level design to include human-scale high quality durable materials with visual interest. The Board also expressed concern about the design of the base of the building at the northwest corner. The proposed garage level was shown in finished concrete, with cementitious panel and plank above. Windows at the northwest corner would have a sill height approximately 8' above the sidewalk. The Board expressed concern about the clear visual division of the facade at the garage level and the amount of blank wall adjacent to the pedestrian experience at this corner. The Board recommended that the base of the building and the garage level should be consistently clad in a human-scaled material. The Board also discussed the application of materials on the west facade, specifically the layering of materials and colors without much depth to the layers. The Board recommended that the layering of materials should respond to modulation in the building, or the depth of the layering should be more pronounced.

#### **RESPONSE**



- Refer to A-4 for the responses to Terry Ave N human activity.
- We have provided studies showing a concrete base at L1 along Terry Ave N, John Street and a portion of the Alley. We believe this is a durable and high quality material. We will develop texture with reveals and board forming to provide visual interest and human scale.
- We have added a metal panel to the exterior skin palette, which simplifies the elevations and ties each facade together more cohesively. On Terry Ave N and John Street we have pushed the building envelope back 12" to create greater modulation within the facade.
- We have also simplified the palette by removing the horizontal cement board lap siding from the project.







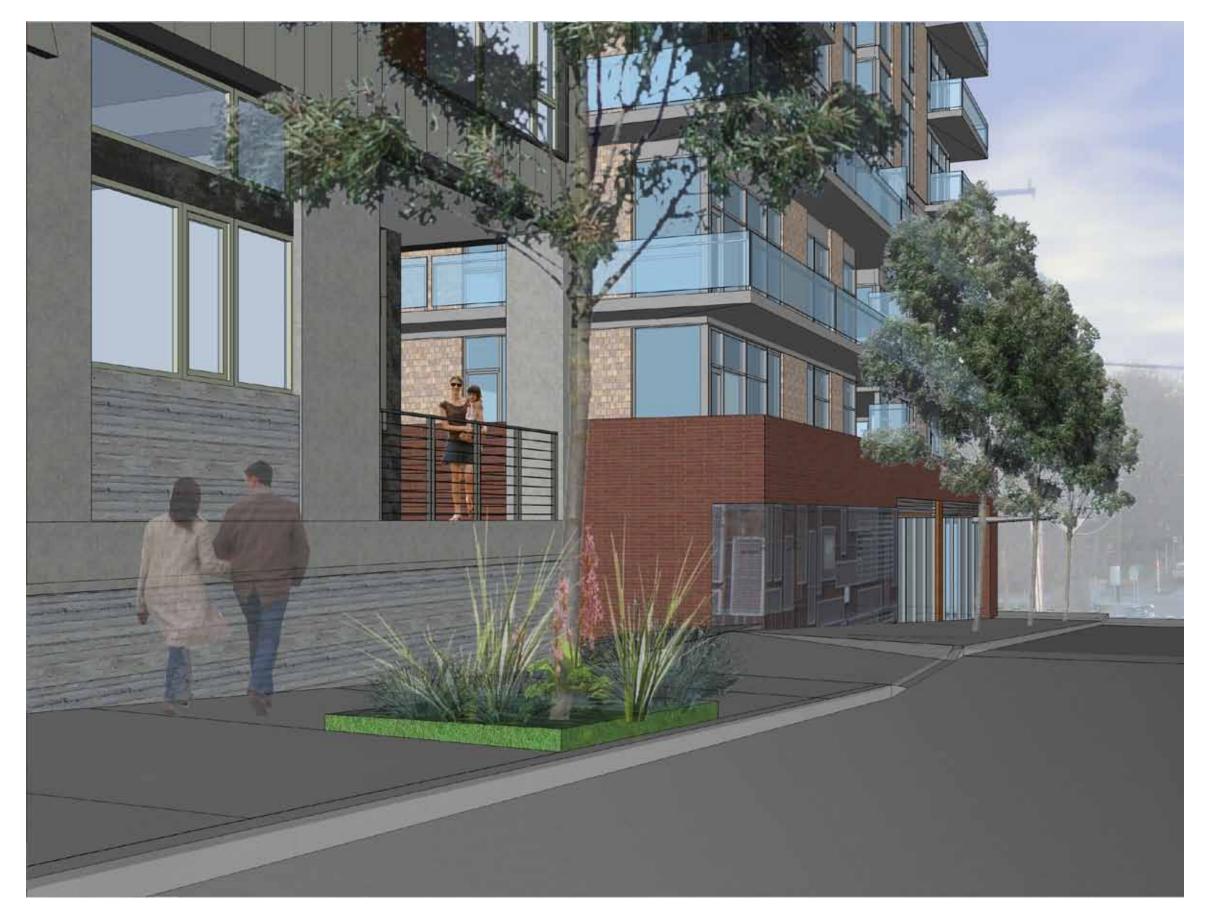




CORNER VIEW AT JOHN STREET AND ALLEY (PROPOSED)



CORNER VIEW AT JOHN STREET AND ALLEY (PREVIOUS DESIGN)













**METAL PANELS** 



**VERTICAL FIBER CEMENT PANELS - SABRE GRAY 1482** 



**ORANGE ACCENT - CARAMEL LATTE 2166-20** 



POURED IN PLACE CONCRETE



POURED IN PLACE CONCRETE **BOARD FORMED TEXTURE** 

#### D-12: RESIDENTIAL ENTRIES AND TRANSITIONS

For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Board noted that the proposed cementitious panels on the columns adjacent to the residential entry will experience a high degree of traffic and will likely not offer a durable finish. The Board recommended that the columns should instead be clad in high quality very durable finish that provides visual interest at the entry. The Board also recommended that the applicant modify the design to enhance the entry. Enhancements could include a decorative or emphasized canopy, larger signage, interesting materials and colors, decorative lighting, and art or sculpture.

#### **RESPONSE**



- The columns at the ground level will be poured-in-place concrete, a high quality durable material.
- The signage and materials at the entry have been developed and enhanced to provide more activation and visual interest.
- A bench that matches those proposed benches along Terry Ave N has been added to the entry area for residential and guest use.
- The entry is paved and open, which allows foot traffic to flow from both Terry Ave N and John Street.



VIEW OF ENTRY AT TERRY AVENUE NORTH AND JOHN STREET (PROPOSED)



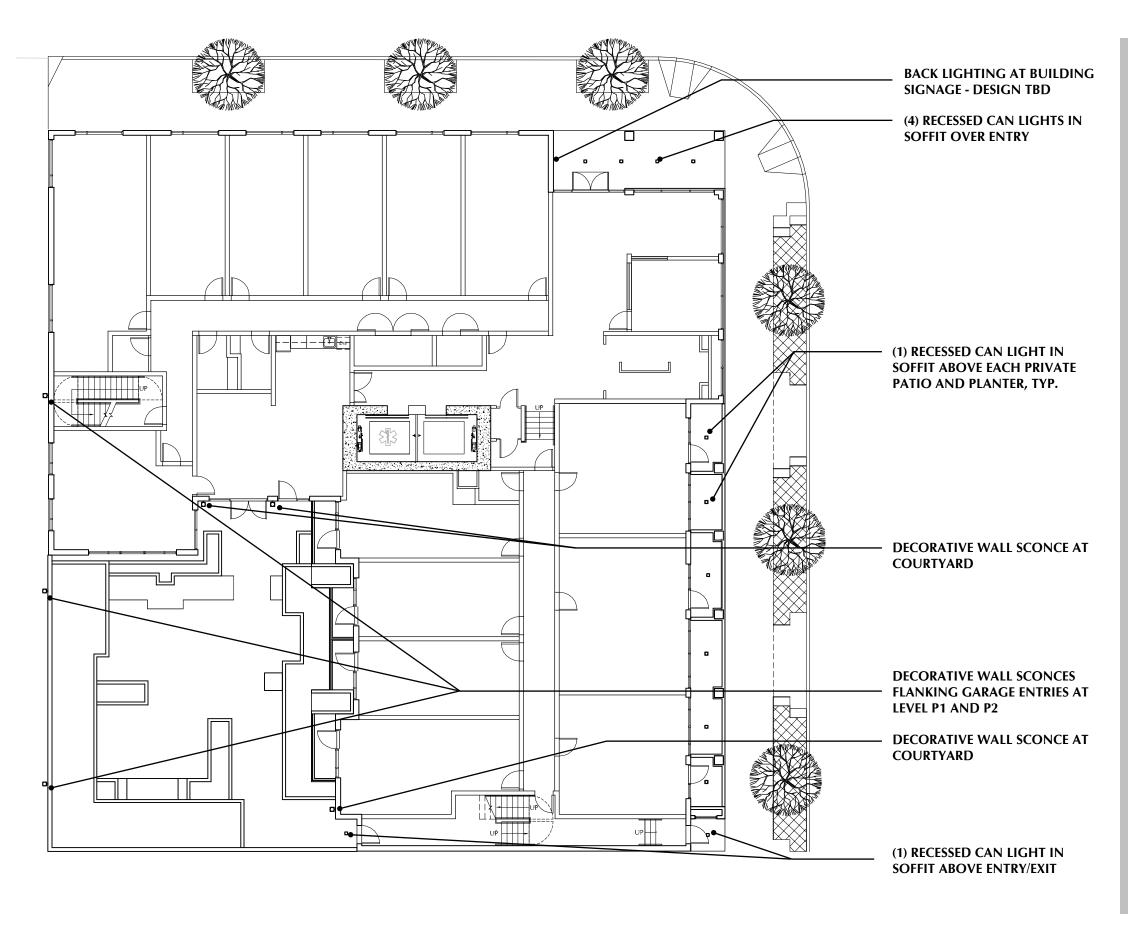
VIEW OF ENTRY AT TERRY AVENUE NORTH AND JOHN STREET (PREVIOUS DESIGN)













### **RECESSED CAN LIGHT**



**DECORATIVE WALL SCONCE** 









#### E-1: LANDSCAPING TO REINFORCE DESIGN CONTINUITY WITH ADJACENT SITES

Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Board appreciated the response to the Rollin Street Flats landscape design, and requested additional information about how the proposed Terry Ave N streetscape relates to the Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines, as described in response to A-4.

#### **RESPONSE**



#### **Proposed Streetscape Concept:**

- The general concept is based on the idea to demonstrate the industrial history of the street while allowing nature the ability to have some reclamation on the area as described per the Terry Avenue Design Guidelines. Industrial design features (benches) would be more predominate viewing south towards downtown, while natural features more predominate (hiding benches as much as possible) viewing north towards Lake Union.
- The use of materials proposed such as pavers/stamped concrete, planting type (big canopy trees and low planting at ground level) and plant location (allowing to creep over hardscape), seating amenities (industrial style wood benches) and lighting as described per the Terry Avenue Design Guidelines and SDOT feedback, are proposed to help enhance the industrial/natural character as well as define street vs. pedestrian zones.
- Spaces are designed to allow both physical and visual connections between the residential units, the street and pedestrian zones, while still defining pedestrian areas by including amenities such as seating and landscaping per the Terry Avenue Design Guidelines. This is accomplished by low plants and allowing open movement between street and pedestrian zones.

#### **SDOT Street Improvement Permit Feedback:**

- No amenities within 3' from outside face of curb
- Minimum sidewalk width from outside face of curb to building is 14'
- Sidewalks and curbs designed per SDOT standards and direction during the SIP process
- 60% SIP approval has been reached with SDOT

#### **PLANT LEGEND**

**TREES** 

ULMUS 'FRONTIER'/FRONTIER ELM

ZELKOVA SERRATA'MUSHASHINO'/MUSHASHINO ZELKOVA

#### **SHRUBS**

PRUNUS LAUROCERASUS 'OTTO LUYKEN' OTTO LUYKEN LAUREL

TAXUS BACCATA 'REPANDENS'/SPREADING ENGLISH YEW

#### **PERENNIALS**

- BERGENIA CORDIFOLIA 'BRESSINGHAM WHITE'/ BRESSINGHAM WHITE BERGINIA
- BERGENIA CORDIFOLIA 'MORNING RED' MORNING RED BERGENIA
- CAREX MORROWII 'ICE DANCE'/ICE DANCE SEDGE
- HEBE ALBICANS 'RED EDGE'/RED EDGE HEBE
- \* HELICTOTRICHON SEMPERVIRENS/BLUE OAT GRASS
- SARCOCOCCA HOOKERIANA VAR. HUMILIS/ DWARF SWEET BOX

#### GROUND COVER

ARCTOSAPHYLOS UVA-URSI/KINNIKINNICK
FRAGARIA CHILOENSIS/SAND STRAWBERRY

