



## INITIAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number: 3002133

Address: 1650 East Olive Way

Applicant: Eric Blank of Nicholson Kovalchick Architects

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, January 19, 2011

Board Members Present: Evan Bourquard  
Dawn Bushnaq  
Clint Keithley  
Lisa Picard  
Wolf Saar  
Sharon Sutton (chair)

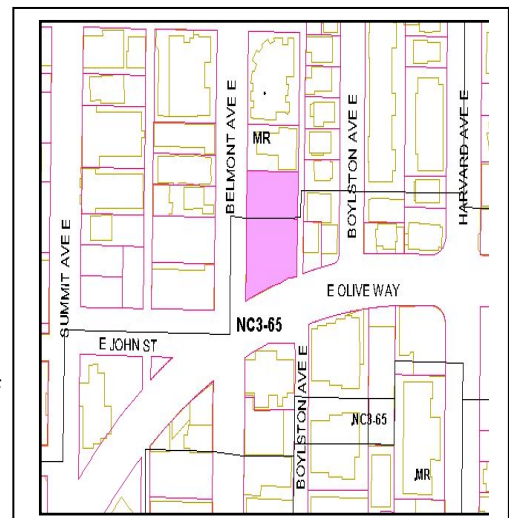
DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Split zoned, the parcel with the commercial structure has a Neighborhood Commercial Three with a 65 foot height limit (NC3P 65) zoning classification and the northern parcel with two, four-unit buildings has a Midrise (MR) designation with a 60' height limit.

Nearby Zones: The two major zoning designations (NC3 65 and MR) generally mirror the land use patterns. The commercial zone follows the curve of E. Olive Way extending east from I-5 to Broadway. Extensive areas of MR zoning sandwich the commercial corridor on the north and south.



Lot Area: 14,630 square feet

The site comprises two parcels containing two residential structures and one commercial building. The latter currently houses B & O Espresso a well known coffee house on Capitol Hill. Split zoned, the parcel with the commercial structure has a Neighborhood Commercial Three with a 65 foot height limit (NC3P 65) zoning classification and the northern parcel with two, four-unit buildings has a Midrise (MR) designation with a 60' height limit. The development site lies within the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village and possesses a Pedestrian One (P-1) zone designation. The city of Seattle designated Olive Way as a SEPA scenic route. Neighborhood specific design review guidelines for Capitol Hill apply to the site. In addition, the parcels lie within the Capitol Hill Station Area Overlay District.

The two parcels, comprising approximately 14,630 square feet, rise nearly 13 feet from the site's southwest corner to the northeast corner. The alley bordering the eastern edge of the site has a width of 12 feet. A two foot alley dedication may be required pending DPD and SDOT review.

Access: Applicant proposes vehicular access along Belmont Avenue East.

The neighborhood, a dense, active commercial and residential district, is served by several commercial corridors. East Olive Way, a major vehicular and transit route, connects Capitol Hill and downtown. The character of the side streets leading to E. Olive Way comprise mostly multi-family buildings ranging in ages from over one hundred years to a few recently completed projects. Over a period of many years, the area has witnessed the conversion of single family houses to commercial uses along Olive Way and to multi-family housing on Belmont Ave. The latter has a series of traditional brick apartment buildings, international style inspired apartments constructed in the 1960s, and single family houses sitting above terrace garages. Nearby designated city landmarks include the San Remo Apartments, the Pantages House, and the Ward House. Notable views are of the downtown skyline, which can be seen from ground level along many of the streets and avenues including E. Olive Way. From upper levels, more distant views include the Space Needle, Queen Anne Hill and the Olympic Mountains.

To the north of the site lies a two-story, brick clad 12-unit apartment building; to the west across Belmont Ave. E. are several apartment buildings and a parking lot. The Sealth Vista Apartments contain 40 units and was built in 1923. Across E. Olive Way is a two-story glass, steel and masonry commercial structure (1966). On the east across the alley, a single family house and two office buildings front E. Olive Way and Boylston Ave. E.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a six-story, mixed-use building on East Olive Way at the northeast intersection of E. Olive Way and Belmont Avenue East. Uses would include street level commercial, five floors of residential units, and a below parking garage.

<b>INITIAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: January 19, 2011</b>
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## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant refined the “C” shaped scheme for the Initial Recommendation meeting. Programmatically, the commercial spaces facing E. Olive Way step down the slope and turn the corner on to Belmont Ave. E. Along Belmont Ave. a small courtyard serves as an entry for the residential lobby. Two live/work units separate the courtyard and the garage entry. The applicant proposes six and one-half floors of residential units above the ground floor. Three units would have pedestrian access from the alley.

Overall a pier and spandrel system dominates the south and west facades with a materials change from predominately brick at the lower floors to a metal panel siding at the upper levels. A vertical gasket, housing balconies, divides the south elevation’s composition into two major segments---a narrow, two bay wide eastern mass and a lower, four bay wide volume. A chamfered corner replete with a metal and glass bay window system visually turns the corner. Beneath the canopy at this important corner lies an entrance into the commercial space. The applicant proposes to have room for a sidewalk café in the Belmont Ave. right of way. The west façade, a tripartite scheme, sets nearly equal masses, pushed close to the property line, flanking a small courtyard. A series of balconies overlook the entry court. The southern-most portion of the Belmont façade has a traditional base, middle and top that continues with the exception of the corner bay the pattern established along Olive Way E. The primary elevation of the courtyard varies in language from the stronger pier and spandrel motif. The north flank of the west elevation picks up the theme established earlier but the height of the brick is reduced to three levels and the grey metal panels predominate above it. The upper most floor sets back from the dominant vertical plane.

The north elevation, defined by an array of setbacks, has a less well defined composition. A blank wall faces the adjacent apartment building and brick continuing from the alley and west elevations partially wraps on to the facades. The alley elevation has two prominent sections. One closest to the alley continues the brick pier and spandrel system established on the south as well as the metal panels above it. A garden wall with three entry gates defines the units with direct access to the alley. Wood siding further defines the lower units. White or cream colored metal panels comprise the majority of the wall set back from the alley. Two columns of balconies with orange accent color decks provide residential character to the recessed elevation.

The applicant proposes four departures in the Midrise zone and one in the Neighborhood Commercial zone. In the former, the departures would alter code regulations for front and side setbacks, parking access and the sight triangle. The change in the development standard for the NC zone involves height of nonresidential spaces. See the end of this document for more details.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately nine members of the public signed-in at this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

### **Materials & Color:**

- The orange panels are bewildering. Orange cheapens the building's appearance.
- Use more texture where the façade is flat.
- Iron work could be better.
- The metal siding has a cheap appearance.
- The metal spandrel is too busy---visually distracting.
- Overall too many materials.
- Use frosted windows on the commercial use along the alley.
- Use more wood at the pedestrian level.
- The brick color should be more brown/tan than red/orange. The orange/red color would cheapen the building's appearance.

### **Façade appearance:**

- Too much glazing at the chamfered corner. It makes the corner look taller and doesn't appear characteristic of the neighborhood.
- Too much modulation.
- Texture is more important than modulation.

### **Detailing:**

- Drawings should be of large enough scale to illustrate/demonstrate high level of detail at building base.

### **Program:**

- Live/work units will have their blinds closed all the time---essentially a blank wall.
- Courtyard does not seem viable. It won't be used. It is too small.
- Decks hangover the sidewalk and should be placed within the property line so tenants don't spit and throw objects down on pedestrians.

### **Landscaping:**

- Proposed paving patterns are nice. A wide sidewalk is best.
- Art should be placed within and adjacent to the street ROW.

### **Massing:**

- Setbacks should be greater, particularly on the north and east sides of the structure.
- Push the structure toward the sidewalk and eliminate the outdoor seating. At the café, have big windows that swing open during nice weather.
- Place the setbacks elsewhere on the project.

### **Height, Bulk & Scale:**

- Height, bulk and scale are all overdone. Too much structure.

- Provide additional setbacks on the north elevation.
- Reductions to the building bulk should occur at the alley and Belmont Ave. Upper level setbacks needed.
- The Board should consider setbacks in the NC zone.
- There should be a 7' side setback on the MR parcel next to the NC parcel.

**Security:**

- Ensure that security lighting is placed along the alley.

**Streetscape Compatibility & Human Activity:**

- The sidewalk along Olive Way E. should be wider. This is a heavily trafficked sidewalk.
- The setback on Belmont Ave. should be five feet not 2 inches.
- Outdoor cafe seating should not occur in the sidewalk. It presents an obstruction to pedestrians.

**Respect for Adjacent Sites**

- Creating setbacks on the alley was guidance provided by the Board at the EDG meetings. The setbacks on the alley would provide solar access to the neighbors to the east.

**Transition Between Residence and Street:**

- The courtyard keeps getting smaller. On the "C" scheme (3/4/2009 meeting), the courtyard was twice as deep.

**Departures:**

- The courtyard is a zoning requirement and should not be included in any area offset considerations.
- Side setback. Five feet is preferable and code required. Should not be 2 inches at north property line.
- How do all of the departures allow the project to better meet the established guidelines? It is unclear.
- The departures requested do not allow the project to better meet the guidelines.

**Other:**

- Applicant should follow Capitol Hill Neighborhood Guidelines. The Board should enforce them.
- The Affordable Housing Incentive is being used in a manner that is unintended by the City of Seattle.
- New Board members will not have heard the public comments preferring a more traditional style for the building.
- The property across Belmont Ave. E. from the site is not SEPA exempt. Both properties are owned by the same person.

Letters and emails addressing design review may be read at DPD upon request.

<b>PRIORITIES &amp; BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
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After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

<b>A. Site Planning</b>
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- A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics.** The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

Responding to the Board's early design guidance (March 4, 2009), the applicant placed the driveway close to the north property line separated by live/work units from the courtyard. The Board appreciated this change.

- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility.** The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Retain or increase the width of sidewalks.
- Provide street trees with tree grates or in planter strips, using appropriate species to provide summer shade, winter light, and year-round visual interest.
- Vehicle entrances to buildings should not dominate the streetscape.
- Orient townhouse structures to provide pedestrian entrances to the sidewalk.
- For buildings that span a block and "front" on two streets, each street frontage should receive individual and detailed site planning and architectural design treatments to complement the established streetscape character.
- New development in commercial zones should be sensitive to neighboring residential zones. Examples include lots on Broadway that extend to streets with residential character, such as Nagle Place or 10th or Harvard Avenues East. While a design with a commercial character is appropriate along Broadway, compatibility with residential character should be emphasized along the other streets.

The applicant set back the residential units on the east façade away from the alley to allow a small amount of entry and patio. This complied with earlier Board guidance.

- A-4 Human Activity.** New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Provide for sidewalk retail opportunities and connections by allowing for the opening of the storefront to the street and displaying goods to the pedestrian.

- Provide for outdoor eating and drinking opportunities on the sidewalk by allowing for the opening the restaurant or café windows to the sidewalk and installing outdoor seating while maintaining pedestrian flow.
- Install clear glass windows along the sidewalk to provide visual access into the retail or dining activities that occur inside. Do not block views into the interior spaces with the backs of shelving units or with posters.

Various iterations of the design have reduced the size of the courtyard. Plantings reduce its usefulness but it would function as an entry court and house limited outdoor seating for a possible restaurant.

Responding to the Board's guidance, the floor of the commercial space along E. Olive Way steps up in plane to allow access along the street.

**A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites. Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.**

A brief discussion focused on the outdoor space defined by the northern massing of the proposed structure and the adjacent apartment building.

**A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Incorporate quasi-public open space with new residential development or redevelopment, with special focus on corner landscape treatments and courtyard entries.
- Create substantial courtyard-style open space that is visually accessible to the public view.
- Set back development where appropriate to preserve a view corridor.
- Set back upper floors to provide solar access to the sidewalk and/or neighboring properties.
- Mature street trees have a high value to the neighborhood and departures from development standards that an arborist determines would impair the health of a mature tree are discouraged.
- Use landscape materials that are sustainable, requiring minimal irrigation or fertilizer.
- Use porous paving materials to minimize stormwater run-off.

At the initial Recommendation meeting, the applicant presented a scheme complying with the Board's earlier guidance requesting small secure open spaces separating the lower units from the alley.

## **B. Height, Bulk and Scale**

- 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.

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Break up building mass by incorporating different façade treatments to give the impression of multiple, small-scale buildings, in keeping with the established development pattern.
- Consider existing views to downtown Seattle, the Space Needle, Elliott Bay and the Olympic Mountains, and incorporate site and building design features that may help to preserve those views from public rights-of-way.
- Design new buildings to maximize the amount of sunshine on adjacent sidewalks throughout the year.

The Board requested that the setbacks relate to material changes. The Belmont Ave setback in the MR zone did not appear to be meaningful. It should be greater and in keeping with the residential quality of the street. The MR zone should be acknowledged. In addition, the Board asked the architect to revisit the setback at the northeast corner which comprises a clearstory. The Board also discussed whether setbacks should occur at significant material changes.

## **C. Architectural Elements and Materials**

- C-1 Architectural Context.** New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

Unconvinced by the massing of the northern half of the structure, the Board requested that the architect present a more residentially scaled building along Belmont Ave.

- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency.** Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.



**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Incorporate signage that is consistent with the existing or intended character of the building and the neighborhood.
- Solid canopies or fabric awnings over the sidewalk are preferred.
- Avoid using vinyl awnings that also serve as big, illuminated signs.
- Use materials and design that is compatible with the structures in the vicinity if those represent the desired neighborhood character.

The proposed design lacked a common language. The Board members found it difficult to discern a clear overriding idea or parti. The facades appeared more like an awkwardly constructed collage than a well conceived composition. The gasket on the south façade, the treatment of the chamfered corner, and the numerous materials and glazing systems subverted the larger issue of revealing a building in-sync with its larger context and its own sense of compositional integrity. The chamfer and its bay separate the south and west facades rather than unites them by its ungainly size and proportion and the discontinuity created by breaking with the brick and datum line. The Board recommended better proportions and a design consistent with the rest of the building.

The relationship of the lower and upper portions of the building also appears inconsistent. The concrete cap dividing the brick face from the upper level metal panels varies particularly at the west elevation's northern most section. The three story brick base does not appear to relate to its context. Both the recessed gasket on the south façade and recessed wall of the courtyard have a separate language with its own window treatments and balconies that have little in common with the more richly detailed brick facades and the grey metal panels.

Overall, the Board requests a simpler more restrained building, a structure more reminiscent of the architect's work displayed in the back of the Recommendation packet.

**C-3 Human Scale. The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements, and details to achieve a good human scale.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Incorporate building entry treatments that are arched or framed in a manner that welcomes people and protects them from the elements and emphasizes the building's architecture.
- Improve and support pedestrian-orientation by using components such as: non-reflective storefront windows and transoms; pedestrian-scaled awnings; architectural detailing on the first floor; and detailing at the roof line.

The Board requested the presentation of large scale, detailed drawings of the base.

- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials.** Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Use wood shingles or board and batten siding on residential structures.
- Avoid wood or metal siding materials on commercial structures.
- Provide operable windows, especially on storefronts.
- Use materials that are consistent with the existing or intended neighborhood character, including brick, cast stone, architectural stone, terracotta details, and concrete that incorporates texture and color.
- Consider each building as a high-quality, long-term addition to the neighborhood; exterior design and materials should exhibit permanence and quality appropriate to the Capitol Hill neighborhood.
- The use of applied foam ornamentation and EIFS (Exterior Insulation & Finish System) is discouraged, especially on ground level locations.

The Board praised the quality of the materials proposed but asked that the architect reduce the variety of materials and use fewer colors. The architect should also focus on craftsmanship and joinery. Drawings for the next Recommendation should show the materiality of the building in detail.

<b>D. Pedestrian Environment</b>
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- D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances.** Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Provide entryways that link the building to the surrounding landscape.
- Create open spaces at street level that link to the open space of the sidewalk.
- Building entrances should emphasize pedestrian ingress and egress as opposed to accommodating vehicles.
- Minimize the number of residential entrances on commercial streets where non-residential uses are required. Where residential entries and lobbies on commercial streets are unavoidable, minimize their impact to the retail vitality commercial streetscape.

In keeping with its thought that too many materials cloud the composition, the Board requested that the applicant reconsider the design of the courtyard entry. The concrete frame and the wood siding appeared extraneous and incongruous with the larger leitmotifs of the elevation.

**D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Consider: pedestrian-scale lighting, but prevent light spillover onto adjacent properties; architectural lighting to complement the architecture of the structure; transparent windows allowing views into and out of the structure—thus incorporating the “eyes on the street” design approach’
- Provide a clear distinction between pedestrian traffic areas and commercial traffic areas through the use of different paving materials or colors, landscaping, etc.

**D-8 Treatment of Alleys. The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.**

The treatment of the units facing the alley was welcomed by the Board.

**D-9 Commercial Signage. Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.**

The applicant should provide examples of proposed signage to be discussed at the next Recommendation meeting.

**D-10 Commercial Lighting. Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.**

The quality of the lighting fixtures adorning the structure’s base should be upgraded.

**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.**

See D-1.

<b>E. Landscaping</b>
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- E-2     Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site. Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.**

The Board did not discuss the proposed landscaping at the initial Recommendation meeting but may comment upon it at the next meeting.

#### **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the initial Recommendation meeting, the following departures were requested:

- 1.     (Front Setback SMC 23.45.518 Table A):** No front setback is required when a courtyard is provided abutting the street that a minimum width of 30% of the abutting street and a minimum depth of 20' measured to the lot line. The applicant proposes no front setbacks with a courtyard provided adjacent in the NC zone. Courtyard width is 27% of the abutting street and 19'6" deep.
- 2.     (Side Setback SMC 23.45.518 Table A):** The Code requires for portions of a structure less than or equal to 42', a seven foot average setback with a five foot minimum is required. For portion of a structure greater than 42', a ten foot average setbacks with a seven foot minimum is required. The applicant proposes below 42' from grade, an average side setback of 6' 9.5" with a 2" minimum. Above 42' feet from grade, the applicant proposes an average side setback of 9'7.5" with an 8' 1" minimum.
- 3.     (Parking Access SMC 23.45.536):** The Code requires access to parking from an improved alley. The applicant proposes access from Belmont Ave. E.
- 4.     (Sight Triangle SMC 23.54.030):** The Code requires a 10' by 10' triangle at right side of exit lane. The applicant proposes a 5'6" by 5'6" sight triangle or a 45% reduction in the required size.
- 5.     (Nonresidential Space [Height] SMC 23.47A.008):** The Code required 13" floor to floor height at street level nonresidential space. The applicant proposes 12'8" at the southeast commercial space along E. Olive Way.

The Board requires that each of the departures be separately diagrammed to clarify the requests for the next Recommendation meeting. Board members felt that departure request #2 would depend on the redesign of the building. They expressed their inclination to grant the other departures.

#### **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the initial Recommendation meeting, the Board recommended the project return with significant revisions.