



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3002311

Address: 2521 Western Avenue

Applicant: Scott Bevan

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, January 08, 2013

Board Members Present: Mathew Albores  
Pragnesh Parikh  
Brian Scott (partial attendance)

Board Members Absent: Gabriel Grant  
Gundula Proksch

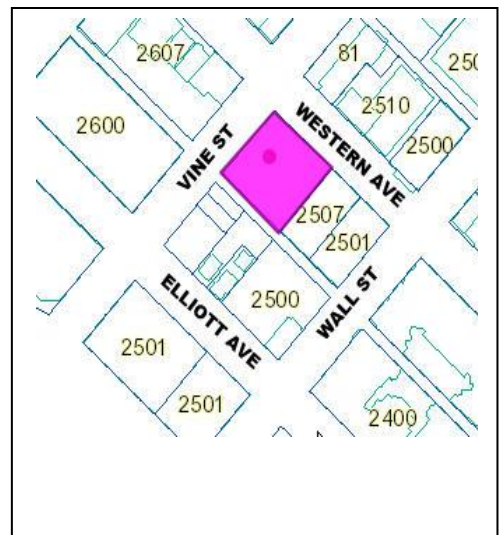
DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Downtown Mixed Residential/Commercial with height limits of 65' and 125' depending upon use. DMR/C 125/65

Zone Pattern: DMR/C and DKMR/R are the dominant zoning classes in the immediate area. West of Elliot the zoning changes to Downtown Harborfront (DH1/45 and DH2/65). DMR heights rise the further east from the water.

Lot Area: 14,400 sq. ft.



Current Development: Surface parking lot. The site's 16 foot declension begins at Western Ave and slopes to the alley on the west.

Access: Alley

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: Rights of way define three sides of the project site: Vine St on the north, Western Ave on the east and an alley on the west. The two-story Millionair Club sits to the south. West of the alley is the Belltown P-Patch, devoted to public agricultural uses and the landmark designated Belltown Cottages. A one to two story warehouse, south of the Millionair Club building, and another older building complete the full block. Notable buildings in the area include the Banner Building, catty-corner, the Ace Hotel on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave., the Hull Building, and the New Pacific Apartment Building. Vine St. is Seattle's foremost green streets.

ECAs: The site does not contain environmental critical areas.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes a 12-story residential structure containing 132 units. Parking for 75 vehicles would be provided below grade.

## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The architect proposes to design a large seven to eight story volume set on top of a three to four level base above a parking garage. A series of diagrams submitted by the architect explore variations in massing (pp 24-25 of the EDG booklet). The diagrams act to introduce the reader to three more detailed massing options. The three schemes share common points of access, a formal residential entry at the northeast corner, garage ingress at the alley, the location of residential units fronting Western at street level and the primary enclosed residential amenity overlooking Vine St. Code compliant, scheme #1, places a box above a lower, squatter box and honors the Vine St. view corridor by stepping back at 35 feet (three to four levels) above the street. A series of slight setbacks occur on the south façade above the Millionair Club. Scheme # 2 varies the mass by producing a vertical column of bays projecting outward above the alley, extends the mass partially into the view corridor above 35' on Vine, and emphasizes the street wall along Western. In plan, the units on the residential floors ring a central vertical circulation core. For Scheme # 3, the presentation booklet illustrates a series of additions and subtraction to a code complying building mass. The upper north façade projects five feet into the public view corridor, the upper south façade extends toward the Millionair Club while other portions of the mass are subtracted at the lower south façade and on the west façade in front of the P-Patch in order to regularize the entire upper mass. The floor plans of Schemes # 2 and 3 resemble one another quite closely.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 30 members of the public affixed their names to the Early Design Review sign-in sheet. The speaker raised the following issues:

### View Corridor

- The community worked hard to create the view corridor. The building mass should not enter into the view corridor setback. (Note: This was stated by several of the speakers.)
- Preserving the view corridor is important.
- Don't move the proposed structure closer to The Vine Building.

### Vine St. landscaping

- The plaza at the corner of the alley and Vine (at the P-Patch) is one of the most charming places in Belltown.
- The community has been involved with the development of Vine St. for 18 years. This is the first proposal on Vine since the creation of the Growing Vine St. plan.
- Vine St. is a prototype for collecting rainwater. The EDG packet doesn't convey how important this issue is.
- The EDG booklet does not understand the amount of public input that has already occurred.
- Landscaping on Vine is very important.
- The site lies in the middle of the demonstration projects. There is a cistern at 81 Vine and the cistern steps west of the alley. The project site is the missing link and a key piece of the landscaping.
- The Carolyn Geist plaza is only half done. It needs its mirror image on the other side of the alley. Steps in the sidewalk are already approved by SDOT.
- Create the mirror image of the cistern steps/plaza. Be as creative as possible. The community worked hard to put the pieces together.
- The landscape design should make a meaningful connection to the existing landscape along Vine St.

### Western Ave.

- Western Ave is narrow. It creates a wind tunnel.
- Design the building to achieve a dynamic streetscape.
- Western Ave has a high level of pedestrian accidents.
- The dwelling units on Western should have stoops.
- The design of Western Ave frontage must consider the daily queue of workers at the Millionair Club.
- Western Ave is also a safety concern. The proposed planters and hedges units along Western are not an adequate buffer between the sidewalk and the residential units.

### The alley

- The alley grade can't be changed much. Use cobblestones on the alley.
- Due to the garage's location across from the P-Patch, design beautiful doors.

### The Roof

- Pay attention to the design of the roof top mechanical equipment. The design should be as interesting as the equipment on the roofs of nearby buildings. Do not make the mechanical equipment too large.
- Install a living roof. The building should meet green building standards.

### Programming

- Consider placing the resident amenity area (called the library by the applicant) on Western Ave rather than along Vine.
- Consider creating an entrance at the corner of the building closest to the park where the applicant wants a bike shop.
- Add art both indoors and outdoors. Integrate the art and the landscaping.
- Add a public oriented amenity to the property.

### Other

- Design a beautiful building.

## PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

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 Downtown Development 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](#).

### A. Site Planning & Massing

#### *Responding to the Larger Context*

**A-1 Respond to the Physical Environment. Develop an architectural concept and compose the building's massing in response to geographic conditions and patterns of urban form found beyond the immediate context of the building site.**

#### **Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

- A. Develop the architectural concept and arrange the building mass to enhance views. This includes views of the water and mountains, and noteworthy structures such as the Space Needle;**

- B. The architecture and building mass should respond to sites having nonstandard shapes. There are several changes in the street grid alignment in Belltown, resulting in triangular sites and chamfered corners. Examples of this include: 1st, Western and Elliott between Battery and Lenora, and along Denny;
- C. The topography of the neighborhood lends to its unique character. Design buildings to take advantage of this condition as an opportunity, rather than a constraint. Along the streets, single entry, blank facades are discouraged. Consider providing multiple entries and windows at street level on sloping streets.

The Board noted this guideline’s high importance.

**A-2 Enhance the Skyline. Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline.**

Responding to public comment, the Board requests more information about the placement and the characteristics of the mechanical penthouses. Atop some of the neighboring buildings, these equipment towers have interesting design characteristics which relate to the community’s interest in providing exceptional and artistic infrastructure.

<b>B. Architectural Expression</b>
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***Relating to the Neighborhood Context***

- B-1 Respond to the Neighborhood Context – Develop an architectural concept and compose the major building elements to reinforce desirable urban features existing in the surrounding neighborhood.  
Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

Belltown has a rich architectural context, with a wide variety of architectural styles represented within the neighborhood. Contemporary methods of building can potentially create visual conflicts with older buildings due to differences in scale, massing, and degrees of articulation. Sometimes new buildings add exteriors that mimic past architectural styles, creating a sense of unauthentic design. These guidelines emphasize the concept of historical continuity, or in other words, the relationship of structures over time. This relationship encourages diversity within a coherent whole, reinforcing the unique and evolving character of Belltown.

The Board supports the idea of a masonry podium or base and a glass and metal tower rising above it. The masonry plinth would relate in height and materials to older Belltown buildings.

- B-2 Create a Transition in Bulk & Scale. Compose the massing of the building to create a transition to the height, bulk, and scale of development in neighboring or nearby less intensive zones.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

New high-rise and half- to full-block developments are juxtaposed with older and smaller scale buildings throughout the neighborhood. Many methods to reduce the apparent scale of new developments through contextually responsive design are identified in other guidelines (e.g., *B-1: Respond to the neighborhood context* and *B-3: Reinforce the positive urban form & architectural attributes of the immediate area*). The objective of this guideline is to discourage overly massive, bulky or unmodulated structures that are unsympathetic to the surrounding context.

- B-3 Reinforce the Positive Urban Form & Architectural Attributes of the Immediate Area . Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

The principal objective of this guideline is to promote scale and character compatibility through reinforcement of the desirable patterns of massing and facade composition found in the surrounding area. Pay particular attention to designated landmarks and other noteworthy buildings.

- A.** Respond to the regulating lines and rhythms of adjacent buildings that also support a street-level environment; regulating lines and rhythms include vertical and horizontal patterns as expressed by cornice lines, belt lines, doors, windows, structural bays and modulation.
- B.** Use regulating lines to promote contextual harmony, solidify the relationship between new and old buildings, and lead the eye down the street.
- C.** Pay attention to excellent fenestration patterns and detailing in the vicinity. The use of recessed windows that create shadow lines, and suggest solidity, is encouraged.

The applicant's proposal to build in the view corridor was not accepted by the Board. A request for a departure would not likely be granted as it does not appear that projecting into the view corridor would better meet the design guidelines.

- B-4 Design a Well-Proportioned & Unified Building. Compose the massing and organize the publicly accessible interior and exterior spaces to create a well-proportioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole.**

As mentioned above, the Board agreed with the podium/tower concept. The shaping of the tower will be an important consideration as the design progresses.

## C. The Streetscape

### *Creating the Pedestrian Environment*

- C-1 Promote Pedestrian Interaction. Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should be open to the general public and appear safe and welcoming.**

#### **Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

- A. reinforce existing retail concentrations;
- B. vary in size, width, and depth of commercial spaces, accommodating for smaller businesses, where feasible;
- C. incorporate the following elements in the adjacent public realm and in open spaces around the building: unique hardscape treatments, pedestrian-scale sidewalk lighting, accent paving (especially at corners, entries and passageways), creative landscape treatments (planting, planters, trellises, arbors), seating, gathering spaces, water features, inclusion of art elements
- D. **Building/Site Corners:** Building corners are places of convergence. The following considerations help reinforce site and building corners: provide meaningful setbacks/ open space, if feasible, provide seating as gathering spaces, incorporate street/ pedestrian amenities in these spaces, make these spaces safe (good visibility), and iconic corner identifiers to create wayfinders that draw people to the site.

The location of the residential amenity area (the library) merited discussion. Does it make more sense to place this feature along Western Ave rather than along and above Vine St? By the next meeting, the architects should, at least, consider Western Ave. as an option and provide a strong rationale for their ultimate direction.

Due to the adjacency of the Millionair Club and the practice of workers queuing along Western Ave, discussion focused on how the design of the residential units fronting on the street could create a useful separation between the residential use and the pedestrian activity. As shown in the drawings, the planters separating the sidewalk from the units did not appear to provide adequate buffer.

The building's relationship to the three conterminous rights of way, including the alley, should promote pedestrian interaction by the exceptional handling of materials, landscaping, and transparency.

- C-2 Design Facades of Many Scales. Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and materials compositions that refer to the scale of human activities contained**

**within. Building facades should be composed of elements scaled to promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation.**

The Board noted that the architect appeared to understand the importance of this guideline.

Due to its visibility above the Millionair Club, the design strategy for the south façade will be an important consideration at the next meeting.

**C-3 Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades. Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.**

Emphasis focused on the desirability of transparency and attention to detail at street level for both Western Ave and Vine St. Due to the west façade's proximity and exposure to the P-Patch, the base along the alley should have more detail and interest than would normally be for an elevation facing an alley. At the second EDG meeting, the drawings should clearly identify where transparency and blank walls will occur at the three rights of way. Avoid large expanses of blank wall at the building's base. Detailing of the masonry provides an opportunity for exploration of texture and pattern along the structure's base to engage pedestrians.

**C-4 Reinforce Building Entries. To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce the building's entry.**

The Board members expressed general agreement with the applicant that the primary residential entry ought to occur at the corner of Vine and Western.

**C-5 Encourage Overhead Weather Protection. Encourage project applicants to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major pedestrian routes.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Overhead weather protection should be designed with consideration given to:**

- A. the overall architectural concept of the building (as described in Guideline B-4);**
- B. uses occurring within the building (such as entries and retail spaces) or in the adjacent streetscape environment (such as bus stops and intersections);**
- C. minimizing gaps in coverage;**
- D. a drainage strategy that keeps rain water off the street-level facade and sidewalk;**
- E. continuity with weather protection provided on nearby buildings;**
- F. relationship to architectural features and elements on adjacent development, especially if abutting a building of historic or noteworthy character;**
- G. the scale of the space defined by the height and depth of the weather protection;**
- H. use of translucent or transparent covering material to maintain a pleasant sidewalk environment with plenty of natural light; and**



- I. **when opaque material is used, the illumination of light-colored undersides to increase security after dark.**

The applicant requested a departure for the design of the overhead weather protection. The Board noted that it was too early to determine whether holding the canopy a few feet away from the building edge made sense.

**C-6 Develop the Alley Façade. To increase pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest, develop portions of the alley façade in response to the unique conditions of the site or project.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance: Considerations**

**Spaces for service and utilities:**

- A. **Services and utilities, while essential to urban development, should be screened or otherwise hidden from the view of the pedestrian.**
- B. **Exterior trash receptacles should be screened on three sides, with a gate on the fourth side that also screens the receptacles from view. Provide a niche to recess the receptacle.**
- C. **Screen loading docks and truck parking from public view using building massing, architectural elements and/or landscaping.**
- D. **Ensure that all utility equipment is located, sized, and designed to be as inconspicuous as possible. Consider ways to reduce the noise impacts of HVAC equipment on the alley environment.**

**Pedestrian environment:**

- E. **Pedestrian circulation is an integral part of the site layout. Where possible and feasible, provide elements, such as landscaping and special paving, that help define a pedestrian-friendly environment in the alley.**
- F. **Create a comfortably scaled and thoughtfully detailed urban environment in the alley through the use of well-designed architectural forms and details, particularly at street level.**

**Architectural concept:**

- G. **In designing a well-proportioned and unified building, the alley façade should not be ignored. An alley façade should be treated with form, scale and materials similar to rest of the building to create a coherent architectural concept.**

Due to its visibility from the west, the alley façade has more importance than a typical alley. The design should have an attention to detail; in particular, the two proposed garage doors should possess interest and a level of refinement matching the rest of the structure.

**D. Public Amenities:**

**D-1 Provide Inviting & Usable Open Space. Design public open spaces to promote a visually pleasing, safe, and active environment for workers, residents, and visitors. Views and solar access from the principal area of the open space should be especially emphasized.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

As a dense, urban neighborhood, Belltown views its streets as its front porches, and its parks and private plazas and spaces as its yards and gardens. The design and location of urban open spaces on a site or adjoining sidewalk is an important determinant in a successful environment, and the type and character of the open space should be influenced by the building's uses.

**Residential open space:** Residential buildings should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

Key to the project's success is continuing the design language established for Vine St.

**D-2 Enhance the Building with Landscaping. Enhance the building and site with substantial landscaping—which includes special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, and site furniture, as well as living plant material.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

Landscape enhancement of the site may include some of the approaches or features listed below, where appropriate:

- A. emphasize entries with special planting in conjunction with decorative paving and/or lighting;
- B. use landscaping to make plazas and courtyards comfortable for human activity and social interaction;
- C. distinctively landscape open areas created by building modulation, such as entry courtyards;
- D. provide year-round greenery - drought tolerant species are encouraged to promote water conservation and reduce maintenance concerns; and
- E. provide opportunities for installation of civic art in the landscape; designer/artist collaborations are encouraged

The alley façade ought to acknowledge the P-Patch amenity. Talk to the gardeners at the P-Patch. Design the plinth to complement the lush landscape across the alley.

The design of the landscaping along Vine St. should complete the gap between the area adjacent to the P-Patch and the area in front of the building at 81 Vine St. Explore a rainwater collection system to complement the other systems along Vine St. Similar to the others, the system should visibly express the process of collection and transmittal of water.

Provide concept landscape plans for the roof and terrace(s). Will the terrace above Vine St. possess a water collection system integrated with the Vine St. landscaping?

**D-3 Provide Elements that Define the Place. Provide special elements on the facades, within public open spaces, or on the sidewalk to create a distinct, attractive, and memorable “sense of place” associated with the building.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Belltown is eclectic, diverse, eccentric and whimsical. New developments should incorporate elements on building facades, within open space, or on the sidewalk that refer to the neighborhood’s rich art and history to reinforce a sense of place in Belltown.**

- **Art and Heritage:** Art and History are vital to reinforcing a sense of place.
- **Green Streets:** Green Streets are street rights-of-way that are enhanced for pedestrian circulation and activity with a variety of pedestrian-oriented features, such as sidewalk widening, landscaping, artwork, and traffic calming. Interesting street level uses and pedestrian amenities enliven the Green Street and lend special identity to the surrounding area.
- **Street Hierarchy:** The function and character of Belltown’s streetscapes are defined street by street. In defining the streetscape for various streets, the hierarchy of streets is determined by street function, adjacent land uses, and the nature of existing streetscape improvements.

Consider using, landscaping, art and placemaking techniques to endow Western, Vine and the alley with an identity. Vine St. should integrate the concepts provided in the *Growing Vine Street Revisted 2004* document.

**D-5 Provide Adequate Lighting. To promote a sense of security for people downtown during nighttime hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building facade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance: Considerations**

**Consider employing one or more of the following lighting strategies as appropriate.**

- A. **Illuminate distinctive features of the building, including entries, signage, canopies, and areas of architectural detail and interest.**

- B. Install lighting in display windows that spills onto and illuminates the sidewalk.
- C. Orient outside lighting to minimize glare within the public right-of-way.

Ensure safety by providing adequate pedestrian scaled lighting along the three rights of way.

**D-6 Design for Personal Safety & Security. Design the building and site to enhance the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.**

See guidance for D-5.

<b>E. Vehicular Access &amp; Parking</b>
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***Minimizing the Adverse Impacts***

**E-2 Integrate Parking Facilities. Minimize the visual impact of parking by integrating parking facilities with surrounding development. Incorporate architectural treatments or suitable landscaping to provide for the safety and comfort of people using the facility as well as those walking by.**

Discussion focused on the need for two garage doors on the alley. The Board concluded that if two doors are needed that they should be well designed.

**E-3 Minimize the Presence of Service Areas. Locate service areas for trash dumpsters, loading docks, mechanical equipment, and the like away from the street front where possible. Screen from view those elements which for programmatic reasons cannot be located away from the street front.**

**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 Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departures were requested:

- 1. Lot coverage. (SMC 23.49.158 Table A):** Maximum lot coverage equals 75% of the lot between 65' and 85, and a maximum of 65% coverage above 85'. The applicant proposes to average the lot coverage for all floors.

The Board indicated its consternation about this request as the material provided did not appear to convince the Board members that it would better meet the design guidelines. Providing a diagram and better rationale at the next meeting is necessary.

- 2. (View Corridor SMC 23.49.024):** The Code requires a minimum setback from the Vine St. property line above 35'. The applicant proposes to project the building mass into the view corridor.

The Board indicated that it would not accept a portion of the structure in the view corridor.

- 3. Structural Building Overhangs (SMC 23.53.035A.4):** The Code requires a maximum length of 15' reduced to 9' with a 45 degree angles. The applicant proposes square bays with width greater than 15'.

The Board indicated that it would review the bays or structural overhangs once design development occurs.

- 4. Structural Building Overhangs (SMC 23.53.035A.1):** The Code requires vertical clearance of 26' feet from the alley. The applicant proposes a vertical clearance of roughly 15' from finished alley within the 2' alley dedication zone and 17' from alley elevation to bottom of the projecting bays.

The Board stated its willingness to entertain this code departure request once the design is provided.

- 5. Overhead Weather Protection (SMC 23.49.018):** The Code requires continuous overhead weather protection along the entire street frontage, minimum dimension of 8' horizontally from building wall. The applicant proposes setting the canopies one to three feet from the building face.

The Board stated its concern that a five foot overhang is too narrow for adequate protection. However, the Board would entertain this code departure request once the design is more fully developed.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should return to the Board for an additional EDG meeting.