City of Seattle

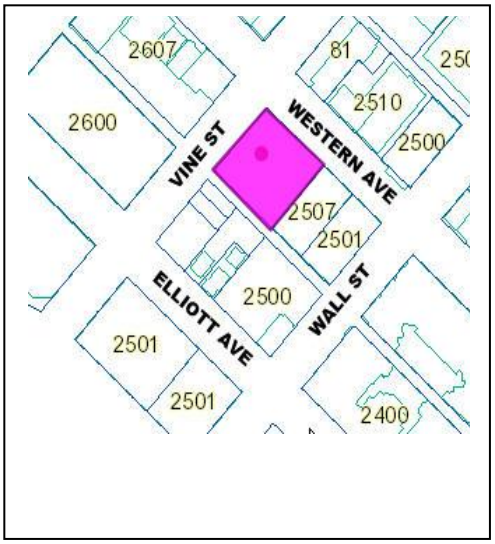
Department of Planning & Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number:	3002311
Address:	2521 Western Avenue
Applicant:	Scott Bevan
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, July 16, 2013
Board Members Present:	Mathew Albores Gabriel Grant Murphy McCullough Pragnesh Parikh 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 DMR/R are the dominant zoning classes in the immediate area. West of Elliot Ave 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 of the site. 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 1st Ave., the Hull Building, and the New Pacific Apartment Building. Vine St. is one of 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 and parking for 75 vehicles accessed from the alley.

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 which 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.

At the second EDG meeting, the applicant revealed a new massing scheme respecting the integrity of the view corridor, stepping back in the vertical plane at the south elevation to allowing varying amounts of glazing, and showing a clear idea for the rooftop. Both the architect and landscape architect presented much more evolved designs for the elevations, Vine St. and the terraces.

The architect presented refined drawings at the Recommendation meeting. These included significant revisions to the Vine St. right of way and alteration of the appurtenances previously placed in the view corridor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sixteen members of the public affixed their names to the Recommendation meeting sign-in sheet. In general, most of the speakers praised the project and the efforts of the development team to include the community. Comments focused on the rain water infrastructure, the two plazas, improvements to the treatment of the façade at the alley. Specific enhancements requested include:

- Further refinement of the alley paving and the pony wall at the P-patch;
- Use of a material other than glass for the balconies;
- Need for functional balconies;
- Continue to improve water retention; and
- Build storefront entries on Western Ave now.

DPD received several letters commenting on the proposal. The authors mentioned the following: need for adherence to the Growing Vine Street Concept; paving of the entire alley; activation of the Western Ave street frontage; lack of adequate parking in the building; concerns about traffic during construction; and inconsistency with the character of the block.

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 **<u>Respond to the Physical Environment</u>. 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.

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

Earlier deliberation focused on the design of the rooftop. The Board did not discuss the merits of the design presented at the Recommendation meeting.

B. Architectural Expression

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.

B-2 **<u>Create a Transition in Bulk & Scale</u>. 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 **<u>Reinforce the Positive Urban Form & Architectural Attributes of the Immediate Area</u> . 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.**

B-4 **<u>Design a Well-Proportioned & Unified Building</u>. 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.**

The Board observed that the plinth or podium level ought to have a stronger presence. The design of the metal overhang from the upper levels on the east elevation and the projecting bay on the west elevation dissipate the visual integrity of the brick cornice. Revise the design to reassert the cornice at these locations.

The intent of interlocking the upper metal and glass mass with the podium level on the east and west facades appeared arbitrary, perhaps, unintentionally emphasizing the garage entrance on the alley elevation. No recommendation to revise the design was provided.

C. The Streetscape

Creating the Pedestrian Environment

C-1 <u>Promote Pedestrian Interaction</u>. 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.**

Earlier Board discussion focused on the design of the Western Ave street front. Revisions to the canopies and the landscaping met with the Board's approval.

C-2 <u>Design Facades of Many Scales</u>. 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.

In response to a public comment, the Board stated its satisfaction with the unobtrusive balconies and exterior railings.

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

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

C-5 **<u>Encourage Overhead Weather Protection</u>. 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.**

Changes to the canopies allowing a 12 inch gap between the wall and the marquee (see departure discussion # 3) met with the Board's tacit approval.

C-6 **<u>Develop the Alley Façade</u>. 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.

The architect revised the building corner at the alley and Vine St to accommodate greater transparency. This change appealed to both the community and the Board.

D. Public Amenities:

D-1 <u>Provide Inviting & Usable Open Space</u>. 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.

Significant changes to the Vine St. landscape design reduced its monumentality and added a rainwater conveyance system from the lower roof. The Board appreciated the inclusion of an artist in the project design who will produce custom made or handcrafted elements to the project. The Board recommended that DPD ensure that an artist will produce the handrails, art-screen, splash "hands" at the bottom of the open downspouts and step risers along Vine St.

D-2 <u>Enhance the Building with Landscaping</u>. 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**

See guidance for D-1 and D-3.

D-3 **<u>Provide Elements that Define the Place</u>. 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.**

The Board approved the design of the Vine St. right of way and recommended a condition to ensure the installation of hand crafted architectural and landscape elements. See guidance for D-1.

D-5 **<u>Provide Adequate Lighting</u>. 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.**

The Board did not comment upon the concept lighting plan.

D-6 **<u>Design for Personal Safety & Security</u>. Design the building and site to enhance the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.**
The Board requested that the applicant and DPD work with SDOT to improve the crosswalk.

E. Vehicular Access & Parking

Minimizing the Adverse Impacts

E-2 **<u>Integrate Parking Facilities</u>. 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.**

E-3 **<u>Minimize the Presence of Service Areas</u>. 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.**

Recommendations: The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the July 16, 2013 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings available at the July 16, 2013 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and the requested development standard departures from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below). The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

1) Revise the design of the metal overhang from the upper levels on the east elevation and the projecting bay on the west elevation to reassert the masonry cornice. Ensure that the visual integrity of the podium's brick framing device remains. (B-4)
2) Ensure that an artist will craft the handrails, art-screen, splash "hands" at the bottom of the open downspouts and step risers along Vine St. (D-1,2 and 3)

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) are 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).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMEND-ATION
1. Structural Building Overhangs SMC 23.53.035A.1	Vertical clearance shall be a minimum of 26' from an alley.	Vertical clearance of 14' from finished alley elevation within the 2' alley dedication zone. 16' vertical clearance from the finished alley elevation to bottom of bay window at northern end of alley.	▪ The design provides improved building proportions and design consistency. B-4, C-6	Recommended Approval
2. Structural Building Overhangs SMC 23.53.035A	The maximum length of each bay window shall be 15', reduced to 9' with 45 degree angles.	Square bay, as wide as 22'3".	▪ Width of bay guided by view corridor setback and design consistency. B-4, C-2	Recommended Approval based on fulfillment of related condition.
3. Overhead Weather Protection SMC 23.49.018	Continuous overhead weather protection shall be required along the entire street frontage, minimum dimension of 8' horizontally from building wall.	Overhead weather protection 6' horizontally from building wall, with inside edge held as much as 12" from face of wall, except within corner bulb area.	▪ Marquee reduced to meet street planting standards. ▪ Marquee held off face of building to create drip edge for landscaping below and to discourage habitation by transient population. D-6	Recommended Approval
4. Lot Coverage above 85'. SMC 23.49.158	For portions of the structure between 0'-65': 100% lot coverage For portions greater than 65' to 85': 75% maximum lot coverage For portions greater than 85' to 125', 65% maximum lot coverage	Average the lot coverage for all floors, reapportioning area to allow for consistent floor plate sizes in the tower portion of the building.	▪ Averaging lot coverage for floors above 35' results in better overall massing than proscribed by the code requirements. B-4	Recommended Approval