

**PRELIMINARY DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS
OF
CAPITOL HILL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

April 16, 2008

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3005413

Address: 504 Yale Avenue North

Applicant: Evett Ruffcorn, Architect for Weiss-Jenkins VII, LLC

Board members present: Evan Bourquard
Brian Cavanaugh
Jason Morrow
Rumi Takahashi

Board members absent: Sharon E. Sutton

DCLU Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips, AICP

Project Description:

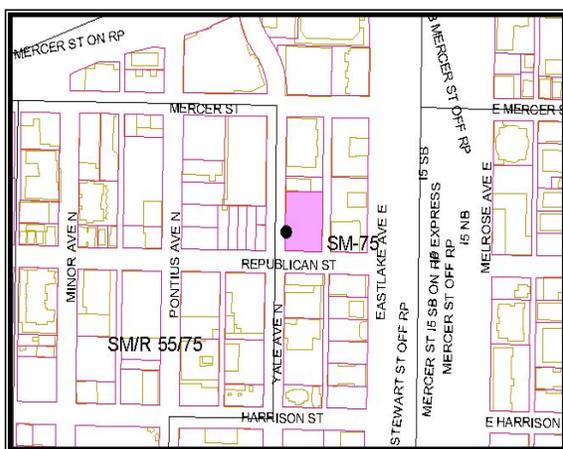
The applicant proposes a 75 foot (five and one-half story) office building at the northeast corner of Republican Street and Yale Avenue North in the Seattle Cascade neighborhood. The structure would have a foot print of approximately 17,800 gross square feet with approximately 70,000 square feet devoted to office space and a nearly equal amount dedicated to parking. Four levels of above grade and below grade parking would house an estimated 133 parking stalls. With a depth of approximately 20 feet, a narrow band of retail use would front onto Yale Ave. N. A skybridge, spanning the alley to the adjacent office building, introduced at the Early Design Guidance meeting has been eliminated from the proposal.

Approximately, 115 feet by 160 feet the rectangular site sits upon a slope that ascends nearly 14 feet from west to east. The proposal would replace two light industrial buildings on the parcel. Zoning is Seattle Mixed (SM 75) with a height limit of 75 feet. The South Lake Union Neighborhood design review guidelines supplement DPD's Neighborhood Design Review guidelines. The site lies within the South Lake Union Urban Center and the Lake Union Neighborhood District. Republican St. is a Class II pedestrian street.

The overall massing of the proposal resembles a rectangular box with its upper, western most bays terraced. Viewed from the south, the terracing follows the step pattern in the Republican Building to directly to the east. The predominant beige color brick alludes to the hue of the same neighbor. Based on the Board’s early design guidance, the applicant located vehicular access from the alley. The ramping system needed to descend below grade limits the depth of retail fronting onto Yale Ave. N. which also forces the architect to eliminate the possibility of retail uses on Republican St. other than at the corner. Locating retail on Yale Ave. strengthens the increasingly pedestrian orientation along a stretch of Yale throughout the Cascade neighborhood. The proposed design places the lobby and the vertical circulation system at the center of the building and west facade. The circulation tower is clearly expressed by a composition of vertical elements with black Roman brick and transparent and translucent glazing. Horizontal metal fins on the tower reinforce the proposed structure’s overall horizontal composition.

Black brick with alternating rusticated **courses**, discontinuous canopies, and a storefront glazing system articulate the proposal’s base. Behind the façade, the height of the retail space is approximately 23 feet on the southern portion. Parking occupies a mezzanine behind the base to the north of the lobby entrance. Four floors of offices rise above the base. Three floors have beige brick in a column and spandrel grid system. A fully glazed office penthouse level caps the west elevation. The base, middle and top motif carries over to the south elevation. The overall modernist aesthetic contrasts with the introduction of arched windows at the fifth level over the eastern most half of the composition. The arches allude to the generally post-modern design of the developer’s earlier building across the alley. The north façade, with little articulation to its painted CMU veneer, abuts the property line. The landscape plan illustrates planting strips adjacent to the roadway and a narrow planting strip for vines hard against the south façade.

Vicinity



The Cascade Neighborhood, like the South Lake Union area, of which it is a part, has witnessed considerable development in recent years, both commercial and residential in nature. Weiss-Jenkins, the developer, constructed the Republican office building (across the alley) in 2001. Development proposals in various stages of planning or construction are underway for the two full blocks to the west. These include primarily residential mixed-use complexes. A recently completed mixed use building to the south on Yale Ave. N. sits adjacent to the historic St.

Spiridon Russian Orthodox Cathedral. Other development sites include a full block directly to the east of Cascade playground and the Alley 24 complex to the west of REI. Almost as many designated landmarks populate the neighborhood including the Jensen Block (1908), the brick Supply Laundry Building (1912) caddy corner from the proposal site, St. Spiridon

Russian Orthodox Cathedral (1937), and the New Richmond Laundry Building (1917, 1927 1944) now part of Alley 24.

To the north, large apartment and office structures occupy parcels between Mercer St. and the access ramps to I-5. Immediately to the north lie a former single family house now used as a studio and the Union Bay Apartments, a 73 unit residential structure. The owners of the former have preliminarily contacted DPD about a proposal for their site (MUP 3008804). Across the alley to the east lie the Republican Building and the brick Carolina Court apartments (1916).

In the east/west direction, Republican Street, an arterial, runs east and west. Yale Ave., a local street traveling north / south, is narrowly paved with an approximate roadway width of 30 feet. The site is improved with curbs and sidewalks on all sides. A three foot dedication is required at Republican St. per the right of way (Street Improvement Manual).

South of Mercer Street, the predominate zones west of I-5 are the Seattle Mixed 75 and the Seattle Mixed Residential 55/75 (SM/R 55/75). Zoning remains a Seattle Mixed designation (SM-75) north of Mercer St. and shifts to an industrial commercial classification (IC 65) west of the alley between Fairview and Minor Avenues North.

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES: EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING, September 20, 2006.

At the Early Design Guidance meeting held on September 20, 2006 and after visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*" of highest priority to this project:

- A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics.
- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility.
- A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street.
- A-4 Human Activity.
- A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access.
- A-10 Corner Lots.
- B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility.
- C-1 Architectural Context.
- C-3 Human Scale.
- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials.
- C-5 Structured Parking Entrances.
- D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances.
- D-2 Blank Walls.
- D-5 visual Impacts of Parking Structures.

Summary: The Board addressed the issues of parking access, pedestrian activity (overhead weather protection, streetscape design and a proposed sky bridge), and proximity to the Supply Laundry building (a city of Seattle landmark).

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY: APRIL 17, 2008 MEETING

On April 17, 2008, the Capitol Hill Design Review Board convened for a Final Recommendation meeting. Site, landscaping, and floor plans, and elevations were presented for the Board members' consideration. The applicant requested three departures from the city's Land Use Code.

Public Comment: Five individuals signed-in at the Recommendation meeting. Comments supported the applicant's proposal to place retail on Yale Ave. N. rather than Republican. Other comments focused on the amount of landscaping, the relationship of the project to the proposed swale on the west side of Yale Ave. N., and whether utilities could be placed underground.

Board Recommendations: After considering the proposed design and the project context, hearing public comment and reconsidering the previously stated design priorities, the Design Review Board members came to the following preliminary recommendations on how the applicant met the identified design objectives. South Lake Union Neighborhood Design Guidelines are in italics.

A. Site Planning

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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance. New development is encouraged to take advantage of site configuration to accomplish sustainability goals. The Board is generally willing to recommend departures from development standards if they are needed to achieve sustainable design. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) manual which provides additional information. Examples include:

- *Sustainable landscaping*
- *Solar orientation*
- *Storm water run-off, detention and filtration systems*
- *Versatile building design for entire building life cycle*

The early design guidance addressed the skybridge proposal. Due to its elimination from the project, the Board did not offer further comments.

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

SLU-specific supplemental guidance. The vision for street level uses in South Lake Union is a completed network of sidewalks that successfully accommodate pedestrians. Streetscape compatibility is a high priority of the neighborhood with redevelopment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming and open to the general public.

- *Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities, such as: tree grates; benches; and lighting.*
- *Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.*

Board members agree that providing retail and pedestrian amenities at the corner and on Yale Ave. N. represented a higher priority than retail uses on Republican St.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

The Board had no comments.

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

SLU-specific supplemental guidance.

- *Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.*
- *Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.*
- *Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.*
- *Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.*

The Board acknowledged that ensuring pedestrian activity on Yale Ave. was a better strategy than requiring commercial uses on Republican St. The members understood that the necessity of a parking ramp from the alley precluded pedestrian oriented businesses on Republican St. An aperture at the base of the second bay from the intersection on Republican may provide additional visual interest to vines and a masonry wall.

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access. Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.

The Board welcomed the change of vehicular access from Yale Ave. to the alley.

A-10 Corner Lots. Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

The Board members asked the applicant to strength the base of the south façade closest to the street intersection. The base appears compressed and fails to recognize the importance of the corner condition. Raising the height of the storefront window and possibly altering the height of the canopy were recommended by the Board members.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

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 the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance.

- *Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.*
- *Relate proportions of buildings to the width and scale of the street.*

Board consternation focused on general building proportions and the scale of the stair and elevator tower as potentially exacerbating the structure's mass. No recommendations were offered.

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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance.

- *Respond to the history and character in the adjacent vicinity in terms of patterns, style, and scale. Encourage historic character to be revealed and reclaimed, for example through use of community artifacts, and historic materials, forms and textures.*
- *Respond to the unique, grass roots, sustainable character of the Cascade neighborhood. Examples of elements to consider include: community artwork; edible gardens; water filtration systems that serve as pedestrian amenities; gutters that support greenery.*

The applicant responded to the Board's early design guidance by introducing arched windows on the south façade to respond to the windows on the Supply Laundry Building (a city of Seattle landmark) and the fenestration at the upper levels of the more recent Republican Building across the alley. The Board preliminarily recommended the deletion of the arched windows as being incompatible with the overall modernist aesthetic of the proposal. The Board did not suggest other techniques to respond to the former laundry building.

The applicant's selection of brick relates to the older laundry district buildings in the neighborhood.

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 façade walls.

Although the arched windows relate the proposed design to the Republican Building and the Supply Laundry Building, the Board recommended eliminating the arched windows as inconsistent with the overall aesthetic the project designer's wish to convey.

At the building base along Yale Ave., the window heights on the south bays belie the actual height of the retail spaces. The Board asked for revisions to the base in order to maximize the amount of light into the storefronts. The vents on Yale Ave. appear quite problematic to the Board. The applicant should consider the alternatives of either moving the vents to a less visible façade, venting through the roof, changing the method of air circulation or possibly revising the design of the louvers to enhance the façade. Another question to resolve is whether the vents into the parking garage create extraneous noise on the public rights of way.

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

The Board strongly recommended the use of continuous overhead weather protection along pedestrian oriented Yale Ave. N. The need to wrap the canopy around the corner to meet the Republican St. canopy did not have the same resonance for the Board members. Whatever the treatment of the canopy at the corner, a stronger corner presence is paramount. See guidance A-10.

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.

The proposed elevations feature mostly black and beige brick and generous amounts of glazing. The base has striations of rusticated black brick that give weight to the proposed structure. The architect details running bonds of beige brick at the upper levels.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

Complying with early design guidance, the development team shifted vehicular access from Yale Ave. N. to the alley mid-block between Yale Ave. N. and Eastlake Ave. E. This revision met with the Board's approval.

D. Pedestrian Environment.

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.

The architect discussed a denser pattern of and different texture of sidewalk paving along the retail street frontage. This was not shown in the drawings in the packet but was referred to during the presentation. At the next Recommendation meeting, the landscape drawings should reflect this change.

Board discussion of continuous overhead weather protection on Yale Ave. does not preclude a higher canopy in front of the building lobby.

D-2 Blank Walls. Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

The design of the parking garage creates a potential blank wall along Republican St. Rusticated brick coursing with vines planted tight against the wall represented the designer's efforts at responding to the condition. The Board recommended that the architect redesign the second bay from Yale Ave. to possibly bring natural light into the garage and create a visually interesting aperture for the pedestrian.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures. The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

See D-2.

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

The architect proposes an exterior lighting system integrated into the overhead weather protection. The elevations illustrate one sconce to the left of the lobby entrance.

E Landscaping

E-3 Landscaping Design to Address Special Site Conditions. The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.

In response to Board inquiries, the landscape architect noted that two street trees could not be planted along Republican St. closest to the intersection due to the location of underground utilities. The Board asked the applicant to pursue with SDOT the possibility of installing planter boxes to house the street trees.

DEPARTURES

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOM-MENDATION
1. Transparency for Class II Pedestrian Streets. SMC 23.48.018A.1c	Class II pedestrian streets w/ >7.5% slope must have at least 45% transparency along street level façade.	17% transparency on Republican St.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased transparency on pedestrian oriented Yale Ave (30% required) to 74%. 	To be determined.
2Blank Façade on Class II Pedestrian Sts. SMC 23.48.018B2	Blank facades limited to segments 15' wide or 30' based on Director's determination.	Rusticated brick striations and narrow plating strip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adequate reasoning not available. 	To be determined.
3. Screening & Landscape Standards. SMC 23.48.024B.3a	On Class II streets, parking is not permitted at street level unless separated by intervening uses.	22 % screening of parking on Republican St.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greater screening of parking on Yale Ave. where it is more important. 	To be determined.

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