



City of Seattle
 Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

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

**INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS
 OF THE
 CAPITOL/FIRST HILL/CENTRAL AREA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3005677

Address: Boylston Avenue East

Meeting date: June 20, 2007
Report date: June 26, 2007

Applicant: Bryan Austin, Demetriou Architects
 for Greg Kappers, Prescott Homes

Board members present: Philip Beck
 Jason Morrow
 Sharon Sutton
 Rumi Takahashi
 James Walker, Chair

Board members absent: None

DPD staff present: Lisa Rutzick, Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

The subject site, located in the North Capitol Hill neighborhood, is approximately 11,500 square feet and is situated mid-block on the west side of Boylston Avenue East, between East Aloha Street and East Roy Street. The site is made up of two parcels, each with an existing four-unit multi-family residential structure, both of which would be demolished. There is no alley access to the site. The site currently has a 14-foot tall retaining wall approximately 14 feet west of the property line, above which the two existing buildings are located. The subject property is zoned Lowrise 3 (L3) with a 30 foot height limit. The same zoning designation continues on all sides of the site and lies just outside of the Harvard Belmont Landmark District. The area is well served by transit and is developed with



mostly single and multi-family residential structures.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal includes demolition of two existing multi-family residential buildings (eight units total) and the construction of a new 10-unit multifamily structure. Access to the site would be from Boylston Avenue and parking would be below-grade.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE: JANUARY 17, 2007

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Three schemes were presented at the Early Design Guidance meeting. In all three schemes, access would be taken from Boylston Avenue East. The first (Option A) proposed four buildings, each containing two units (for a total of eight units). The buildings would be separated with landscaped pathways and private open spaces. In this alternative, the garages would be at street level and face Boylston with multiple curb cuts needed to access the garages. The second alternative (Option B) included a modulated U-shaped building containing 10 townhouse units, with an interior courtyard, all of which is situated approximately 14 feet above the sidewalk with a terraced planter between the sidewalk and the development. All of the parking in this scheme would be located below grade. The third option and preferred scheme (Option C) proposes a similar modulated U-shaped building with an interior courtyard as shown in Option B, but shifted to the east and down to sidewalk grade allowing four of the townhouse units to front directly onto Boylston Avenue East. In this scheme, the front portion of the building is approximately at sidewalk level while the six units in the rear would follow the existing topography and be situated above and behind the front portion of the building. All of the parking would be below grade, tucked behind the four front townhouse units and accessed via a 12-foot wide driveway from the street.

The Board agreed that proposed Option C was superior to the other alternative in terms of taking advantage of the topography, responding to the neighborhood context, enhancing the pedestrian character of the street and keeping the parking hidden from view.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 15 members of the public attended the Early Design Guidance meeting. The following comments were offered:

- Would like the Board to give strong direction to the designer and developers regarding the integration of high quality landscaping and materials. Provided photographs of abutting development to the north that included only a 13 foot wide landscaped area along its entire 100 foot frontage along Boylston.
- Supports the single driveway access proposed.
- Encourage materials that align with those used in Harvard Estates and the Victoria Town Homes on Queen Anne. Suggest that these projects serve as benchmarks for design considerations as this project is further designed.
- No parking should be allowed in the proposed driveway.
- The garage doors should be very quiet and not disturb neighbors.
- Considers this site part of the renewed Capitol Hill neighborhood in terms of livability and elegance.
- Interested in comparing footprints of the proposed building with that of the new building to the immediate north to better understand bulk impacts on the neighbors abutting the site.
- Grateful to find housing in this neighborhood, but has found the workmanship of the development abutting the site to the north to be questionable.
- Clarify that the proposed building will be three stories (not four).
- Would like to see the wrought-iron gate of Harvard Estates extended to the subject site.

- Excited to see this site redevelop.
- Hopeful that rooftop deck will be well-designed and pleasant to view from neighboring units.
- Suggest that fencing at the perimeter match that of Harvard Estates to allow coordinated sprinkler systems.
- Preservation of the large existing Maple tree at the rear of the subject site should be a priority.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS: JUNE 20, 2007

DESIGN PRESENTATION

At the Initial Recommendation meeting, a further developed design was presented to the Board. The design concept evolved from the Option C shown at the EDG with the ten units divided into three clusters. The two front buildings each have three units and face towards Boylston Avenue. The rear building contains four units. The middle and rear units are configured around an interior courtyard that connects to the sidewalk. The rear four units have private patios to the east and the front four units have direct access to the Boylston right of way. A driveway bisects the site and slopes downward beneath the proposed development.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 12 members of the public attended the Initial Recommendation meeting. The following comments were offered:

- Concerned with the relationship between the proposed development and the townhouses immediately to the north. In particular, the privacy of the upper levels is jeopardized by the configuration and proximity of the proposed roof decks. Would like to see planter boxes and/or screening provided along the north side of the proposed roof decks.
- Hopes that the existing retaining wall is maintained. [Both the retaining walls on the north and south sides of the site are proposed to remain.]
- Wants to see high quality materials used for the proposed development.
- Provide a commitment from the developer to preserve the existing Birch and Maple trees as they currently provide a visual buffer and privacy screening between the subject site and the abutting Harvard Estates project.
- Recessing the garage door is commendable; however, the tunnel-like space created by the driveway poses security issues. Install a secondary and decorative wrought iron gate at the sidewalk that will further discourage trespassing.
- Clarify height of building, retaining walls and setbacks.
- Clarify that the proposed five-foot walkways between the front buildings and the rear building are surrounded by facades that reach up to 40 feet in height.
- Concerned with the loss of solar access from the location of the penthouses on the neighboring units.
- Owner noted that saving trees will create construction hardships.

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES

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 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. Site Planning

- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.**
- A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable from the street.**
- A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. The space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction.**
- A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.**
- 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 noted that the design of the four townhouse unit entries facing Boylston should be well-designed, detailed and landscaped, while reinforcing the residential character of the street. The Board further agreed that the design of stairs leading to the central residential courtyard area should also be well-designed and landscaped, while providing enticing views to pedestrians at street level.

The Board also discussed that the wide right-of-way provides excellent opportunities for lush, interesting landscaping that reflects that of recent multi-family development in the neighborhood, such as Harvard Estates and Merrill Court. The Board stated that they expect to see the entire right-of-way "buffer" area designed and landscaped for the full frontage of the site with the exception of the access drive and pathways to the four units facing the street. The Board looks forward to reviewing a high-quality well programmed and well landscaped ground level open space design. (See also E-1 and E-2)

The rooftop decks will be visible from nearby buildings and should be thoughtfully designed to elicit enjoyment by the residents, but also to be visually pleasant as viewed by neighbors.

The Board was very pleased with the narrow, singular driveway proposed, as well as the tucking away of the below-grade parking garage behind the street-facing units taking advantage of the site's existing topography. The Board encouraged the driveway design (paving, garage door, etc) to be well-integrated into and contribute to the proposed building's aesthetics.

At the Initial Recommendation meeting, the Board appreciated that the interior courtyard space will have decorative pavers and artwork. However, the Board thinks that the space will become lifeless since the units bordering the courtyard do not engage that space. Rather, the orientation of the units turns their backs towards this courtyard amenity. The Board strongly recommends that the interior layout of the units and fenestration bordering the courtyard endeavor to interact with the shared courtyard space. The courtyard itself should also be specifically programmed to ensure its usability and livability with furniture and landscaping that reinforces the unit entries.

The Board was pleased at the singular, centered driveway with a recessed garage door. The Board noted with the tunnel-like space created by the depressed driveway and garage door set back approximately 30 feet back from the property line. The Board recommended inclusion of a secondary gate at the property line (or within a few feet of the property line) that is made of decorative wrought iron, in a pattern and configuration similar to that found at the Harvard Estates.

The Board recommended that the gates and structural piers be set back at the property line (and not within the right-of-way). The landscaping in the right-of-way should be lush and irrigated.

The Board also discussed the likelihood that they will recommend a condition that the gate and matching railings shown throughout the development be wrought iron and match those found at the Harvard Estates.

The Board expressed concern with the privacy, size and usability of the proposed roof decks. The Board recommends that the roof deck configuration be reconsidered to be more functional, sensitive to the neighbors and more integrated with each other. Of greater concern to the Board is the location and number of stairwell penthouses that connect the units to the roof decks. The penthouses overly dominate the elevations and should be consolidated where possible, setback from the building edges and endeavor to be smaller scaled and less obtrusive. Additionally, the solar blockage created by these penthouses both on and off site should be considered and minimized. The Board expects to see an analysis of this impact at the next meeting.

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 nearby, 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 on the adjacent zones.

The Board agreed that Option C best responds to the site topography and reinforces the spatial characteristics of the existing development in the neighborhood. The bulk and mass of Option C appropriately distributes the bulk throughout the site and minimizes the bulk and scale as compared to Option A and B.

C. Architectural Elements

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

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.**

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.

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.

The Board supported the suggestion that the architecture of the proposed development take its design and material cues from the Harvard Belmont Landmark district, as well as the Harvard Estates and Merrill Court, two projects that have successfully integrated high quality traditional materials and details into the building designs, site plan and landscaping. The Board concurred that the use of stone and brick would be appropriate materials for the proposed development and they expect to see such materials presented at the next meeting. The Board agreed that the material palette and design of the recent town homes built immediately to the north of the site are less desirable. For example, they do not want to see faux rock veneer or hardi-board used in the proposed building.

The Board looks forward to reviewing a more detailed, high quality material and color palette. The Board would also like to see an elevation of the proposed development in the context of the full block (extending from Roy to Aloha streets).

The Board reiterated support for the narrow singular driveway proposed and encouraged the design to minimize intrusion to the sidewalk and landscaped planting strip and right-of-way buffer. A garage door system should be selected that is quiet and will not disrupt residents and neighbors as it opens and closes. The Board warned that the multiple curb cuts, expansive asphalt paving and numerous garage doors facing the sidewalk at ground level found in the building to the north would not be advisable. (See also A-8)

At the Initial Recommendation meeting, the Board recommended against the use of any stucco on the building exterior visible from the property perimeter. The Board also recommended against any simulated stone products, specifically the material noted on Sheet A7.4 of the packet.

Generally, the Board recommended that the historic character be carried evenly throughout the building composition. For example, the Board recommended that sliding doors be replaced with French doors.

The Board noted that there are too many window types and that a more ordered approach to the fenestration on all sides is recommended.

The Board agreed that having multiple decks, roof deck and ground level open space for each unit is not necessary; rather it is the quality and usability of the private open spaces that is important. Towards that end, the Board recommended that the decks be recessed, not projecting, to be more aligned with the historic character of the building's aesthetics.

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.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas . Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks, and mechanical equipment away from the street where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units, and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.

The Board agreed that the entry design of the four townhouse units facing onto Boylston Avenue East should create a sense of individualized, semi-private open spaces that are buffered by a wide, well-landscaped right-of-way between the property line and the sidewalk.

The Board specified that the service areas and access to these areas should be minimized and well-integrated into the development to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Board would like to review how the various garbage collection containers will be stored.

At the Initial Recommendation meeting, the Board was pleased with the design, landscaping and configuration of the entry patios of the street facing units. The Board also appreciated that the trash area has been tucked under the stairwell and will not be visible to passersby.

The Board was extremely concerned with the proposed departure to reduce the width of the separation between the buildings from ten to five feet. This width is far too narrow and dark to be enjoyed by residents. The building face along these two corridors measure 30 feet tall (and 40 feet

tall where the penthouses are located). Moreover, the overhead canopies at the entries along these corridors project three feet and would further crowd the space; these entries are not hospitable.

E. Landscaping

- E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites. Landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.**
- 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.**
- E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions. The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as existing significant trees.**

The Board would like to see an innovative and well-programmed residential courtyard design, as well as that of the stair well access to the upper level courtyard. The Board looks forward to a detailed graphic showing the design of this courtyard and steps to create a distinctive, landscaped, functional entry pathway.

The Board discussed at length the treatment of the wider than normal right of way planting strip and stressed that this area become a well-landscaped softscape with plantings (not grass) and an irrigation system be included to assist in the long term maintenance of the vegetation.

The Board strongly encouraged the preservation of the large Maple tree located near the rear property line.

At the Initial Recommendation meeting, the Board was pleased with the proposed landscaping in the wide right-of-way, the front entry patios for the street facing units, the interior courtyard configuration and variety of private open spaces available for each unit. The Board stated, however, that the interior courtyard does not relate well to the units fronting onto the shared open space. The Board noted that the roof decks are not of a usable size and should be better thought through to ensure that they are functional, enjoyable spaces for the residents. The Board also recommends installing planters and/or screening, as well landscaping that creates a privacy buffer between the subject development and the neighboring units. Additionally, the Board suggested that the division between the two units sharing each roof deck be more neighborly and better coordinated to help create the perception of larger spaces.

See also A-7.

The Board strongly agreed that the Birch tree located at the southwest corner of the site and the Maple tree located along the rear (east) property line be preserved and protected during construction. The Board intends to recommend a condition to this effect at the next meeting.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

Two departures from the development standards were proposed at the Initial Recommendation meeting.

- 1. Structure Depth (SMC 23.45.011). The Code allows a structural depth of 65% of the lot depth, which equals 75 feet. The proposed design exceeds the structural depth by 3.9 feet.**

The Board expressed preliminary support for such a departure provided that the design adequately responds to the guidance provided at this meeting.

- 2. Interior Setbacks (SMC 23.45.014).** The Code requires that there be a ten foot separation between structures. The proposed design shows a five foot setback between the two front buildings and the rear building.

The Board was extremely concerned about the proposed departure and will recommend against such a departure. The Board agreed that a five foot wide corridor bordered by 30 to 40 foot tall walls on either side will become a narrow, inhospitable and dark corridor. (See A-7, D-1).

NEXT STEPS

At the next Recommendation Meeting, the Board would like to see the following graphics and information presented. All graphics should be posted on boards and readable from a distance.

1. Detailed material and color palette with actual samples, including wrought iron gates and railing material. Show design of gates and fencing.
2. Updated colored Boylston elevation.
3. Unit floor plans (showing relationship between units and central courtyard).
4. Roof plan (to fully understand location and impact of stair penthouses).
5. Solar study of impacts of stair penthouses on neighboring properties.
6. Information on how proposed development intends to achieve LEED silver standards.
7. Show surrounding buildings in plan view.