



## INITIAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE QUEEN ANNE/ MAGNOLIA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3007906

Address: 975 John Street

Applicant: Larry Allen for 975 John Street LLC

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, July 20, 2011

Board Members Present: David Delfs (Chair)  
Mindy Black  
Lipika Mukerji

Board Members Absent: Jacob Connell  
Jill Kurfirst

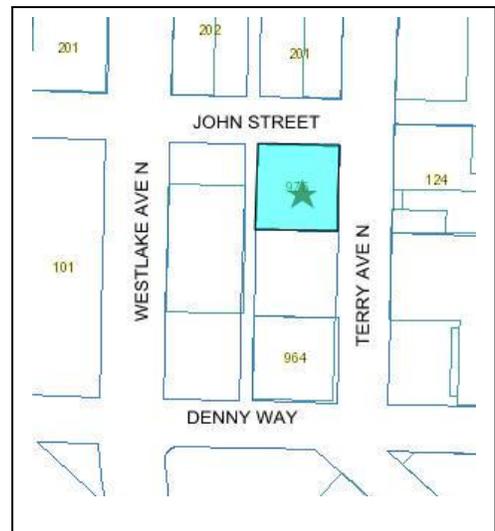
DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser, Senior Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed (SM-125)

Nearby Zones: (North) Industrial Commercial IC-85 to the north, across John Street  
(South) (SM-125)  
(East) (SM-125)  
(West) (SM-125)

Lot Area: 14,400 square feet



**Current Development:** The existing site is a two story office building with basement parking, constructed in 1923 and significantly modified in 1965, according to King County records.

**Access:** The existing structure includes alley access to a basement garage, and pedestrian access via entries on Terry Avenue and John Street.

**Surrounding Development:** Surrounding uses are a mix of mixed-use residential/retail, industrial/warehouse, retail, office, and Denny Park. Surrounding structures range from one to twelve stories, with older structures in the 1-5 story range and newer structures closer to 12 stories. The recently constructed mixed-use building Rollin Street is located to the west across the alley from this site.

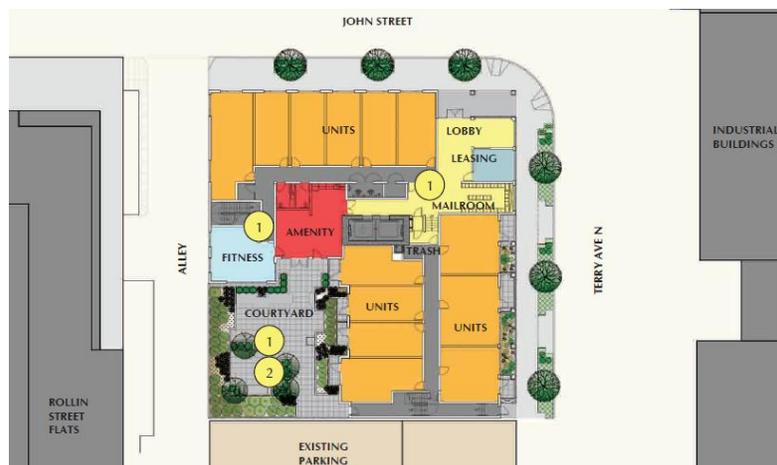
**ECAs:** There are no Environmentally Critical Areas on the site, but there is a mapped steep slope on the site to the south. This site slopes approximately 15' from the northeast corner down to the southwest corner.

This area of South Lake Union has experienced a large amount of development in the last five years, with new residential and commercial structures nearby.

**Neighborhood Character:** The site is located in the South Lake Union Urban Center Village and is also located in a Frequent Transit Corridor. Terry Ave North is classified as a Type II Pedestrian Street and is the subject of the Terry Ave N Street Design Guidelines (Seattle Department of Transportation). This street includes a high level of pedestrian activity. The area includes sidewalks and nearby transit stops for both bus and the South Lake Union Streetcar. Parking is on-street and in private underground and structured parking lots.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a seven-story structure containing 145 residential units in an 8-story building. Parking for 72 vehicles would be provided below grade, accessed from the alley. The existing two-story building would be demolished.



## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Three schemes were presented at the Early Design Guidance meeting. All of the options included retail at the Terry Ave N. street level with residential studio/efficiency units above the street level and structured and below grade parking.

Parking is not required, but the applicant proposes 72 below grade parking spaces. The applicant proposed two points of parking entry at the alley would be located on either side of the Rollins Street condo parking entry at the alley to avoid conflict.

The first scheme (Scheme 1) demonstrated the massing possible under existing code requirements. The scheme included a residential entry at the northeast corner of the site, retail at the Terry Ave N. street frontage, and 11 stories of residential above.

The second scheme (Scheme 2) was a modified “U” mass shape, including modulation and articulation in the east and west facades. The John Street façade would be maximized to capture views to the north of Lake Union. The Terry Ave N. façade would be set back and massed to reflect the nearby warehouse context. A ground level open space would be provided at the south facing opening of the “U” shape, with three units at each level facing into the courtyard. Retail would be provided at the Terry Ave N. street frontage, with 11 stories of residential above.

The third and applicant preferred scheme (Scheme 3) was a modification of Scheme 2. A residential entry was shown at the corner with residential amenity space at the corner for each level of the building. The northeast corner would serve as a recessed ‘front porch’ at grade. The retail at Terry Ave N would be set back 8’ to allow for pedestrian weather protection and plantings. The massing and open spaces would be the same as in Scheme 2. The program consists of first level retail (at the east facade) with five stories of residential above. The residential units would be up to 400 square feet in size, which the applicant noted will meet current market needs in the area.

Proposed departures include a reduction in the amount of required transparency (SMC 23.48.018.A.1.b) and an increase in the maximum area of blank walls (SMC 23.84.018.B.3.a). Both departures would be needed for the parking structure visible at grade at the northwest corner of the site. Because of the site’s slope, the parking structure would be visible at the northwest corner and along part of the north façade. The applicant proposes to provide a ‘front porch’ amenity at the residential entry at the northeast corner, and enhance blank wall areas with plantings in the public right of way and architectural detailing on the blank wall areas.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately three members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Does the applicant intend to design the retail spaces to attract local small businesses?
  - Applicant response: It would be desirable, but that hasn't yet been determined.
- This area is in transition and has a variety of uses, including industrial and trucking. Those businesses need to continue the ability to function. The wide right of way at Terry is helpful.
- A representative for Cornish College noted that these smaller units will be very good for students attending the college. The College is nearby and the average vehicle ownership of Cornish students is less than ½ car per person.

**INITIAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: July 20, 2011**

**DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The applicant noted that the proposed project goals include smaller market rate apartments (average 400 square foot size), with approximately 1 parking stall per two apartments.

The previous preferred design shown at EDG in 2009 was a wood frame 7 story mixed-use residential and retail building. The design was modified since EDG to a metal construction 8 story residential-only building. The applicant explained that the retail component had been removed from the proposal since EDG. Residential units with private patios are now proposed at Terry Ave N, and residential units with no patio or balcony proposed at John St.



*Terry Ave N street level*



*North façade*

The proposed design included exterior finish of cementitious panel and plank siding in a combination of reds, oranges, and grays. The applicant showed a new option of varied gray tone panels on the upper portions of the building, beyond what was shown in the Design Recommendation packet.

The northwest corner of the building included a wall of below grade parking and the first story of residential uses. This corner of the garage wall would be visible due to the slope from east down to west. The garage wall was shown in a concrete finish, with cementitious siding on the wall above. The building address was shown as cast in the concrete wall, with some additional graphic designs of this option shown at the Design Recommendation meeting.



*Northwest corner*

The courtyard was relocated from a south-facing inset area of the building at EDG to the southwest corner of the building at the Recommendation stage. A 150 square foot rooftop deck was added to approximately the center of the roof. The applicant showed shadow studies of

both these residential open spaces.



*Courtyard and Rooftop deck*

The courtyard would include stormwater detention in the form of planter beds, with notch weirs (overflow structures) to allow additional runoff from the beds.

The streetscape landscaping was designed in response to the Rollin Street Flats on John Street, and the Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines on Terry. The applicant described the planter beds on Terry Ave N with concrete blocks on the north side of the beds, to provide a 'green' view when looking north, and an

'industrial' view looking south.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately one member of the public attended this Initial Design Recommendation meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Appreciation for the proposed open space location and landscape plan on John Street.
- More durable quality materials are needed, given the small size of the building and lack of modulation.
- More texture and detail in materials would be better, similar to the design shown on page 23 of the Design Recommendation packet.
- Terry Avenue North Design Guidelines plan should be followed for landscaping on Terry Avenue.

## **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 Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

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

### **A. Site Planning**

**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.**
- **Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.**
- **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.**
- **Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.**
- **Create businesses and community activity clusters through co-location of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.**

- **Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.**

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the retail areas are proposed below an overhang on the east-facing façade. The applicant should design these areas to have clear sight lines, good lighting, and create good connections between the sidewalk and the retail areas.*

*The Board noted that the old QFC site in Uptown neighborhood has a new proposed development, with small retail spaces that are apparently more rentable in this type of neighborhood. The applicant should examine the potential for dividing the retail at grade into a series of small spaces.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board noted that Terry Avenue North is a pedestrian street and provides a high level of pedestrian activity between Denny Way and Lake Union, as confirmed in the Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines. Recent leasing activity in the area indicates that small retail spaces would be in high demand. It's important to provide an active and visually interesting street level use at this street frontage to respond to the context of the area and the development of the pedestrian corridor. The Board agreed that the proposed residential uses with private patios at the street level will not achieve the level of human activity and interaction needed at this street frontage.

The Board recommended that the street level use on Terry include a more active use, such as commercial or at the very least, residential amenity space. The design of this street level use should be consistent with the glass storefront system shown at the residential corner entry, and may include interesting materials and colors for visual interest. The Terry Ave N street frontage should include continuous overhead weather protection for pedestrians.

The Board also noted that the streetscape design on both Terry Ave N and N John St should be consistent with the approved Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines (referenced as an approved plan in the Seattle Department of Transportation Right of Way Improvement Manual 6.1.8). The Board noted that the curbless design shown in these Guidelines could be appropriate at this site. The applicant should demonstrate how the proposed streetscape is consistent with these Guidelines, and include any feedback about these details from SDOT through the Street Improvement Permit process.

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

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the need to Provide maximum possible separation from Rollins Street Flats to the west, to increase light, air, and privacy for those residents and residents in the proposed building. The applicant should work to*

*provide maximum light and air to all proposed and existing units, perhaps by locating open space to coincide with separation from adjacent units at the alley.*

*The Board noted that if possible, a taller building with a single loaded corridor could provide better separation of residences, more light and air to all residential units, and more usable open space at grade.*

*At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board responded positively to the location of the courtyard at the southwest corner, and didn't have additional recommendations related to this item.*

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

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board directed the applicant to design outdoor open space for long-term usability, and maximum light and air. Internal amenity areas should be located to maximize their use (for example, group the lounge, laundry, and trash areas in the floor plan).*

*The Board expressed concern that the open space at grade in the small courtyard could be easily shadowed by future development to the south. The applicant should demonstrate that the proposed open space location will provide the long term light and air and usable outdoor area for all residents. The applicant could provide shadow studies of the proposed open space, demonstrating that the proposed 6 story building and future 12-story development to the south would still allow light and air to the courtyard at grade. Alternatively, the applicant could relocate proposed massing to place the open space adjacent to the alley to provide light, air, usable open space, and residential separation from Rollins Street Flats.*

*In addition to outdoor open space, the Board also advised that the applicant should group internal common areas, in order to encourage residents' use of the common areas.*

*At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board responded positively to the location of the courtyard at the southwest corner and the rooftop deck area, and didn't have additional recommendations related to this item. The Board recognized that modifying the residential amenity space to meet Guideline A-4 may result in not grouping the courtyard and amenity spaces together.*

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

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the applicant had shown a glass corner element in an earlier version of the design review packet. The Board agreed that maximum glazing would provide better light to the small internal spaces within the building. The glazed corner element would also help to define the lounge at the corner as*

*different from the rest of the building program. The glazed corner would also help to define the corner of the building architecturally.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board responded positively to the proposed upper level design of the building, and didn't have additional recommendations related to this item.

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

**B-1 Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility.** Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk, and scale between anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through building placement, scale and details with specific attention to regional transportation corridors such as Mercer, Aurora, Fairview and Westlake. These locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements.
- 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.
- Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that relate to the existing structures or existing pattern of development in the vicinity.
- Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as: landscaping; trellis; complementary materials; detailing; accent trim.

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that in addition to the comments found in A-5 and A-7, the rooftop design should include consideration for existing and future surrounding buildings, which could be twice as tall as the proposed development. The rooftop should be designed to be visually interesting and all mechanical equipment screened from potential adjacent residents' views.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board noted that the proposed rooftop mechanical equipment will be fully enclosed, and they responded positively to the overall massing and upper level façade treatment.

The Board expressed concern about the proposed use and street level design at Terry Ave N (described in response to Guideline A-4). The Board recommended a street level use at Terry Ave N that will generate human activity, and revise the street level design to include human-scale high quality durable materials with visual interest.

The Board also expressed concern about the design of the base of the building at the northwest corner. The proposed garage level was shown in finished concrete, with cementitious panel and plank above. Windows at the northwest corner would have a sill height approximately 8' above the sidewalk. The Board expressed concern about the clear visual division of the façade at the garage level and the amount of blank wall adjacent to the pedestrian experience at this corner. The Board recommended that the base of the building and the garage level should be consistently clad in a human-scaled material.

The Board also discussed the application of materials on the west façade, specifically the layering of materials and colors without much depth to the layers. The Board recommended that the layering of materials should respond to modulation in the building, or the depth of the layering should be more pronounced (for example, several inches of façade relief between the layers of material).

## 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:**

- **Support the existing fine-grained character of the neighborhood with a mix of building styles.**
- **Re-use and preserve important buildings and landmarks when possible.**
- **Expose historic signs and vintage advertising on buildings where possible.**
- **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 working class, maritime, commercial and industrial character of the Waterfront and Westlake areas. Examples of elements to consider include: window detail patterns; open bay doors; sloped roofs.**
- **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.**

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that in addition to the comments found in A-10 and B-1, the proposed development should reflect nearby new and old context. New context can be found in Rollins Street Flats, and similar structures. Older context can be found in Bungee Foods and similar warehouse structures.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board didn't offer recommendations related to this Guideline.

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

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

Design the “fifth elevation” — the roofscape — in addition to the streetscape. As this area topographically is a valley, the roofs may be viewed from locations outside the neighborhood such as the freeway and Space Needle. Therefore, views from outside the area as well as from within the neighborhood should be considered, and roof-top elements should be organized to minimize view impacts from the freeway and elevated areas.

*Guidance* and recommendations reflect those found in response to Guidelines B-1 and C-1.

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

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board didn't offer guidance about this item.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, Board recommendations reflected those in response to Guidelines A-4 and B-1.

- 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.

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board didn't offer guidance about this item.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, Board recommendations reflected those in response to Guidelines A-4 and B-1. Materials should be durable, high quality and include finely detailed finishes and edges.

## **D. Pedestrian Environment**

- 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.

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that in addition to the comments found in A-10 and B-1, the proposed blank walls at the south property line should include*

*contrasting color and/or surface treatment. These walls may be visible for a long time before development occurs on the parcel to the south.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board recommendation reflected the response to Guideline B-1.

- 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.**

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board expressed concern with the potential visual impact of the northwest corner of the parking garage on the pedestrian environment. The applicant has proposed a green wall at the north façade of the garage. The Board gave guidance that the applicant should examine a variety of treatments at that wall, such as interesting materials/colors, textured treatments, architectural details, and/or a variety of landscaping.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, Board recommendation reflected the response to Guideline B-1.

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

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- **Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18-hour public activity. Methods to consider are: enhanced pedestrian and street lighting; well- designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street; police horse tie-up locations for routine patrols and larger event assistance.**

*Guidance and recommendations reflect those found in response to Guideline A-4.*

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

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board didn't offer guidance about this item.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, Board recommendation reflected the response to Guideline B-1.

- D-10 Commercial Lighting. Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts**

during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.

*Guidance* and recommendations reflect those found in response to Guideline A-4.

- D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions.** For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board didn't offer guidance about this item.*

*At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board noted that the proposed cementitious panels on the columns adjacent to the residential entry will experience a high degree of traffic and will likely not offer a durable finish. The Board recommended that the columns should instead be clad in a high quality very durable finish that provides visual interest at the entry.*

The Board also recommended that the applicant modify the design to enhance the entry. Enhancements could include a decorative or emphasized canopy, larger signage, interesting materials and colors, decorative lighting, and art or sculpture.

## **E. Landscaping**

- E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites.** Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Support the creation of a hierarchy of passive and active open space within South Lake Union. This may include pooling open space requirements on-site to create larger spaces.
- Encourage landscaping that meets LEED criteria. This is a priority in the Cascade neighborhood.
- Where appropriate, install indigenous trees and plants to improve aesthetics, capture water and create habitat.
- Retain existing, non-intrusive mature trees or replace with large caliper trees.
- Water features are encouraged including natural marsh-like installations.
- Reference the City of Seattle Right Tree Book and the City Light Streetscape Light Standards Manual for appropriate landscaping and lighting options for the area.

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board gave guidance that the landscaping and streetscape should reflect the Rollins Street Flats streetscape and continue the theme to this block.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board appreciated the response to the Rollin Street Flats landscape design, and requested additional information about how the proposed Terry Ave N. streetscape relates to the Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines, as described in response to A-4.

**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.**

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- **Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a building and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the previous uses of the area. Neighborhood themes may include service industries such as laundries, auto row, floral businesses, photography district, arts district, maritime, etc.**

*At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board directed the applicant to design landscaping at the alley near the green wall to be low profile to prevent potential conflicts between cars and pedestrians at the alley intersection. The landscaping should also be designed to fully camouflage the blank wall.*

At the Initial Recommendation Meeting, the Board recommended additional design efforts at the northwest corner and residential entry, as described in response to Guidelines B-1 and D-12.

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

No development standard departures were requested or identified by the applicant at the Initial Design Recommendation meeting or in the Initial Design Recommendation packet.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

**At the conclusion of the Initial Recommendation meeting, the Board recommended the project should return for a second Recommendation meeting to address the design changes described in this report.**