



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor  
Department of Planning and Development  
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**RECOMMENDATION MEETING  
Of  
AREA 7, THE CAPITOL HILL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**  
Meeting Date: January 21, 2009  
Report Date: February 2, 2009

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

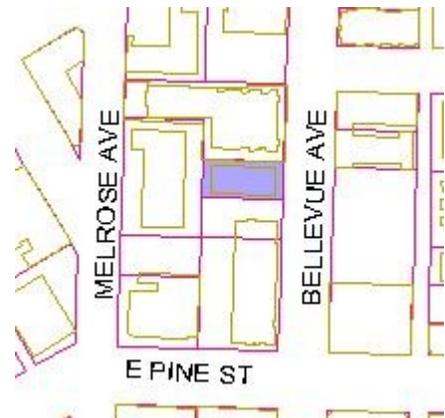
Project Number: 3008760  
Address: 1623 Bellevue Avenue  
Applicant: Roger Newell, Roger Newell Architects  
Board Members Present: Rumi Takahashi, Chair  
Jason Morrow  
Evan Bourquard  
Sharon Sutton  
Brian Cavanaugh  
DPD Project Planner: Art Pederson

**PROJECT AND SITE DESCRIPTION**

The project proposes a six story structure with 23 residential units, approximately 1,027 square feet of retail space and approximately 12 parking spaces within the structure below grade. Parking access would be from Bellevue Avenue.

The project site is approximately 5,250 square feet in area (50' x 105') and on west side of Bellevue Avenue between East Pine and East Olive Streets. The site sits above the parcels to the west and is divided from them by a short distance of elevation change that extends northward.

The site is zoned Neighborhood Commercial 3 with a sixty-five foot height limit (NC 3-65) as are all surrounding parcels. A Mid-Rise zone (MR) extends to the northeast beyond the alley across the street. The surrounding parcels are a mix of ages and sizes of multi-family structures, some containing commercial uses, such as directly across Bellevue Avenue, and an occasional early 1900's single-family structure. The site directly to the south contains a 26 unit 1960's apartment structure that is expected to be demolished for the construction of a six-story 103 unit residential structure with street level commercial space and parking for 123 vehicles (DPD #3007778).



## **DEVELOPER AND ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION**

Roger Newell, project architect, described the project and its design response to the Design Review Board's Early Design Guidance.

The building design has been changed from the EDG presented pronounced plinth / podium to the moment frame expression encouraged by the Board. Now, the two story building base is cast in place concrete with four wood frame levels above. Overall, the east and west facades are divided into two vertical stacks of units separated by a central wider frame element. On the Bellevue Avenue façade the full site width concrete base frame will continue through the third level in the south vertical stack, to respond to the elevator and stair penthouse that extends beyond the roof above. The north half third level will clad with cementitious panels as will the entirety of the three levels above, the north and south facades, and levels 2 through 6 on the west (back) façade. Except for the south portion concrete frame that extends to the fourth level, the frame of the street façade levels above the concrete base will be inset five feet from the north and south property boundaries and set back approximately 23-feet from the street property line leaving a 40-foot wide central section.

The two stacks of units within the frame system are each divided into a larger central bay and a narrow outboard bay. The central bays are comprised predominately of setback grids of windows for living rooms and narrower areas of decks that recess toward the set back bedroom windows. The five-foot wide outboard bays contain windows leading to each unit's second bedroom.

At sidewalk level, there is a secondary residential entry at the building's south end followed by a commercial area of approximately 18 feet in length divided into two small commercial spaces, then a wider main residential entry, and finally the garage entry. The main residential entry door and garage door are proposed to be located 5'4" from the sidewalk. To minimize the garage opening impact on the street front, a 10-foot wide garage door and driveway are proposed and the previously presented *Design Departure* for a reduced north side sight triangle is still requested.

Materials proposed are stained concrete at the building's first level on all facades with this extending through the street side second level and one-half of the third level, as described above. Large dark red cementitious panels will be a rain-screen siding for all façade levels above the concrete. The panels will have visible open joints, likely with exposed fasteners for an industrial and strong expression. An aluminum storefront window system will be used for the commercial areas. A steel and glass canopy will extend over the commercial frontage. The proposed residential windows are clay color vinyl with the true divided lights forming the grid pattern. The main residential entry canopy of aluminum and plexi-glass will be curvilinear to differentiate it from the commercial area. The metal residential and garage doors will also be a grid pattern. The entry soffits will be a Hardi-panel-like material of a lighter color than the exterior.

In front of the residential grid windows along the street façade fiberglass planters are proposed. Planters are also proposed in front of the commercial store fronts and a small area by the main residential entry. The rear first level patio will have raised planter areas with an extensive array

of trees and lower growing plants. The sidewalk planting strip will be extensively landscaped but a paved area will remain next to the driveway for once a week dumpster placement. There will be a roof-top residential amenity patio area with a raised landscape planter and both surrounded by an extensive green roof.

A request for a *Design Departures* from the dimensional requirements for sight triangles was continued from EDG and is described in the *Design Departure* Table at the end of this document.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT RECOMMENDATION MEETING**

Three members of the public attended and one person offered the following comments in response to the applicant's presentation:

- The "green roof" is a nice addition – too bad it can't also be on the lower levels.
- The proposed moment frame design is responsive to the Pike / Pine vernacular, but the planters break the rhythm established by the frame.
- The street level windows should not be a grid pattern like the upper level windows, but instead should follow the Pike / Pine vernacular with larger panes or lights on the bottom with smaller panes on the top of the window assembly. The project's west side patio level windows are more in keeping with this.
- The proposed garage door grid is attractive but is too similar to the window grid and may be confused as store-front area and thereby be a safety problem.
- The vertical material change (stained concrete below with stained cementitious panels above) is not a part of the Pike / Pine vernacular.
- The curved residential entry canopy should instead be similar to the flatter and rectilinear commercial canopy.

### **DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES, EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING OF MAY 21, 2008.**

At the Early Design Guidance meeting, after visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, the Design Review Board members identified by letter and number the following 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-3 Entrances Visible from the Street
- A-4 Human Activity
- A-6 Transition between Residence and Street
- A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access
- B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility
- C-1 Architectural Context
- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency
- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials
- C-5 Structured Parking Entrances
- D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures
- D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas

- D-7 Personal Safety and Security
- D-10 Commercial Lighting
- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and / or Site

The detailed EDG Guidance is included below in *Italics* along with the Board's Recommendations on the presented Master Use Permit design response.

### **DEPARTURES FROM CODE STANDARDS**

A *Design Departure* from the full dimensional requirements for driveway to sidewalk sight triangles was requested at the EDG meeting. The Board said they would consider this request due to the buildings northeast corner column, narrow site, and based on whether granting the *Design Departure* would result in a better project design and adequately address any resultant pedestrian safety issues.

### **EDG PUBLIC COMMENT**

Numerous public comments were received at the EDG meeting. These are documented in the EDG report and available in the project file and on DPD's web site.

### **RECOMMENDATION MEETING**

At the January 21, 2009 *Recommendation* meeting the Design Review Board reviewed the design submitted in response to the EDG and further developed in conjunction with the project planner and discussed the requested *Design Departure* (see *Design Departure* table at the end of this document for details). Following the clarifying questions and deliberation, the Board provided the following additional guidance and recommendations. The Board's comments and recommendations follow EDG Guidance that is 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.**

*The Board acknowledges that the relatively narrow site (50') is a limiting site condition. However, the four schemes presented do not show any exploration of alternatives to a plinth with set back tower above. Although it is in response to the required first to second level set-back from existing Seattle City Light (SCL) power lines, it does not respond to the surrounding architectural context (see C-1 below). Further design development should strongly explore alternatives to this pronounced base and set-back when responding to the remaining design guidance given.*

Recommendation Meeting. The Board was pleased to see the design moved away from the original tower and plinth proposed and incorporates an expressed moment frame *parti* common to the surrounding Pike / Pine area. Consequently, it determined that the presented design responds to this particular guidance.

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

*Responding to this guideline could be difficult with the proposed two bay plinth and combined and recessed residential and garage entries. Combining these two entries to avoid a single and narrow residential entry is understandable, however as proposed the residential entry could become lost in the larger bay. Moving away from the strongly expressed plinth as outlined in C-2 below could provide new design options for this area. The design should also consider bringing the residential entry further toward the property line and /or creating a closer visual association with the commercial entry area. Differentiation of the canopy / overhead weather protection (OHWP) for each entry can be explored, but not fully relied upon.*

Recommendation Meeting. The Board was pleased to see that the residential entry door and garage door are proposed to be closer to the sidewalk / property line (5'4" proposed). However, they discussed the benefit for creating a better relationship with the street and for the structure's overall architectural expression by moving both even closer to the sidewalk / property line and **Recommends** both should be at the same 18" set back as the commercial storefront. See C-2 below for Board comments about the curved residential canopy proposed.

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

*The proposed recessed commercial and residential entries beneath the frame of the proposed plinth seem to hide these elements and diminish their ability to support human activity.*

*The one large commercial space proposed isn't in keeping with the smaller commercial spaces in this area. Dividing this into two spaces with two entries may be a better economic choice while creating a better response to this guideline.*

Recommendation Meeting. In light of other comments in this document, the Board determined that the presented design responds to this guidance.

**A-6 Transition between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.**

*The proposed 10-foot garage and residential door set-backs should not create areas where pedestrian and resident safety is compromised.*

Recommendation Meeting. By following the **Recommendation** on entry door set-back in A-3 above, the Board determined that the presented design will respond to this guidance.

**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.**

*A limitation of a narrow site is the amount of street frontage given over to vehicle access. The Board is supportive of the proposed 10-foot driveway but directs the design to create a visually pleasing and safe vehicle entry area with a high quality door finish / design and quality surrounding materials (soffit, walls, and lighting).*

Recommendation Meeting. Concerns about pedestrian safety by a too similar appearance of the residential entry and garage doors were discussed. The Board concluded this should not be a problem since the garage entry width is small and the operating door will be a strong clue to

pedestrians of the nature of this area. Also, the garage entry will not have a canopy while the residential entry will.

The proposed grid pattern metal garage door should be constructed of quality materials and finish for long term durability and visual appeal. The garage ramp interior walls and soffit (ceiling) visible from the street should also use high quality materials, colors that relate to the building exterior, and appropriate lighting since this area will be visible from the sidewalk.

The Board discussed the Design Departure for a reduced sight triangle on the driveway's north side. The Board ***Recommends Approval*** of this request due to the proposed narrow driveway, which will minimize streetscape visual impacts within the context of this narrow lot, and the proposal to supplement this reduction with mirrors and visible (not) audible alarms. The Board suggested the applicant explore the possibility of altering the sidewalk paving pattern in front of the garage entry as another opportunity for creating a visual cue for pedestrians.

The Board finds that the presented design fully responds to this guidance.

## **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 the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

*The Board expressed concerns about the proposed building massing (see C-2 below).*

Recommendation Meeting. Based on the Board comments elsewhere in this document the presented design has fully responded to this guidance.

## **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.

**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 context.

**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 Pike Pine Design Guidelines provide many examples of prevalent contextual building forms and materials. The proposed extensive use of stucco and a pronounced plinth are not among them.*

*Again, the design should re-examine the use of the plinth with tower above. The Board notes*

*that the proposed upper level frame expression does refer to the “moment frame” auto-row structures throughout the neighborhood. However, this expression is greatly diminished by its set-back from the plinth base and the recessed street level facade within the plinth.*

*If the underground re-location of the SCL power lines in conjunction with the neighboring project to the south is not possible, alternative to the tower set-back should be found. A possibility may be setting back the base to be in line with the upper levels.*

*An examination of the quality buildings in the neighborhood should be made to see what the prevalent material choices are; brick is one. If a concrete base is pursued, it should not be covered with stucco or similar. The choice of materials should reinforce the positive “moment frame” expression. Material transitions at the building corners should be visually appropriate. If a ground level set back is pursued careful attention must be given to the choice of soffit material to assure the set-back area is visually inviting.*

Recommendation Meeting. The Board **Recommends** the proposed moment frame expression and stained concrete base, but had concerns about the proposed planters, the durability of the Hardi-panels at exposed corner edges and in proximity to planters, and the lack of details about residential window trim in transition to the panel siding.

The Board discussed the architectural incompatibility and likely maintenance / waterproofing problems of the proposed street facing upper level residential planters and **Recommended** they not be used. With the removal of the planters, the residential windows should be brought down to, or almost to, the floor level, similar to that proposed on the building’s west side. Not using planters will avoid their moisture impacts on the siding panels.

The Board supports the proposed use of Hardi-panels as the upper level siding but is concerned that its exposed corners, where it would wrap inward toward the recessed windows and patios, won’t withstand moisture impacts and maintain long term visual attractiveness. The Board directs the architect to assure this will not be a problem, and if so, revise this detail compatible with the overall design presented.

The recessed upper level windows proposed should read as assemblies distinct from the “moment frame” element surrounding them. This may require that they extend from floor to ceiling and around corners. The materials that wrap will the windows (head, jamb, sill, and corners) must be consistent with the window frames to reinforce the concept of the windows as unified assemblies.

**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.**

*See guidance in A-3, 4, 6, and 8 above. Interior garage lighting should be shielded from sidewalk and street view.*

Recommendation Meeting. Based on the Board comments elsewhere in this document the presented design responds to this guidance.

#### **D. Pedestrian Environment**

**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 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 guidance in A-3, 4, 6, 8, and C-5 above.*

Recommendation Meeting. Based on the Board comments elsewhere in this document the presented design responds to this guidance.

**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 front 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 applicants discussed splitting the garbage and recycling storage areas within the structure and locating the garbage / dumpster equipment by the garage door since the proposed garage entry won't permit entry of large pick-up vehicles. Any location visible from the street must be fully and attractively screened.*

Recommendation Meeting. The garbage and recycling are proposed to be in the garage and away from the garage doors. However, these containers will be brought out to the planting strip once weekly for pickup. The proposed expanded concrete area in the planting strip and next to the driveway should be adequate to keep these off the sidewalk and out of the way of pedestrians. Based on this, the Board finds the presented design responds to this guidance.

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

*See guidance in A-3, 4, and 6 above.*

Recommendation Meeting. Based on the Board comments elsewhere in this document the presented design responds to this guidance.

**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 evening hours.**

*Any street level façade setback, both pedestrian and vehicle, beneath a level above should provide adequate and attractive lighting. In respect to neighboring residential structures across Bellevue Avenue, light should not trespass off site.*

Recommendation Meeting. The Board finds the presented design responds to this guidance.

## **E. Landscaping**

**E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site. Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellis, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.**

*Any street level setback, the planting strip (if it leaves adequate sidewalk width), and any upper*

level terrace areas are an opportunity for quality landscaping / Green Factor elements that will provide “greening” appropriate to this urban context.

Recommendation Meeting. With the exception of the proposed street facing upper level residential planters discussed above, the Board finds the presented landscape and green roof plan responds to this guidance.

The possibility of the existing Pacific dogwood at the site’s southwest corner being an *Exceptional* tree is an unresolved issue. However, if it is and must be retained, the Board does not see any significant implications for the presented and *Recommended* design.

**DEPARTURES FROM CODE STANDARDS**

<b>Land Use Code Standard</b>	<b>Proposed Amount of Departure</b>	<b>Rationale for Request</b>	<b>Board Guidance</b>
<p><b>Sight Triangle.</b> Two-way driveways less than 22’ wide and less than 10’ from the property line may have a 5’ by 10’ unobstructed sight triangle on that side, other wise the triangle must have 10’ sides. SMC 23.54.030.G.</p>	<p>The applicant asked that the property line triangle to be 2’ x 10’ and the south side triangle to extend 6’ into the driveway and 9’ along the sidewalk frontage based on their proposed 5’4” set back. However the Board directs the applicant to bring the door as close to an 18” set back as possible. This would result in 18” by 10’ and 9’ triangles.</p>	<p>The small site and demands of the proposed plinth construction require a column to intrude possibly 2’ into the sight triangle on the north side. On the south side, in order to bring the building toward the property boundary, low architectural elements will intrude into the triangle. The same safety goal can be achieved by the addition of mirrors and visual warning signals. <i>A-1, A-6</i></p>	<p>The Board <b><i>Recommends Approval</i></b> of the requested reduction to achieve the guidance given, based on the overall design proposed, and addition of mirrors and audible warning signals.</p>

**BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

The Board finds that the project design successfully responds to the design guidance given, with the *Recommendations* and the other changes outlined in this document. The applicant and architect shall make the necessary design changes and submit the required drawings to the project planner for review and final approval after the SEPA *Exceptional* tree issue is resolved.

The Board ***Recommends Approval*** of the *Design Departure* request.

**NEXT STEPS**

Update the MUP plans to incorporate the design changes discussed above (see A-3, A-8, C-1,2,3, D-6, and E-2). It is advisable to discuss the proposed changes with the project planner before updating the plans, however. Submit the required arborist report so a determination on

whether the Pacific dogwood tree will be considered *Exceptional* and need to be preserved. This should also occur before the MUP plans are updated.

I:\PedersA\Design Review\3008760 Pk-Pn \3008760 Rec .DOC