



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning & Development

D.M. Sugimura, Director

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**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE PRIORITIES  
OF THE  
CAPITOL/FIRST HILL/CENTRAL AREA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**Project Number:** 3008933

**Address:** 302 Harvard Avenue East

**Applicant:** Kate Suski, WRP Associates

**Meeting Date:** January 6, 2010  
**Report Date:** January 28, 2010

**Board members present:** Evan Bourquard  
Lisa Picard  
Wolf Saar  
Sharon Sutton, Chair

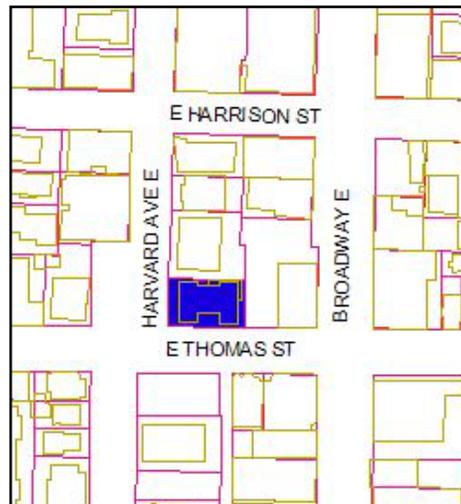
**Board members absent:** Brian Cavanaugh

**DPD staff present:** Lisa Rutzick, Land Use Planner

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**SITE & VICINITY**

The 8,000 sf site is located on a corner lot one block west of Broadway's commercial corridor. The property currently has an 11-unit apartment building and is bordered by East Thomas Street to the south and Harvard Avenue East to the west. The site is zoned Neighborhood Commercial (NC3 40/65). Across the street to the south and west, the zone changes to Midrise with a Residential Commercial overlay (MR-RC) with a 60-foot height limit. The site lies within the Capitol Hill Urban Village Commercial Zone Overlay (that has its own set of Neighborhood Guidelines), as well as a Light Rail Station Overlay.



Many of the surrounding properties are zoned NC3/R-40 with a 65' height limit for housing over 40'. Adjacent uses consist of large multifamily residential buildings and a few single family houses to the north, west and south.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal includes the construction of a new mixed-use building. The new structure would include approximately 70-75 residential units, approximately 3,000 sf of ground level retail and below grade parking for approximately 40-50 vehicles. Access to the site is proposed from Harvard Avenue East.

## **DESIGN PRESENTATION**

Three schemes were presented at the Early Design Guidance meeting. All of the options include below grade parking accessed from Harvard Avenue East. The first scheme (Option 1) proposes a rectangular-shaped building that maximizes the site and includes a notch at the northeast corner. The structure would be set back seven feet from the east and north property lines. The residential entry would be from Thomas Street. No departures would be needed for this alternative.

The second alternative (Option 2) proposes a more modulated building, with recessed notches and a setback area that encroaches more into the setback areas shown in Option 1. The main residential entry would be from Harvard. This alternative includes departures from the parking stall ratio and sight triangle standards.

The third and preferred scheme (Option 3) shows an L-shaped massing configuration that is further articulated with vertical bays. The main residential entry would be from Thomas. Access would be from Harvard Avenue East. This alternative also includes departures from the parking stall ratio and sight triangle standards.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

- Prefer massing that uses angles other than 90-degrees in the building form.
- Location of the development should result in less parking demand, therefore less parking should be provided.
- The provision of parking results in increased traffic in a neighborhood where light rail will be built. Instead the focus should be on the location of the site at the shift in the street grid and responding to this unusual condition.
- Support proposed driveway location and provision of parking.
- The design of the building should relate to the history of the streetcar and Capitol Hill.
- The residential entry location along Harvard relates to the neighborhood better.

## **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. The Board also consulted with the recently adopted neighborhood specific guidelines *Capitol Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines*.

### **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 subject site is located on a corner of an intersection where the street grid shifts, creating an unusually wide right of way (approximately 20'-6") and excellent opportunity for enhancements to the public realm. The Board encouraged extending the Green Factor requirements into the right of way and working with SDOT to maximize the design potential. The Board also stressed the importance of connecting to the Broadway character of the neighborhood.

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

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Retain or increase the width of sidewalks.**
- Provide street trees with tree grates or in planter strips, using appropriate species to provide summer shade, winter light, and year-round visual interest.**
- Vehicle entrances to buildings should not dominate the streetscape.**
- Orient townhouse structures to provide pedestrian entrances to the sidewalk.**
- For buildings that span a block and "front" on two streets, each street frontage should receive individual and detailed site planning and architectural design treatments to complement the established streetscape character.**
- New development in commercial zones should be sensitive to neighboring residential zones. While a design with a commercial character is appropriate along Broadway, compatibility with residential character should be emphasized along the other streets.**

The Board agreed that the design challenge of this building is to respond to both the strong commercial character of Broadway and the strong residential character that is established to the west and south of the site. The jog in the street grid creates interesting

and desirable spaces that offers much potential for the pedestrian experience and also for architectural views to the site at this prominent corner.

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

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Provide for sidewalk retail opportunities and connections by allowing for the opening of the storefront to the street and displaying goods to the pedestrian.**

**Provide for outdoor eating and drinking opportunities on the sidewalk by allowing for the opening the restaurant or café windows to the sidewalk and installing outdoor seating while maintaining pedestrian flow.**

**Install clear glass windows along the sidewalk to provide visual access into the retail or dining activities that occur inside. Do not block views into the interior spaces with the backs of shelving units or with posters.**

The design proposed a departure from the 13-foot commercial height standard and the Board agreed that they were not favorably inclined towards such a deviation. The Board felt that the proposed commercial spaces should maximize the potential to draw commercial activity from Broadway. A large storefront should be emphasized and the Board would like to see multiple entrances along Thomas Street.

**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.**

The Board warned against having the proposed design relate too closely to the approved building design directly across the street. The Board clarified that this is a different site with a different set of conditions that need to be addressed. Instead, the design should respond to the building to the north, the residential context and the prominent corner location.

The Board noted that the design should be cognizant of the 40-foot zone and the existing buildings in the area. In response to the building to the north, this may be expressed with a simple datum line or perhaps a change in the materials.

**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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Preserve and enhance the pedestrian environment in residential and commercial areas by providing for continuous sidewalks that are unencumbered by parked vehicles and are minimally broken within a block by vehicular access.**

The Board strongly agreed that the parking entrance should not be recessed into the building with the building cantilevering out over the driveway; rather the building should enclose the driveway and carry the building solidly to the ground. The Board noted that the treatment of the provision of parking should be treated as a building amenity, rather than as an essential, dominant program.

**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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Incorporate residential entries and special landscaping into corner lots by setting the structure back from the property lines.
- Provide for a prominent retail corner entry.

The Board noted that this site is located at an intersection where Harvard Avenue jogs, creating a very visible corner location. The design should take advantage of and acknowledge this visibility. The Board recommended that the corner design be strong and serve as a continuation of the south and west facades, rather than strive to create a third element.

<b>B. Height, Bulk, and Scale</b>
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**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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Break up building mass by incorporating different façade treatments to give the impression of multiple, small-scale buildings, in keeping with the established development pattern.
- Consider existing views to downtown Seattle, the Space Needle, Elliott Bay and the Olympic Mountains, and incorporate site and building design features that may help to preserve those views from public rights-of-way.
- Design new buildings to maximize the amount of sunshine on adjacent sidewalks throughout the year.

The Board discussed how the building form might respond to the lower scale building to the immediate north. They supported the massing concept of dropping the height of the northern portion of the building from 65 feet down to 40 feet and allow greater light and air to the north side of the building.

At the next meeting, the Board would like to see views of the building from multiple angles and from the pedestrian viewpoint.

## C. Architectural Elements

### 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.**

The Board noted that although the character of Thomas Street and Harvard Street are fairly different, it is important that the façade design wraps around the corner evenly and provides a consistent appearance and relate to each other.

### 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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Incorporate signage that is consistent with the existing or intended character of the building and the neighborhood.**
- Solid canopies or fabric awnings over the sidewalk are preferred.**
- Avoid using vinyl awnings that also serve as big, illuminated signs.**
- Use materials and design that is compatible with the structures in the vicinity if those represent the desired neighborhood character.**

The Board noted that the building design should strive for a strong urban character that expresses the visual and physical proximity to Broadway. The Board recommended a simple design concept that integrates a robust, commercial appearance that also responds to the scale of the neighborhood. Overhead weather protection is encouraged.

### 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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Provide operable windows, especially on storefronts.**
- Consider each building as a high-quality, long-term addition to the neighborhood; exterior design and materials should exhibit permanence and quality appropriate to the Capitol Hill neighborhood.**
- The use of applied foam ornamentation and EIFS (Exterior Insulation & Finish System) is discouraged, especially on ground level locations.**

The Board stressed that the design should use a material palette that is durable and long-lasting. The Board looks forward to reviewing a more detailed materials and color board that is reflective of and responsive to the neighborhood.

**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 stressed that the vehicular access to the site should be visually minimized and cause as little disruption to pedestrian circulation around the site as possible. In particular, the design of the garage door and driveway paving should be interesting, attractive and safe. The driveway design should be subservient to pedestrian comfort and circulation. The Board would be supportive of a departure request to reduce the driveway width.

**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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Provide entryways that link the building to the surrounding landscape.
- Create open spaces at street level that link to the open space of the sidewalk.
- Building entrances should emphasize pedestrian ingress and egress as opposed to accommodating vehicles.
- Minimize the number of residential entrances on commercial streets where non-residential uses are required. Where residential entries and lobbies on commercial streets are unavoidable, minimize their impact to the retail vitality commercial streetscape.

The Board would like to see overhead weather protection and exterior lighting designs at the next meeting.

**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 Board noted that the north façade should avoid being a blank wall and should be treated to provide visual interest.

**D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas. Building sites should locate service elements away from the street front where possible. Where these elements cannot be located away from street fronts, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

For new development along Broadway that extends to streets with residential character—such as Nagle Place or 10th or Harvard Avenues East—any vehicle access, loading or service activities should be screened and designed with features appropriate for a residential context.

The Board stressed that all of the service elements associated with the proposed development should be located within the proposed structure to provide increased security and discourage loitering. The Board recommended that the service area be located fully within the garage and not be visible from the sidewalk.

**D-11 Commercial Transparency. Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.**

See A-4.

**E. Landscaping**

**E-3 Landscape 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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Maintain or enhance the character and aesthetic qualities of neighborhood development to provide for consistent streetscape character along a corridor.
- Supplement and complement existing mature street trees where feasible.
- Incorporate street trees in both commercial and residential environments in addition to trees onsite.
- Commercial landscape treatments that include street trees.

The Board noted that if vertical landscaping is proposed along the north façade, details of the plantings and support systems should be presented at the next meeting.

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The following departures from the development standards were proposed at this phase:

**Departure Summary Table**

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	BOARD RESPONSE
<b>PARKING STALL SIZE RATIO</b> SMC 23.54.030.B1	Minimum of 60% of the stalls striped for medium sized vehicles	Less than 60% of the stalls are medium size	Board may be supportive of the proposed departure provided that the design of the garage is well integrated into the building and efforts to promote the pedestrian environment are paramount.
<b>COMMERCIAL HEIGHT</b>	13' floor to floor	10' floor to floor	Board not supportive of such a departure request.

SMC 23.47A.008.B3.b			
<b>SIGHT TRIANGLE</b> SMC 23.54.030.G	15' sight triangle at garage exit	Eliminate sight triangle	Board supportive of adjustment to sight triangle requirements provided that other measures, such as mirrors and traffic indicators are used to promote pedestrian safety.

**NEXT STEPS**

**MUP Application:**

1. Submit application for Master Use Permit (MUP) application. Please call Lisa Rutzick (at 206-386-9049) when you have scheduled your MUP intake appointment.
2. Please include a written response to the guidance provided in this EDG. Per Attachment B of Client Assistance Memo 238, plan on embedding four 11x17 colored and shadowed elevations, landscape and right-of-way improvement plans and three-dimensional street level vignettes into the front of the MUP plan set (4 per sheet) as Design Review sheets.
3. A traffic study may be required as part of the MUP process.

**Recommendation Meeting:**

4. The Board would like to review details of the landscaping and open spaces (both private and communal) at the ground level, particularly around the street facing stoops.
5. The Board would like to review three-dimensional renderings showing how the buildings, details and design relate to the sidewalk.
6. Please submit a color and materials board. Please also provide colored renderings and/or graphics showing the proposed development from the pedestrian perspective, as well as from the parking lot to the west.
7. Please also prepare conceptual address signage and lighting plans.