



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  
NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**Project Number:** 3010420

**Address:** 1753 NW 56<sup>th</sup> Street

**Applicant:** Rumi Takahashi, Weinstein AU

**Meeting Date:** February 8, 2010  
**Report Date:** March 1, 2010

**Board members present:** Joe Giampietro  
Jean Morgan  
Guy Peckham  
Bill Singer, Chair

**Board members absent:** Mark Brands

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

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**SITE & VICINITY**

The 9,492 sf site is located on a lot one-half block north of Ballard's commercial corridor along Market Street. The property is currently vacant and is bordered by NW 56<sup>th</sup> Street to the south and an alley to the south. The site is zoned Neighborhood Commercial with an 85-foot height limit (NC3 85). The site is located within the Ballard Hub Urban Village and is just outside the Ballard Municipal Center boundaries. The site does not contain City-defined Environmentally Critical Areas, nor is it subject to Neighborhood Specific Guidelines.

Across the street to the north, the zone changes to



Neighborhood Commercial with a 65-foot height limit. Market Street (one-half block south of the site) is the commercial spine of the Ballard neighborhood and demarcates the northern edge of the commercial center of Ballard from the more residential areas to the north. Market Street is dominated by one and two story retail and commercial structures. Historic residential development has been low-rise multifamily and single family, mostly north of Market Street. Recent residential development has been 65 to 85 foot height mixed use. These recent projects can be found on both sides of Market Street, and are clustered along 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal includes the construction of a seven story, 57,000 sq. ft. building containing 80 low income housing units, offices and meeting spaces (Compass Center). Parking for 12 vehicles will be within the structure. Vehicular access to the site is proposed from the alley and the residential entrance is from NW 56<sup>th</sup> Street.

## **DESIGN PRESENTATION**

Three schemes were presented at the Early Design Guidance meeting. All of the options include parking accessed from the alley.

The high voltage power lines located in the sidewalk in front of the subject site require an upper level setback. The three options below respond to this condition by setting back the upper floors (as shown in Option A) to accommodate the clearance area or by setting back the entire building (shown in Options B and C).

The first scheme (Option A) proposes a building that meets the street front for the first two stories and then sets back at the upper level. The building at the upper levels is a U-shape with the open space at the third level configured to the open towards the south (the alley). No departures would be needed for this alternative.

The second alternative (Option B) proposes a C-shaped building with the upper level courtyard facing to the west. The front (north) building façade would generally be one plane and extend to the ground at a setback distance from the sidewalk. This alternative includes departures from the driveway widths and parking stall dimensions.

The third and preferred scheme (Option C) shows an H-shaped massing configuration with notches that face to the east and the west. The front façade is similar to that of Option 2 that is composed of a setback building face. This alternative includes departures from the driveway widths and parking stall dimensions, as well as street level façade, street level use depth and street level use height.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

- Concern with the safety of the alley and potential for loitering. Would like to see alley well designed and lit to discourage unsafe behaviors and/or loitering.
- Applaud proposed green roof design concept.
- Concern with the nature of the future tenants of the proposed project.
- Concern that proposed structure will block views and cause shadows on nearby residences.
- Concern that the wireless antennas on the rooftop of the Landmark apartment building will be affected by the proposed development.
- Would like to see a building design that includes texture and modulation on the side elevations. Supportive of a modern design.
- Interested in a more varied sidewalk design to provide greater interest to the pedestrian.
- Support for the proposed development and services provided. Supportive of Option C.
- Concern that the rooftop deck be designed with safety in mind.
- Clarification of the proposed unit sizes and development standards (including FAR).
- Suggest street trees provide edible fruit.
- Concern with the maintenance of green roof.
- Clarification of the residential program.

### **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.

<b>A. Site Planning</b>
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**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.**

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

As described in greater detail in A-4, the Board was supportive of a two story commercial base concept that would emphasize the commercial character. The Board also indicated support for this base to be highly glazed.

The Board would like to see overhead weather protection provided at the building entry, not over the vegetated setback area.

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

The design proposed a departure from the 13-foot commercial height standard and the Board agreed that the critical consideration is the experience from the pedestrian level and the sense of a strong commercial base. The Board supported the design concept of expressing the first two floors as a commercial base. This two story volume should have a

more commercial character while the upper levels will be residential both in function and appearance. See also A-3.

- 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 would like to see further detail about the solar and shadow impacts from the proposed structure on adjacent sites. The Board would also like to see more detail regarding the viability and programming of the proposed open spaces at ground level, third floor and rooftop.

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

The Board discussed at length the setback area between the sidewalk and the building face of the preferred option. The Board agreed this space should offer a nice public amenity for the pedestrian environment and should be well landscaped and contributes to a welcoming entry area. All of the proposed open spaces should be well considered and programmed and presented 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 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.**

The Board agreed that the Option C is the preferred alternative in terms of open space and more potential for variations of the facades. They did note a concern with this concept if the sites to both the east and west are redeveloped, then the proposed modulation will no longer be visible and the proposed open spaces no longer as viable with regard to light access. The Board agreed that setting the entire building back at the ground floors to match the required clearance area required at the upper levels allows for generous streetscape relief.

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

## C. Architectural Elements

### 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.**

The Board noted that the building facades should be well detailed and modulation is important. Treatment of the end walls shown in Option C and the notched areas, as well as significant glazing are desirable treatments to include in the building design. The Board would like to see an architectural design that is cohesive from base to top.

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

The proposed setback at the ground floor and the pairing of the first two floors into a base will contribute to the human scale of 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.**

The Board stressed that the design should use a material palette that is durable and long-lasting and provides some texture to the building. The Board looks forward to reviewing a more detailed materials and color board.

## 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.**

The Board noted that blank wall, particularly along the alley and at the east and west ends of the building, 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.**

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 alley. The Board would like to review these details at the next meeting.

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

The Board recommended that the alley design include exterior lighting and other features to create an environment that feels safe and accessible for those properties that abut the alley.

**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.**

The Board noted that the commercial storefront should include at least ten feet of the glazing at the ground floor.

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

The Board recommended developing a landscape plan that creates variation in the street planting and sidewalk alignment. The public amenity created by the increased open space and the ground level will counteract a reduction in first floor commercial height and depth. The Board stressed that the design focus energy on the pedestrian environment. The existing sidewalk does not include sufficient space for a planting strip that could accommodate street trees. Given this condition, along with the setback area created in Options B and C, the Board expressed support for realigning the sidewalk to create adequate space to accommodate planting areas on both sides of the sidewalk for trees.

The Board would also like to see exploration of vertical landscaping along the alley (from the rooftop downward).

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

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

**Departure Summary Table**

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS
<b>COMMERCIAL DEPTH</b> SMC 23.47A.008.B3a	30'	23'-26'	May be supportive of departure provided that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Setback at ground level includes generous landscaping and creative right of way design and amenities that contribute to public streetscape.</li> <li>○ The setback space not appears privatized.</li> <li>○ Storefront includes at least 10' of</li> </ul>
<b>COMMERCIAL STREET USE</b> SMC 23.47A.005.C3	20% max non residential	>20%	
<b>COMMERCIAL HEIGHT</b> SMC 23.47A.008.B3.b	13' floor to floor	12' floor to floor	

			glazing at ground floor. o Activated street front with clear visual sight lines.
<b>DRIVEWAY WIDTH</b> SMC 23.54.030.D2a	22'	18'-22'	Board supportive of adjustment to driveway width requirements provided that other measures, such as mirrors and traffic indicators are used to promote pedestrian safety.
<b>PARKING STALL SIZE RATIO</b> SMC 23.54.030.B2b	Max. of 65% of the stalls striped for small sized vehicles Min. 35% stalls for large vehicles	67% of the stalls are small size 8% of the stalls for large vehicles	Board may be supportive of the proposed departure provided that the design of the service (garbage, recycling) functions are well integrated into the building and efforts to promote the pedestrian environment are paramount.

**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 at rooftop and 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 signage and lighting plans, especially along the alley.
8. Please prepare a shadow study of the proposed building in relation to the open spaces of neighboring buildings.
9. The Board would like to review the details of the garbage and recycling areas provided within the building.