City of Seattle

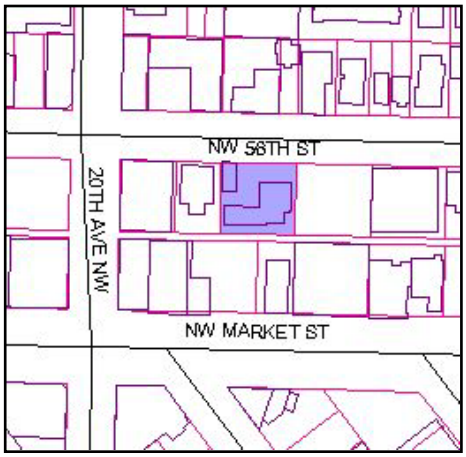
Department of Planning & Development
D.M. Sugimura, Director

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number:	**3010420**
Address:	**1753 NW 56th Street**
Applicant:	**Rumi Takahashi, Weinstein AU**
Meeting Date:	**June 14, 2010**
Board members present:	**Mark Brands** **Mike DeLila** **Jean Morgan** **Ted Panton** **Bill Singer, Chair**
Board members absent:	**None**
DPD staff present:	**Lisa Rutzick, Land Use Planner**

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 56th Street to the north 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 17th Avenue NW and 24th Avenue NW.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal includes the construction of a seven-story, approximately 51,000 sq. ft. building containing 80 low income disabled / low-income elderly housing units, offices and meeting spaces. Parking for 12 vehicles will be located within the structure. Vehicular access to the site is proposed from the alley and the residential and commercial entrances are from NW 56th Street.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE: FEBRUARY 8, 2010

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.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION: JUNE 14, 2010

DESIGN PRESENTATION

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the design had evolved in response to the guidance provided at the earlier meeting. The design presentations included colored elevations, renderings, floor plans, material and color board,

as well as a more detailed explanation of the four proposed departures. The building mass is H-shaped with vertical light wells along the east and west facades. The two-story building base is glassy and transparent, while the upper residential levels are a solid material with a symmetrical fenestration pattern. Open spaces and landscaped areas are provided along the sidewalk, at the entry area, a deck at the second level of the south elevation, on the roof level, at the third floor podium level at the base of the vertical notches. Slender planting beds allow for vegetation at the base of the east and west facades.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 100 members of the public attended the Final Recommendation meeting. The following comments were offered:

- The building massing is overdone and is not considerate of neighbors; the corners should be cut back to reduce the impression of mass. The proposed access from the alley is questionable given the narrow width of the alley.
- The parking calculations have not been done correctly.
- The proposed design does not relate to surrounding buildings since there is no modulation or balconies. The front entry area should not include a seat wall.
- Suggest that the design consider integration of the Norwegian style of textile art called "Urness" to give more neighborhood flavor to the building.
- The green deck should be accessible. The planting strip should be continuous to accommodate street trees. Pleased that the garbage collection area is located within the building. Feels that the departure requests are minimal.
- Would like to see larger unit sizes. Clarification of the parapet height and that ventilation is directed through the roof.
- Clarification that bike parking will be provided.
- The alley is too narrow to accommodate garbage trucks.
- It is likely that smokers will congregate near the building entrance.
- There are no parking problems in this neighborhood.
- The planting strip design should include a more convenient door swing area for those cars parking along the curb.

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's recommendations from the Final Recommendation meeting follow in **bold** text.

A. Site Planning

A-1 **<u>Responding to Site Characteristics</u>. 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 **<u>Entrances Visible from the Street</u>. 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.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board was pleased with the overhead canopy provided at the building entry area. They agreed the design, signage and location were appropriate.

A-4 **<u>Human Activity.</u> 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.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board was supportive of the design of the two-story building base that is an aluminum storefront window system that is typical of more commercial uses. (No departure from the 13-foot commercial height standard is requested.)

A-5 **<u>Respect for Adjacent Sites</u>. 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.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board reviewed a shadow study and concluded that the shadow impacts from the proposed building are within the anticipated impacts for a building within this zoning designation and in fact are less than typical due to the setback on the north side and the fact that the building is ten feet shorter than allowable by Code.

The Board recommended that architectural details be integrated at the ground level, that reference the Scandinavian neighborhood history or character. These details should be visible to the pedestrian and provide visual interest. The Board would like to see further exploration of the 'Urness' style of Norwegian textile design or other Scandinavian/Nordic cultural reference to be incorporated into the design.

The Board was also very please with the proposed green roof design which will an amenity to the neighborhood by collecting stormwater runoff in a low-impact manner.

A-7 **<u>Residential Open Space</u>. 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 contribute to a welcoming entry area. All of the proposed open spaces should be well considered and programmed and presented at the next meeting.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board agreed that the proposed landscape plan for the right-of-way, setback and entry areas are generously vegetated, provides visual interest to the pedestrian environment and creates a welcoming entry space. See also E-2.

B. Height, Bulk, and Scale

B-1 **<u>Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility</u>. 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.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board reviewed several architectural renderings and elevations and continued to appreciate the ground level setback area, as well as the recessed notches on the east and west facades. The Board agreed that the proposed design offers successful massing that is appropriate within the zone designation and changing context.

C. Architectural Elements

C-2 <u>Architectural Concept and Consistency</u>.

- **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.

The building detailing responds to the more formal character to the north and more relaxed character to the alley. The Board expressed support for the solid, elegant, well-designed and proportioned building that is cohesive from top to bottom and around all four elevations. The Board also appreciated the significant glazing and vertical notches on both the east and west facades.

C-3 **<u>Human Scale</u>. 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.

See A-4.

C-4 **<u>Exterior Finish Materials</u>. 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.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the material palette included a concrete base with a blue-gray C*eraclad* fiber cement siding system above, blue-gray and orange toned colored, glass, fritted glass and spandrel glass, vinyl residential windows and perforated metal sunshades, a metal canopy at the entry with wood soffits. The two-story building base is a storefront glass window system. Perforated metal sunshades are included on the south façade to help solar heat gain. The Board agreed that the C*eraclad* material shown on the elevations is a desirable, durable material, and are gratified to see this material wraps the entire building, rather than being reserved only for the street elevation. The Board also concluded that the proposed color scheme provides a nice contrast and textural difference between the materials, specifically that the blue-gray tone is a welcome change from the beige tones often found in new construction.

D. Pedestrian Environment

D-2 **<u>Blank Walls</u>. 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.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board was supportive of the east and west blank wall facade treatment which includes wrapping the blue *Ceraclad* material around the building to these elevations and

utilizing a scoring pattern of horizontal lines and a heavier grid pattern overlay.

The Board was supportive of the introduction of Virginia Creeper planting at the base of the east and west elevations, and the softening effect it has at the pedestrian level.

D-6 **<u>Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas</u>. 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.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board was pleased that all of the service elements were located within the structure and accessed off the alley. The Board acknowledged that the alley width is narrow and that circulation is tight, but workable based on the information received from the applicant. The service areas being within the building make for an improved project, and therefore justify the granting of Departure #3 (narrowed garbage access width)

D-7 **<u>Pedestrian Safety</u>. 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.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board was supportive of the proposed exterior lighting plan along both the street front and the alley façade, as well the proposed security camera system at the building perimeter – both of which will help create an environment that feels safe. Furthermore, the communal dining area and laundry area are located at the second level above the alley, which promote visual connectivity between the building and the alley, thereby enhancing safety.

D-11 **<u>Commercial Transparency</u>. 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.

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board was very pleased with the two-story glassy base, which consists of transparent glass and a combination of colored, fritted and spandrel glass creating vertical bays that reinforce the vertical lines of the upper levels. The commercial storefront meets the 13' height requirement.

E. Landscaping

E-2 **<u>Landscape to Enhance the Building and/or Site</u>. 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).

At the Final Recommendation meeting, the Board discussed the proposed street tree variety and low-level plantings and wanted to confirm that the proposed trees and ground plantings would allow clear views between the sidewalk and the street. The Board expressed support for the generous planting strip width of 9'-6" and proposed double allee of trees.

The Board was very supportive of the heavily vegetated area proposed for the entrance area and between the sidewalk and the building facade. The Board recommended, however, that the planting strip design be adjusted to allow for permeability between the sidewalk and the curb to allow pedestrian access.

The Board agreed that the entry area should allow for a small gathering space and recommended the installation of a seat wall is appropriate at the entry area. The Board discussed that the seat wall may be integrated into the landscaping or in front of the entry vestibule.

The Board was pleased with the proposed Virginia Creeper vines to be planted at the building base of the east and west façades to grow up the concrete building base and helps break up the view of the blank wall.

The Board also recommended that if additional bicycle parking is needed, it should be located within the front setback area. The Board continued to support the re-alignment of the sidewalk to allow for generous plantings on both sides of the sidewalk.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

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

Departure Summary Table

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS
DRIVEWAY WIDTH SMC 23.54.030.D2a	22' min 25' max	21'-6" for 8 stalls 25' for 4 stalls	The Board voted unanimously in favor of the requested departures. The Board agreed that the proposed modifications are *de minimus* in scope and are primarily the result of setting back the first floor along the street side. This setting back of the building allowed for the creation of a lushly planted, visually interesting and inviting space for pedestrians, tenants and neighbors alike. This gesture responds to the guidance of multiple guidelines including A-3, A-4, A-5, A-7 and E-2.
PARKING AISLE WIDTH SMC 23.54.030	20' – small stalls 22' – medium stalls 24' – large stalls	20' for small stalls 20'-6" for 1 med stall 24' for large stall	
GARBAGE SERVICE ACCESS WIDTH SMC 23.47A.029.D2b	10' wide	6' for overhead door (room itself is at least 10' wide)	
PARKING STALL SIZE RATIO SMC 23.54.030.B2b	Max. of 65% of the stalls striped for small sized vehicles (8 stalls) Min. 35% stalls for large vehicles (4 stalls)	58% small (7 stalls) 33% medium (4 stalls) 8% of the stalls for large vehicles (1 stall)	

Board Recommended Conditions:

1. Architectural details should be integrated at the ground level, that reference the neighborhood history or character. These details should be visible to the pedestrian and provide visual interest. Further exploration of the 'Urness' style of textile design or other Scandinavian/Nordic cultural reference to be incorporated into the design should be considered.
2. The planting strip design should be adjusted to allow for permeability between the sidewalk and the curb to allow pedestrian access
3. The installation of seating at the building frontage is recommended. The seating may be integrated into the landscaping or in front of the entry vestibule.
4. If additional bicycle parking is needed, it should be located at the building frontage.
5. Mirrors and/or other traffic indicators should be used to promote safety of vehicles, garbage trucks and pedestrians in the garage entrance and internal circulation areas.

Note: At the Recommendation meeting, the desire to have an ADA van space located along the curb at NW 56th Street directly in front of the building to facilitate equitable entry to the building for disabled visitors / occupants was expressed. The plans include reserving a large paved area, placing some of the special paving with cultural reference and locating two bike racks in that space to announce the front entry. The Board expressed support for the placement of the ADA van space in the right-of-way.