



City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development

D. M. Sugimura, Director



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3011923

Address: 418 Bellevue Ave E

Applicant: Brian Runberg

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, May 04, 2011

Board Members Present: Evan Bourquard (Chair)
Clint Keithley
Lisa Picard
Wolf Saar
Chip Wall

Board Members Absent: Dawn Bushnaq, Recused

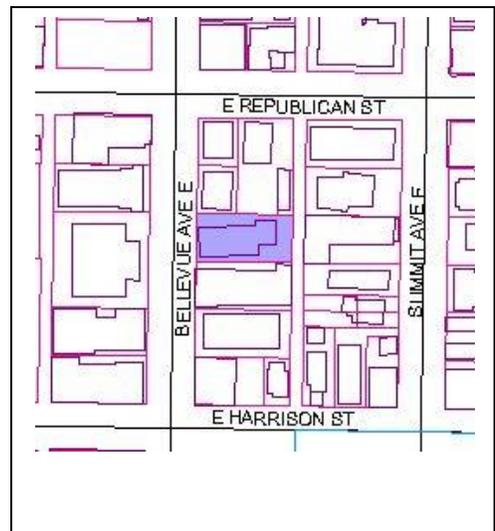
DPD Staff Present: Lisa Rutzick, Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Midrise (MR)

Nearby Zones: (North) MR
(South) MR
(East) MR
(West) MR

Lot Area: 7,200 sf



Current Development: The subject site is located mid-block on the west side of Bellevue Avenue East, between East Harrison Street and East Republican Street. The site is made up of one vacant lot. While the site is relatively flat, there is a 14-16 feet difference between the street and the alley with a vertical retaining wall against the east property line at the alley.

Access: There is improved alley access to the site to the west.

Surrounding Development: The neighborhood is characterized by small, low- and mid-rise apartment and condominium buildings, most of which date from the early to mid-twentieth century. Older buildings are typically 3-4 story brick structures, while later buildings tend to be wood frame or concrete structures, ranging from 3-5 stories. Recent developments are typically wood frame buildings, 4-6 stories in height. Most of these buildings occupy only one or two parcels, creating a fairly consistent scale of development throughout the neighborhood. Many of the existing buildings are set back from the street and from adjacent property lines, while others, particularly larger buildings, are built out to their property lines. Brick is the most common cladding material, particularly in older buildings, while later buildings are clad in a variety of materials including wood, brick, stone and concrete masonry.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: The area is well served by transit and is developed with mostly higher density multi-family residential structures.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a seven-story structure containing 59 units. Parking for 16 vehicles to be provided below grade.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: May 4, 2011

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include vehicular access from the street (Bellevue Avenue).

The first scheme (Option A) showed a seven story building forming a basic box shape.

The second scheme (Option B) showed a six and seven story building with the lower portion at the street front and stepping upward in the easterly half of the site. The shape of this massing

included a notched area facing south and units aligned in a barbell configuration with the end units running east-west and the central units running north-south.

The third and preferred scheme (Option C) showed a modified version of scheme B with a shallower notch at the south side and an additional notch at the north side. The entire building was shown at seven stories.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 14 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Noted that the proposed massing concepts are not responsive to the neighborhood context and don't acknowledge the West Slope District of the Neighborhood Design Guidelines. The existing context is compatible with neighborhood density, but this proposed development is out of scale with this context. Does not feel that guidelines A-5 or C-1 have been satisfied.
- Stated concerns with the proposed setbacks, access off of the street and lack of landscaping – all unresponsive to guidelines B-1, A-5, A-8 and E-2.
- Pleased to see redevelopment of this site and the addition of high density to the neighborhood. Feels that the proposed driveway location is detrimental to the heavily used sidewalks and pedestrian activity of the neighborhood; the driveway from the street should be eliminated. Also, the sight triangle departure request poses a danger to the pedestrian crossing in front of the building.
- Discourage the proposed departure for the access off Bellevue as setting a poor precedent for new development. All of the parking should be located off the alley.
- Concerned with the loss of solar exposure to a neighboring building due to the future development of the subject site. As such, allowing any encroachments into the required setbacks should be denied.
- Encourage high density development that is done well. Concerned with the shading created by the proposed setback departures. The tucked-in parking off of the alley should be enclosed for safety and security.
- Stated that the proposed building is out of scale with the neighborhood. Although the presentation shows that the distance between buildings may be comparable, it has a much different impact when the buildings are three and four stories tall, versus seven stories.
- Stated that the project needs more parking.
- Oppose the loss of views from private property that would be caused by the proposed development.

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-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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the topographical challenge of the site and the resultant issue of efficient vehicular access. The Board agreed that such a condition, however, did not warrant access from the street to non required parking.

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. Examples include lots on Broadway that extend to streets with residential character, such as Nagle Place or 10th or Harvard Avenues East. While a design with a commercial character is appropriate along Broadway, compatibility with residential character should be emphasized along the other streets.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board was strongly opposed to the proposed access off of Bellevue Avenue and agreed that such a disruption to the pedestrian environment could not be justified, especially since no parking is required by Code.

The Board would like to review the specific design details and dimensions of the ground level stoops and residential units along Bellevue at the next meeting.

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 at length the impact of the proposed departures and massing on the neighboring buildings and found that the applicant's preferred scheme would be too disruptive to the nearby residences and open spaces in terms of shading and proximity. The Board requested that a shading study of the proposed shadow impacts from the proposed building be presented for review at the next meeting.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board reiterated a sentiment from the D-12 guideline that states *"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."* The Board unanimously agreed that the details of how this project meets the sidewalk at the ground level will be a critical component of this project's success. The lobby and ground level residential units should include transparency, landscaping and dimensions that foster engagement with the street.

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.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the magnitude of the proposed setback departures and agreed that the resultant design was oversized and would create a massing that was out of scale with the neighborhood. The Board stressed that while neighborhood densification is laudable, there needs to be a balanced approach when such density involves going beyond the allowed buildable area to such a large extent. The quality of the streetscape experience would suffer as a result of such departures, therefore many of the requested departures and massing shown at this meeting were not supported due to the negative impacts to bulk and scale. See departure discussion of setbacks at the conclusion of this report.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the importance of the design that is responsive to the context. Specifically, the Board requested a more detailed analysis of how the seven story building will respond to the existing and predominantly lower scaled buildings.

The Board does not expect the design of this building to emulate the historic buildings in the neighborhood. The Board was intrigued by the idea of a design that contrasts with the varied historic architecture eras that are represented in the context.

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.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed that the design of this building should have a clear concept for each façade that is responsive and sensitive to the immediate context. The Board was supportive of the design concept for a contemporary looking building.

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

Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:

- Incorporate building entry treatments that are arched or framed in a manner that welcomes people and protects them from the elements and emphasizes the building's architecture.
- Improve and support pedestrian-orientation by using components such as: non-reflective storefront windows and transoms; pedestrian-scaled awnings; architectural detailing on the first floor; and detailing at the roof line.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that they will look forward to reviewing the details of the residential stoops and lobby at the next meeting.

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:

- Use wood shingles or board and batten siding on residential structures.
- Avoid wood or metal siding materials on commercial structures.
- Provide operable windows, especially on storefronts.
- Use materials that are consistent with the existing or intended neighborhood character, including brick, cast stone, architectural stone, terracotta details, and concrete that incorporates texture and color.
- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board encouraged a material palette with the richness of materials shown in the examples contained in the presentation packet. The Board appreciated the suggestion of using both cool and warm materials. The Board will review the color and material palette at the next meeting. The Board was supportive of the levels of transparency suggested in the presentation packet.

D. Pedestrian Environment

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.

Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:

- Consolidate and screen dumpsters to preserve and enhance the pedestrian environment.

Broadway-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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board encouraged secure screening of the trash and recycling off of the alley. The Board also noted that the tucked in parking shown off of the alley should be similarly screened and secured.

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

Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:

- Consider: pedestrian-scale lighting, but prevent light spillover onto adjacent properties; architectural lighting to complement the architecture of the structure; transparent windows allowing views into and out of the structure—thus incorporating the “eyes on the street” design approach’
- Provide a clear distinction between pedestrian traffic areas and commercial traffic areas through the use of different paving materials or colors, landscaping, etc.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that adequate lighting and security of the tucked in parking and service areas are critical to maintaining a safe alley.

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

See D-7.

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.

See A-1, A-6 and C-3.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated they will look forward to reviewing a well-detailed landscape design for the right-of-way and the space located along the north and south sides of the site. The Board is particularly interested in how the ground level residential units will be design and treated to maintain privacy and security for these units, while also engaging with the street.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departures were requested:

- 1. Parking Access Location (SMC 23.45.536.C.1):** The Code requires that access to parking shall be from an improved alley, but not from the street, or from both the alley and the street, unless the Director permits access from the street according to subsection 23.45.536.D The applicant proposes access from the street and the alley.

The Board indicated that they would not vote in favor of such a departure as it directly conflicts with specific design guidelines that seek to protect and enhance the pedestrian streetscape and not allow disruptions for vehicular access that is to parking that is not required by Code. (A-2, C-3, D-7)

- 2. Sight Triangles (SMC 23.54.030.G1):** The Code requires that for two way driveways or easements less than twenty-two feet wide, a sight triangle on both sides of the driveway used as an exit shall be provided, and shall be kept clear of any obstruction for a distance of ten feet from the intersection of the driveway or easement with a driveway, easement, sidewalk or curb intersection if there is no sidewalk. The applicant proposes the use of traffic safety mirrors to mitigate the absence of sight triangles at the driveway.

The Board indicated is not favorably inclined towards the vehicular access from the street, thus this request also poses significant concerns for the Board. (A-2, C-3, D-7)

- 3. Setbacks (SMC 23.45.518 Table A):** The Code requires the following:

Front Setback: 7' average, 5' minimum

Side Setback: For portions of the structure below 42': 7' average, 5' minimum

For portions of the structure above 42': 10' average, 7' minimum
Rear Setback: 10' for rear lot line abutting an alley

The applicant proposes to allow the proposed building to extend into the setbacks as shown in the diagrams in the [presentation packet](#).

The Board indicated that some of the proposed setbacks might be favorably viewed by the Board, while others were excessive and contrary to the Design Guidelines. Generally, the Board was unconvinced that the proposed departures would result in a better design and agreed that they would need to see greater consideration of materials, landscaping and details.

Rear: The Board was accepting of an encroachment into the rear setback and would be willing to entertain such a departure.

Front: The Board was unanimously opposed to the proposed encroachment into the front setback.

Sides: The Board considered the proposed side setbacks and agreed that portions of such encroachments might be acceptable depending on whether the ultimate design is responsive and sensitive towards the abutting neighbors and existing development pattern. On the north side, the proposed reduction in setback for the western half of the property (directly across from the neighboring building to the north) is not acceptable to the Board; however, the proposed encroachment on the eastern half of the north façade could be entertained as a departure. Similarly, on the south façade, the Board was opposed to the setback reduction for the western portion of this façade since it impacts the perception of the building width from Bellevue Ave. The Board would like to see a consistent minimum setback of five to seven feet along the south property line, however departing from the average might be acceptable depending on how the design is articulated and if it includes breaking up of the mass at the upper levels. (A-2, A-5, B-1, C-1)

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forwards to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.