



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3011958 and 3011959

Address: 4535 12th Ave NE and 4550 11th Ave NE

Applicant: Derek Bottles for Avalon Bay Communities

Date of Meeting: Monday, April 04, 2011

Board Members Present: Joe Hurley (Chair)  
Jaime Fisher (substitute for new Board members not confirmed)  
Salone Habibudden  
Peter Krech  
Tricia Reisenauer (substitute for new Board members not confirmed)

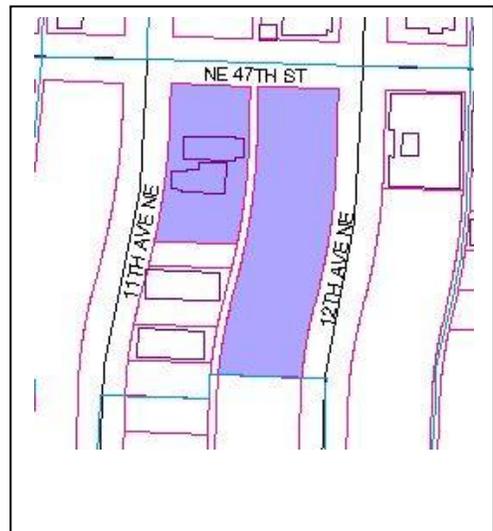
DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser, Senior Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 3, with an 85' height limit (NC3-85)

Nearby Zones: (North) NC3-65, across the street  
(South) NC3-85  
(East) NC3-85  
(West) NC3-85

Lot Area: East Parcel : 37,516 square feet  
West Parcel : 20,253 square feet



The west site is occupied by approximately 3,336 square feet of structures (Hatha Yoga Center, and 4 apartments) and 50 surface parking spaces. The existing buildings were constructed in 1912, according to King County records. None of the structures are currently designated historic landmarks. There are 9 trees located near the north and west property lines.

Current  
Development:

The east site is occupied by a paid parking lot with 146 surface parking spaces. A King County Metro bus layover area is located on the street adjacent to the east property line.

The sites are located on a long north-south block, bounded by the busy one-way arterial 11th Ave NE on the west, and the two-way non-arterial 12th Ave NE on the east. NE 47th St borders the north side of the site and is a lower traffic two-way arterial.

The platting pattern curves in this block, visible in the long curved east and west property lines.

Access:

Vehicular access to the site is from the alley separating the two lots, as well as curb cuts on 12th Ave NE, NE 47th St, and 11th Ave NE. Pedestrian access to the commercial use and apartments is from 11th Ave NE.

Surrounding  
Development:

The area includes a mix of uses and age of structures. To the north are newer mixed-use apartment and commercial structures, built to the maximum zoning height. To the east is an early 20th-century institution (church) structure, and surface parking spaces. To the south are office structures and a vacant grocery store. To the west are surface parking lots with 1-2 story automotive sales and service buildings.

ECAs:

There are no Environmentally Critical Areas on the site. There are mapped steep slope areas to the east in the public right of way for 12th Ave NE, and on the site across 12th Ave NE to the east.

The University of Washington campus is located a few blocks to the southeast. The future light rail station (to open in approximately 2020) is located one block to the south and one block to the east. University Way (“The Ave”) is located one block to the east. NE 45th St is located one block to the south.

Neighborhood Character: The site is approximately in the center of the University Urban Center. Urban Centers are intended to be neighborhoods with higher density development, taller structures, and a variety of commercial uses and services near transit. The University Urban Center exhibits many of these characteristics, although some of the parcels are underdeveloped when compared to the zoned heights and intensity of uses. Most of the commercial uses and services are located on the main arterial streets.

The nearby neighborhood is fully developed with sidewalks, but often lacks planting strips and street trees. Transit service is very good, and the future light rail station will increase the frequency and choice of modes of transit. The nearby streets are heavily used by pedestrians, cyclists, transit, and other vehicles.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The east site (adjacent to 12th Ave NE) would include a 7-story mixed-use structure with below grade parking. This structure would include 238 apartments, 6,000 square feet of commercial space, 8 live-work units, and 255 below grade parking spaces accessed from the alley. The west site (adjacent to 11th Ave NE) would include a 7-story mixed-use structure with below grade parking. This structure would include 134 apartments, 6,000 square feet of commercial space, 3 live-work units, and 145 below grade parking spaces accessed from the alley.

<b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: April 4, 2011</b>
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## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options included seven story buildings with alley vehicular access and below grade parking. The east building also included a step down at the roofline, in response to the grade changes across the site.

The first scheme (Option 1) showed a continuous street wall with no modulation at the street frontages. An interior publicly accessible courtyard was shown between the east and west parcels, with additional open space at a private terrace on the east parcel adjacent to the alley. The primary residential lobby was located near the northeast corner facing 12th Ave NE. The secondary residential lobby was located at the west façade, facing 11th Ave NE. This option offers a continuous commercial base, but could also result in long un-modulated street facades.

The northeast corner residential entry responds to the context of nearby building entries at that intersection.

The second scheme (Option 2) showed a continuous ground level street wall with modulation in the upper stories, providing second story open space at three major openings along 12th Ave NE and 11th Ave NE. The applicant described these spaces as private terraces for the residents. This option also included a step in the roof line along 12th Ave NE, creating the appearance of two separate structures on 12th Ave NE. The 12th Ave NE façade also included a mid-block ground level courtyard. The primary residential entry was shown at the north façade, with a secondary lobby entry below a large modulation in the 11th Ave NE façade. The step in the roof level would allow a rooftop amenity space. Positive aspects of this design include a continuous commercial base, rhythmic massing that responds to nearby building masses, and a ground level courtyard at 11th Ave NE. Challenges include a lack of modulation at street level, minimal light and air for units facing the alley and lack of a prominent entry for the east parcel.

The third scheme (Option 3) showed three distinct masses at the 12th Ave NE façade, providing two areas of open space at grade and one large opening adjacent to the primary residential entry. This opening led through to a courtyard adjacent to the alley. The courtyard would be open to the public, and would be separated from the 12th Ave NE sidewalk by a set of stairs. The applicant explained that this opening would be a 24' tall, two-story high space with residential units above. The garage access points were shown south of the courtyard and at the south end of the east parcel. Vehicles would pass through the courtyard to the garage access, and the alley surface could be treated to reflect the multiple uses in that area. Positive aspects of this option include usable ground level open space, more light and air for alley facing units, rooftop amenity space, the large interior courtyard, the opening to the courtyard allows visual connection through the site, and the stepped mass responds to the curved street and emphasizes the primary residential entry. Challenges include a stepped massing that doesn't emphasize the curve in the 12th Ave NE property line, and the retail spaces on 12th Ave NE would be adjacent to a bus layover area.

No departures were proposed by the applicant at this stage in review.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately 31 members of the public signed in at this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Several people were concerned with the loss of the existing yoga studio and apartments on site, and recommended that the applicant find a way to build the business back into the proposed development
- Encouraged the applicant to design to encourage community based businesses, including flexible commercial spaces
- Recommended that the design include natural materials, such as wood (an example on the Alcione building in South Lake Union or Tempo in the Interbay neighborhood)

- Encouraged the applicant to design any publicly accessible spaces with safety in mind (lighting, visibility), and manage the area to prevent unsafe activities
- Noted the challenges with each street frontage, such as the high level of traffic on 11th Ave NE, and the noise from the bus layover areas on NE 47th St and 12th Ave NE.
- Encouraged massing like the third option, which breaks up the long street frontage
- Noted concerns with the lack of foot traffic in the area and viability of commercial spaces
- Questions about the mix of units, and affordability of units and commercial spaces (the applicant responded that the project will be market rate studio, 1 bedrooms, and live-work units)
- Encouraged the applicant to restrict the alley to pedestrians and cyclists
- Encouraged the applicant to include affordable housing units
- Recommended the design include a better connection between the open spaces on site and the retail/commercial spaces
- Noted the challenges from the grade changes on site, including the transition from sidewalk down to interior courtyard, how the courtyard transitions to the retail spaces, etc.
- Concerns with trash collection if the courtyard will be a gathering area
- Questions about whether the parking will be open for use by commercial tenants (the applicant responded that it would)

## 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 Board noted that additional or different design review guidelines may be identified as a priority, following the second Early Design Guidance meeting.

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.**

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context: The pedestrian-oriented street streetscape is perhaps the most important characteristic to be emphasized in the neighborhood. The University Community identified certain streets as “Mixed Use Corridors”. These are streets where commercial and residential uses and activities interface and create a lively, attractive, and safe pedestrian environment. The Mixed Use Corridors are shown in**

**Map 1. Another important site feature in the University Community is the presence of the Burke Gilman Trail. The primary goal is to minimize impacts to views, sunlight and mixed uses while increasing safety and access along the trail.**

**Guideline: For properties facing the Burke Gilman Trail, new buildings should be located to minimize impacts to views of Mount Rainier, Cascade Mountains and Lake Washington, and allow for sunlight along the trail and increase safety and access for trail users.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board expressed confusion about the grade changes across the site, including the transition from the 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE sidewalk to the interior courtyard, the transition in grade from courtyard to adjacent retail spaces, and the transition of commercial spaces along 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE. The Board requested that the applicant return for a second EDG meeting with this information. Section drawings may be helpful to describe these transitions.

The Board also noted that the proposed site plan placing commercial space at the 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE façade doesn't appear to consider the impact of the bus layover area at that street front. The applicant should indicate how the design will conceptually respond to this condition.

The Board requested that the applicant return for a second EDG meeting with additional analysis showing how the preferred alternative and program will respond to the site characteristics.

The Board noted that the grade changes and the long street front present challenges for live-work entries at grade on 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE. Detailed information about this relationship will be required at the Recommendation stage of review.

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

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context: Another way to emphasize human activity and pedestrian orientation, particularly along Mixed Use Corridors, is to provide clearly identifiable storefront entries. In residential projects, walkways and entries promote visual access and security.**

**Guidelines:**

- 1. On Mixed Use Corridors, primary business and residential entrances should be oriented to the commercial street.**
- 2. In residential projects, except townhouses, it is generally preferable to have one walkway from the street that can serve several building entrances.**

3. **When a courtyard is proposed for a residential project, the courtyard should have at least one entry from the street.**
4. **In residential projects, front yard fences over four (4) feet in height that reduce visual access and security should be avoided.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board commended the applicant for proposing an entry design that takes advantage of the sight line in the curved street front on 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, and maximizes the view of the building entry. The applicant should further develop this concept at the Recommendation stage. The design should include a significant high quality architectural element to highlight the change in the street grid pattern and emphasize the building bay at that location.

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

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context: Pedestrian orientation and activity should be emphasized in the University Community, particularly along Mixed Use Corridors. While most streets feature narrow sidewalks relative to the volume of pedestrian traffic, wider sidewalks and more small open spaces for sitting, street musicians, bus waiting, and other activities would benefit these areas. Pedestrian-oriented open spaces, such as wider sidewalks and plazas, are encouraged as long as the setback does not detract from the “street wall.”**

**Guidelines: On Mixed Use Corridors, where narrow sidewalks exist (less than 15’ wide), consider recessing entries to provide small open spaces for sitting, street musicians, bus waiting, or other pedestrian activities. Recessed entries should promote pedestrian movement and avoid blind corners.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated that the reasons for the central courtyard location were unclear. The Board was unsure how this open space location related to the building program and the context of nearby development.

The Board requested that the applicant return with this information, and examine potential alternative locations for the proposed courtyard and residential entry. Possible options could include:

- A courtyard for each building at the street front or alley
- A courtyard/entry at the northeast corner
- Modification of Alternative 2 with the open space at the street front, or
- A courtyard that connects through from 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE to 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE

The Board asked that the applicant return for a second EDG and conceptually demonstrate how the proposed open space and entry location will encourage human activity.

**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.

Comments reflect the guidance in response to A-4. The applicant should demonstrate how the courtyard and residential entries will meet this guideline.

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

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context:** There is a severe lack of both public and private open space in the community. Small open spaces—such as gardens, courtyards, or plazas—that are visible or accessible to the public are an important part of the neighborhood’s vision. Therefore, providing ground-level open space is an important public objective and will improve the quality of the residential environment.

**Guidelines:**

1. The ground-level open space should be designed as a plaza, courtyard, play area, mini-park, pedestrian open space, garden, or similar occupiable site feature. The quantity of open space is less important than the provision of functional and visual ground-level open space.
2. A central courtyard in cottage or townhouse developments may provide better open space than space for each unit. In these cases, yard setbacks may be reduced if a sensitive transition to neighbors is maintained.

Comments reflect the guidance in response to A-4. The applicant should demonstrate how the courtyard and other open space will meet this guideline. The Board asked the applicant to return for a second EDG meeting with analysis about the proposed open space. The analysis should indicate how the open space will relate to the uses facing the courtyard and indicate destinations in the program that will encourage pedestrians to enter or exit the interior courtyard.

**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.

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context:** In Lowrise residential developments, single-lane driveways (approximately 12 feet in width) are preferred over wide or multiple driveways where feasible.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed concerns with how the courtyard separated by the alley will function as usable open space, given the use of the alley by vehicles accessing the parking garage. The Board requested that the applicant return for a second EDG meeting with additional information about how the courtyard and alley will function as both pedestrian gathering space and vehicular access.

**A-10 Corner Lots. Building on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.**

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context:** The Citywide Design Guidelines encourage buildings on corner lots to orient to the corner and adjacent street fronts. Within the University Community there are several intersections that serve as “gateways” to the neighborhood.

**Guideline:** For new buildings located on a corner, including, but not limited to the corner locations identified in Map 3, consider providing special building elements distinguishable from the rest of the building such as a tower, corner articulation or bay windows. Consider a special site feature such as diagonal orientation and entry, a sculpture, a courtyard, or other device. Corner entries should be set back to allow pedestrian flow and good visibility at the intersection.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board described the massing break at the primary residential entry as an “additional building corner.” The curved property line offers a clear sight line and the opportunity to emphasize this point in the façade. The Board directed the applicant to provide a major architectural element at this point in the façade, as described in response to A-3. The Board also noted that the NE 47<sup>th</sup> St & 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and NE 47<sup>th</sup> St & 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE corners will be important to the design.

<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.**

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context:** The residential areas are experiencing a change from houses to block-like apartments. Also, the proximity of lower intensive zones to higher intensive zones requires special attention to potential impacts of increased height, bulk and scale.

These potential impact areas are shown in Map 4 . The design and siting of buildings is critical to maintaining stability and Lowrise character.

**Guideline: Special attention should be paid to projects in the following areas to minimize impacts of increased height, bulk and scale as stated in the Citywide Design Guideline.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board asked the applicant to return for a second EDG meeting with additional information demonstrating how the preferred alternative could break up the long façade and respond to building mass of nearby development. The Board advised the applicant to provide analysis of nearby context (building module dimensions, bay widths, etc.) and demonstrate how that context influences the proposed modulation.

The Board also noted the need for shadow studies in the courtyard. The placement of building mass should maximize the opportunities for light and air to the open space. The Board noted that one possibility is to reduce the building mass at the south side of the courtyard.

## **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.**

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context:** Buildings in the University Community feature a broad range of building types with an equally broad range of architectural character. Because of the area’s variety, no single architectural style or character emerges as a dominant direction for new construction. As an example, the University of Washington campus sets a general direction in architectural style and preference for masonry and cast stone materials, however, new buildings on and off campus incorporate the general massing and materials of this character, rather than replicating it.

**Guidelines:**

- 1. Although no single architectural style or character emerges as a dominant direction for new construction in the University Community, project applicants should show how the proposed design incorporates elements of the local architectural character especially when there are buildings of local historical significance or landmark status in the vicinity.**
- 2. For areas within Ravenna Urban Village, particularly along 25th Avenue NE, the style of architecture is not as important so long as it emphasizes pedestrian orientation and avoids large-scale, standardized and auto-oriented characteristics.**

3. On Mixed Use Corridors, consider breaking up the façade into modules of not more than 50 feet (measured horizontally parallel to the street) on University Way and 100 feet on other corridors, corresponding to traditional platting and building construction.
4. When the defined character of a block, including adjacent or facing blocks, is comprised of historic buildings, or groups of buildings of local historic importance and character, as well as street trees or other significant vegetation (as identified in the 1975 Inventory and subsequent updating), the architectural treatment of new development should respond to this local historical character.
5. Buildings in Lowrise zones should provide a “fine-grained” architectural character.

Comments reflect the guidance in response to A-4. The applicant should demonstrate how the courtyard and other open space will meet this guideline.

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

Comments reflect the guidance in response to B-1.

<b>D. Pedestrian Environment</b>
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**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.**

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context:** The University Community would like to encourage, especially on Mixed Use Corridors, the provision of usable, small open spaces, such as gardens, courtyards, or plazas that are visible and/or accessible to the public. Therefore, providing ground-level open space is an important public objective and will improve the quality of both the pedestrian and residential environment.

**Guidelines:**

1. On Mixed Use Corridors, consider setting back a portion of the building to provide small pedestrian open spaces with seating amenities. The building façades along the open space must still be pedestrian-oriented.
2. On Mixed Use Corridors, entries to upper floor residential uses should be accessed from, but not dominate, the street frontage. On corner locations, the main residential entry should be on the side street with a small courtyard that provides a transition between the entry and the street.

Comments reflect the guidance in response to A-3 and A-4 and B-1.

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the need for this information at a conceptual level, in order to provide adequate guidance. The applicant should provide conceptual information about dumpsters and service areas at the second EDG meeting.

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

Comments reflect the guidance in response to A-4. Any proposed open space should be designed with clear sight lines, adequate lighting, 'eyes on the street,' and other strategies to increase safety and security.

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

Comments reflect the guidance in response to A-4 and 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. 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.**

Comments reflect the guidance in response to A-3 and A-4.

## **E. Landscaping**

- E-3 Landscape Design 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.**

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Context:** The retention of existing, large trees is an important consideration in new construction, particularly on the wooded slopes in the Ravenna Urban Village. The 17th Avenue NE tree-lined boulevard is an important, visually pleasing streetscape.

**Guidelines:**

- 1. Retain existing large trees wherever possible. This is especially important on the wooded slopes in the Ravenna Urban Village.**
- 2. The 17th Avenue NE (boulevard) character, with landscaped front yards and uniform street trees, is an important neighborhood feature to be maintained.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board described how the landscape design should be integrated with the design. The landscape and hardscape should also enhance the courtyard relationship to grade changes, the access to the building, and integrate the pedestrian gathering areas and vehicular uses in the courtyard.

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

No departures were proposed at this stage in the review.

**BOARD DIRECTION**

**At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should return to the Board for an additional EDG meeting.**