



# City of Seattle

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



## FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE SOUTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012306

Address: 3261 SW Avalon Way

Applicant: Steve Fischer

Date of Meeting: Thursday, November 17, 2011

Board Members Present: Myer Harrell  
Robin Murphy  
Daniel Skaggs  
Norma Tompkins

Board Members Absent: Brandon Nicholson (recused)

DPD Staff Present: Bruce Rips

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Midrise (MR)

Nearby Zones: North: MR along SW Avalon Way. Single Family (SF 5000) to the north.

South: Single Family 5000

East: MR along SW Avalon Way.

West: Neighborhood Commercial Three with a 65' height limit (NC3 65) at 35th Ave Commercial 1 65 (C1 65) farther to the west.



Lot Area: Total area equals 24,000 sq. ft. (200' by 120'). The grade changes approximately 14 feet descending from the SW corner to the NE corner. Topographically, the site is located on the eastern flank of the West Seattle hill. The site perches on a south-facing hillside overlooking the West Seattle stadium and golf course.

Current Development & Access: Five parcels occupied by four single family houses. One parcel is vacant. Current access occurs from SW Avalon Way

Located at the northeast edge of the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village, the project site lies along a segment of SW Avalon Way that has evolved from primarily single family houses to a denser, multi-family neighborhood. Some mid-century apartment buildings appear to remain viable. The change to higher and denser apartment buildings began in the early 1990s. Several of these were built before the beginning of the city's Design Review program.

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: SW Avalon curves uphill in three long blocks with the low end starting at the W. Seattle Bridge and rising up to join the minor arterial 35<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW and the major arterial Fauntleroy Way SW, as tertiary access to the West Seattle Junction and surrounding neighborhoods. The lower end of SW Avalon Way is zoned LR1 and is dominated by industrial uses, the Seattle port facilities and railroad infrastructure associated with Harbor Island. The Nucor steel plant dominates the intersection of SW Avalon Way and the W. Seattle Bridge. A few commercial buildings are remnants of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century township of Avalon.

Towards the west of the site, zoned NC3 65, C1 65 and multifamily Lowrise (LR3), much of the development is focused on automobile access to and from the upper deck of the W. Seattle Bridge. Uses include a handful of chain restaurants and a combination of convenience stores and gas stations. Farther to the southwest, an area, once dominated by auto sales and service lots, is in various stages of redevelopment. At the intersection of Fauntleroy and SW Alaska Way, the traffic splits to continue either to the residential area or the Fauntleroy ferry terminal or to climb five blocks west to the primary commercial and retail spine of the West Seattle Junction. Beyond the commercial and mixed uses listed, the surrounding neighborhoods are primarily occupied by single family homes, reflecting their SF 5000 zoning. South of the project, beyond an unimproved alley, a city park includes the W. Seattle Stadium, the W. Seattle Golf Course and Camp Long. Beyond the park and towards Elliott Bay lays the low-lying residentially developed Delridge valley all of which drains into the Longfellow Creek watershed.

ECAs: No mapped Environmentally Critical Areas on the subject site.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes to design and construct a six-story residential building (approximately 115 units) with below grade parking (projected 110 spaces) in a Midrise zone. Access would occur from SW Avalon Way. The proposed development would require the demolition of four single family houses.

## **DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES: EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING, July 28, 2011.**

At the Early Design Guidance meetings held on July 28, 2011 and after visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, 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:

- A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics.
- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility.
- A-4 Human Activity.
- A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites.
- A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street
- A-7 Residential Open Space.
- A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access.
- B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility.
- C-1 Architectural Context.
- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency.
- C-3 Human Scale.
- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials.
- C-5 Structured Parking Entrances.
- D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances.
- D-2 Blank Walls.
- D-3 Retaining Walls.
- D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures.
- D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas.
- D-7 Personal Safety and Security.
- D-8 Treatment of Alleys
- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site.
- E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions.

## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant returned to the West Seattle Board with a design resembling Option C from the EDG meeting, the north façade closely corresponding to the illustrations in the EDG packet. The proposal kept the two curb cuts, the four tower motif, and the two outdoor courts overlooking SW Avalon and the stadium. The designer deemphasized the insistent vertical modulation in the north façade by creating a large and small projecting bay rather than four nearly equal bays in the central portion of the tripartite scheme. Detailing the two central bays with a green metal siding stretched horizontally across the bays between the windows, counterpoises the shifting planes of the dark grey, light grey and red vertical bays on either side of the north façade's central wall.

The applicant requested eight departures several of which interrelate. Six of the eight departure requests vary from the Midrise zone setback regulations. The combined structure width and side setback departures place portions of the structure closer to the east and west property lines. The other two requests provide relief from the sight triangles required at the two curb cuts accessing the double driveways on SW. Avalon Way.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Six members of the public signed-in at the Recommendation meeting. One speaker asked that the proposal respect the adjacent sites by pulling back from the side setback and the front setback.

## 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.**

The Board did not comment beyond those in the early design guidance.

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

**West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:**

**A pedestrian-oriented streetscape is perhaps the most important characteristic to be achieved in new development in the Junction’s mixed use areas (as previously defined). New development—particularly on SW Alaska, Genesee, Oregon and Edmunds Streets—will set the precedent in establishing desirable siting and design characteristics in the right-of-way.**

The Board accepted the two curb cuts. However, it recommended against granting the departure requests for the sight triangles at both curb cuts.

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

**West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:**

**An active and interesting sidewalk engages pedestrians through effective transitions between the public and private realm. Particularly in the California Avenue Commercial Core, proposed development is encouraged to set back from the front property line to allow for more public space that enhances the pedestrian environment. Building facades should give shape to the space of the street through arrangement and scale of elements. Display windows should be large and open at the street level to provide interest and encourage activity along the sidewalk. At night, these windows should provide a secondary source of lighting.**

The Board did not provide additional comment.

- 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.**

Noted during Board deliberation, the request for the side setback departures has an intrinsic relationship to the structure width departure. The latter generates the need for the former. The Board recommended pulling back the southwest corner to mirror the side setbacks conditions (both above and below 42’) of the northwest corner.

The Board recommended approval for the rear setback departure.

- 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.**

The Board recommended that the applicant redesign the front court to create a more capacious entry to the front lobby. The design presented at the meeting narrowed the entry route from the sidewalk to the front doors in favor of more plantings and greater private space for the units directly fronting onto the court.

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

See recommendation for A-6.

**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.**

The applicant illustrated a one curb cut solution; however, the design would reduce the number of parking spaces. The Board accepted the two curb cut proposal on SW Avalon Way. It recommended denial of the two sight triangle departures, explaining that the sight triangles provide for pedestrians safety.

## **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.**

**West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:**

**Current zoning in the Junction has created abrupt edges in some areas between intensive, mixed-use development potential and less-intensive, multifamily development potential. In addition, the Code-complying building envelope of NC-65' (and higher) zoning designations permitted within the Commercial Core would result in development that exceeds the scale of existing commercial/mixed-use development. More refined transitions in height, bulk and scale—in terms of relationship to surrounding context and within the proposed structure itself—must be considered.**

See the recommendation for A-5. The Board recommended approval of the structural width departure with a modification based on pulling back the building mass at the southwest corner.

## **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.**

**West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:**

- **Facade Articulation:** To make new, larger development compatible with the surrounding architectural context, facade articulation and architectural embellishment are important considerations in mixed use and multifamily residential buildings. When larger buildings replace several small buildings, facade articulation should reflect the original platting pattern and reinforce the architectural rhythm established in the commercial core.
- **Architectural Cues:** New mixed-use development should respond to several architectural features common in the Junction’s best storefront buildings to preserve and enhance pedestrian orientation and maintain an acceptable level of consistency with the existing architecture. To create cohesiveness in the Junction, identifiable and exemplary architectural patterns should be reinforced. New elements can be introduced - provided they are accompanied by strong design linkages.

The Board did not provide additional comment.

- 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.

**West Seattle Junction-specific supplemental guidance:**

New multi-story developments are encouraged to consider methods to integrate a building’s upper and lower levels. This is especially critical in areas zoned NC-65’ and greater, where more recent buildings in the Junction lack coherency and exhibit a disconnect between the commercial base and upper residential levels as a result of disparate proportions, features and materials. The base of new mixed-use buildings – especially those zoned 65 ft. in height and higher - should reflect the scale of the overall building. New mixed-use buildings are encouraged to build the commercial level, as well as one to two levels above, out to the front and side property lines to create a more substantial base.

The Board members devoted a considerable amount of discussion concerning the simplification of the over wrought north façade. Could the design be enhanced by eliminating one of the seven colors? The Board did not recommend changes.

- 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.

Discussion focused on the copious use of metal siding. The Board did not request changes to the materials selection.

- C-5 Structured Parking Entrances.** The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

The Board did not provide additional comment.

## D. Pedestrian Environment

- D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances.** Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:

Design projects to attract pedestrians to the commercial corridors (California, Alaska). Larger sites are encouraged to incorporate pedestrian walkways and open spaces to create breaks in the street wall and encourage movement through the site and to the surrounding area. The Design Review Board would be willing to entertain a request for departures from development standards (e.g. an increase in the 64% upper level lot coverage in NC zones and a reduction in open space) to recover development potential lost at the ground level.

The Board did not provide additional comment.

- 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 did not provide additional comment.

- D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures.** The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

West Seattle Junction -specific supplemental guidance:

- Parking structures should be designed and sited in a manner that enhances pedestrian access and circulation from the parking area to retail uses.
- The design of parking structures/areas adjacent to the public realm (sidewalks, alley) should improve the safety and appearance of parking uses in relation to the pedestrian environment.

Board discussion did not focus on the impacts of the parking structure on the adjacent buildings.

- 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.

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

The Board did not provide additional comment.

**E. Landscaping**

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

Prior Board comments focused on adding evergreen plantings to the landscape design. The applicant mentioned to the Board that these were added to the plans.

**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.**

Revisions to the front entry court need to meet the recommendations from A-6.

**Recommendations:** The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the November 17, 2011 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings available at the November 17, 2011 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and the requested development standard departures from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below). The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

- 1) The southwest corner shall mirror the side setback conditions (both above and below 42') established at the northwest corner. (A-5, B-1)
- 2) Redesign the front court to create a more capacious public entry to the front lobby. (A-6)

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) are 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).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMENDATION
1. Structure Width SMC 23.45.528	Maximum structure width allowed is 150'.	189'6". This is 39'6" greater than required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces two larger courts on the north and south portions of the building.</li> </ul>	Recommended approval with a revision based on the Southwest corner modifications.
2. Rear Setback. SMC 23.45.518.	Minimum at alley 10'.	Eliminate setback. 10' reduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	Recommended approval
3. Side Setbacks Below 42' SMC 23.45.518	Minimum is 5' Average 7'	East: 5' minimum and average. 2' difference.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows for a large parking garage.</li> </ul>	Recommended approval.
4. Side Setback below 42' SMC 23.45.518	Minimum is 5' Average 7'	West: 5' minimum and average. 2' difference.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows for a large parking garage.</li> </ul>	Recommended approval.
5. Side Setback above 42'. SMC 23.45.518	Minimum is 7' Average is 10'	East: 5'6" minimum and 9' average above podium. 1'6" minimum and 1' average differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows for a tower on the east façade.</li> </ul>	Recommended approval
6. Side Setback above 42'. SMC 23.45.518	Minimum is 7' Average is 10'	West: 5' minimum and 9'2" average above podium. 2' minimum and 10" average differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Justification as stated in DR packet was not acceptable to Board.</li> </ul>	Recommended approval based on condition.
7. Sight Triangle SMC 23.54.030G	10' minimum sight triangle leg length to sidewalk.	West Driveway: 7'1". A reduction of 2'11".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board stated that pedestrian safety was more important than the applicant's rationale regarding residential layout of units.</li> </ul>	Recommended Denial.
8. Sight Triangle SMC 23.54.030G	10' minimum sight triangle leg length to sidewalk.	East Driveway: 3'4". A 6'8" reduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board stated that pedestrian safety was more important than the applicant's rationale regarding residential layout of units.</li> </ul>	Recommended Denial.

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