



# City of Seattle

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



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012744

Address: 4558 7th Ave NE

Applicant: Lee Roberts, Collins Woerman Architects

Date of Meeting: Monday, November 07, 2011

Board Members Present: Joe Hurley (Chair)  
Salone Habibudden  
Peter Krech  
Christina Pizana  
Martine Zettle

Board Members Absent: None

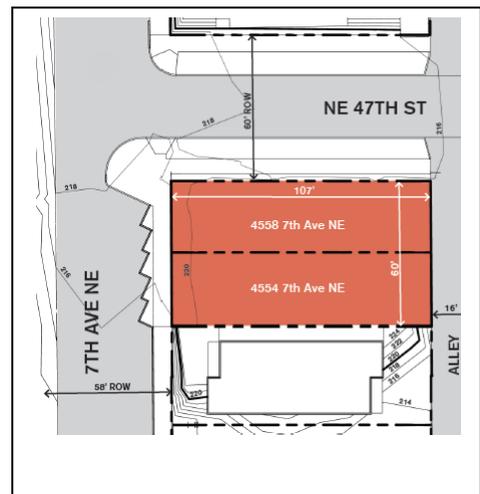
DPD Staff Present: Lisa Rutzick, Senior Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Midrise (MR)

Nearby Zones: (North) LR1  
(South) MR  
(East) MR  
(West) MR

Lot Area: 6,420 square feet



**Current Development:** The corner site is currently vacant. The site is at the border between an MR zone and an L1 zone. The property to the east of the project, Duncan Place, has been redeveloped recently to the zone allowed height of 60 feet. The L1 zone to the north of the site is dominated by single-family houses and smaller multifamily developments.

**Access:** Existing vehicular access to this site is from the alley. Existing pedestrian access is from 7th Ave N, NE 47th Street and the alley.

**Surrounding Development:** Surrounding uses are primarily single family residential and multi-family residential, with commercial development to the south. The buildings are a mix of 5-20 story multi-family and 1-2 story single family construction in a range of ages and styles.

**ECAs:** There are no Environmentally Critical Areas on the site.

**Neighborhood Character:** The site is located in the University Urban Center, an area of diverse uses and frequent transit service. The neighborhood includes a mix of residential units, including older single family structures (some converted to apartments), mid-20th century and newer multi-family residential buildings, and 1-2 story commercial structures flanking the nearby arterials. A major influence in this neighborhood is the University of Washington, with the campus located several blocks east of this site.

The site is located with a frequent transit service area, with frequent bus service located one block south at NE 45th Street and a few blocks to the east (Roosevelt Way NE and 11th Ave NE). The light rail Brooklyn Station will be constructed at Brooklyn Ave NE and NE 45th Street, and is expected to open in approximately 2020.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

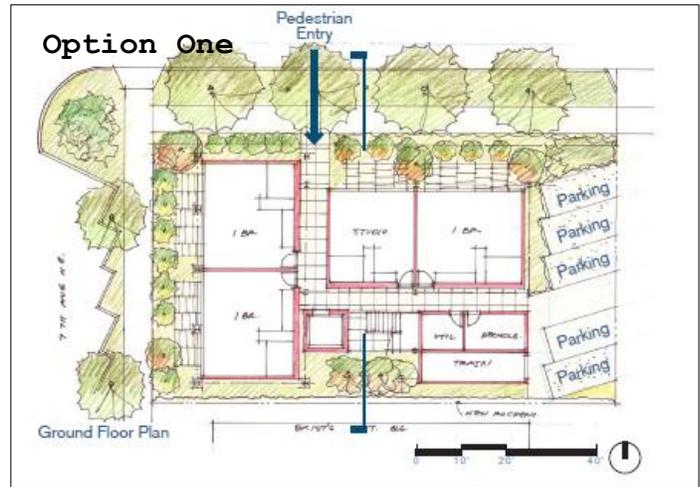
The proposed project is for the design and construction of a six-story structure containing 24 residential units with parking for two to five vehicles to be provided at grade, along the alley. Parking would be accessed from the alley.

The proposed development is part of the Sustainable Living Innovations (SLI) program developed by private consortium of professional firms. The SLI approach uses pre-fabricated systems (pre-plumbed, wired, etc) built off site and then transferred to and installed on a permanent site. The SLI configuration uses a single-loaded layout accessed from exterior walkways surrounding an open interior courtyard. This creates several advantages (including enhanced sustainability) by providing cross-ventilation, large window systems and an abundance of natural light for units.

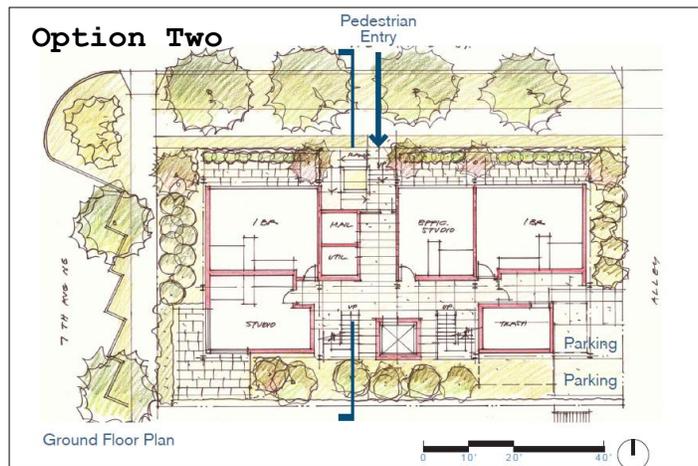
**DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options included a six story building with parking accessed from the alley.

The first scheme (Option 1) arranged the building mass as a C-shape, with 29 units facing north, southwest, and southeast around an open-air hallway with open stairs. The building was six stories above grade, with four units at ground level and five units per floor on typical floors. The primary pedestrian entry was on NE 47th Street, and surface parking and an alternative pedestrian entry are accessed from the alley. Ground floor units all had semi-private terraces 18" above the sidewalk. An angled canopy covered the shared hallway above the sixth floor, with the potential for mounting solar collectors for hot water or electricity. A departure for a three-foot encroachment into the alley setback would be needed.

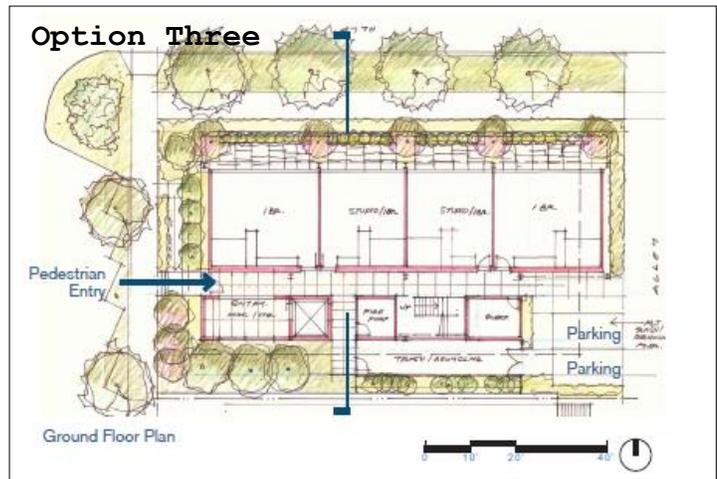


The second scheme (Option 2) arranged the building mass as a T, with two units per floor facing north, and two units per floor facing west, for a total of 24 units. A separation between pairs of units created the main pedestrian entry on NE 47th Street. The building was six stories above grade, with four units per floor on all floors. The primary pedestrian entry was on 7th Avenue NE, with 5 surface parking spaces and an alternative pedestrian entrance accessed from the alley. Ground floor units all had semi-private terraces 18" above the sidewalk. An angled canopy covers the shared hallway above the sixth floor, with the potential for mounting solar collectors for hot water or electricity. Departures for a two and a half foot encroachment into the front setback and a three-foot encroachment into the alley setback would be needed.



The third scheme (Option 3), and the applicant preferred option, arranged the building mass as a single bar, with all units facing north. A secondary bar consisted of the elevator, open stairs, and open hallways. The building was six stories above grade, with four units per floor on all floors,

for a total of 24 units. The primary pedestrian entry was on 7th Avenue NE, with two surface parking spaces and an alternative pedestrian entrance accessed from the alley. Ground floor units all had semi-private terraces 18" above the sidewalk. An angled canopy covered the shared hallway above the sixth floor, with the potential for mounting solar collectors for hot water or electricity. A departure for a six-foot encroachment into the alley setback would be needed.



## PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately ten members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting and two comment letters were received. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Supported the proposed project. Views to the north should be welcomed. Would like to see more parking provided.
- The University Garden Neighborhood is bounded by several arterials and contains a diversity of uses, densities and housing types. Encouraged proposal for industrial housing as a welcome addition to the neighborhood. The site is bordered by two zones across 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the building bulk should respond with an appropriate transition, such as use of color, balconies, green walls and landscaping. Design should emphasize the building entry. Windows should be included in the blank walls facing I5 to the west. The facades appeared too uniform and should better respond to the context. Additional parking is desired. Suggested more expression of the exposed steel as the building's exo-skeleton. Pointed out the bird roosting on steel may be problematic.
- Nearby condominium building excited with the proposed development as an addition to a strong neighborhood. Encouraged the large floor to ceiling windows.
- Concerned about access along 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue during construction of the proposed development.
- Objected to proposed density.
- Concerned that more parking is needed.

## 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-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 noted that the combination of shallow entry courtyard and stepped planters and open spaces at the street frontage could result in confusion about the location of entries. The Board gave guidance to provide a clear and welcoming sense of entry, as well as a connection to the sidewalk at 47<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **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.”

See C-3.

### **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 noted that the residential entrances at the street level should engage with the site through landscaping, lighting, signage,

overhead weather protection, seating and/or other elements that express residential uses and engagement at the ground level.

- 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 discussed taking advantage of the light and views from the full western exposure (instead of the blank western wall) and would like to see more analysis exploring this option. The west elevation is highly visible and the lack of engagement with the site and the rest of the building belies the interesting architecture and construction methodology of the project that is more apparent from the other elevations.

<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 supported the preferred option with the narrowest building profile and setting back further from the street, creating less intrusive massing. This slender profile is the least intrusive and minimizes the bulk to neighbors.

## C. Architectural Elements and Materials

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board was generally pleased with the direction of the design. The Board suggested greater layering of architecture, but noted that the layering of architecture for this design concept does not imply that the more traditional base, middle, top hierarchy as appropriate. The boldness of the design concept and composition is strong and would be potentially be undermined by such a stratification. The Board suggested, however, that another layer of detailing to accessorize the building (such as overheard weather canopies at the base, signage, balconies, solar panels, etc) should be considered and integrated into the architecture and presented at the next meeting.

See also A-10.

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

At the Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board specified that great attention to the detailing of the south facade will be critical to review at the next meeting. The Board was particularly interested in the elements that break down the scale of the elevation beyond the window and framing systems. This attention to detail is particularly important at the ground level.

- 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.**

**University-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Guidelines:**

- 1. New buildings should emphasize durable, attractive, and well-detailed finish materials, including: Brick; Concrete; Cast stone, natural stone, tile; Stucco and stucco-like panels; Art tile; Wood.**
- 2. Sculptural cast stone and decorative tile are particularly appropriate because they relate to campus architecture and Art Deco buildings. Wood and cast stone are appropriate for moldings and trim.**

3. The materials listed below are discouraged and should only be used if they complement the building's architectural character and are architecturally treated for a specific reason that supports the building and streetscape character: Masonry units; Metal siding; Wood siding and shingles; Vinyl siding; Sprayed-on finish; Mirrored glass.
4. Where anodized metal is used for window and door trim, then care should be given to the proportion and breakup of glazing to reinforce the building concept and proportions.
5. Fencing adjacent to the sidewalk should be sited and designed in an attractive and pedestrian oriented manner.
6. Awnings made of translucent material may be backlit, but should not overpower neighboring light schemes. Lights, which direct light downward, mounted from the awning frame are acceptable. Lights that shine from the exterior down on the awning are acceptable.
7. Light standards should be compatible with other site design and building elements.

### Signs

**Context:** The Citywide Design Guidelines do not provide guidance for new signs. New guidelines encourage signs that reinforce the character of the building and the neighborhood.

#### **Guidelines:**

1. The following sign types are encouraged, particularly along Mixed Use Corridors – Pedestrian oriented shingle or blade signs extending from the building front just above pedestrians; Marquee signs and signs on pedestrian canopies; Neon signs; Carefully executed window signs; such as etched glass or hand painted signs; Small signs on awnings or canopies.
2. Post mounted signs are discouraged.
3. The location and installation of signage should be integrated with the building's architecture.
4. Monument signs should be integrated into the development, such as on a screen wall.

At the Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board was supportive of the proposed material palettes that included metal, cement board, resin, resin board – a combination of contrasting materials to include some warmer materials along with the steel frame. The fenestration is a commercial grade window system that creates a floor to ceiling glazing expression. The Board suggested that the lack of fenestration on the south side and full glazing on the north side creates a sense of imbalance that should be explored to project a more integrated design.

The Board also noted that bird roosting/droppings on the steel beams may create a corrosive condition that should be considered given the extent of steel.

## 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.**

**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.

See A-3, A-4 and A-6.

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stressed the important of addressing the blank wall condition for the east and west elevations and explore opportunities for green walls, fenestration (or clerestory windows), texture or other treatment that breaks down the expanse of the blank wall and provides visual interest.

- 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.**

The Board expects to review more information about the trash and recycling accommodations at the next meeting.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board directed the applicant to carefully consider lighting, building corners, access points, side yards, and landscaping as they develop the design. These items should be designed to create clear sight lines and maximize safety of residents and pedestrians. At the next meeting, the Board would specifically like to review the alley parking area with these considerations in mind.

## **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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that they would like to see more information about the overall landscape plan at the Recommendation meeting. The Board directed the applicant to carefully consider landscaping appropriate to the edges of the site and the edges between the building and sidewalk.

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the proximity to I5 is an unusual condition that should inform the design and landscaping concept.

### **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The Board's recommendation on the requested departures 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 departures. The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting. At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departure was requested:

- 1. Rear Setback (23.45.510):** The Code requires ten foot setback from the east (alley) property line. The applicant proposes four foot setback to accommodate the single bar of units, with the narrowest building profile. The intervening setback would be landscaped.

The Board indicated that they will continue to entertain this departure, provided the applicant can demonstrate proposal would better meet the intent of the adopted design review guidelines.

### **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.**