



# City of Seattle

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



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012837

Address: 1406 East Republican Street

Applicant: John Schack

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, February 01, 2012

Board Members Present: Evan Bourquard  
Dawn Bushnaq  
Clint Keithly, substitute  
Wolf Saar  
Chip Wall

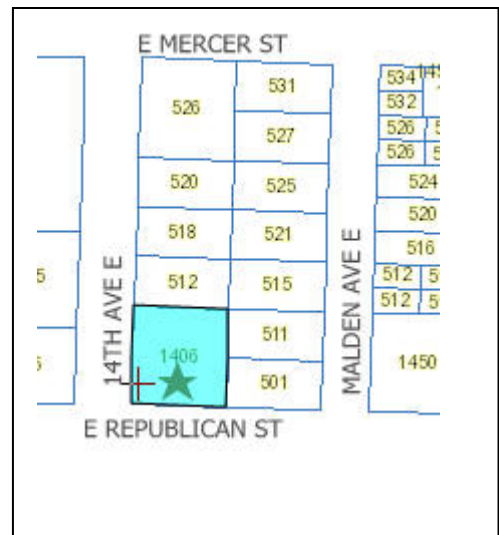
Board Members Absent: Lisa Picard

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Lowrise Three (LR3)

Nearby Zones: North: Lowrise zones (LR3 and LR2) extend to Roy St.  
South: LR 3 to John St. which has NC240 zoning.  
East: LR3 extends to 15th Ave E. where there is a Neighborhood Commercial Two with a 40' height limit in a pedestrian zone (NC2P 40)  
West: LR3 extends to 10th Ave E.



Lot Area: The nearly square 10,183 sq. ft. site sits at the northeast corner of 14th Ave. E. and E. Republican St. in the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village.

Current Development: Three detached cottages front E. Republican St. and a garage sits behind the cottages.

Access: A driveway begins at 14th Ave E. and bisects the site.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character: The site sits upon the crest of Capitol Hill with potential views to the west. The neighborhood commercial corridor along 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. E. lies two blocks to the west. A Group Health facility is approximately six blocks from the project site. The neighborhood possesses a farrago of housing types (single family, duplex, four-plex and larger apartment buildings). Contemporary structures intermingle with traditional, three to four story brick apartment buildings that seem to anchor the neighborhood. To the northwest on 14th Ave E, Seattle Housing Authority's Capitol Park Apartments rises 11 floors above the street.

ECAs: No mapped Environmentally Critical Areas on the site.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes to design and build a four-story, 36-unit residential structure with partially below grade parking for 22 vehicles.

## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The applicant's three conceptual schemes all address the idea of a courtyard building partially enclosed by four floors of apartment units. Scheme One presents a west facing courtyard forming a relatively traditional "U" shaped structure in plan. Scheme Two shifts the courtyard to the north/south direction and carves a large two-story opening at the site's southwest corner meant to connect the intersection of the two rights of way with the rectangular void forming the courtyard. In Scheme Three, the direction of the courtyard stretches east/west with a covered two story portal or gateway fronting 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue East. Schemes Two and Three shift or skew the vertical planes of the west façade and south façade (Scheme Three) off the orthogonal grid. The angling of a vertical plane on the 14<sup>th</sup> Ave E. side shifts the upper portion back from the street.

The courtyard in the latter two options establishes a shared community amenity at the same time housing an open vertical circulation (stairs) system. In both schemes, the semi enclosed open space leaks out toward the corner of the property, creating the potential for a fluid transition between public and private open space. The applicant favors vehicular access from E.

Republican St. which would descend to a parking garage mostly below grade. The parking garage forms a plinth or podium for the larger building mass that emerges several feet above grade.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Fifteen members of the public affixed their names to the EDG sign-in sheet. Those who spoke raised the following concerns.

### Height, Bulk and Scale

- Buildings to the east will be in shade due to the proposal. (mentioned several times)
- The proposal is out of scale with the neighborhood.
- The structure is too monolithic.
- The size and scale of the project is too large. Reduce the building height to three floors.

### Neighborhood Character & Context

- Photos presented by the applicant do not accurately reflect the neighborhood. The speaker displayed his own photographic study.
- The building's character ignores its context.
- The structure will dominate and change the neighborhood character.
- The height of the walls and the central courtyard close off the neighborhood around it.
- The whole building is unfriendly to the neighbors who have lived here many years.
- It is inaccurate to state that this proposal is in character with the neighborhood.
- Bring the design of the building into harmony with other buildings in the neighborhood.
- The neighborhood has witnessed a significant increase in children and families.

### Landscaping

- The proposed P patch location will not receive any sun.

### Safety

- At night, women have to walk a considerable distance due to the lack of parking in the area.
- The position of the building on the parcel will create dark corridors along the north and east sides creating an unsafe condition.

### Parking

- The proposal lacks sufficient parking.
- Each unit should have at least one parking space.

### Programming

- The project has too many dwelling units.
- Currently, the parcel is underused.
- The courtyard is a good idea.

## Miscellaneous

- The large opening to the courtyard will create a wind tunnel. The building's siting and size will also channel wind around the building onto the neighbors' property.
- The sustainable aspects of the building are encouraging.

DPD received one letter from a neighborhood property owner and resident. He summarized his letters with the following:

1. The scale of the proposal is out of character with its immediate surroundings.
2. The proposed development may significantly change wind, rain and snow patterns in its immediate surroundings that will pose a danger to existing dwellings, trees and residents that could result in legal liability.
3. The streets that surround the proposed development are already congested and existing street parking is already at maximum usage. The development places an added hardship on residents of the presently existing dwelling but it will seriously impact the business community along with adjacent section of 15<sup>th</sup> Ave E.
4. Sunlight will be seriously impacted by the height and scale of this project to the point of putting into perpetual shade a number of houses and their yards---including at least several residences with young children.
5. The blocking of sunlight will result in the probable demise of a number of mature trees and bushes located to the immediate north and east of the proposal.

## 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-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.

- 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.

See Board guidance A-4, A-7, C-1, C-3, D-1, and D-3.

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

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

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Provide for sidewalk retail opportunities and connections by allowing for the opening of the storefront to the street and displaying goods to the pedestrian.

The applicant should focus on the activation of the courtyard and how it relates to the street.

**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.

For the next EDG meeting, the applicant will need to provide shadow studies for each of the options.

**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.

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

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Incorporate quasi-public open space with new residential development or redevelopment, with special focus on corner landscape treatments and courtyard entries.
- Create substantial courtyard-style open space that is visually accessible to the public view.
- Set back development where appropriate to preserve a view corridor.
- Set back upper floors to provide solar access to the sidewalk and/or neighboring properties.
- Mature street trees have a high value to the neighborhood and departures from development standards that an arborist determines would impair the health of a mature tree are discouraged.
- Use landscape materials that are sustainable, requiring minimal irrigation or fertilizer.
- Use porous paving materials to minimize stormwater run-off.

The Board noted two specific Capitol Hill specific guidelines: 1) create substantial courtyard style open space that is visually accessible to the public view and 2) set back upper floors to provide solar access to the sidewalk and/or neighboring properties. New concept schemes will need to address these issues.

**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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Preserve and enhance the pedestrian environment in residential and commercial areas by providing for continuous sidewalks that are unencumbered by parked vehicles and are minimally broken within a block by 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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Incorporate residential entries and special landscaping into corner lots by setting the structure back from the property lines.

**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.

Along with the Board's desire to see a scheme that better recognizes the neighborhood context, the massing of the proposal should begin to step back in height near the site's

edges where there are adjacent properties. Other techniques to reduce the building scale should also be considered.

The parking plinth adds unnecessary height to the building, increasing its sense of monumentality. In general, building pattern in the neighborhood has a closer relationship to grade. Both the cantilever over the driveway and the first floor and the two story portal into the courtyard augment the building's scale. The grand entrance to the courtyard should be handled with more sensitivity to promote a greater sense of intimacy.

## **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.**

The Board noted that the DR packet did not convey an understanding of the neighborhood's urban patterns. A keener analysis should produce better design options. At the next meeting, an analysis of these patterns will need to be presented. The proposed design concepts should respond to this analysis and to the guidelines.

### **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.

This guideline represents an important criterion as the Board reviews continue.

### **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.**

In general, the Board found the scale of the preferred option troubling. The plinth augments the building's sense of monumentality. The courtyard pushes the structure closer to the edges of the site particularly toward the north property line. The attempt to create an open space at the corner and to skew the façade from the orthogonal grid act to detach the structure from the intimacy of the streetscape.

The portal to the courtyard lacks the intimacy that the Capitol Hill specific guidance intends. The scale appears oversized and imposing in contrast to the character of the neighborhood.

- 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.**

This guidance has importance later in the review process. The Board noted its support for a modern interpretation of historic precedent and encourages the use of high quality materials.

- 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 observed that the cantilever above the driveway undermines the sensitive relationship between the streetscape and the building. The height of the cantilever, augmented by the driveway's slope, lacks the intimacy that a pedestrian oriented neighborhood warrants.



## 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.**

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Provide entryways that link the building to the surrounding landscape.
- Create open spaces at street level that link to the open space of the sidewalk.
- Building entrances should emphasize pedestrian ingress and egress as opposed to accommodating vehicles.
- Minimize the number of residential entrances on commercial streets where non-residential uses are required. Where residential entries and lobbies on commercial streets are unavoidable, minimize their impact to the retail vitality commercial streetscape.

The courtyard could function like a muse with the unit entrances facing into it. The Board questioned the placement of the lobby at the east end of the courtyard.

The accessible path from 14<sup>th</sup> Ave E. along the north property line to the back of the east façade should be more direct. As presented, the access route is treated as a backdoor entrance to those who will need it. The accessible route should occur near the right of way and/or within the courtyard. Lowering the garage will help create a shorter pedestrian ramp into the complex.

- D-3 Retaining Walls. Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where higher retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscapes.**

The site grades and the parking garage combine to place the building higher above the sidewalk grade than what the Board wishes. This acts to create an uncomfortable relationship between the building and the streetscape.

- 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.

**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.

Pathways behind and in front of the building should be well lit.

**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.

<b>E. Landscaping</b>
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**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.

**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.

**Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Maintain or enhance the character and aesthetic qualities of neighborhood development to provide for consistent streetscape character along a corridor.
- Supplement and complement existing mature street trees where feasible.

- **Incorporate street trees in both commercial and residential environments in addition to trees onsite.**
- **Commercial landscape treatments that include street trees.**

## **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 applicant introduced the following departure:

- 1. Façade length requirement.** SMC23.45.527B. The maximum combined length of all portions of facades with 15 feet of a lot line that is neither a rear lot line nor a street or alley lot line shall not exceed 65 percent of the length of that lot line. The applicant proposes a 76 percent façade length along the east property line.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

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

The Board requested the development of new options for the EDG review.

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