



City of Seattle

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



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013291

Address: 515 Harvard Avenue E

Applicant: Hewitt Architects for Maria Barrientos & Greg Stein

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, May 15, 2013

Board Members Present: Dawn Bushnaq (Chair)
Dan Foltz
Natalie Gualy
Wolf Saar (substitute)
Bo Zhang (substitute)

Board Members Absent: Ric Cochrane
Tina Orr-Cahall

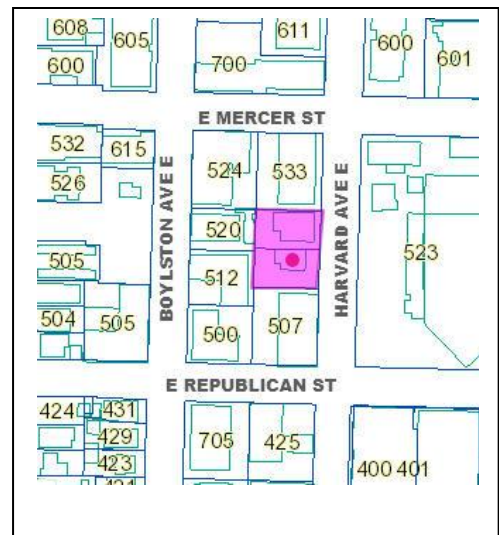
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Midrise (MR)

Nearby Zones: (North) MR
(South) MR
(East) NC3-40
(West) MR

Lot Area: 18,213 sf, mid block, flat



Current Development: An existing 5 story residential building ('Phase 1') occupies the west part of the site, fronting onto Boylston Ave; the subject site on Harvard Ave is vacant.

Access: Pedestrians from Harvard Ave; vehicles and services would share an existing Phase 1 parking access off Boylston.

Surrounding Development: Residential buildings of 3-6 stories, with diverse footprints and styles.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: This residential street has an eclectic character and scale, and is one block west of the vibrant pedestrian, mixed use Broadway corridor in Capital Hill.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is proposing development on an 18,213 sf mid-block site, between two existing 3-4 story apartment buildings, on the west side of Harvard Ave E. The site is just west of the boundary of the Light Rail Station Overlay, and is zoned Midrise (MR). The applicant-preferred option C proposes a 7 story structure, 75 ft tall using the affordable bonus, of approximately 63,000 sf and 80 units. Underground parking for 23 spaces would interconnect with the existing phase 1 parking to the west, and use the existing access off Boylston E.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: May 15, 2013
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DESIGN PROPOSAL

The EDG booklet includes materials presented by the applicant at the EDG meeting, and is available online by entering the project number at this website:
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp.
or contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Address: **Public Resource Center**
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98124

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 10 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Noted the existing street walls create a canyon, would like to see more variation and scale.
- Stated support for developing a vacant lot and supported the proposed modern design language, adding variety in an already eclectic neighborhood.
- Objected to the proposed height as out of scale with existing context, and referencing guideline B-1, stated the proposed massing is not sensitive to the surrounding area.
- Opposed to the façade length departure as the building is already tall and bulky.
- Encouraged more use of materials found in the vicinity, such as red brick.
- Supported the concept of linking to the existing phase 1 site, but requested the landscaping and design of the ground level of phase 1 deserved much improvement.
- Felt the design proposal was a chaotic mix of forms and should be simplified.
- Concerned about the privacy and windows in the side walls of adjacent residential buildings, and stated the proposal should respect neighbors more, referencing guideline A-5.
- Supported the residential stoops at ground level, but opposed to any fences that privatize and create a harsh transition to the public sidewalk.

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 following Citywide Design Guidelines & *Capital Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines* (as applicable) of **highest priority** for this project.

The Priority guidelines are summarized below. For the full text of all guidelines 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.*
- *Orient townhouse structures to provide pedestrian entrances to the sidewalk.*

- *For buildings that span a block and “front” on two streets, each street frontage should receive individual and detailed site planning and architectural design treatments to complement the established streetscape character.*
- *New development in commercial zones should be sensitive to neighboring residential zones. Examples include lots on Broadway that extend to streets with residential character, such as Nagle Place or 10th or Harvard Avenues East. While a design with a commercial character is appropriate along Broadway, compatibility with residential character should be emphasized along the other streets.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the proposed modulated frontage and vertical proportions could provide a desirable break in a block with typically flat and/or repetitive street walls. The Board supported the absence of a curb cut on Harvard and the consolidation of vehicular access at the existing Boylston garage door, although they agreed that the garage door and frontage deserved improvements. The Board supported the recessed courtyard/lobby and the residential patios as contributing to the streetscape, contingent upon a well-resolved material and public-private layering.

- A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites.** Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board extensively discussed how the proposed massing and details –such as window placement for privacy – must be better analyzed and adjusted to respect adjacent residents. This is especially true as the proposal is relatively tall, has long side walls, and minimum setbacks. The Board stated that all the building perimeter edges and corners deserve careful study, and they expect to see “reflected window” elevation drawings at the recommendation meeting; living room windows should be staggered or buffered from those adjacent.

While supporting the use, the Board advised extra care to address noise and other impacts from the proposed café at the northeast corner, to the residents immediately adjacent and across the street. The Board also suggested re-evaluation of the elevator core location – the tallest element – being at the north building wall, and its consequent shadow and bulk impacts on the context; shadow impacts should inform the specific massing.

- 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 agreed the setback residential patios proposed could provide street scale and buffering, but was concerned the tall,

perpendicular privacy walls and columns might be overly compartmentalized and harsh, especially if taken all the way to the street property line. The Board supported the angled building walls leading to the lobby/café entrance, but the detailed character of the transitions - from street to semi-public patios to internal space, must be carefully developed at the Recommendation stage. If these are private spaces, the Board did not support that area being tabulated as part of the courtyard rationale for any departure.

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 pourous paving materials to minimize stormwater run-off.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed this guideline is promoted by the proposed lobby entrance and its through-building connection to Phase 1, and the landscaped court at the middle of the site. The Board needs to review more perspective studies of the scale and transparency through these linked spaces, and detailed landscape development of the courtyard, and any roof decks.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

B-1 Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility. Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk, and scale between anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:

- *Break up building mass by incorporating different façade treatments to give the impression of multiple, small-scale buildings, in keeping with the established development pattern.*
- *Consider existing views to downtown Seattle, the Space Needle, Elliott Bay and the Olympic Mountains, and incorporate site and building design features that may help to preserve those views from public rights-of-way.*
- *Design new buildings to maximize the amount of sunshine on adjacent sidewalks throughout the year.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board generally supported Option C, and agreed a 7 story building could be compatible with the context (which is largely MR zoning), if very carefully designed. The Board applauded the massing moves on the street façade to break down the scale and create modulation. However, they strongly agreed the south, west and north walls and corners must be carefully studied to mitigate impacts on adjacent residents and the surrounding public realm. The Board expects to see site sections through the proposed building and adjacent buildings, as well as studies showing massing/ privacy design adjustments at the Recommendation meeting.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

- C-1 Architectural Context.** New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how a contemporary expression provides relief in this block’s streetwall and material context, yet there may be subtle cues inspired from the local context to help this building fit and reinforce this specific physical and/or cultural setting. As currently shown, Option C ‘refined’ could be found in Belltown or any Seattle locale; it should instead, demonstrate elements and character specific to Capital Hill.

- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency.** Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:

- *Incorporate signage that is consistent with the existing or intended character of the building and the neighborhood.*
- *Solid canopies or fabric awnings over the sidewalk are preferred.*
- *Avoid using vinyl awnings that also serve as big, illuminated signs.*

- *Use materials and design that is compatible with the structures in the vicinity if those represent the desired neighborhood character.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed with the stated goal of a richly modulated street wall, and emphasizing the 5 over 2 proportions, but also suggested consideration of the horizontally stacked expression in the context, perhaps at a subordinate reading. To serve this, the Board required more elevations and street level views that include more of the surrounding buildings for context, and accurate photo mapping on those adjacent buildings, and they not be ‘grayed out’.

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

Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported some scale making efforts at the ground level street edge, but was concerned the privacy walls shown were too tall and long, creating compartments, and the proposed ‘scrim/trellis’ evokes the intimidating fence/cages newly installed (without approval) across the street. At the Recommendation meeting, the Board expects more gracious and subtle methods to create human scale, at the residential patios, the entry courtyard, and along the entire street edge.

- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials.** Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:

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

- *Consider each building as a high-quality, long-term addition to the neighborhood; exterior design and materials should exhibit permanence and quality appropriate to the Capitol Hill neighborhood.*
- *The use of applied foam ornamentation and EIFS (Exterior Insulation & Finish System) is discouraged, especially on ground level locations.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the material palette and quality will be a focal point of the Recommendation review.

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.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the proposed entry courtyard and through-block link has good promise to provide a legible, 2 story scaled entrance, generous spatial break in the street wall, and a valuable gathering space. But all these aspects must be verified with sections and perspective studies showing the street edge character, plus transparency and spatial scale through the building.

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.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the trash and services of Phase 2 will be added to these existing functions at the Boylston Street access point, and they must be carefully integrated at the existing driveway and door there.

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

Capitol Hill-specific supplemental guidance:

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board expressed concern that the tall, long walls proposed at the residential patios along Harvard, created an unsafe character by blocking eyes on the street and providing hidden compartments. The Board advised a more open approach, with landscape layers parallel to the street, integrated lighting and resident surveillance. They also deplored the fence and cage approach recently installed across the street.

- D-9 Commercial Signage.** Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the concept of a small commercial shop at the northeast corner, to provide activation and interest to the street, as long as its signage and lighting is modest, any noise is mitigated, and the associated patio blends with the entry and provides a transition to the street.

- D-10 Commercial Lighting.** Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how all lighting must respect adjacent neighbors, including any commercial lighting for the proposed cafe. The lobby/ courtyard should have an internalized glow that signifies entry and gathering, without spilling onto neighboring properties.

E. Landscaping

E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites. Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the mid-block courtyard should flow and connect west (at least visually) past the adjacent Phase 1 project, to Boylston street. Additionally, it provides a mid-block shared amenity space for both buildings, which should be landscape designed for social function and green relief in a relatively dense, 2 phase project.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

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

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departures were requested based on the preferred Option C "refined":

- 1. Front Setback** (SMC 23.45.518.B; MR Setbacks): In brief, the Code requires a front setback of 5 ft minimum and averaging 7 ft. The applicant proposes a portion of the northeast corner to have a zero ft front setback, while the rest would comply.

The Board indicated non support for that corner being at or near the property line, and suggested a linear patio supporting the proposed cafe, or a landscaped layer along the sidewalk and street, which meets the setback requirement.

- 2. Maximum Structural Depth** (SMC 23.45.528.B.1): In brief, the Code requires the maximum length of the side walls to be 75% of the lot depth, which in this case (combined with Phase 1) would be 75 ft. The applicant proposes a depth of 106 ft on the north wall, which amounts to 90.6 % of the total lot depth, an increase of 15%. The applicant rationale was that the front entry courtyard equates to the structural depth courtyard exception of 23.45.528.B.2.

The Board indicated cautious receptivity to this departure, given the angled, recessed entry is desirable, but required the following: the entry courtyard must equal the 713 sq ft minimum area of usable, common space, even if not the prescribed rectangle shape; any private patios cannot count in this minimum area. Regardless of the entry design, the Board reserves the right to not support this departure if other issues concerning the massing, height and edges of the departure-generating extra long wall, are not sufficiently addressed per guidelines A-5 and B-1 above.

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. The Board required the following specific direction of issues to be addressed in the Recommendation submittal:

- 1) **A-5; Adjacent Windows and Privacy:** Analyze and draw accurate, reflected elevations of the windows on the 2 adjacent buildings, and ensure proposed windows, especially living rooms, are staggered or designed in a manner to ensure privacy to neighbors.
- 2) **C-2, D-6 & A-6; Street Level Views with Context:** Provide accurate elevations and eye-level perspectives (minimum of 2 directions from Harvard Street) of the proposal and most of the length of 2 adjacent structures, with accurate colors (not gray), transparent trees and details; also include elevation and perspective of the Boylston Phase 1 and improvements. These views should fully portray and confirm the pedestrian friendly character of the residential patios, entry courtyard and café, at the street transition.
- 3) **A-5; Site Sections:** To verify context relationships, provide a large scale north/south section through the proposal and the first 30 ft (minimum) of adjacent structures, showing floor lines, windows, street trees, etc; also include an east/west section through the proposal, central courtyard and Phase 1 structure.
- 4) **B-1; North Wall and Bulk Analysis:** To test the structure depth departure and verify bulk relationships, provide eye-level massing studies of the north wall from Mercer Street, and north wall elevations (both including dashed adjacent structure), and other efforts to mitigate (chamfered corners, upper level stepbacks, etc) the height, shadow and bulk impacts on 4 most proximate neighbors. This may entail a reduction in floor area and/or unit count, which is entirely valid given the departure request.
- 5) **D-1 & A-7; Courtyard Entry and through block Link:** To verify the scale and transparency of these spaces, provide perspectives and large scale sections in both directions through the sequence of semi-public spaces.
- 6) **A-2; Northeast Corner and Café details:** Provide large scale plans, elevations and zoom-in perspectives to verify the following: the proposed café will not acoustically impact neighbors (outdoor seating, deliveries, etc), will have a subtle lighting and signage presence in a residential setting, yet will offer a clearly identifiable and “discovered” character to the street.

All of the above studies should serve the over-arching goal of mitigating the bulk impacts, respecting privacy, and having a sensitive transition to the neighbors and context.