



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number: 3013303

Address: 3078 SW Avalon Way

Applicant: Radim Blazej, Caron Architecture

Date of Meeting: Thursday, September 13, 2012

Board Members Present: Myer Harrell (Acting Chair)  
Laird Bennion  
Norma Tompkins

Board Members Absent: Robin Murphy  
Daniel Skaggs

DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, Senior Land Use Planner

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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: MR (Midrise)

Nearby Zones: (North) SF 5000  
(South) MR  
(East) MR  
(West) SF 5000

Lot Area: 19,196 sf



Current Development: House and garage on south half of site; two, 1 story apartment buildings on north half; site slopes approximately 33 ft from southwest corner to northeast corner, with a steep 12 foot slope along the Avalon Way frontage.

Access: Vehicular access from the existing, improved alley to west.

Surrounding Development: 6 story apartment building adjacent to the south; 2 story apartment buildings adjacent to the north; 1-2 story houses and backyards across alley to the west; mix of houses and 4 story apartment buildings across Avalon Way to the east.

ECAs: Small portion of Steep Slope ECA at southeast corner.

Neighborhood Character: Avalon Way is a busy arterial with heavy traffic, buses and moderate pedestrian activity. Buildings along Avalon are a mix of older houses and low apartments, with newer 4-6 story residential buildings, and no commercial in this vicinity. To the west is a pocket of consistent SF houses with backyards and garages along the alley, with mixed ages and conditions.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Demolish existing structures and construct a new 6 story (to alley) structure with approximately 77,000 sf and 108 units. A landscaped courtyard for residents and a roof terrace are proposed. Although this site has no parking requirement (SMC 23.54.015.A.table B, row M), approximately 77 parking spaces are proposed below grade, on 2 levels) with a curb cut both on Avalon and the alley.

<b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: September 13, 2012</b>
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## PROJECT & DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The EDG Design Proposal booklet includes materials presented at the 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](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

The booklet is also available to view in the DPD file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**Mailing Public Resource Center**  
**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

## PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

During public comment, the following design-related comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Noted the project is adjacent to a single family zone and according to West Seattle design guideline B-1, “refined transitions in height, bulk and scale, in relationship to surrounding context...must be considered” (multiple comments restated this concern and guideline).
- Supported the color concept sketch, and the project should include vibrant colors, textures and material variety.
- Agreed that the 2 options with a continuous 6 story wall along the alley, and the adjacent SF zone, were less desirable than option C, but still concerned with bulk and scale of C. It looks larger and taller than existing apartments to south.
- Requested the building incorporate sloped roofs and other features to mitigate the boxiness.
- Noted the northeast corner is very tall, especially considering other buildings in the vicinity step-down with the slope heading north along Avalon Way.
- Opposed to any parking access off the alley, for safety concerns and congestion are there already. [Applicant responded they want to distribute the parking to not be 100% onto busy Avalon, and avoid overly steep ramps.]
- Cautioned that exterior materials must be durable and high quality.
- Encouraged the footprint along Avalon to setback and be similar to the setback of existing neighbors to the north and south.
- Requested option C to reduce height 1-2 stories, reduce bulk, and probably unit count.
- Questioned if the existing trees will be retained; applicant responded they are being assessed.
- Concerned with the addition of noise/visual screening of courtyard along alley, to not impinge on backyards of neighbors, and requested project provide alley downlighting for safety.
- Commented that the courtyard on alley of option C was odd.

## 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 (A-1, A-2, etc)** & **West Seattle Junction Neighborhood specific guidelines** (as applicable) of HIGHEST PRIORITY for this project.

These Board-selected priority guidelines are shown in **bold**, and are listed in their entirety, while ALL guidelines are still applicable. All the Design Guidelines are listed by header 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.

**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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that while not proposing commercial uses at street level, the appearance and quality of the 2 story loft units and the adjacent landscaping/public realm is crucial to establishing a pedestrian friendly street edge. They encouraged high quality, commercial grade materials and landscaping. The treatment along the alley should also be high quality and intentionally designed, not just a fence.**

- 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 encouraged the side yards to be landscaped and the proposed windows staggered to buffer the windows and privacy of adjacent neighbors (existing window overlays to be required), and the design of courtyard and roof terraces should buffer overlooks of the adjacent balconies and backyards.**

- 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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that both vehicular entries should consider pedestrian safety and sight lines when detail designed, yet be a minimal portal on the Avalon elevation; the Board did NOT exclude vehicle entry to only one location.**

## **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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed this topic at length. They requested street elevations along Avalon, showing the full facades of adjacent 2 buildings to south and those to north. They considered the other massing options which placed the courtyard to the east, but referred back to option C in deference to the reduced bulk along the alley and the adjacent “less intensive zone”. They agreed stepping back the upper stories on all sides is warranted, especially at the west side facing the SF zone. They supported the common roof deck at the northeast, but strongly suggested reducing the overall height of the northeast corner approximately one floor. The length of the north wall, currently generating a departure request, should be studied to trim the corners, to afford light to the northern neighbors, and/or simply shortened to reduce the bulk towards the alley.**

## **C. Architectural Elements and Materials**

- 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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the proposed modulation and deep reveals of the massing are crucial to mitigating the bulk (especially along Avalon), and this should be supported by a high quality, durable and interesting cladding palette, on all sides. That palette should employ a range of colors, materials and textures more pronounced than those shown in the EDG sketches.**

## 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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board requested the applicant consider a pass-through or pedestrian path in one of the side yards, and to carefully design a screen along the alley courtyard to protect adjacent backyard privacy and encourage an attractive and safe alley presence. The Board also applauded the 2 story scale and street presence of the Avalon lobby, and encouraged further scale and pedestrian interest in the street-facing loft façade designs.**

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

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board emphasized that adequate lighting and security along the alley is key, through good design and "eyes on the alley" strategies. They also requested a full length, detailed and dimensioned elevation of the alley elevation showing the parking wall condition and materials, including landscaping and courtyard screen design. (See also Departure #1 discussion below)**

- 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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that the Avalon lobby entrance should strive to provide the elements described in this guideline.**

<b>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.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board encouraged maximizing the size of the roof deck, and the planted or softscape areas of the courtyard and roof deck because the site will be fully developed leaving little remaining permeable surface other than the sideyards. They also encouraged landscaping, and pedestrian features along Avalon; and trellises, play structures, seating etc in the courtyard and on the roof deck, for use and amenity to residents.**

### **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 following departures were requested:

- 1. Rear Yard Setback (SMC 23.45.518.B):** The Code requires a 10 ft setback from the alley property line to any structure more than 18 in above grade. The applicant proposes a departure to 0 ft, to allow the parking structure “lid” to pop above grade approximately 7 ft at the northwest, alley corner.

**The Board expressed concern about the height of a blank parking wall along the alley (and adjacent property), and noted there is no parking below this northwest corner, and suggested the patio above could step down from its unit, reducing the height of the wall and/or patio fence. This departure also eliminates rear yard permeable surface, so a robust response to the comments for landscape guideline E-2 will factor into subsequent board review.**

- 2. Structure Depth (SMC 23.45.528.B1):** The Code requires the structure wall along side yards to be a maximum of 75% of the lot depth. The applicant proposes a parking wall that is 92.5% of the lot depth, and upper building walls that are 80% of lot depth.

**The Board indicated some receptivity to the 80% request, but wants that considered in light of the revisions to bulk and wall length that might result from Guideline B-1 above. They also might consider a parking wall departure above the 75%, depending on a better resolution of the tall northwest corner mentioned in departure #1 above.**

**BOARD DISCUSSION SUMMARY** (to be integrated with and in addition to the comments above)

**A) Bulk, scale and height revisions (B-1, A-5):**

1) The Board agreed option C is best to reduce bulk along the alley and the adjacent “less intensive zone”, and endorsed additional revisions to create a sensitive massing transition to context:

- a) stepping back the upper stories on all sides is warranted, especially at the west side facing the SF zone (per the west side perspective sketch, but not the level 8 plan);
- b) maintain the large reveals and modulation along Avalon, but reduce the overall height of the northeast corner approximately one floor;
- c) trim corners and/or reduce length of the north wall (reduce/eliminate departure #2).

2) Provide alley and street elevations along Avalon, showing the full facades of adjacent 2 buildings to south and those to north.

**B) Street and alley edge design (A-2, A-8, D-1, D-8, D-12) :**

- 1) Along Avalon, retain the 2 story loft unit scale and lobby entry, and provide high quality materials and landscaping that creates pedestrian interest.
- 2) Reduce the height of the northwest alley corner, and provide high quality materials and an intentional, pedestrian scaled design of the entire alley frontage.
- 3) Provide large scale elevations of the entire alley frontage showing materials, landscaping and other details, including the pedestrian scaled screening of the adjacent courtyard.

**C) Courtyard, roof and sideyard landscape design (E-2):**

- 1) Increase the total green area on site and add generous landscaping turf, shrubs and trees to the courtyard and roofdeck.
- 2) Provide seating, play structures and other features for resident amenity in these common spaces.
- 3) Use trees and landscape in the sideyards to buffer the adjacent properties, and explore the possibility of an east-west pedestrian path in one side yard.

**D) Design for privacy of neighbors (A-5):**

- 1) Survey the windows and balconies of adjacent buildings and carefully design proposed windows, roof terraces, and railings to minimize overlook of adjacent windows, balconies and backyards across the alley.

**E) Material variety and quality (C-4):**

- 1) Maintain the deep reveals and modulation shown, which mitigates the bulk of the structure, and support this with a high quality, durable and interesting cladding palette, on all sides.
- 2) That palette should employ a range of colors, materials and/or textures, more pronounced than shown to help “fragment” the massing, perhaps expressing the north cross-bar as a distinct massing from the block to the south.



3) Maintain the masonry base along Avalon and employ a balanced mix of metal and cement-board cladding above that.

#### **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.**