



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013740

Address: 2013 Third Avenue

Applicant: Kathryn Smith of SMR Architects

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, December 04, 2012

Board Members Present: Mathew Albores  
Gabe Grant  
Pragnesh Parikh  
Gundula Proksch  
Brian Scott

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Downtown Mixed Commercial with an allowable range of 240' to 400' height limits depending upon uses. (DMC 240/290-400). The site lies within the Belltown Urban Center Village, along a principal transit and Class I pedestrian street.



DMC 240/290-400 immediately surroundings the subject site. Northwest of Lenora St., zoning changes to Downtown Mixed Residential with height allowances for a range of 65' to 125' depending upon the use and location. To the southwest, the zoning transitions to Pike Place Market Mixed (PMM 85) west of 1<sup>st</sup> Ave and Downtown Residential Commercial with a range of height limits from 85' to 150' southeast of Stewart St.

Nearby Zones:

Lot Area: 6,487 square feet.

Current Development: The site lies mid-block on the west side of Third Ave between Virginia St to the south and Lenora St. to the north. An alley lies adjacent at the rear of the site. A Metro rapid ride bus stop sits on the block front. The site's five foot declension occurs from east to west.

Access: Alley

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: Buildings on the block include older one to two stories structures with commercial and office uses. Recent developments nearby include the Lenora Apartments and the YWCA Opportunity Place, both seven-story structures. The Denny Hill Building is located adjacent to the site to the north. Within the nine block neighborhood, there are a few high-rises housing condominiums and offices.

ECAs: No mapped environmental critical area (ECA)

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes a seven-story structure containing 65 residential units over approximately 1,000 square feet of commercial space. Existing structures on the site would be demolished.

**DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The applicant presented three design schemes. Given the constrained site, the schemes each resemble a seven-story, rectangular block in mass. Common characteristics include the placement of commercial space at street level, residential amenity space behind the commercial area, and storage and utilities at the rear of the site facing the alley. No option inserts parking

into the program. In plan, Scheme A places two light wells mid-way back from the street separated by a hallway. The “I” shaped scheme in plan resembles apartments built the earlier part of the last century. At the base of these light wells the applicant proposes exterior common residential open space adjacent to the adjoining buildings. The majority of dwelling units would face either east or west with a few units looking into the two courtyards. Scheme B forms a central court at the second level wrapped by a corridor that accesses the units which for the most part face east or west. The courtyard, also serving as both a source of light and an amenity area would be enclosed on all vertical sides.

The third option, Scheme C, shifts the light well and open space to the southern portion of the building mass. Three units on each floor would look directly into it. All other units would face east or west. Accompanying the massing and programming studies, façade studies illustrated the organization of the bays based on horizontal datum lines from adjacent buildings and variations on vertical tripartite and four part systems.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately 26 members of the public affixed their names to the Early Design Review meeting sign-in sheet. Speakers raised the following issues:

### **Programming**

- Increase the size of the commercial space to provide “natural guardians” watching over the street. A larger commercial space would make the space more attractive to tenants.
- Consider opportunities for urban agriculture in the open spaces.

### **Massing/Building Organization**

- Don’t place the resident amenity on the ground floor. Locate it on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and increase its size.
- Use the central courtyard scheme.
- Keep the building off the alley.
- The elevated outdoor space is preferable. Modulation of the structure should be encouraged.

### **Streetscape Environment**

- People will camp out beneath the canopies. Eliminate the canopies.
- Design the building to discourage people from loitering in front of it.

### **Aesthetics**

- The proposed façade is pedestrian looking. Produce a building with flare. Make it interesting.

### **Other**

- There is not enough low-income housing. (stated by several speakers)
- There are too many social service providers in the neighborhood.

- Plymouth doesn't do enough about keeping people from hanging out in front of its buildings.

DPD received numerous letters (and a book of photos documenting street life on Third Ave) that mostly focused on the clustering of social service providers and low income housing on Third Ave and the immediate vicinity. Some letters also provided insights into the building program and design. Recommendations included the following:

- The outdoor amenity area for Scheme C would not receive any light if the property owner to the south develops a taller building.
- The outdoor area of Scheme C would potentially enable people to climb from the proposed building to the roof of the neighboring structure.
- The proposed commercial space should be larger meeting Councilmember Burgess's idea for "natural guardians".
- Recreational space should not be located on the first floor.
- Provide parking.
- The Design Review Board should recommend relocating the bus stop.
- Locate the door to the residential entry as far from the bus stop as possible as there is no place to walk between the building and the bus stop.

## 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 Downtown Development 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 & Massing

#### *Responding to the Larger Context*

- A-1 Respond to the Physical Environment. Develop an architectural concept and compose the building's massing in response to geographic conditions and patterns of urban form found beyond the immediate context of the building site.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

- A. Develop the architectural concept and arrange the building mass to enhance views. This includes views of the water and mountains, and noteworthy structures such as the Space Needle;
- B. The architecture and building mass should respond to sites having nonstandard shapes. There are several changes in the street grid alignment in Belltown, resulting in triangular sites and chamfered corners. Examples of this include: 1st, Western and Elliott between Battery and Lenora, and along Denny;
- C. The topography of the neighborhood lends to its unique character. Design buildings to take advantage of this condition as an opportunity, rather than a constraint. Along the streets, single entry, blank facades are discouraged. Consider providing multiple entries and windows at street level on sloping streets.

In seeking to understand the urban environment, the applicant should respond to an urban form beyond that of merely the immediate context.

<b>B. Architectural Expression</b>
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*Relating to the Neighborhood Context*

- B-1 Respond to the Neighborhood Context – Develop an architectural concept and compose the major building elements to reinforce desirable urban features existing in the surrounding neighborhood.

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

Belltown has a rich architectural context, with a wide variety of architectural styles represented within the neighborhood. Contemporary methods of building can potentially create visual conflicts with older buildings due to differences in scale, massing, and degrees of articulation. Sometimes new buildings add exteriors that mimic past architectural styles, creating a sense of unauthentic design. These guidelines emphasize the concept of historical continuity, or in other words, the relationship of structures over time. This relationship encourages diversity within a coherent whole, reinforcing the unique and evolving character of Belltown.

- B-3 Reinforce the Positive Urban Form & Architectural Attributes of the Immediate Area. Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

The principal objective of this guideline is to promote scale and character compatibility through reinforcement of the desirable patterns of massing and facade composition

found in the surrounding area. Pay particular attention to designated landmarks and other noteworthy buildings.

- A. Respond to the regulating lines and rhythms of adjacent buildings that also support a street-level environment; regulating lines and rhythms include vertical and horizontal patterns as expressed by cornice lines, belt lines, doors, windows, structural bays and modulation.
- B. Use regulating lines to promote contextual harmony, solidify the relationship between new and old buildings, and lead the eye down the street.
- C. Pay attention to excellent fenestration patterns and detailing in the vicinity. The use of recessed windows that create shadow lines, and suggest solidity, is encouraged.

See guidance for C-2.

- B-4 Design a Well-Proportioned & Unified Building.** Compose the massing and organize the publicly accessible interior and exterior spaces to create a well-proportioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole.

## **C. The Streetscape: *Creating the Pedestrian Environment***

- C-1 Promote Pedestrian Interaction.** Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should be open to the general public and appear safe and welcoming.

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

- A. reinforce existing retail concentrations;
  - B. vary in size, width, and depth of commercial spaces, accommodating for smaller businesses, where feasible;
  - C. incorporate the following elements in the adjacent public realm and in open spaces around the building: unique hardscape treatments, pedestrian-scale sidewalk lighting, accent paving (especially at corners, entries and passageways), creative landscape treatments (planting, planters, trellises, arbors), seating, gathering spaces, water features, inclusion of art elements
- C-2 Design Facades of Many Scales.** Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and materials compositions that refer to the scale of human activities contained within. Building facades should be composed of elements scaled to promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation.

Mimicking an historic building with inexpensive materials won't necessarily work well. The Board encourages a solution that emphasizes scale and detail inclusive of the entire

Third Ave. façade. The Board noted the lack of upper level detailing at the Langdon & Anne Simmons Senior Apartments.

The size of the fenestration, as shown on the various elevation studies, appeared inadequate for the units. The building should provide residents with generous amounts of natural light.

**C-3 Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades. Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.**

Attention to architectural details that act as an intermediary between the structure's multiple scales will provide a means of meeting this guideline as well as C-2.

**C-4 Reinforce Building Entries. To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce the building's entry.**

**C-5 Encourage Overhead Weather Protection. Encourage project applicants to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major pedestrian routes.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

**Overhead weather protection should be designed with consideration given to:**

- A. the overall architectural concept of the building (as described in Guideline B-4);**
- B. uses occurring within the building (such as entries and retail spaces) or in the adjacent streetscape environment (such as bus stops and intersections);**
- C. minimizing gaps in coverage;**
- D. a drainage strategy that keeps rain water off the street-level facade and sidewalk;**
- E. continuity with weather protection provided on nearby buildings;**
- F. relationship to architectural features and elements on adjacent development, especially if abutting a building of historic or noteworthy character;**
- G. the scale of the space defined by the height and depth of the weather protection;**
- H. use of translucent or transparent covering material to maintain a pleasant sidewalk environment with plenty of natural light; and**
- I. when opaque material is used, the illumination of light-colored undersides to increase security after dark.**

For this project alone, design the overhead weather protection in a manner that discourages loitering beneath the canopy. See guidance for D-6.

**C-6 Develop the Alley Façade. To increase pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest, develop portions of the alley façade in response to the unique conditions of the site or project.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance: Considerations**

**Spaces for service and utilities:**

- A. Services and utilities, while essential to urban development, should be screened or otherwise hidden from the view of the pedestrian.
- B. Exterior trash receptacles should be screened on three sides, with a gate on the fourth side that also screens the receptacles from view. Provide a niche to recess the receptacle.
- C. Screen loading docks and truck parking from public view using building massing, architectural elements and/or landscaping.
- D. Ensure that all utility equipment is located, sized, and designed to be as inconspicuous as possible. Consider ways to reduce the noise impacts of HVAC equipment on the alley environment.

**Pedestrian environment:**

- E. Pedestrian circulation is an integral part of the site layout. Where possible and feasible, provide elements, such as landscaping and special paving, that help define a pedestrian-friendly environment in the alley.
- F. Create a comfortably scaled and thoughtfully detailed urban environment in the alley through the use of well-designed architectural forms and details, particularly at street level.

**Architectural concept:**

- G. In designing a well-proportioned and unified building, the alley façade should not be ignored. An alley façade should be treated with form, scale and materials similar to rest of the building to create a coherent architectural concept.

Select materials for the alley façade to be easily cleaned of graffiti.

**D. Public Amenities. *Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space***

- D-1 **Provide Inviting & Usable Open Space.** Design public open spaces to promote a visually pleasing, safe, and active environment for workers, residents, and visitors. Views and solar access from the principal area of the open space should be especially emphasized.

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

As a dense, urban neighborhood, Belltown views its streets as its front porches, and its parks and private plazas and spaces as its yards and gardens. The design and location of urban open spaces on a site or adjoining sidewalk is an important determinant in a successful environment, and the type and character of the open space should be influenced by the building's uses.

**Residential open space:** Residential buildings should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.



The Board emphasized its expectation to have the resident amenity area adjoin the upper level open space. This will provide a pleasant environment (the concept plans illustrated an amenity area without natural light) for the residents. Certain tenant services (e.g. laundry) may remain on the lower level. A close proximity of these spaces with one another will improve the building's purpose.

**D-3 Provide Elements that Define the Place. Provide special elements on the facades, within public open spaces, or on the sidewalk to create a distinct, attractive, and memorable "sense of place" associated with the building.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:**

Belltown is eclectic, diverse, eccentric and whimsical. New developments should incorporate elements on building facades, within open space, or on the sidewalk that refer to the neighborhood's rich art and history to reinforce a sense of place in Belltown.

- **Art and Heritage:** Art and History are vital to reinforcing a sense of place.
- **Green Streets:** Green Streets are street rights-of-way that are enhanced for pedestrian circulation and activity with a variety of pedestrian-oriented features, such as sidewalk widening, landscaping, artwork, and traffic calming. Interesting street level uses and pedestrian amenities enliven the Green Street and lend special identity to the surrounding area.
- **Street Hierarchy:** The function and character of Belltown's streetscapes are defined street by street. In defining the streetscape for various streets, the hierarchy of streets is determined by street function, adjacent land uses, and the nature of existing streetscape improvements.

Due to site constraints much of the building's identity relies on the appearance of the Third Ave façade. A design, rich with detailing at all levels, will communicate a sense of place. How the treatment of the façade, both its organization and its detailing, relates to its surroundings and its own internal needs will help establish its success.

**D-4 Provide Appropriate Signage. Design signage appropriate for the scale and character of the project and immediate neighborhood. All signs should be oriented to pedestrians and/or persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance: Considerations**

If the project is large, consider designing a comprehensive building and tenant signage system using one of the following or similar methods:

- A. Use signs on an individual storefront's awning, overhang, shop entrance, or building facade to add interest and give a human dimension to street-level building facades; and
- B. Show creativity and individual expression in the design of signs.

- C. Use signs to help distinguish the ground level of a building from the upper levels of a building; and
- D. Establish a rhythm of elements along the street-level facade; for instance, the regular cadence of signs with storefronts enhances the pedestrian experience.

The use of signage ought to eliminate the reliance on staggered canopy heights to signify the residential and commercial entries.

- D-5 Provide Adequate Lighting. To promote a sense of security for people downtown during nighttime hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building facade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.**

**Belltown-specific supplemental guidance: Considerations**

Consider employing one or more of the following lighting strategies as appropriate.

- A. Illuminate distinctive features of the building, including entries, signage, canopies, and areas of architectural detail and interest.
- B. Install lighting in display windows that spills onto and illuminates the sidewalk.
- C. Orient outside lighting to minimize glare within the public right-of-way.

- D-6 Design for Personal Safety & Security. Design the building and site to enhance the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.**

The architect’s solutions must respond to the neighbors’ concerns about safety and their concerns about the propensity of people loitering in front of the buildings. Design the canopy and the alcoves to discourage people from camping out beneath and within them respectively. Raise the canopies’ height and avoid staggering them.

**E. Vehicular Access & Parking**

**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 did not request departures for Schemes B and C. Scheme A would have required a departure from the size of the common recreation area.

## **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.

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