



## FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013740

Address: 2013 Third Avenue

Applicant: Kathryn Smith of SMR Architects

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, July 02, 2013

Board Members Present: Mathew Albores  
Gabe Grant  
Peter Krech (substitute)

Board Members Absent: Murphy McCullough  
Pragnesh Parikh  
Gundula Proksch

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, a few high-rise housing condominiums and offices add a larger scale to the area.

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.

By the Recommendation meeting, the applicant introduced a roof deck, a skylight for the common amenity area and a façade composition, including materials, varying from the traditional pier and spandrel arrangement found in the majority of older Belltown buildings.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately 16 members of the public affixed their names to the Recommendation meeting sign-in sheet. Speakers raised the following issues:

- The skylight in the amenity room and the roof top deck are good solutions to the Board’s earlier guidance to join the indoor and outdoor amenity areas.
- Having an office at the storefront is beneficial to public safety. The attendant can monitor the street activity.
- The project ought to have an engaging, active retail space in front part of the building. The design as shown is questionable. The gas meter creates a dead space. A larger retail space is preferred to an office.
- The alternative floor plan with the retail and not the office along the sidewalk is preferred. Install windows that open. This would better position the space for the market. Think about better integrating the retail/restaurant space with the mission of the building.
- The horizontal bands indicating the floor levels allude to the structure’s five over two construction. Removal of the bands would make a less civic scaled building.
- Design and placement of the access door to the gas meter is confusing. It looks like another entry.
- the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor open space produces security issues by providing access to the neighbors property.
- Having an office at the front of the building allows an employee of the housing agency to monitor activity on the sidewalk.
- The entry point is critical.

- The view from the office should include the vestibule.
- The roof top deck is a benefit to the residents.

## 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.**

Much of the Board deliberation focused on the promise of the retail area. Is it preferable to have a larger retail space complying with the land use code’s requirement for 75 percent of the street frontage at street-level or to have a building manager’s office at the storefront to monitor activity at the sidewalk? After listening to public comment, the Board agreed that in this instance the office was preferable. Along with recommending the departure request for use at the street level, the Board outlined several design changes to the building base (see guidance for C-2).

## **B. Architectural Expression**

### *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.**
- 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.**

Design the office space located at the street front, the gas meter screen, and the residential entry as a unified element. See specific recommendations for guideline C-4.

See discussion of the champagne colored horizontal bands in the guidance for C-2. The bands overly emphasize the building's horizontal character.

## **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.**

The horizontal banding delineating the floor levels clutters the façade and emphasizes the structure's squatness. The Board recommended removal of the banding on all walls to allow simpler elevations with the east and west elevations possessing two colors.

The type of windows ought to vary. Where two single windows are ganged together, replace the glazing with a single large operable window. Provide as much ventilation as possible. The Board noted its preference for the fenestration's seemingly random orientation.

Drawing upon public comment about the frequency of graffiti in the neighborhood, the Board recommended using a smooth faced CMU or brick shown on p. 41 of the Recommendation booklet rather than the rougher split-face surface. The smoother material makes it easier to clean.

The design of the screening protecting the gas meter competes with the residential entry and has an institutional appearance. The architect must work with the planner to create a more artistic and engaging metal screen.

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

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

The recessed residential entry inadvertently appears less significant than the metal screen / door for the gas meter and the entry to the retail. The Board recommended shifting the door to the retail area to the south, wrapping the metal screen for the gas meter into the residential entry vestibule, and bringing the glazing of the storefront (in front of the office) system around the column and into the vestibule as well. Eliminate the painted concrete portions of the front façade in favor of glazing or concrete masonry unit (CMU) and speak to the gas provider about allowing a more vertical meter. These actions should reduce the visual clutter of the storefront design and produce a larger area representing the residential entry and its associated office.

**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.**

The Board expressed its satisfaction with the design of the canopy (especially the wood soffit) and recommended inclusion of lighting in its design.

**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.

**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 applicant's revision of the plans creating a large skylight in the first floor amenity room assuaged the Board's earlier concerns about the lack of natural light into this important space. The addition of a roof top deck and a second floor open space with greater privacy for the apartments facing the deck also satisfied the Board. The distinctive skylight with its tapering soffit (p. 27 of the Recommendation packet) must remain a part of the design.

**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.

**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.

No discussion of the signage concept occurred.

- 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.

The Board prefers that the overhead weather protection contain lighting. It isn't necessary to have lighting underneath the canopy and on the piers of the building.

- 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 applicant adequately addressed earlier safety concerns as well as those brought up during the meeting's public comment portion. See recommended lighting for the canopy for guidance C-5.

**Recommendations:** The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the July 2, 2013 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings available at the July 2, 2013 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and the requested development standard departures from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below). The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

- 1) Eliminate the horizontal banding delineating the floor levels on all elevations. This allows for simpler elevations with just two colors on the east and west facades. (C-2)
- 2) Vary the window types. Where two single windows are ganged together, replace the glazing with a single large operable window. Provide as much ventilation as possible (C-2)
- 3) Use a smooth faced CMU or brick shown on p. 41 of the Recommendation booklet rather than the rougher split-face to ensure an easier surface to clean. (C-2)

- 4) Design the screen and door protecting the gas meter with greater artistic qualities. The architect must work with the planner to produce a more engaging design. (C-2)
- 5) Redesign the northern one-third of the east, street-level façade to provide a more pedestrian oriented appearance. Shift the door to the retail area to the south, wrap the metal screen for the gas meter into the residential entry vestibule, and bring the glazing of the storefront (in front of the office) system around the column and into the vestibule as well. Eliminate the painted concrete portions of the front façade in favor of glazing or concrete masonry unit (CMU). Try to reduce the presence of the gas meter at street-level. These actions should reduce the visual clutter of the storefront design and produce a larger area representing the residential entry and the adjoining office. (C-4)
- 6) Include lighting in the front canopy. (C-5, D-5, D-6)
- 7) Ensure that the amenity room skylight with its tapering soffit ( as depicted on p. 27 of the Recommendation packet) remains a part of the design. (D-1)

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board’s recommendation on the requested departure(s) are 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).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMEND- ATION
1. Street –Level Use. SMC 23.49.009	A minimum of 75% of the street frontage at street-level must be occupied by an approved use (general sales and services).	62% street frontage for general sales and service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A portion of the street frontage is for human services (offices)</li> <li>▪ The gas meter requirements consume 14% of the street frontage. .</li> </ul>	Recommended Approval