



# City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3014327

Address: 607 Malden Avenue East

Applicant: Bradley Khouri, b9 architects for Graham Black

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, February 13, 2013

Board Members Present: Dawn Bushnaq  
 Ric Cochran  
 Lisa Picard  
 Wolf Saar - Chair  
 Chip Wall

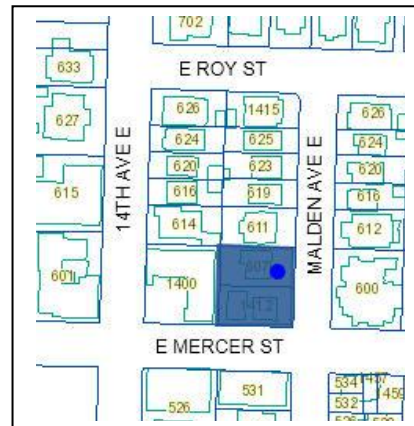
DPD Staff Present: Beth Hartwick, Senior Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Lowrise 3 (LR3) in the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village

Nearby Zones: North: Lowrise 2 and Single Family 5000.  
 South: Lowrise 3 and Neighborhood Commercial 2P-40.  
 East: Lowrise 3, Neighborhood Commercial 2P-40 and Single Family 5000.  
 West: Lowrise 3.

Lot Area: 10,375 square feet



**Current Development:** The proposed development site will combine two parcels. The site abutting E Mercer St has two single family residences built in 1908. The lot with street frontage along Malden Ave E is developed with a stately single-family residence built in 1906.

**Access:** The site is a corner lot with street frontage along Malden Ave E and E Mercer Strret.31st Ave S and S. Day St.

**Surrounding Development:** The subject lot is located in a northeast corner of a large area of Lowrise, and Neighborhood Commercial zoning. To the north and east, single family zoned blocks are developed with some of Seattle’s oldest housing stock from the early 1900’s. Directly to the north is a brick four unit apartment built in 1907. Across Malden Ave E is a wood clad 1988 apartment structure and a 1907 brick apartment building. Directly to the west is a three story brick apartment built in 1957. Across E Mercer Street to the south is a three-story brick apartment built in 1928, and southeast of the site is a 2003 townhouse development.

**ECAs:** None

**Neighborhood Character:** The neighborhood is one of Seattle’s oldest, with stately homes and brick apartment buildings interspersed with newer development. Old trees and landscaping provide a strong vegetation presence. A few blocks to the north is Volunteer Park. One block to the east is 15th Ave E which is an active commercial street.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is for 11 or 12 townhouse type units, and 8 to 11 parking spaces. The development will combine two parcels. The preferred option preserves and moves an existing single family residence and retains a ginkgo tree.

As this proposal has alternatives with both townhouse and rowhouses structures. The following clarification is needed to understand the difference between the residential types. Internally, rowhouses and townhouses are the same type of residential units. The Seattle Land Use Code, however differentiates where and how they are allowed to be located on a lot. Townhouses have side setback requirements; rowhouses do not (unless required by building code). Townhouses are allowed to be developed along with single family or apartment structures on the same lot. Rowhouses may not. There are also differences on where parking is allowed to be located.

**DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Three alternative design schemes were presented. During the presentation, the applicant noted that the site is relatively flat and located about six feet above the sidewalk. There is a mature Ginkgo tree that they would like to retain. They would like to work with SDOT and suggest that the existing trees in the right of way be removed and replaced with different trees, and to allow the proposed stoops to protrude into the right-of-way.

**Alternative 1** consists of 12 units in three townhouse structures. Two triplexes are located on the northern half of the site and a six-unit townhouse structure is located in the southern half of the site facing E Mercer St. All the townhouses are three stories high and have roof deck and private ground level amenity areas. Four curb cuts lead to partially underground garages for eight of the units. All but three of the townhouses will have street facing entries, which are raised above the right-of way and accessed by stairs. The three existing houses and the ginkgo tree would be removed.

Three departures are requested as part of this alternative. Three curb cuts are allowed by code, the fourth one needs a departure. The townhouses along E Mercer Street are requesting a departure from the required side setbacks along Malden Ave E and the west property line.



**Alternative 2** is the code compliant scheme. The development proposed is for 11 rowhouses in two structures. Seven rowhouses will face E Mercer Street and six will have their frontage off of Malden Ave. E. The rowhouses are all three-stories high, some have roof decks, and all have private amenity areas in the front setback. Surface parking for nine vehicles is provided in back of the rowhouses, accessed by a driveway along the west property line that passes underneath one of the units. The three existing houses would be removed.



**Alternative 3** is the applicants preferred scheme. The existing house facing Malden Ave E will be preserved and moved east towards the street approximately 18'. Behind the residence, three townhouse units are proposed. Seven townhouse units will face E Mercer Street. The townhouse structures will be three stories; some of the units will have roof decks. Street facing units will have stoops down to the street. The ginkgo tree would be preserved and located in a common amenity area. Eleven parking spaces will be provided in a below grade parking structure accessed off of E Mercer Street.

Multiple departures are being requested along with this alternative; for the front setback along Malden Ave E, the rear setback at the west property line, the side setback along E Mercer St, building separations in two locations and from façade length setbacks along the north property line. See the Development Standards Departure section later in the report.



## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately 25 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Supported saving the ginkgo tree. The tree was planted by the owner of the house and it was his wish that the tree remains for its life. Encouraged an arborist report to be prepared to determine what will be needed to protect the tree during construction.
- Concerned with the density of the proposed project. This site is in a transition zone.
- Concerned with the height, bulk and scale of the proposed project.
- Objected to the applicant using the existing apartment building to the south as an example as it is unique to the neighborhood.
- Would like to see a courtyard to provide more light and air and open space.
- Suggested that the tree to the north of the site be protected during construction.
- Stated that the existing trees in the right-of-way should remain and that SDOT should be asked to prune the trees.
- Stated that a recent study has shown people don't use stoops anymore.
- Stated that the project is great but this is the wrong location for it.
- Concerned about the loss of green. The neighborhood gets greener as you move north towards Volunteer Park.
- Concerned that the development will cause loss of views, light and air to the apartment building to the west.
- Would like to see the project have better pedestrian orientation and scale.
- Stated that they liked rowhouses but they are not appropriate in this neighborhood.
- Concerned that the proposed courtyard will be an unpleasant space to be in.
- Stated that the project needs to preserve sunshine on the sidewalks.
- Concerned the project will cast shade on the site to the north and is not thoughtful of neighboring properties.
- Concerned that the project is too close to its lot lines.
- Stated that the height of the proposed buildings is not being shown accurately.

## **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-1 Responding to Site Characteristics. The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board recommended that the ginkgo tree be preserved.

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting the Board indicated they want the Malden Ave. E house should be preserved.

The Board noted that it was not clear, what in the neighborhood was driving the proposed design. The Board stated that the development should be informed by the pattern of the current neighborhood. They requested that the applicant should study and provide documentation showing the size and setbacks of development around the site.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting the Board identified this guideline as highest priority but made no specific comments.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board identified this guideline as highest priority and encouraged the corner of Mercer and Malden be developed to promote social interaction and neighborliness.

**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 stated concerns with the location of the proposed structures along the north and west lot line. The relationship of proposed structures should better respect the existing structures on the abutting properties.

The Board indicated they were not inclined to support the façade length/setback departure along the north property line. The Board had concerns about the setback departure along the west lot line.

**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 indicated this was of highest priority.

**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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that rowhouses, which have no side setbacks or structures behind them, provide open space at the rear of the site (see Alternative 2). The preferred Alternative 3 is asking for setback departures so that the street facing townhouse structures are sited “like” rowhouses, but they will have development behind them. The Board questioned where the open space in this alternative is being provided.



**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 indicated they would like to see a single point of access to parking.

**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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board encouraged bringing the structure closer to the street along Malden Ave E and perhaps E Mercer St. to encourage more neighborhood interaction. They indicated they would prefer multiple windows at this 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.**

**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 indicated they would like the proposal to scale down the density on the site and lower the height of the corner units. See Guideline A-7.

They suggested the applicant work to make the design have more human scale and a less monolithic appearance.

## 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 questioned what scale and elements of the surrounding neighborhood were being used in the proposed development. The Board stated they would like the development be more informed by the pattern of the current neighborhood. See Guideline A-2.

The Board supported the 'modern' look of the design. They gave strong support for retaining the Malden Ave E residence.

- 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:**

- 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 noted this guideline as highest priority and wants it to inform the design of the 'new' part of the development. The design should look less monolithic and provide more human scale. They encouraged the use of brick.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting the Board indicated this guideline as highest priority and encouraged the architectural elements of the street facing facades work to achieve this guideline. See Guideline C-2.

- 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.

- 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 applicant stated that the new structures will be faced with brick. The Board encouraged the use of brick.

## **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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated they want to see a lighting plan particularly at the entries and in the open space.

- D-2 Blank Walls.** Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated that the blank wall along the west lot line is a key concern. The applicant stated that the wall would be animated with windows. See Guideline A-5.

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board strongly recommended that any retaining walls along Malden Ave. E. should be broken into segments and detailed.

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board did not talk about this guideline. The applicant should show how the service areas will work at The Recommendation Meeting.

## **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 indicated this guideline was of highest priority. The lushness and green of the neighborhood should be reinforced by the proposed landscaping.

- 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 stated that the amount of landscaping provided should approach the amount of “green” currently on the site. A detailed landscaping plan should be presented at the Recommendation Meeting.

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated that they strongly supported the preservation of the ginkgo tree.

## 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 seven departures were requested for the preferred option Alternative 3:

- 1. Front Setbacks (SMC 23.45.518 A):** The Code requires for townhouse, a 7' average and 5' minimum front setback. The applicant proposes a 4'- 11" average and 2'-5" minimum for the front setback of unit 7 facing Malden Ave. E.

The Board indicated that they are inclined to allow the departure of the east setback to bring the structure closer to the street corner. This will better allow a relationship with the street and encourage neighborhood interaction. (Guidelines A-4, A-10)

- 2. Side Setback (SMC 23.45.518 A):** The Code requires for townhouses, with a facade greater than 40' in length, a 7' average and 5' minimum side setback. The applicant proposes a 5' side setback for the townhouses facing E Mercer St.

The Board indicated they may be inclined to allow this departure. They will first need to review the requested analysis of the surrounding properties. (Guideline A-2)

- 3. Rear Setback (SMC 23.45.518 A):** The Code requires for townhouse, a 7' average and 5' minimum rear setback. The applicant proposes a 6'- 8" rear setback for the triplex along the west lot line.

The Board indicated that they are concerned about this departure because of the density of the development and the relationship to the property to the west. (Guidelines A-5, B-1)

- 4. Rear Setback (SMC 23.45.518 A):** The Code requires for townhouse, a 7' average and 5' minimum rear setback. The applicant proposes no rear setback for Unit 1 along the west lot line.

The Board indicated that they are concerned about this departure because of the density of the development and the relationship to the property to the west. (Guidelines A-5, B-1, D-2)

- 5. Separations between structures (SMC 23.45.518 F.1):** The Code requires in LR zones the minimum required separation between principal structures at any two points on different interior facades to be 10 feet. The applicant proposes a 6' separation between a portion of townhouse unit 1 and the triplex unit 8.

The Board did not comment on this requested departure but indicated they are concerned about the density of the proposed development. (Guidelines A-7, B-1)

- 6. Separations between structures (SMC 23.45.518 F.1):** The Code requires in LR zones the minimum required separation between principal structures at any two points on different interior facades to be 10 feet. The applicant proposes a 4'-7" separation between a portion of townhouse unit 9 and the single family residence.

The Board did not comment on this requested departure but indicated they are concerned about the density of the proposed development. (Guidelines A-7, B-1)

- 7. Façade Length Limits (SMC 23.45.527.B):** The Code requires that the maximum combined length of all portions of facades within 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. As the north side lot line is 99' in length, 64'-4" is allowed. The applicant proposes a length of 68'-9" or 69% for the length of townhouse unit 10 and the single family residence.

The Board indicated that they are not inclined to support this departure due to the density of the development and relationship to the property to the north. (Guidelines A-5, B-1)

## **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 stated that the applicant should move forward with the preferred option Alternative 3. As well as meeting the guidelines above as specified, the design should be reworked to provide for solar access, privacy and landscaping. The Board noted that rowhouses, which have no side setbacks or structures behind them, provide open space at the rear of the site. To allow the townhouse structures to be sited like rowhouses, more open space needs to be provided.

1. The streetscape should be informed by the pattern of the neighborhood. At the Recommendation Meeting the applicant shall provide an analysis of the surrounding neighborhood properties. The analysis should provide the dimensions and square footage of structures and the setback dimensions of structures from their property lines.
2. The Ginkgo tree needs to be preserved.
3. Parking needs to have a single point of access.
4. The Malden Ave E house should be preserved.
5. The Board likes that the look of the structures is "modern". They would like the project to appear less monolithic and provide more human scale elements.
6. The Mercer and Malden facades should be brick.
7. At the Recommendation meeting provide a lighting plan.
8. At the Recommendation Meeting provide a detailed landscape plan.