

Current Development: The subject site is located on the southwest corner of E John Street and 18th Avenue. The site consists of one existing parcel, containing a multifamily structure. The subject lot is located approximately 3-5 feet above E John Street and 5-6 feet above 18th Avenue E. Existing rockeries separate the flat lot from the existing improved rights-of-way.

Access: Vehicular access is available from an improved 16 foot alley along the west property line, E John Street and 18th Avenue.

Surrounding Development: The neighborhood is characterized by small single family homes, low- and mid-rise apartment and condominium buildings, most of which date from the early to mid-twentieth century. Older buildings are typically 3-4 story brick structures, while later buildings tend to be wood frame or concrete structures, ranging from 3-5 stories. Recent developments are typically wood frame buildings, 4-6 stories in height. Most of these buildings occupy one or two parcels, creating a fairly consistent scale of development throughout the neighborhood. Many of the existing buildings are set back from the street and from adjacent property lines, while others, particularly larger buildings, are built out to their property lines. Brick is the most common cladding material, particularly in older buildings, while later buildings are clad in a variety of materials including wood, brick, stone and concrete masonry.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: The area is well served by transit and is developed with mostly higher density multi-family residential structures.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a four-story structure containing 50 residential units. Parking for 16 vehicles, and bicycle storage to be provided within the structure below grade. Existing structure to be demolished.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: March 27, 2013
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DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include the underground parking access directly from the alley. Each option includes a building massing forming a “U” around a central courtyard.

The first scheme (Option A) showed the preferred option. The four story building is designed with the central courtyard located facing the west alley property line. The building massing is located adjacent to E John Street, 18th Avenue E and the south property line. The primary building entry is located on the 18th Avenue façade near the center of the building. The primary entry is located approximately 6 feet above adjacent sidewalk grade and is accessed by a ramp and stair within the street side setback. The vehicles access is provided from the alley to an underground parking garage accessed from the driveway adjacent to the south property line. The building maintains a varied setback along the south ranging from 15 feet near 18th Avenue to 24 feet at the driveway. Multiple subterranean units are proposed accessed from E John Street by a stair well. Decks are proposed along the south façade and rooftop amenity space is provided on top of the fourth floor. A departure is required for bay windows within each street setback to allow a bay window between 12' and 16' feet wide, rather than the code permitted 8 feet.

The second scheme (Option B) showed a four story building designed with the central courtyard located facing E John Street and the north property line. The building massing is located adjacent to the west, south and east property lines. The primary building entry is located on E John Street and is access directly from street grade. The courtyard is located above adjacent street grade by 5.5 feet. The vehicles access is provided from the alley to an underground parking garage accessed from the driveway adjacent to the south property line. The building maintains a varied setback along the south ranging from 4.5 feet near 18th Avenue to 24 feet at the driveway. Multiple units are located with direct street access to 18th Avenue E. The units are partially below adjacent street grade and will be accessed by a concrete ramp parallel to the sidewalk adjacent to the street wall. Decks are proposed along the south façade and roof amenity space on top of fourth floor.

The third scheme (Option C) showed four story building is designed with the central courtyard located facing 18th Avenue and the east property line. The building massing is located adjacent to the west, south and north property lines. The primary building entry is located within the courtyard access from 18th Avenue. The courtyard is located 6 feet above adjacent street grade and is accessed from a stair and ramp provided from sidewalk parallel to the street and adjacent to the building wall. The vehicles access is provided from the alley to an underground parking garage accessed from the driveway adjacent to the south property line. The building maintains a 25 foot setback to the south property line. Multiple subterranean units will be located with direct street access to E John Street. Decks are proposed along the south façade and roof amenity space on top of fourth floor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following comments were offered at the Early Design Guidance meeting and one comment letter was submitted after the meeting:

- Discouraged use of decks on south facing façade: because decks will adversely impact privacy for the neighbor directly south.

- Felt the building scale and massing is overwhelming for the site.
- Encouraged a more prominent, welcoming primary entry along 18th Avenue.
- Would like to see more housing provided for families rather than just workforce housing.
- Concerned too many small units provided within the proposed building, would like to see a shorter building with larger units and more parking.
- Encouraged architectural concept and material application to reinforce the historic building context and neighborhood charm.
- Felt the deep stair wells accessing units on E John Street did not relate to existing neighborhood context and created larger bulk.
- Encouraged the building window and balconies be designed to provide additional privacy for adjacent residential structures facing the proposed building. Encouraged light and air but minimize direct site lines.
- Concerned the proposed building will not meet zoning code once the Master Use Permit is submitted. Specifically feel that the setback and FAR are not per code standards.
- Preferred courtyard facing the alley.
- Would like to see larger planters rather than a few smaller planters to maximize dense landscaping.
- Noted large planting strip on 18th Avenue without overhead power lines will allow larger street trees within the right-of-way.
- Appreciated outreach to the neighborhood.
- Concerned about solar access to the buildings across the street. Encouraged use of upper level setbacks to provide more light to the adjacent sidewalk.
- Felt the proposed Tudor architectural concept works with smaller 2-story structures but does not translate to the proposed 4-story building. Would prefer a brick structure.
- Concerned about rooftop HVAC equipment and noise impacts to adjacent structures.
- Felt the provided parking is insufficient given the lack of on street parking in the neighborhood. Noted tenants of the existing building would rent parking if available.
- Appreciated the secure bike parking provided within the garage space.
- Felt proposed building design is too modern and does not relate to existing neighborhood character.
- Concerned about light spillage onto adjacent residential buildings.

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.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE:

1. Massing and Building Location.

The Board felt the preferred Massing Option A should move forward to MUP submittal with the following guidance:

- a) The Board agreed Massing Option A provided the better design solution by locating the courtyard facing west allowing additional afternoon sunlight to the space while also minimizing the bulk of structure along the alley and units facing south (A-7, B-1).
 - b) The preferred alternative was revised prior to the Early Design Guidance Meeting to provide 15 foot south side setback between the proposed structure and the south property line. Upper level usable decks were removed and replaced by Juliet balconies. The Board preferred the revision to mitigate impacts on privacy and bulk to the adjacent structure. The revised massing proposal should be maintained as the design progresses (A-5, B-1).
2. **Further Treatment of Setbacks along E John Street.** A number of subterranean units are proposed facing and with direct access to E John Street. Setbacks provided at the perimeter of the site should be developed to provide safe semi-private access.
- a) The Board was concerned about the viability of units below grade. The proposed subterranean entrances along E John Street must be developed with sufficient width to provide viable, safe, defensible space with secure entry points for residents. Entrances must incorporate security measure to ensure personal security and also provide welcoming spaces for users (A-3, A-6, D-7).
 - b) The Board noted that provided stairwells must have lighting at all times of day. During daylight hours the stairwells must be designed to allow natural light. At night the space must include low level lighting to avoid dark hiding spaces (D-7).
 - c) The Board noted the extensive street landscaping present on site and within the existing neighborhood context. The Board encouraged the applicant to utilize the setback space on site and within the right-of-way to provide a dense landscaping area and maintain landscaping “lushness” consistent with the adjacent streetscape (E-1).
 - d) At the next meeting, the Board wished to see additional details for the treatment of the subterranean access and sidewalk experience. The Board requested imagery and drawings from the sidewalk and stair well locations. The Board encouraged the applicant to research successful case studies and examples of similar conditions to inform the design including key architectural and landscaping features that create successful spaces (A-2, A-3, A-6, D-7).
 - e) The Board felt the street setback should include a combination of landscaping, planters, fencing, lighting and pathways that enhance the pedestrian environment. The Board suggested the applicant research use of simplified planters to maximize the landscaping space provided (A-2, A-3, A-6, D-7).

3. Site Analysis and Architectural Context. New buildings for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character of neighboring buildings.

- a) The Board would like to see the preferred massing A option evolve to communicate a clear design parti. The Board noted the design parti should be reflective of existing architectural context (C-1, C-2).
- b) The Board requested a thorough comprehensive site analysis of the existing neighborhood architectural context. The applicant will need to demonstrate the evolution of the architectural concept is responsive and complementary to the existing neighborhood context and material application. The Board suggests utilizing an analysis of existing good case studies in the neighborhood to inform the design progress (C-1, C-2).
- c) The Board noted that the majority of structures within the neighborhood of similar scale demonstrated a simpler architectural concept with durable brick and limited strategic use of ornamentation and architectural detailing. The Board was not convinced the proposed Tudor style, including additional ornamentation and gabled/mansard roof form were harmonious with the existing context. At the next meeting, the applicant will need to reconcile the design choices within the existing neighborhood context (C-1, C-2).
- d) The Board would prefer to use of a few high quality durable materials, rather than many materials (C-4).
- e) The Board would like more information showing how the design parti and material application will reduce the scale of the building (B-1, C-2 C-4).

5) Primary Entry on 18th Avenue. The primary building entry is located on the 18th Avenue façade near the center of the building. The primary entry is located approximately 6 feet above adjacent sidewalk grade and is accessed by a ramp and stair within the street side setback.

- a) The Board requested more detail on how the primary entry will be accessed from the street given the substantial grade change. The preferred massing alternative locates the entry stair is provided parallel to the building façade and sidewalk rather than as a direct approach. The Board requested the applicant review the placement of entry stairs to minimize the grade transition and provide a direct, gracious stair approach to the primary entry (A-3 and A-6)
- b) The Board felt the design of the primary entry on 18th Avenue should be integrated with the overall design parti while encouraging a strong point of entry consistent with existing neighborhood context (A-3, A-1, C-2).
- c) The Board encouraged the use of a landscaping transition between the building and the street property line. The Board noted that larger planters provide opportunities

for denser landscaping, but the project must also limit height of retaining walls to provide a human scale pedestrian experience along the street (D-3, E-1, E-2).

4. **Maximize Privacy.** The development should provide privacy for the adjacent structures.
 - a) The Board requested a privacy study in elevation views documenting existing windows whose privacy will be impacted by proposed development. The location of existing windows should inform the location of proposed windows. Balconies and windows should be positioned to minimize impacts to adjacent residents. Where windows or balconies are directly across or may have privacy impacts on adjacent structures consider locating windows to be high or include architectural treatment such as louvered rails to obstruct directly line of site into adjacent structures (A-5).

- 6) **Develop Material Palette.** The material palette should consist of durable materials that enhance the structure, add variety to the architectural form and knit building into the neighborhood context.
 - a) The Board was supportive of the standard brick material presented within the design package. The Board encouraged use of durable, quality materials respectful of existing materiality context of the established Capitol Hill neighborhood. The Board agreed the building's corner location plays a prominent role in the overall neighborhood context and should be designed and executed with attention to long term quality (A-10, C-4).
 - b) The Board felt the materiality design could progress to be become simpler utilizing minimized palette of simple durable materials (C-4)

- 7) **Circulation**
 - a) The Board felt that the bike entry approach from the corner must be resolved so that the bike path interior to the structure is sufficient width at each corner to provided sufficient space for bike movements.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: March 26, 2014

The packet includes materials presented at the Recommendation meeting, and is available online by entering the project number at this website:
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp

or contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

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

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Several members of the public were in attendance at the Recommendation meeting held on March 26, 2014. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Expressed appreciation for the 15 foot setback provided along the south property line.
- Would like to see a bracketed cornice similar to the building at 1815 17th Avenue.
- Expressed appreciation for the amount of parking provided and size of units provided.
- Expressed gratitude for the collaborative work and outreach with neighbors.
- Expressed support for the large windows and Juliette balconies.
- Felt the building's primary color is too creamy for neighborhood context. Concerned the building will reflect substantial light.
- Concerned about long term wear on hardy board. Would like to see the building weather well over the years.
- Noted the building on 19th and Mercer Streets provide a good example of mixed 1920s and modern architecture.
- Noted privacy study reverses window orientation for residential building across the alley and that private balconies will face existing residential windows along the alley.
- Expressed concern for the loss of privacy with nine full balconies facing the alley even though a substantial setback is provided.
- Felt the design has evolved to respond to the neighbors' concerns.
- Would like to see landscaping on the alley outside of the courtyard fence to slow traffic, provide a softer edge.
- Would like to see lighting located to avoid light glare onto adjacent lots.
- Felt trash and recycling should be located off the alley.
- Encouraged the use of mature landscaping installation to avoid additional time requirements for landscaping to provide screening.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

At the Recommendation meeting, the Board discussed the response to the EDG and offered the following recommendations for the proposal to meet the applicable Design Review Guidelines identified at the EDG meeting.

1. **Privacy.** The Board agreed the revised design, which locates the building 15 feet from the south property line, maintained a massing responsive to EDG guidance.
 - a) The Board recommended a condition to increase the height and depth of landscaping between the private deck on the south façade and the property line. The Board noted that the additional landscaping required may reduce the size of the deck (A-5, E-2).
 - b) The Board recommended a condition to provide additional vertical landscaping between the private decks on the west façade and the alley property line to achieve additional privacy along the alley (A-5, E-2).

- c) The Board felt the remainder of the decks with the substantial setback along the alley were treated well and should be maintained as is (A-5, E-2).
2. **Ground Level Treatment.** The Board felt minor modifications to the ground level treatment along the alley would enhance the design.
- a) The Board recommended a condition to revise the entry stairs to provide an angled, more open, gracious stair approach (A-3, A-6).
 - b) The Board recommended a condition to locate the decorative alley security fence inside a landscape buffer at the alley lot line to achieve a softer transition between the building’s courtyard and the single family homes across the alley (A-5, E-1).
 - c) The Board recommended a condition to use mature plants at landscaping installation to achieve the lushness and privacy screening demonstrated in the recommendation packet (A-5, E-1).
 - d) The Board recommended a condition focus lighting on the building and pedestrian pathway to provide safe spaces while avoiding avoid light spillage and glare onto adjacent properties (A-5).
3. **Materials.** The Board expressed concerned the primary color choice may be too light. The Board supported the material concept but felt the color should be resolved within the neighborhood context.
- a) The Board recommended a condition that the applicant works with the planner before construction to study and choose a color on site. The Board directed the primary color choice should be richer, less reflective, more muted, and draw on cues from the neighborhood context (C-1, C-4).
 - b) The Board noted the brick color, sienna, may be fined tuned to produce a better color combination once the primary building color has been decided (C-1, C-4).
 - c) The Board recommended condition to provide details within the Master Use Permit drawings for the brick window wrap, multi-part cornice, belly band, bay window panel window insert. Each detail shall include the thickness and relief. All details should be completed in a cohesive style (C-1, C-4).

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

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.

- A-2 **Streetscape Compatibility.** The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.
- A-3 **Entrances Visible from the Street.** Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.
- 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.
- 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.
- A-7 **Residential Open Space.** Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.
- 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.

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.

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

- 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.

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.
- 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.
- D-7 **Personal Safety and Security.** Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.
- D-8 **Treatment of Alleys.** The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.
- 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.

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.
- 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.

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 following development standard departures were requested at the Recommendation meeting.

- 1. Projections into Required Setbacks (SMC 23.45.518 H):** The Code requires garden window projections into required setback to begin 30 inches above the finished floor, be no wider than 8 feet and limited to 6 feet in height.

The applicant proposes to windows at the finished floor level, 9'-2" high and 12'-6" wide. The windows are shown on Page 38 in the diagrams in the [presentation packet](#).

The Board unanimously approved the requested setback departure. The Board noted the bay windows provide modulation, balance and symmetry for the large facades, accentuate the corner location, and further the design parti and architectural concept while being responsive to the existing neighborhood context better meeting Design Guidelines A-10 Corner Lots, B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale, C-1 Architectural Context, C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency and C-4 Exterior Finish Materials.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation summarized below was based on the design review packet dated March 26, 2014, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the March 26, 2014 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, all five Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design. The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

1. Increase the height and depth of landscaping between the private deck on the south façade and the property line (A-5, E-2).
2. Provide additional vertical landscaping between the private decks on the west façade and the alley property line to achieve additional privacy along the alley (A-5, E-2).
3. Revise the entry stairs to provide an angled, more open, gracious stair approach (A-3, A-6).
4. Locate the decorative alley security fence inside a landscape buffer at the alley lot line (A-5, E-1).
5. Utilize mature plants in the landscaping installation to achieve the lushness and privacy screening demonstrated in the recommendation packet (A-5, E-1).
6. Update the lighting plan to focus lighting on the building and pedestrian pathway to provide safe spaces while avoiding avoid light spillage and glare onto adjacent properties (A-5).
7. Study the color palette and select a primary color that is richer, less reflective, more muted, and draws on cues from the neighborhood context (C-1, C-4).
8. Provide details within the Master Use Permit drawings for the brick window wrap, multi-part cornice, belly band, bay window panel window insert. Each detail shall include the dimensions of the thickness and relief. All details should be completed in a cohesive style (C-1, C-4).