



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number: 3014948

Address: 1124 Columbia Street

Applicant: Joe Workman with Collins Woerman

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, June 05, 2013

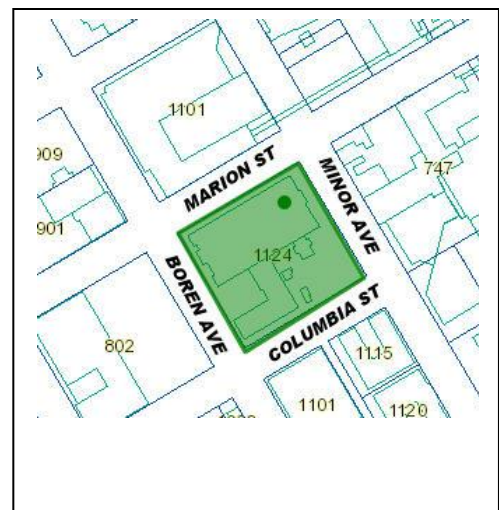
Board Members Present: Dawn Bushnaq  
Ric Cochrane  
Dan Foltz  
Natalie Gualy  
Christina Orr-Cahall

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial Three with a 160 foot height limit (NC3 160). The site includes a Major Institutional Overlay (MIO 160) with the same height limit.



Zoning Patterns:	<p>The underlying NC3 160 zone extends along the Madison St. corridor from I-5 on the west to Harvard St. on the east. Multifamily Highrise (HR) zone represents the dominant zoning classification to the west and south of the subject site. A combination of HR and multifamily Midrise zoning is the primary zoning to the east. A MIO designation for the vicinity of the Swedish Medical complex, Seattle University and the Virginia Mason Medical complex covers much of the area to the site's north and east.</p>
Lot Area:	<p>The full block site comprises 61,440 square feet. The site rises from Boren Ave toward the center of the block by an estimated 16 feet where it flattens off.</p>
Current Development:	<p>Three structures currently occupy the full block. A seven-story structure, built in 1974, forms a rectangular mass along Marion St that occupies the site's northern half. Within the structure, a loading dock and a limited amount of parking is accessed from Marion St. The second structure, Eklind Hall, rises five-stories and occupies the block's southwest corner. Originally built in 1945 as a nursing facility it houses lab spaces. The proponent seeks to demolish this structure. Beneath the parking lot on the remaining corner, lies a three-story "Vivarium". This too would be demolished.</p>
Access:	<p>Existing vehicular access occurs on Minor Ave., Marion Street, and Columbia St.</p>

Surrounding  
Development  
&  
Neighborhood  
Character:

The broader neighborhood possesses a plethora of land uses. These include major medical services, cultural and educational institutions, mixed use, office and retail. Along the immediate northern, eastern and southern edges of the site, building uses generally comprise a mix of institutional and medical services along with periphery parking garages. The site is also within the MIO that governs Swedish Medical Campus. The area has an urban character dominated by institutions. The western edge of the property borders Boren Ave, a primary arterial. The urban character west of Boren Ave. is quieter and pedestrian oriented. The architectural scale is smaller, less dense, and has gracious sidewalks and large street trees. At the intersection of Boren Ave. and Madison St. sit a cluster of mixed use, residential and retail uses. The buildings have extensive amounts of transparency and overhead weather protection.

Numerous significant buildings populate the area: Swedish Medical Center, O’Dea High School, St. James Cathedral, Frye Art Museum, Cabrini Center, and the Sorrento Hotel.

ECAs: The site does not have a mapped Environmental Critical Area.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes a seven-story medical office building with below grade parking for 410 vehicles as an addition to an existing structure.

## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The applicant presented three massing alternatives. Scheme A replaces Eklind Hall with a six story medical office structure linked to the existing seven-story building by a vertical circulation core. The new structure anchors the block’s southwest corner. Where the surface parking lot covers the top of the vivarium today, the applicant inserts a five level, below grade parking garage. Along Boren Ave, a bike storage/locker room fronts the street. Access to the parking garage occurs on Columbia St. with a patient drop-off area in roughly the same place off Minor St. as exists currently. Scheme B forms a rectangular block or mass on the southern portion of the site parallel to the existing seven-story structure. The structure rises eight levels above Boren Ave. with three floors of parking and three floors of medical office. Similar to Scheme A, Columbia St. serves as access to a parking garage. Due to the lower ceiling heights of the garage, the proposed structure does not have the same height as the existing building. Skywalks link the two structures.

Sharing similarities to the first alternative, Scheme C forms a cubic mass at the southwest corner on the site of Eklind Hall connected to the larger building with enclosed circulation. A five level,

above grade parking garage sits on the southeast corner roughly where the vivarium and surface parking lot are. Similar to the other schemes, Columbia St. provides access to the garage.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

- No one in attendance affixed his or her name to the sign-in sheet. No one provided public comment.

## 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.**

**A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.**

The Board seeks a more animated and pedestrian friendly street frontage on Minor, Columbia and Boren. Revisions to the drop-off area as discussed in guidance A-8, D-1, D-4 and E-2 should create a garden like setting for the Columbia and Minor frontages.

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

The position of the main entry away and convenient for patient drop-off in the turnaround area but away from the sidewalk did not raise issues.

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

The Board noted the importance of this guideline.

**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.**

The Board's preference, a reduction from two-curb cuts to one, frees the southeast corner from a vehicular orientation to one in which the drop-off area sits within a gracious garden. A two curb cuts scenario would have one lane ingress and egress connecting Minor and Columbia.

**A-9 Location of Parking on Commercial Street Fronts. Parking on a commercial street front should be minimized and where possible should be located behind a building.**

Screen the surface parking spaces along Columbia St. Design a planter incorporated into the wall that separates the parking spaces in the drop-off area from the Columbia St. right of way.

**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.**

Reconfigure the patient drop-off area to reduce the curb cuts and provide a more gracious park-like setting. First Hill and Capitol Hill have abundant examples of attractively landscaped corner entries including those with vehicle access.

**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.**

The Board found the general massing parti acceptable. See guidance C-2.

**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.**

The medical and other institutional buildings in the neighborhood provide a striking context. This includes the seven-story structure to remain. *Beton brut* architecture and detailing, ribbon windows, and similarity of hue produce a monumental cloister of institutions and highrises. From some vantage points, the area has the presence of a medical acropolis. The diagram presented at the public meeting suggests the same bulk and relative height as nearby structures. The architect's desire to produce a visual counterpoint to the building that it will extend met with Board acceptance. The very architectural elements or features that lend cohesiveness to the neighborhood, however, should not be ignored and could be incorporated in surprising and creative ways.

- 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.**

The architect's notion of the new structure acting as a visual counterpoint to the cast in place concrete building received support from the Board. Consider using elements of the existing structure as a way of ordering or organizing the elevations has relevance. Motifs or elements from the 1970s era structure ought to provide visual clues in design development.

The east elevation of the future structure as it faces the drop-off area should respond to the vehicular movement or curve needed to accommodate the turn around. The massing of the base and entry, at the least, needs to acknowledge this condition. On the upper floors, the waiting areas or lobbies might extend from the corner with the vertical circulation corner along the east side of the new building. The lobbies or waiting areas could be expressed in the building form.

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

Particular attention in complying with the guideline should focus along the sidewalks where the parking garage and other non-pedestrian building uses face the right of way. Attractive, well detailed walls, rather than green screens, with apertures and other transparency are preferable.

## **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.**

The Board's vision of the patient drop-off area resembles a traditional First Hill garden more than a merely functional vehicular turn around for an institutional use. This corner, bordering pedestrian oriented and tree shaded Minor and Columbia streets, ought to resemble a small park-like setting for patients and employees.

- 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.**

Creating attractive and engaging edges of the structure along the street frontages is a key design issue. Board review of the germane departure requests will depend on how the design of these edges evolves.

- D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks. Parking lots near sidewalks should provide adequate security and lighting, avoid encroachment of vehicles onto the sidewalk, and minimize the visual clutter of parking lot signs and equipment.**

Related to D-2 in this case, this guidance addresses the portions of the parking garage that rise above the sidewalk and the drop-off area (and short term parking) at the site's southeast corner. Much of the deliberation focused on the Board's desire to create a community asset at the corner.

- D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures. The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.**

See C-3 and D-2 guidance.

- 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.**

The service area in the larger building will house the functions for the new structure.

- D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.**

- D-9 Commercial Signage. Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.**

- D-10 Commercial Lighting. Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.**

By the Recommendation meeting, an applicant will need to submit an exterior lighting plan.

- D-11 Commercial Transparency. Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.**

## **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.**

While some areas of First Hill have better pedestrian oriented conditions than others, use the most desirable features within the neighborhood to inspire 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.**

Landscaping along the rights of way has an evident of armature of mature shade street trees and comfortable setbacks from the sidewalk accommodating lawns or other forms of landscaping between the buildings and the sidewalk. This pattern should continue with the proposal.

Develop the southeast corner as a drop-off area and garden that welcomes employees, patients and neighbors to admire and to find respite. The Board requests a series of six to eight vignettes of the garden/drop-off area.

## **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 Early Design Guidance meeting, the applicant submitted the six departures outlined below which did not allow the Board adequate time to study these prior to the meeting. The logic of the departures has mostly to do with the parking garage rising above grade at the sidewalk. As stated in the guidance, the design of the building's edges will be foremost in Board consideration of the departures.

1. Parking Location and Access. SMC 23.47A.032B.1.a. Parking shall not be located between a structure and a street lot line. The applicant requests use of 68 feet of the Columbia St. frontage for surface parking along the client drop-off area.
2. Parking Location and Access. SMC 23.47A.032B.1.b. Within a structure, street-level parking shall be separated from street-level, street facing facades by another permitted use. The



applicant proposes predominately parking where the proposed structure meets Columbia St. including the garage entry.

3. Parking Location and Access. SMC 23.47A.032B1.c Parking to the side of a structure shall not exceed 60 feet of street frontage. The applicant requests 68' of parking to the side of the structure.
4. Street-level Development Standards. SMC 23.47A.008B.2. Sixty percent of the street-facing façade between two and eight feet above the sidewalk shall be transparent. The applicant requests a façade with a maximum transparency of 45 percent.
5. Street-level Development Standards. SMC 23.47A.008B.3.b. Non-residential uses at street level shall have a floor to floor height of at least 13 feet. The applicant requests a floor to floor height along Boren Ave of 11'6" or a 1'6" reduction.
6. Street-level Development Standards. SMC 23.47A.008 Table D. Item N: Parking garage that is eight feet or more above grade requires a 3.5' of screening along the perimeter of each floor of parking. The applicant requests the allowance for a 25' portion of the Columbia St. garage face at or above eight feet along the sidewalk to be unscreened by landscape immediately adjacent to the building due to the presence of a six foot wide planting strip on the street side of the sidewalk at this location.

The Board indicated that based on a reduced amount of driveway due to providing one curb cut rather than two more area should be available for landscaping.

## **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.

In addition to the expected drawings presented for the public meeting, the Board requests renderings and perspectives of the pedestrian environment along the site's edges and the southeast corner patient drop-off area. Views of the building access on Boren are also needed.