



## FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3017071

Address: 10733 Meridian Ave N

Applicant: Brenda Barnes and Lauren Nestrud Garkel, Clark Design Group

Date of Meeting: Monday, May 11, 2015

Board Members Present: Ivana Begley, Chair  
Eric Blank  
Martine Zettle

Board Members Absent: none

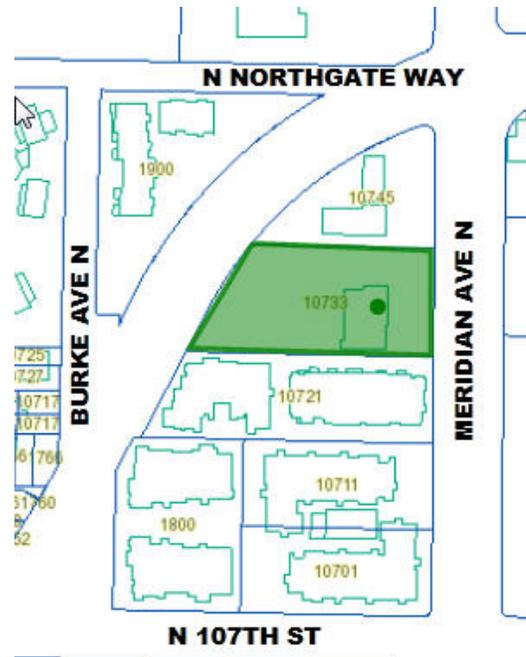
DPD Staff Present: Scott Ringgold, Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site zone: Neighborhood Commercial 3, with a 40' base height limit (NC3-40)

Nearby zones: (North) NC3-40  
(South) residential Midrise and Lowrise 3 (MR and LR3)  
(East) NC3-85  
(West) LR3

Lot area: 29,375 sq.ft.



**Current development:**

Single-story restaurant with surface parking

**Site, surrounding development and neighborhood character:**

The site is elongated east-to-west, with about 125' of street frontage along Meridian Ave N and roughly 140' along N Northgate Way. It slopes gradually down to the west and south, about 10' in all. There are no exceptional trees, though some mature trees along the northern property line might be retained.

Directly to the north is a gas station. Directly to the south are apartment buildings 3-5 stories tall, with principal entries focused inward toward heavily landscaped private open space, limited windows or pedestrian entries facing rights of way, and a wide driveway from Meridian Ave N directly along the shared property line. To the east across Meridian Ave N are 3-5 story office buildings set far back from the street, and surrounded by surface parking. Across N Northgate Way to the west is a townhouse development built in the last decade, and farther to the west is a single family neighborhood characterized by large treed lots and postwar single family homes.

Adjacent to the site, Meridian Ave N and N Northgate Way are heavily trafficked, with improved sidewalks but somewhat limited pedestrian amenities. Street trees exist along N Northgate Way, but the planting strip is narrow, and the eastern sidewalk terminates to the south of the site. Meridian Avenue North is characterized by mature street trees in a landscape strip of standard width. A bus stop exists to the north of the site.

**Access:**

The site fronts on Meridian Ave N and N Northgate Way. Proposed vehicular access to the site is along both frontages, subject to Design Review recommendation.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

A limited steep slope exists toward the site's southwest corner, eligible for exemption under SMC [25.09.180](#) B2.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

A 5-story hotel building containing 140 rooms. Parking for 149 vehicles to be provided below grade. Existing 1-story structure to be demolished.

## FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE July 21, 2014

The applicants' [design packet](#) includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3017071) via this link: <http://bit.ly/SearchDesignReview>.

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**Mailing Public Resource Center**

**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**Email:** [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

### DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Lauren Nestrud of Clark Design Group presented the project and its design concept. The project is a five-story hotel intended to cater to travelers along the Interstate 5 corridor. The site has good visibility from the high-traffic intersection at North Northgate Way and Meridian Ave N. The preliminary siting would locate the project's "public uses" along Meridian and hotel rooms at grade along Northgate Way.

A goal is to accentuate the main entry along Meridian with sidewalk canopies and landscaping at the sidewalk. Along N Northgate Way the intent is to step the design back to respond to the geometry of the site and provide opportunities for substantial landscaping.

Ms. Nestrud presented three alternative massing concepts: a "Bar building", a "T building", and a "U building". The "Bar" is the preferred concept; it would set back from the north property line, the "T" would present a strong façade along Meridian Ave N and center the building along the site's east-west axis, and the "U" would orient the massing along both street frontages and the north property line, creating an open space on the site's south side.

#### Alternative Concepts



Concept A - Bar Building (Preferred Scheme)



Concept B - T Building



Concept C - U Building

Ms. Nestrud discussed benefits and disadvantages of each concept, also listed in the design packet. The Bar provides some separation from the apartments to the south and opportunities for screening and landscaping along the north property line, with an “urban garden” at the site’s northeast corner. The T-shaped scheme also steps away from the south line, but Ms. Nestrud stated it doesn’t enhance the entry sequence for pedestrians along Meridian Ave N. The U-shaped scheme maximizes solar gain and offers a landscaped plaza on the south side, but the proximity to the gas station is less desirable.

Regarding site access, the design team considered various options: along the north side, along the south side, from both streets, and from just one. Driveway access along the south side would be less apparent to visitors and might create confusion with the adjacent driveway for the neighboring apartments. If the design were to limit itself to a single driveway, the turnaround scheme would be complicated, and might conflict with pedestrian movements. The preferred design scheme therefore involves a requested development standard departure, to allow through-site vehicular access along both streets.

A further requested departure relates to street-level development standards along North Northgate Way. The site slopes down to the west and south. Assuming no break in the floor plates, this presents a disconnect between ground floors on each street frontage. The preferred design seeks to present the project’s more active, public functions along Meridian Ave N, and to notch back the hotel rooms along N Northgate Way to provide a landscaped buffer and visual access to the street, with parking behind. The departure would allow the street-level street-facing façade to be lower than the required 13' along N Northlake Way.

Design Review Board members asked the following **clarifying questions**:

*Any trees on the site?* No exceptional trees. There will be excavation for the parking. We'll look to keep the tree adjacent to the gas station.

*Please clarify how the preferred driveway accesses would work.* Right turn only and maybe enter only on Meridian. Potentially exiting would be right only onto Northgate. It's a use oriented to vehicles, so we think most cars will come from I-5.

*Please clarify which concept is Code compliant.* The T-shaped scheme provides Code-compliant driveway access, and compliance with street-level development standards would involve breaking the floor plates to address N Northlake Way.

*Are each of the options comparable in gross floor area?* They're similar in size.

*Are there any concepts that would break the floor plate and step down to N Northlake Way?* We did that thinking early on, but we're trying to locate all the elevators where the public space is. To break floor plates would likely involve multiple cores.

*Please clarify required setbacks.* On the south side, the design must step back 10' above a height of 13'. In our preferred concept, it would step back 15'.

*How far would the facade be from back of sidewalk?* Along Meridian, the intent is to locate the structure right at the property line.

*Please detail what are the “public” uses you describe.* Lobby, restaurant, fitness, pool, overhead weather protection, entry registration to your right. Bars and restaurant would be along the sidewalk, with the fitness and pool located behind.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Five members of the public attended the Early Design Guidance meeting on July 21, 2014. Their spoken comments are as follows:

*The City’s arborist is very protective of the tulip poplars. Considering the bus stop, this portion of Meridian Ave N is a confusing traffic space. Turning left into the site is nearly impossible, unless it’s after 10 at night. Right turners coming around the buses won’t help.*

*As part-owner of the buildings to the south, I ask that you take steps to mitigate the effects on our property. Please address light access, bulk and scale, particularly at the northwest corner of our property and the southwest corner of this one. I can’t tell how many feet above existing grade it will be: looks like 4-5 stories. Please consider stepping the building down, I don’t know what’s reasonable, but light, noise and bulk would be my concerns. I’d prefer the driveway on the north side, for my purposes that would be best.*

DPD received one comment letter, written by the same neighbor who provided the second set of comments above. The letter substantially reflects the same above comments.

<b>FINAL RECOMMENDATION May 11, 2015</b>
--

The applicants’ [design packet](#) includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3017071) via this link: <http://bit.ly/SearchDesignReview>.

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**Mailing Public Resource Center**  
**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**Email:** [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

## **DESIGN RESPONSE**

Ms. Nestrud-Garkel presented a further refined development of the Board’s preferred “T-building”. She identified an access easement at the site’s northeast corner belonging to the adjacent gas station; the design therefore shifts south to accommodate that easement. It also shifts west to accommodate the mature tulip tree in the right of way, identified by the Board as

an important design element. Finally, the massing shifts north to partially accommodate a required setback from the adjacent residential property to the south.

The updated design features a cantilever that offers some rain protection at the vehicular dropoff. It offers appropriate signage at the northeast corner. It also provides for an “urban garden” along the sidewalk and adjacent to the main pedestrian entry.

In response to the Board’s stated concerns about privacy and views related to the adjacent residences, Ms. Nestrud demonstrated how the unit layouts orient to avoid direct sight-lines to neighboring windows.

The proposed vehicular access program primarily draws drivers from Meridian Ave N on the east, and directs them to exit to North Northgate Way. Service access would enter and exit via the western curb cut, in order to separate the project’s more public, pedestrian-oriented functions from the service functions.

Finish materials include a durable dark-colored ceramic panel, the dominant material along the Meridian façade, and which provides a ground-oriented datum line that wraps the northern façade and around to the Northgate side. A white cementitious panel dominates the upper levels, accented by a brown panel that organizes the windows into regular bays.

The principal pedestrian entrance offers overhead weather protection with wood soffits and downlight accents.

Landscape architect Kristen Lundquist presented the project’s landscape design. She emphasized layering of planting materials with attention to each of the varying conditions that wrap the site. The design of the urban garden features seating and wide planters. A green screen lines portions of the south wall, with denser, higher shrubs where ground-level rooms face the neighbors. Low plantings frame the space between the sidewalk and the west wall. Columnar trees line the northern façade, along the driveway’s edge.

Proposed development standard departures are as outlined in the table on page 17. The Board considered all requested departures in the context of the relevant design guidelines and recommended that DPD approve them, with conditions.

Design Review Board members asked the following **clarifying questions**:

*Will the egress onto N Northgate Way be right turn only?* Yes. We’ll sign it that way.

*Please walk us through the signage locations.* Along Meridian we’re using the northeast corner as the wayfinding opportunity from the main intersection. That signage will be interior illuminated. If you missed the turn, there’s a “second chance” sign along North Northgate Way. There’s no illuminated signage facing south, toward the residences.

*Will the replacement street tree obscure the signage?* The sign is at about 40'. These trees do get large.

*On the north property line, there were trees we noted. Which if any can be protected and preserved? Our below-grade parking garage prevents us from maintaining these trees.*

*How do the finish materials address durability? It's all rainscreen, so this is [EIFS](#) with drainage. The stone is a molded concrete.*

*What's the entry sequence for the typical guest? You would park your car at the side, walk around to the Meridian entrance, receive your access to the parking garage, and park underneath. There will be some appropriate wayfinding signage.*

*On page 24 of the packet, I'm trying to make sense of the canopy. Does it cover both the at-grade entrance and the stairs to them? Yes it does. The posts will be integrated into the landscaping.*

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Four members of the public attended the recommendations meeting on May 11, 2015. Their comments are as follows:

*I appreciate that the architects have done a lot of work and have addressed many of our concerns. I don't see a south elevation. Do the materials match the other elevations? (Board identified alternative south elevations shown on pages 32 and 33 of the design packet, which identify the proposed materials.)*

*What are the separations between the proposed structures? At one point 22', at another 33'. We provide a 25' setback at one point.*

*I would put a premium on a setback at the southwest portion. Can you shift that whole portion of the building to the north, toward the driveway?*

*I appreciate that the Board asked about the trees.*

DPD received one comment letter, which did not address issues related to Design Review.

## **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.

### **FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE July 21, 2014**

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

## CONTEXT & SITE

### ***Northgate Supplemental Guidance:***

#### **DC1-I Retain Existing Natural Systems and Site Features as Landscaping**

**DC1-I-i. Natural Features:** Consider design strategies to preserve existing on-site natural habitats, significant vegetation or other natural features .... For example, consider retaining natural features such as existing vegetation ... that are aesthetically pleasing, ... and can create a pedestrian friendly environment by providing natural areas of interest. Also, features such as larger planting strips located adjacent to sidewalks can be used for landscaping to enhance the site and can effectively separate pedestrians from the impacts of traffic.

**If feasible, the Board identified as a high priority the retention of existing trees on the north side of the site.**

### **CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.**

#### **CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale**

**CS2-D-1. Existing Development and Zoning:** Review the height, bulk, and scale of neighboring buildings as well as the scale of development anticipated by zoning for the area to determine an appropriate complement and/or transition.

**CS2-D-2. Existing Site Features:** Use changes in topography, site shape, and vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent properties.

**CS2-D-3. Zone Transitions:** For projects located at the edge of different zones, provide an appropriate transition or complement to the adjacent zone(s). Projects should create a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zone and the proposed development.

**CS2-D-4. Massing Choices:** Strive for a successful transition between zones where a project abuts a less intense zone.

**CS2-D-5. Respect for Adjacent Sites:** Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy of residents in adjacent buildings.

**Considering the Lowrise-zoned apartments adjoining the site to the southwest, the Board indicated that the T-shaped massing scheme would appropriately address this guideline. Board members requested sections to show locations of adjacent windows at the southeast corner, with privacy in mind.**

**At the final recommendations meeting, the Board reviewed the updated massing and considered the unit orientations. They supported the preferred scheme's urban garden along the sidewalk, its location of the activity area and the enclosed pool, and its provision of at-grade landscaping and setback along the western portion of the south façade.**

**CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.**

**CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes**

**CS3-A-2. Contemporary Design:** Explore how contemporary designs can contribute to the development of attractive new forms and architectural styles; as expressed through use of new materials or other means.

**CS3-A-4. Evolving Neighborhoods:** In neighborhoods where architectural character is evolving or otherwise in transition, explore ways for new development to establish a positive and desirable context for others to build upon in the future.

***Northgate Supplemental Guidance:***

**CS3-I Streetscape Compatibility**

**CS3-I-i. Response to Context:** The architecture of individual buildings should relate to their surroundings. This does not necessarily mean a historical approach, but rather one that is sensitive to the surrounding urban built and natural environments. In areas zoned for mixed-use development outside the retail core area, orient and design the commercial facade at street level to be compatible with the streetscape of the surrounding residential neighborhood. Compatibility can be accomplished through a combination of the following:

1. The overall proportion of the facade;
2. Building setbacks;
3. Placement of windows and bays;
4. Location of entries; and
5. Exterior materials.

**The Board identified these as relevant and priority guidelines, but reserved comment until the project’s recommendations meeting.**

**At the final recommendations meeting, Board members supported the design team’s organization of the principal facades: a strong and well-proportioned “watermark” and the thoughtful grouping of windows to address the architectural cohesion of a large and visible building.**

**PUBLIC LIFE**

**PL1 Connectivity: Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.**

**PL1-A Network of Open Spaces**

**PL1-A-2. Adding to Public Life:** Seek opportunities to foster human interaction through an increase in the size and quality of project-related open space available for public life.

**PL1-B Walkways and Connections**

**PL1-B-3. Pedestrian Amenities:** Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian oriented open spaces to enliven the area and attract interest and interaction with the site and building should be considered.

**PL1-C Outdoor Uses and Activities**

**PL1-C-1. Selecting Activity Areas:** Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board identified the existing street trees along Meridian Ave N as a major asset providing a defining quality to the site and vicinity. They provide a relative sense of pedestrian scale. Seattle’s Department of Transportation (SDOT) identifies these as tulip trees ([Liriodendron Tulipifera](#)).**

**While Board members recognized a reasonable design intent to engage the sidewalk, they felt that locating a building right up against the eastern property line would likely conflict with the existing street tree, involving substantial pruning along its west side. In the next design iteration, they requested some buffering of the existing street tree, by pulling the Meridian façade back into the site and possibly providing more space for the urban garden identified by the design team.**

**If it’s also possible to retain the two existing on-site trees along the site’s north end, the Board would welcome it.**

**At the final recommendations meeting, the Board supported the design response to guidance.**

**PL2 Walkability: Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.**

**PL2-B Safety and Security**

**PL2-B-1. Eyes on the Street:** Create a safe environment by providing lines of sight and encouraging natural surveillance.

**PL2-B-2. Lighting for Safety:** Provide lighting at sufficient lumen intensities and scales, including pathway illumination, pedestrian and entry lighting, and/or security lights.

**PL2-B-3. Street-Level Transparency:** Ensure transparency of street-level uses (for uses such as nonresidential uses or residential lobbies), where appropriate, by keeping views open into spaces behind walls or plantings, at corners, or along narrow passageways.

**PL2-D Wayfinding**

**PL2-D-1. Design as Wayfinding:** Use design features as a means of wayfinding wherever possible.

**The Board identified these as priority guidelines. They offered no further comment in this regard.**

**At the final recommendations meeting, the Board conditioned their recommendation. The steps down from the sidewalk should incorporate a clear color delineation, integral to the**

paving material, not painted. Board members valued the street-level rooms along North Northgate Way.

**PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.**

**PL3-A Entries**

**PL3-A-1. Design Objectives:** Design primary entries to be obvious, identifiable, and distinctive with clear lines of sight and lobbies visually connected to the street.

***Northgate Supplemental Guidance:***

**PL3-III Street Level Transparency**

**PL3-III-i. Visual Connections:** Provide direct visual connection into street level facades. The following are examples of less desirable design treatments that should be discouraged:

1. windowless walls;
2. mirrored or non-transparent glass;
3. glass block;
4. display cases;
5. narrow windows not meeting the intent above;
6. windows located above waist level to persons outside the building on the sidewalk;
7. windows into areas that are too small, shallow, or narrow to support normal human activity (e.g. the back of a tall display case, a narrow hallway)
8. any interior wall, equipment, or functional layout that hampers the intent of transparency stated above.

The Board identified these as priority guidelines. They offered no further comment in this regard.

At the final recommendation meeting, Board members commented positively about the design team's siting choices.

**PL4 Active Transportation: Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.**

**PL4-A Entry Locations and Relationships**

**PL4-A-1. Serving all Modes of Travel:** Provide safe and convenient access points for all modes of travel.

**PL4-A-2. Connections to All Modes:** Site the primary entry in a location that logically relates to building uses and clearly connects all major points of access.

In relation to the existing bus stop on Meridian Ave N, the Board identified this as a relevant guideline.

## DESIGN CONCEPT

### **DC1 Project Uses and Activities: Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.**

#### **DC1-A Arrangement of Interior Uses**

**DC1-A-1. Visibility:** Locate uses and services frequently used by the public in visible or prominent areas, such as at entries or along the street front.

**DC1-A-2. Gathering Places:** Maximize the use of any interior or exterior gathering spaces.

**DC1-A-4. Views and Connections:** Locate interior uses and activities to take advantage of views and physical connections to exterior spaces and uses.

#### **DC1-B Vehicular Access and Circulation**

**DC1-B-1. Access Location and Design:** Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists wherever possible. Emphasize use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

#### **DC1-C Parking and Service Uses**

**DC1-C-1. Below-Grade Parking:** Locate parking below grade wherever possible. Where a surface parking lot is the only alternative, locate the parking in rear or side yards, or on lower or less visible portions of the site.

### ***Northgate Supplemental Guidance:***

#### **DC1-I Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks**

**DC1-I-i. Landscaping:** Interior landscaping, in addition to perimeter landscaping, should be installed to help soften the visual impact of surface parking and enhance natural site drainage. To meet this objective, consider the following:

1. Interior landscaping: Use landscaping to break large areas into a series of smaller areas. Plant low landscaping in left over portions of parking areas.
2. Site landscaping strategically to minimize stormwater run-off;
3. Innovative drainage control measures such as swales or treatment islands or pervious pavements;
4. Plant enough trees, which at maturity form a canopy over large portions of the parking area with trees interspersed between parking spaces;
5. Select tree species that do not obscure signage, amenity features, or opportunities for surveillance;
6. Plant a mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees for year-round greenery. Select types of trees, such as sapless trees, that do not impact parked cars.

#### **DC1-IV Parking and Vehicle Access**

**DC1-IV-i. Minimize Pedestrian/Vehicle Conflicts:** Site and design driveways to minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. This is especially important along Northgate Way, .... Minimize the number of curb cuts and width of driveways and curb cuts along these streets.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board addressed initial issues of vehicular access to the site. They expressed preliminary support for through-access, with appropriately-scaled**

driveways along both frontages. This scheme would alleviate complicated turning onto busy arterials, and it would likely move exiting away from the Meridian side. Board members encouraged the design team to consider a right-turn only sequence.

Board members also supported locating the driveway on the north side, with appropriate landscaping.

At the final recommendations meeting, the Board approved of the vehicular access scheme, but conditioned their approval on adequate signage along N Northgate Way to specify right-turn exiting only.

**DC2 Architectural Concept: Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.**

#### **DC2-A Massing**

**DC2-A-1. Site Characteristics and Uses:** Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space.

**DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass:** Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects.

#### **DC2-B Architectural and Facade Composition**

**DC2-B-1. Façade Composition:** Design all building facades—including alleys and visible roofs— considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned.

**DC2-B-2. Blank Walls:** Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians.

#### **DC2-E Form and Function**

**DC2-E-1. Legibility and Flexibility:** Strive for a balance between building use legibility and flexibility. Design buildings such that their primary functions and uses can be readily determined from the exterior, making the building easy to access and understand. At the same time, design flexibility into the building so that it may remain useful over time even as specific programmatic needs evolve.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board directed the design team to pursue the T-shaped massing scheme: it provides the desired setbacks from south and north; it allows for a covered vehicular entry; and it presents a tall northeastern corner that could be applied as a wayfinding feature.

At the final recommendations meeting, Board members complimented the design team for its choice of finish materials and the material organization of the principal facades.

**DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.**

**DC4-A Exterior Elements and Finishes**

**DC4-A-1. 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.

**DC4-B Signage**

**DC4-B-1. Scale and Character:** Add interest to the streetscape with exterior signs and attachments that are appropriate in scale and character to the project and its environs.

**DC4-B-2. Coordination with Project Design:** Develop a signage plan within the context of architectural and open space concepts, and coordinate the details with façade design, lighting, and other project features to complement the project as a whole, in addition to the surrounding context.

**DC4-C Lighting**

**DC4-C-1. Functions:** Use lighting both to increase site safety in all locations used by pedestrians and to highlight architectural or landscape details and features such as entries, signs, canopies, plantings, and art.

**DC4-C-2. Avoiding Glare:** Design project lighting based upon the uses on and off site, taking care to provide illumination to serve building needs while avoiding off-site night glare and light pollution.

**DC4-D Trees, Landscape, and Hardscape Materials**

**DC4-D-1. Choice of Plant Materials:** Reinforce the overall architectural and open space design concepts through the selection of landscape materials.

**DC4-D-2. Hardscape Materials:** Use exterior courtyards, plazas, and other hard surfaced areas as an opportunity to add color, texture, and/or pattern and enliven public areas through the use of distinctive and durable paving materials. Use permeable materials wherever possible.

**DC4-D-3. Long Range Planning:** Select plants that upon maturity will be of appropriate size, scale, and shape to contribute to the site as intended.

**DC4-D-4. Place Making:** Create a landscape design that helps define spaces with significant elements such as trees.

***Northgate Supplemental Guidance:***

**DC4-I Design Signage Compatible with Human Scale and Consistent with Architectural Concept**

**DC4-I-i. Signage:** Signage should be designed so that it is appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area. Signs should be oriented and scaled for both pedestrians on sidewalks and persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood. Signs should add interest to the street level environment. They can help unify the overall architectural concept of the building, or provide a unique identity for an individual business within the larger structure. While regulatory sign review is not in the purview of design review, integration with the overall architectural expression of a building and appropriate scale and orientation are important design considerations. Franchises should not be given exceptions to these guidelines. The following types of signs are encouraged:

1. Pedestrian-oriented blade signs
2. Signs integrated into the design of the building: along a sign band, on canopies and marquees, located in windows.
3. These types of signs are discouraged: Large illuminated box signs (backlit “can” signs) and Post-mounted signs.

**At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board recognized that the legibility of the vehicle entry sequence is important. They questioned whether this visibility is necessarily wedded to the preferred massing scheme, or whether such visibility trumps the appropriate choice of alternative schemes. Alternatives might include a vertical fin element, or well-integrated signage.**

**Board members stated that at recommendations they would focus intently on how the project relates to these DC4 guidelines. The design team should provide color samples and material boards. The lighting design should demonstrate attention to any glare effects on the residents to the south. Signage should be thoughtfully designed and integrated. The landscape planning should address opportunities for ample planting at ground level and along the south side.**

**At the final recommendations meeting, the Board agreed that the textural quality of the molded concrete base was important, as it should add character and shadow-lines. They stated that the concrete base panels should be located proud of the EIFS above. The reveal pattern on the upper levels gives a pleasant “tectonic” effect, lending an appropriate human scale. The Board values the “watermark” established by the stone base, and how the base material wraps the corners.**

**Board members indicated that EIFS with drainage for durability is very important. For black vinyl windows, the Board recommended that the design team verify manufacturer warranties against heat damage and scratching.**

**Board members voiced appreciation for the landscape buffer along the north property line.**

**It’s important that the proposed signage be clearly visible. They support how the proposed street tree reinforces the urban garden, but they wondered about its effect on the legibility of the signage. If necessary, the Board would support some flexibility in the selection or siting of the new street tree. The Board approved of the design’s lack of any signage on its south side.**

**The front steps must be of a material that highlights the grade change, without resorting to painted stripes. A color change or material treatment might be most appropriate here. The Board identified this as a condition of their approval.**

**The Board recognized that at the site’s southwest corner, the project provides a reasonable setback that results in a substantial separation between facing buildings. They felt the massing choices at this corner are appropriate, and the landscape buffer is well sited.**

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the **FIRST** Early Design Guidance the design team requested the following departures:

1. **Street level development standards (SMC [23.47A.008 B3](#)):** The Code requires that non-residential uses at street level have a floor-to-floor height of at least 13'. The applicant proposes that the 13'-high story extend from Meridian Ave N to N Northgate Way, but as the site's topography falls away to the west, that floor is at the second story on the site's west side.

The Board indicated they were comfortable with this recommendation, assuming that the street level along N Northgate Way would include occupied space, not parking.

2. **Vehicular access (SMC [23.47A.032 C](#)):** The Code requires driveway access from a single street, likely Meridian Ave N in this case. The applicant proposes to locate vehicular access on both frontages.

The Board indicated they were inclined to recommend approval of this departure, considering how it would better facilitate smooth vehicular access to and from the site across adjacent sidewalks. They initially expressed support for a scheme that would result in right turns only.

At the final recommendations meeting the Design Review Board considered and approved the development standard departures tabulated on page 17.

## BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the First Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board recommended that the project move forward to Master Use Permit application.

At the conclusion of the final recommendations meeting, the Board recommended that DPD approve the project's Design Review component and to grant the requested departures, with conditions:

- The applicant must update plans to show that vehicular exiting on N Northgate Way is to be signed for right turns only.
- The steps down from the Meridian Ave N sidewalk should incorporate a clear color delineation, integral to the paving material, not painted.

Standard	Proposed	Departure	Rationale & Recommendation
<p><b>Parking location and access</b>, SMC <a href="#">23.47A.032</a> A1c &amp; C.  <i>“...access is permitted across one of the side street lot lines...”</i>  <i>“...the Director will determine which of the streets will be considered the front lot line...”</i>            DPD would generally limit the project to one curb cut, from N Northgate Way.</p>	<p>Two driveway access points, one on Meridian Ave N, another on N Northgate Way.</p>	<p>The departure would allow an additional curb cut on Meridian Ave N.</p>	<p>The Board supported the departure, for how it focuses attention to the entrance on Meridian Ave N, and promotes what Board members considered to be a more rational vehicular circulation pattern. They conditioned their support on a right-only exit onto N Northgate Way.</p>
<p><b>Street-level setback</b>, SMC <a href="#">23.47A.008</a> A3.  <i>“...façades shall be located within 10 feet of the street lot line, unless... approved landscaping or open spaces are provided.”</i></p>	<p>Setbacks along Meridian Ave N and N Northgate Way vary, and many exceed 10'.</p>	<p>Technically not a departure, considering that the Board supported and DPD will approve the intervening landscaping.</p>	<p>The design steps back from Meridian Ave N in response to Board guidance, and the landscaped setbacks along Northgate provide for visual softening of the façade and appropriate buffering for guests.</p>
<p><b>Nonresidential height</b>, SMC <a href="#">23.47A.008</a> B3.  <i>“Nonresidential uses at street level shall have a floor-to-floor height of at least 13 feet.”</i></p>	<p>The 13' floor continues to N Northgate Way, where it is located on the second level due to the grade change.</p>	<p>The street-level floor-to-floor on N Northgate Way is 11'-4".</p>	<p>The Board recommended approval of this departure, considering that the hotel’s primary active functions are appropriately sited on Meridian Ave N, and the strong “watermark” of the concrete-panel stone base creates the visual heft intended by this standard.</p>
<p><b>Façade transparency</b>, SMC <a href="#">23.47A.008</a> B2.  <i>“Sixty percent of the street-facing façade... shall be transparent”</i></p>	<p>Along N Northgate Way, the design provides 28% transparency.</p>	<p>Along the full 110' width of this façade, the design provides 124 sq.ft. of transparency, where 397 sq.ft. would otherwise be required.</p>	<p>The Board recommended approval of this departure. Long segments of this façade are set way back from the right of way. The design orients street-level guestrooms toward N Northgate Way, and it focuses transparency where this street-facing façade is closest to the sidewalk. The Board recognized that this level of transparency supports the overall composition of the west façade, so the base better relates to the upper levels.</p>

<p><b>Blank façades</b>, SMC <a href="#">23.47A.008</a> A2.  <i>“Blank segments of the street-facing facade between 2 feet and 8 feet above the sidewalk may not exceed 20 feet in width.”</i>  <i>“The total of all blank facade segments may not exceed 40 percent of the width of the facade of the structure along the street.”</i></p>	<p>Along N Northgate Way, the design presents 69% blank wall, including one segment greater than 20' long.</p>	<p>Along the full width of this façade, the design exhibits roughly 67' of blank wall, where no more than 39' would otherwise be allowed.</p>	<p>The Board’s rationale for the departure from the façade transparency standard also supports this departure.</p>
<p><b>Residential setback</b>, SMC <a href="#">23.47A.014</a> B2 &amp; E1a.  <i>“A setback is required...ten feet for portions of structures above 13 feet in height...”</i>  <i>“Decks... not permitted within five (5) feet of a lot in a residential zone.”</i></p>	<p>Along the project’s south side, the design locates an enclosed pool structure and an outdoor seating area in the required setback.</p>	<p>The pool enclosure extends roughly 38' along the south property line, about 27' tall measured from the lowest point of the adjacent driveway.</p>	<p>The Board considered various alternatives presented by the design team, and recommended that the best alternative involves shifting the pool enclosure to the west, where the existing grade drops away. They supported the requested departure.</p>
<p><b>Outdoor activity</b>, SMC <a href="#">23.47A.011</a> E.  <i>“... shall be located at least 50 feet from a lot...”</i></p>	<p>Along the project’s south side, the design locates an open sundeck/ food service space.</p>	<p>The proposed deck is roughly 940 sq.ft., located between the pool enclosure and the hotel lounge. Its location results from the Board’s original “T-building” massing guidance.</p>	<p>With the stated consent of the adjoining property owner, the Board determined that the outdoor seating area is designed to support an appropriate level of human activity that should not adversely affect residents to the south. They recommended that DPD approve the requested departure.</p>