



City of Seattle

Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections
Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN
REVIEW

FIRST RECOMMENDATION OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3020247

Address: 1820 Boylston Ave

Applicant: Steve Fischer and Peter Johnson of Nicholson Kovalchick Architects

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, February 24, 2016

Board Members Present: Dan Foltz, Acting Chair
Barbara Busetti
Christina Orr-Cahall
Amy Taylor

Board Members Absent: Curtis Bigelow, Recused
Natalie Gualy

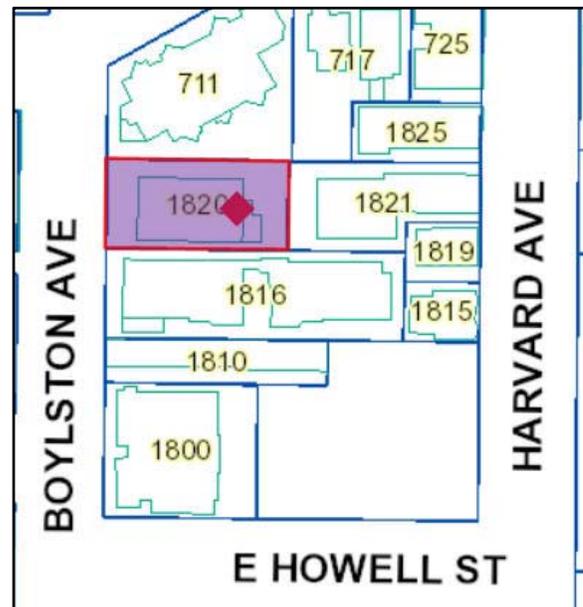
SDCI Staff Present: Magda Hogness

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Midrise (MR) located in the Capitol Hill Urban Village.

Nearby Zones: The Midrise (MR) zone extends north across E Denny Way, west across Summit Ave and south across E Olive St. To the east, across Harvard Ave, the zoning changes to Neighborhood Commercial (NC3-40) with a Major Institutional Overlay (MIO).

Lot Area: Located on Boylston Ave N between E Denny Way and E Howell St, the parcel contains 7350 sf. This midblock site has 60' of frontage along Boylston Ave N.



Access: The subject property includes vehicular access from Boylston Ave N.

Current Development:

A two-story, 8-unit apartment building known as the “Gerrish Hall Apartments” currently exists on the site. The masonry building, originally constructed in 1920, was designed by notable architect James H. Schack. The rectangular building is characterized by its brick construction laid in common bond, symmetrical primary west façade with central front porch, minimal decorative details and projecting cornice. The Landmarks Preservation Board recently denied nomination of the building for landmark status.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The mid-block site is located on the western edge of the Capitol Hill neighborhood, within the South Anchor District as mapped in the Capitol Hill Guidelines. This neighborhood is characterized by mid-rise buildings; most of these buildings occupy only 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 adjacent 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 and concrete masonry.

Surrounded primarily by other residential buildings, the nearby context contains a range of 20th century and contemporary buildings. Immediately north is the Mezzo Condominium building, a five story, 27-unit building built in 1989. Directly to the south is the Boylston Place Apartments, a four-story, 32-unit apartment building constructed in 1990. Across Boylston Avenue, to the west, is the Winchester Apartments, a four-story brick masonry building dating from 1927. To the east, is a three story, 14 unit apartment building, originally constructed in 1960. Further east, across Broadway E is Cal Anderson Park, which offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

The area is well served by transit and is beginning to be developed with higher density multifamily residential structures. The future Capitol Hill Light Rail Station, scheduled to open in early 2016, will be located approximately two blocks east of the subject property, near the northwest corner of Cal Anderson Park.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is to allow an eight story residential building containing 63-68 units and below grade parking for 10 vehicles. Existing structure is proposed to be removed.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE August 12, 2015

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3020247) at this website:

<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/news/events/DesignReview/SearchPastReviews/default.aspx>

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

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

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments offered at the meeting included the following:

- Concerned with the height of the proposed building, obstruction of existing views and lack of sunlight and air circulation in between buildings.
- Concerned with the lack of parking.
- Would like to see the preservation of an old, large tree near the edge of the property and concerned about tree limb trimming.
- Opposed to the rear setback departure request.
- Concerned about the setbacks and massing; they don't maintain the character of the neighborhood.
- Stressed the importance of carefully reviewing the setback departures; if these are granted they will set a precedent for future buildings.

RECOMMENDATION February 24, 2016

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DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

During the presentation, the applicant described the changes since the EDG meeting including refinements to the massing and further design development of the elevations, street frontages and landscape.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments offered at the meeting included the following:

- Concerned with the building design and the height, bulk and scale impacts.
- Lack of support for the proposed departures.
- Questioned the accuracy of the renderings and street views.
- Noted that the geological survey is prepared for a six story building and that the soils are unstable for such a steep excavation. [*Staff note: This review will occur as part of the building permit submittal and must meet all standards*]
- Questioned if the building will conform to the National Building Code for fire and life safety. [*Staff note: This review will occur as part of the building permit submittal and must meet all standards*]
- Concerned with the loss of light and views.
- Supported the design of the facades.

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 August 12, 2015

1. Massing Options, Height Bulk and Scale

- a) The Board was concerned with the height and amount of blank wall shown on the north facade. The Board deliberated if the location of the stairs and elevator should be flipped to the south to provide more opportunity for north facing windows. Ultimately, the Board preferred the proposed location, and requested the applicant bring more developed sketches for further study. The Board stressed that an effort to accommodate the neighboring building needs to be made and emphasized the importance of the detailing of the north façade. Study a setback shift to allow for more glazing. Explore fenestration patterns, texture and lighting and provide a compelling treatment, sensitive to the neighboring building. (Guidelines CS2-B-1, CS2-C-2, CS2-D-1, CS2-D-5, DC2-A-2, DC2-D-2)
- b) The Board acknowledged that the amenity space to the south will be shaded the majority of the year and questioned if the location provides usable space. The Board also discussed the east amenity space and related setback request and noted the

concern of setting precedence for future development, and viability of the existing tree and usable amenity space. (Guidelines CS2-B-3, PL1-C-1, PL1-C-3)

- c) The Board discussed the front façade and related setback request. Given the monolithic design concept, the stepped upper level, and the street level outdoor space, the Board supported the overall massing form. Recognizing that the cantilevered form creates an increase in the perceived height of the building, the Board directed the applicant to thoughtfully develop the façade and provide more information on the design intent. (Guidelines CS2-C-2, CS2-D-1, CS2-D-5, DC2-A, DC2-D-2.)
- 2. Streetscape:** Related to the massing, the Board discussed how the massing transitions to the streetscape. The Board supported the proposed lobby and townhouse locations since the provided outdoor space has the potential to provide eyes on the street and street level interaction. (Guidelines CS2-I, CS2-B-2, PL1-C, PL3-B)
- 3. Materials:** The Board strongly supported the quality of materials proposed in the presentation and packet, in particular the large amounts of glazing, steel and wood, and directed the applicant to consider texture and scale when developing the design. (Guidelines DC2-D, DC4-A, DC4-II)
- a) The Board stressed the importance of the north façade materials. To mitigate the change of scale, provide thoughtful detailing and texture. (Guidelines DC2-A-2, DC4-I, DC4-II, DC4-A)
- 4. Exceptional Tree:** The Board recognized that an Exceptional Tree is located along the perimeter and that all options plan for the retention of the tree. (Guidelines CS1-D-1)

RECOMMENDATION (February 24, 2016)

- 1. Architectural Composition and Height, Bulk, and Scale:** The Board acknowledged the public comments and concerns with the height bulk and scale impacts and discussed each façade.
- a) The Board unanimously supported the material transitions and composition of the south and east façades. (Guidelines DC2-A, DC2-D-2)
 - b) The Board recognized the design of the north façade has improved since the last meeting, but struggled with the composition and related departure request. Two Board members did not support the departure as shown. The Board supported the translation of the horizontal cladding to vertical cladding and the light material proposed. Though the Board supported three sections to break up the façade, they also noted that a strong tie between the sections is not yet apparent and directed the applicant to resolve the middle section and proportion of the façade. The Board also recommended additional planting to soften the façade and to provide more of a planted buffer. (Guidelines CS2-D-5, DC2-A-2, DC2-D-2)
 - c) The Board discussed the west façade and related departure request. Recognizing that initial support for the departure was predicated on a strong monolithic design

concept and generous street level outdoor space, two Board members did not support the departure as shown. The Board directed the applicant to either pull back the façade or thoughtfully develop the lower and upper façade composition and further enhance the open space design. (Guidelines CS2-C-2, CS2-B-3, CS2-D-1, CS2-D-5, DC2-A, DC2-D-2)

- d) The Board noted that the lower two story expression appears commercial and out of character for the proposed residential units. The majority of Board recommended a more refined and less gritty material treatment. The Board directed the applicant to further develop the relationship between the upper and lower massing and provide updated perspectives with the relationship to the context shown. (Guidelines CS2-C-2, CS2-D-1, CS2-D-5, DC2-A, DC2-D, DC4)

2. Landscape and Open Space: The Board gave direction on the proposed landscape and open space design.

- a) The Board supported the landscape design on the east portion of the site and noted that it appears lush and pleasant. (Guidelines DC3-C, DC4-D)
- b) The Board agreed the legibility of the lobby entry is unclear and noted the grade difference between the sidewalk and the lobby. The Board recommended further developing the main entry to read like a lobby entry to clarify wayfinding. (Guidelines PL2-D, PL3-A)
- c) The Board was concerned with the screening and privacy for the street facing residential units. The Board stressed the importance of fine grain detailing and directed the applicant to further develop the concrete walls and planting. (Guidelines DC2-D, DC3-A, DC4-A, DC4-II, DC4-D)
- d) The Board recommended additional landscape be added along the south wall in order to soften the retaining wall for the ground level units. (Guidelines DC2-D, DC3-C, DC4-D)

3. Materials: While generally supportive of the proposed materials, the Board was concerned with metal pillowing/ oil canning and noted that detailing and adequate material thickness is critical. The Board directed that applicant to provide careful detailing and explanation of steps taken to avoid oil canning. (Guidelines DC2-D, DC4-A, DC4-II)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

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

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-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces

CS2-B-1. Site Characteristics: Allow characteristics of sites to inform the design, especially where the street grid and topography create unusually shaped lots that can add distinction to the building massing.

CS2-B-2. Connection to the Street: Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and public realm.

CS2-B-3. Character of Open Space: Contribute to the character and proportion of surrounding open spaces.

CS2-C Relationship to the Block

CS2-C-2. Mid-Block Sites: Look to the uses and scales of adjacent buildings for clues about how to design a mid-block building. Continue a strong street-edge and respond to datum lines of adjacent buildings at the first three floors.

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

Capitol Hill Supplemental Guidance:

CS2-I Streetscape Compatibility

CS2-I-i. Sidewalk Width: Retain or increase the width of sidewalks

CS2-I-ii. Street Trees: Provide street trees with tree grates or in planter strips

CS2-I-iii. Entrances: Vehicles entrances to buildings should not dominate the streetscape

CS2-I-iv. Townhouse Orientation: Orient townhouse structures to provide pedestrian entrances to the sidewalk

PUBLIC LIFE

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

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.

PL1-C-2. Informal Community Uses: In addition to places for walking and sitting, consider including space for informal community use such as performances, farmer’s markets, kiosks and community bulletin Boards, cafes, or street vending.

PL1-C-3. Year-Round Activity: Where possible, include features in open spaces for activities beyond daylight hours and throughout the seasons of the year, especially in

neighborhood centers where active open space will contribute vibrancy, economic health, and public safety.

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-3. Flexibility: Build in flexibility so the building can adapt over time to evolving needs, such as the ability to change residential space to commercial space as needed.

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

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-D Scale and Texture

DC2-D-1. Human Scale: Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept

DC2-D-2. Texture: Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or “texture,” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

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-A-2. Climate Appropriateness: Select durable and attractive materials that will age well in Seattle’s climate, taking special care to detail corners, edges, and transitions.

Capitol Hill Supplemental Guidance:

DC4-I Height, Bulk, and Scale

DC4-I-i. Materials: Masonry and terra cotta are preferred building materials, although other materials may be used in ways that are compatible with these more traditional

materials. The Broadway Market is an example of a development that blends well with its surroundings and includes a mixture of materials, including masonry.

DC4-II Exterior Finish Materials

DC4-II-i. 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.

1. Use wood shingles or Board and batten siding on residential structures.
2. Avoid wood or metal siding materials on commercial structures.
3. Provide operable windows, especially on storefronts.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. The use of applied foam ornamentation and EIFS (Exterior Insulation & Finish System) is discouraged, especially on ground level locations.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendations on departures are based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure.

At the time of the Recommendation meeting, the following departures were requested for the preferred option:

- 1. Front Setback (SMC 23.45.518 B):** The Code requires a 7 ft average setback and a 5 ft minimum setback. The applicant proposes no setback for levels 3-7.

The Board was split on the front setback departure request and discussed approval of the project if the departure was removed. The Board recognized that initial early support was tied to a monolithic design concept and generous street level outdoor space. Ultimately, the Board directed the applicant pull back the façade or thoughtfully develop the lower two story expression and open space to read as a coherent and intentional design. (Guidelines CS2-C-2, CS2-D-5, DC2-A, DC2-D-2)

- 2. North Side Setback (SMC 23.45.518 B):** The Code requires a 7 ft average setback and 5 ft minimum setback for portions of a structure over 42 ft. The Code also requires a 10 ft average setback and 7 ft minimum for portions of a structure over 42 ft. The applicant proposes a 5 ft 2 in average and 4 ft 2 in minimum for all levels of the structure.

The Board struggled with how the departure achieved a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure and two Board members did not support the departure as shown. The Board directed the applicant to resolve the middle portion of the façade and recommended exploring additional planting to soften the façade and provide more of a planted buffer, sensitive to the neighboring building. (Guidelines CS2-D-5, DC2-A-2, DC2-D-2)

3. **Driveway Site Triangles (SMC23.54.030.G.4):** The Code states that the driveways must start 5'-0" from the lot line. The applicant proposes the driveway to start two feet from the lot line and a singular mirror to address visibility.

The Board unanimously indicated support of the departure as it minimizes the disruption of the streetscape for the driveway and addresses potential safety concerns. (Guideline DC1-B)

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the RECOMMENDATION meeting, the Board split 2-2 on moving the project forward. After the meeting, staff recommended the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided.