



## FINAL 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, May 25, 2016

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

Board Members Absent: Curtis Bigelow, Recused

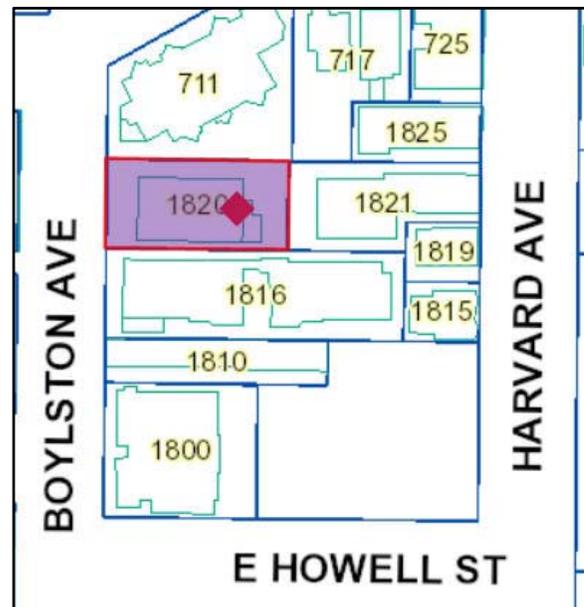
SDCI Staff Present: Magda Hogness

### 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 55 units and below grade parking for 14 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](mailto: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.

## FIRST RECOMMENDATION February 24, 2016

### 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.

<b>FINAL RECOMMENDATION May 25, 2016</b>
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### **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The applicant described the changes which included minimizing the departure requests, resolving the north elevation, developing the street facing lower and upper façade composition and enhancing the open space design.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following public comments were offered at the meeting:

- Support of the new design, especially the developed transition to the street.
- Recognized that the city is growing and is really impressed by this design. Many surrounding buildings are not as well built.
- Supported the proposed mix of materials and views and light for provided for the units; excited to see this in the neighborhood.
- Questioned if the design of the building conformed to Code. Concerned with trash removal through the garage driveway since the slope of this driveway is 20%. [*Staff note: The design must meet all standards. This review will occur as part of the Zoning review and will need Seattle Public Utilities approval.*]
- Supported the landscape design.
- Preferred for trash storage located in the garage, not on the street.
- Concerned with the north setback departure request.
- Supported the project as the massing is nicely integrated into the block and respectful of the existing development.
- Lack of support for the north setback departure request. The addition of lighting, trees and windows to soften the massive north facing wall does not address the problem.
- Concerned with the stairway exit pathway and that it will provide an outdoor haven for late night smoking and drinking.
- Concerned with lighting and glare impacts, the proposed lighting will be shining into bedrooms.
- Supported the proposed north setback distance as it is larger than the typical house to house distance in the neighborhood.

## 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)

## **SECOND RECOMMENDATION (May 25, 2016)**

The Board commended the applicant for the responsive development and design studies.

- 1. **North Façade Composition and Height, Bulk, and Scale:** The Board acknowledged the public comments on the north setback departure request and the concern over the bulk and scale of the frontage, however they concluded that the applicant had done a judicious job of responding and deferring to the adjacent context.

- a. The Board recognized that the proposed building siting responds to the location of open space within the block and steps with the massing shifts of the adjacent building to the north. The proposed setbacks allow for the majority of glazing to be located along the south façade which minimizes disrupting the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in the adjacent building to the north. (Guidelines CS2, DC2-A-2)
- b. The Board also agreed the design of façade had been further resolved with material transitions, location of glazing and that the additional planting softens the façade. (Guidelines DC2-A, DC2-D-2, DC3-C, DC4-D)
- c. The Board explained that the pathway along the north frontage doesn't appear to be the primary entrance and recognized the use of this pathway will largely depend on how the door is keyed. The Board supported downplaying the importance of the pathway with design cues and door access, but did not suggest this as condition of the project. (Guidelines DC2-D, DC3-C, DC4-D)

- 2. **Street Facing Façade Composition and Height, Bulk, and Scale:** The Board recognized the improvement of the frontage and agreed the decreased setback departure request is much more attuned to the neighborhood context.

- a. The Board agreed the developed design establishes a better relationship between the upper and lower massing. The Board supported the design and related departure as the departure strengthens the sliding bars/ monolithic design concept and creates an elegant composition. (Guidelines DC2-A, DC2-D, DC4)
- b. The Board recognized that the previous circuitous route to the lobby had been eliminated and strongly supported the direct access to the lobby as it further enhanced the open space design. The new design of the raised lobby and individual

stoops provides a strong connection to the street and a better transition to grade. (Guidelines CS1-C-2, PL3-A, PL3-C)

3. **Materials:** The Board unanimously supported the proposed materials, especially the variation of the OKO panels.
  - a. The Board also strongly supported the proposed brick material as it references the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood and improves wayfinding to the lobby. (Guidelines PL2-D, PL3-A, DC4-A, DC4-II, DC4-D)
  - b. Also at this location along the street front, the Board supported the wood cap on the concrete walls as it softens the streetscape frontage. (Guidelines DC2-D, DC3-A, DC4-A, DC4-II, DC4-D)
  - c. The Board agreed that the applicant’s explanation of the thicker 22 gauge metal panel had addressed their previous concerns with metal pillowing/ oil canning. (Guidelines DC2-D, DC4-A, DC4-II)
4. **Lighting.** Acknowledging the public concern about lighting impacts, the Board explained the proposed exterior lighting is shielded by a fence. Therefore, the Board supported the proposed exterior lighting and encouraged the applicant to avoid off-site night glare and light pollution with any lobby fixtures. (Guideline DC4-C-2)
5. **Trash:** The Board agreed with public comment that permanent trash storage should be located away from the streetscape and recommended resolving the trash pickup and driveway slope, but did not recommend this as condition of the project. (Guideline DC4-C-4)

## 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:** Vehicle 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 Final Recommendation meeting, the following departures were requested:

1. **Front Setback (SMC 23.45.518 B):** The Code requires a 7' average setback and a 5' minimum setback. The applicant proposes a 2'-6" minimum and a 4'-6" average for levels 3-7.

The Board unanimously supported this departure request as the design provides generous street level outdoor space and a coherent massing design concept. The Board recognized that the departure strengthens the sliding bars/ monolithic design concept and that the uppermost story is setback 19'-4" which reduces the perceived height of the structure from the street. The resulting design better meets Design Guidelines DC2-A, Architectural Concept Massing, DC2-D-2 Texture and DC3-A Building Open Space Relationship.

2. **North Side Setback (SMC 23.45.518 B):** The Code requires a 7' average setback and 5' minimum setback for portions of a structure under 42'; above this height the Code requires a 10' average setback and a 7' minimum setback. The applicant proposes a 5'-8" average setback and a 5'-1" minimum setback for all levels.

The Board acknowledged the decrease in the departure request since the previous meeting and unanimously supported the revised departure as the design responds well to the surrounding urban fabric. The Board recognized the design allows for the majority of the glazing to be located along the south façade, which provides privacy for the neighbors to the north. The Board also agreed the design of façade had been further resolved with material transitions, location of glazing, and additional planting. The design better meets Design Guidelines meets Design Guidelines CS2 Urban Pattern and Form, DC2-A, Architectural Concept Massing and DC2-D-2 Texture.

3. **Driveway Site Triangles (SMC23.54.030.G.4):** The Code states that the driveways must start 5' from the lot line. The applicant proposes the driveway to start 2' from the lot line and a singular mirror to address visibility.

The Board unanimously supported the departure as it minimizes the disruption of the streetscape for the driveway and addresses potential safety concerns. The resulting design better meets Guideline DC1-B Vehicular access and circulation.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the Second RECOMMENDATION meeting, the Board unanimously recommended approval of the project.

**The recommendation summarized above was based on the design review packet dated Wednesday, May 25, 2016, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the Wednesday, May 25, 2016 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context and reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, the five Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and departures with no conditions.**