# City of Seattle

**Department of Construction & Inspections**
Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN REVIEW

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE**
**NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

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| Project Number: | 3024206 |
| Address: | 8541 15TH Ave, NW |
| Applicant: | David Neiman, Neiman Taber Architecture |
| Date of Meeting: | Monday, November 20, 2017 |
| Board Members Present: | Dale Kutzera (Chair)<br>Chris Bell<br>Emily McNichols |
| Board Members Absent: | Marc Angelillo<br>Keith Walzak |
| SDCI Staff Present: | David L. Landry, AICP, Land Use Planner |

**SITE & VICINITY**

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 3 Pedestrian Designation Zone (NC3 P-40)

Nearby Zones: North – NC3 P-40
South – NC3 P-40
East – NC3 P-40
West - LR-3

Overlay Districts: Crown Hill Residential Urban Village
Frequent Transit Corridor

Project Area: 6,854 square feet (sq. ft.)


**Current Development:**
The proposal site is located on the west side of 15th Ave NW, midblock, between NW 87th St. to the north and NW 86th St. to the south. The site is currently occupied by a single-story masonry commercial building built in 1946.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**
The proposal site is located within the Crown Hill neighborhood which is within the Crown Hill Residential Urban Village Ballard a designated pedestrian zone, east of Ballard and west of Greenwood. The first 'occupants' of Crown Hill were located on a plot land just north of Ballard in what was to become the Crown Hill Cemetery. Conversely live residents move into the area in high numbers after the conclusion of World War II. Much of the architecture and many houses reflect the character of that era. There are still a fair number of single-level brick houses with distinct front yards from that time period.

In the 1980's and 90's the area saw a large influx of more people resulting in the construction of several apartments, condominiums and townhouses. The proposal site is located on the west side of 15th Ave NW a primary commercial arterial in Northwest Seattle which is an auto-oriented street that was partially designated a pedestrian zone in 2013. Most of 15th Ave is primarily comprised of single-story masonry commercial development on either side of the street that transitions to single family housing one block to the west; along 16th Ave NW and townhouse, duplex, apartments and condominiums one block to the east along Mary Ave NW.

**Access:**
Access to the site is currently via a curb cut west off of 15th Avenue NW from either the north or south direction or south off of NW 87th St. or north off of NW 85th St. along a narrow and unimproved alley way.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**
The site is not located in an Environmentally Critical Area.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**
This is a proposal to construct a four-story building containing 40 residential units and 2,131 sq. ft. of retail space located at ground level. Existing building to be demolished.

## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE June 19, 2017

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3024206) at the following 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 SDCI:

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|---|---|
| **Mailing Address:** | **Public Resource Center**<br>700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000<br>P.O. Box 34019<br>Seattle, WA 98124-4019 |
| **Email:** | PRC@seattle.gov |

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

At the EDG meeting, the following comments were provided:

- Asked where people might park.
- Stated that the square footage of the project is quite small.
- Asked what building was being removed.
- Wondered what the future impact might be if development extends to 16th Ave NW.

**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.

1. **Massing and Design Concept:** The Board overall favored the preferred scheme, Option C. They liked that the scheme had larger units and they appreciated that the project was being designed for workforce housing. The Board however questioned whether Options A or B were actually viable options. Members felt that there needed to be more of a justification as to why the applicant chose an "H" pattern floor plan for these options. The Board asked why the applicant did not go for a larger footprint that fills the whole site with the living units facing outward toward the right of ways. **(CS2-B-2, CS2-D-1, CS2-D-4, DC2-A-1, DC1-A-2, DC3-A-1)**

2. **Trash**: The Board questioned why the trash needed to be immediately adjacent to a living unit and were concerned that trash removal would require circulating through the building instead of providing a direct route to the alley for removal. The Board also observed that the trash room seemed generously sized and wondered if some of the bicycle parking could be placed there instead in the lobby area which they questioned the logic behind. The Board did concede that bike riders would take their bikes out to 15th Ave NW instead of out along the alley which is currently unpaved. **PL4-B-2, PL4-B-3, DC2-D-1, DC3-A-1, DC4-C-1)**

3. **Amenity Space**: After some discussion, the Board felt that the project did not have enough amenity space. Members said that they were accustomed to seeing projects like this with a large roof or a large amenity room inside the building. The Board was not impressed with the placement of the amenity area outside the rear door, adjacent to the alley and the trash pick-up area. Members felt that amenity at the very least needs to provide opportunity to create an environment that is usable and attractive and having the trash cross the usable active portion of it is unacceptable. The Board felt that the active portion should be expanded so that it is not being called out to in the design to haul trash across the amenity space. Board members suggested that a quick fix might be to flip the locations of the trash room and the electrical room. Finally the Board asked how can an amenity space be created that faces a dirt alley which they felt would not get used. Members asked if the space could be placed straight off of the lobby area somehow but

left it up to the applicant to find a solution. **CS1-B, PL3-C-3, DC1-A-1, DC1-A-2, DC2-D-1, DC3-A-1, DC4-C, DC4-D, DC4-A)**

4. **Elevator**: The Board questioned why the applicant did not choose to introduce an elevator. The Board had difficulty accepting the idea of no elevator which they felt would segregate the able bodied from the non-able bodied, forcing them to live on a specific floor, contrary to the concept of universal access. **PL4-A-1, PL4-B, DC3-A-1)**
    a. The Board strongly suggested that the applicant look at options for an elevator which they felt could solve some of the other problems with the amenity area and the trash. Board members suggested that the applicant could save a little money on the exterior pallet which might enable them to put in an elevator. **PL4-A-1, DC4-A-1)**

5. **Retail Space**: The board verbalized that they like the retail space as the residential entry is to one side and does not interrupt retail space. They also felt that the smaller designated spaces were flexible with lots of doors. They also like the overhead canopy and expanded sidewalk. **PL3-C-1, PL3-C-2, DC1-A-3, DC4-A)**

## RECOMMENDATION November 20, 2017

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**PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following comments were offered at the Recommendation meeting:

- Asked what separates the amenity space from the backyard and alley.

One purpose of the design review process is for the Board and City to receive comments from the public that help to identify issues about the site and design concept, identify applicable citywide and neighborhood design guidelines of highest priority to the site and explore conceptual design, siting alternatives and eventual architectural design. Concerns with off-street parking are reviewed as part of the environmental review conducted by SDCI and are not

part of this review. Density and uses are regulated by the Land Use Code and are not part of this review.

All public comments submitted in writing for this project can be viewed using the following link and entering the project number: http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/edms/ .

**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 recommendations.

1. **Massing:** The Board discussed the overall scale of the massing and suggested that the building did not have the correct proportions because the bottom floor appeared to be too squat while the upper floors seemed too tall. In their deliberations, the Board felt that overall building lacked secondary architectural details.
    a. The Board recommended a condition to introduce secondary architectural features using cornice detail, banding or other elements. **(DC2-C)**

2. **Material and Streetscape:** The Board approved of the rhythm and placement of both the commercial and residential windows. However, the Board noted that there is a disconnect between the design of the storefront windows and the smaller transom windows, as the commercial windows suggest a feeling of live-work units at the ground floor and not commercial uses. The Board also commented that the canopy appears visually to be too low at 8 feet, as the convention is normally a height of 10 to 12 feet.
    a. The Board recommended a condition to provide greater integration of the transom windows with the commercial windows by using any of the following: one integrated storefront window system; all black vinyl windows; or integrated trim that brings both window systems together or increasing the height of the transom. The Board left it up to the applicant as to which approach to take. **(DC2-A)**
    b. Although not a condition of final approval, the Board strongly advised that the canopy be redesigned to reflect the rhythm of the building, which could include setbacks and protrusions. **(PL1-C-3, PL2-C-1, PL3-A-2)**

3. **Living Units and Trash Room**: The Board questioned whether the trash removal design responded to EDG, since it still requires residents to navigate a circuitous route through the building instead of providing a direct route to the alley. The Board noted that the relocation of the trash room to the north wall didn't resolve this concern, but instead appeared to be a change to achieve a larger 2-bedroom unit at the southwest corner. The Board also questioned the design rationale for a notch on the south facing façade and not one on the north, and whether the notch would provide light or air to the residences. After further deliberation, the Board declined to recommend a condition for any additional changes to the trash room circulation or the design of the notch. **(CS1-B-2, PL3-B-2, DC1-C-4)**

3. **Commercial Spaces:** The Board supported the four openings on the ground floor designed for smaller commercial retail. The Board also supported the taller offset entry residential entry. The Board observed that the canopy was a continuous solid band with no interruptions or changes, which appears to visually erase the rhythm of the first and second floor windows. The Board questioned whether the design responded to EDG, since there were no doors leading from 'back of house' areas of the commercials spaces to the interior hallway for purposes of refuse removal. The Board acknowledged that some changes had been made to the programming and building circulation and they still had concerns about the design of access and circulation, but declined to recommend conditions for these items. **(DC1-A-3, DC1-C-4)**

4. **Secondary Architectural Elements**: The Board supported the design with the use of the cedar siding and the tall thin windows. However, the Board noted a lack of secondary architectural elements on the street facing facade. They observed that the upper stories did not use any window trim, cornice detail, or horizontal banding. The Board also questioned why the canopy wasn't used to visually separate the first floor from the upper floors but rather placed below the transom windows. The Board noted that they normally see the placement of canopies inside the commercial zone. The Board was also troubled by the lack of continuity between the top of the first floor window sill, the canopy, the clearstory windows. The Board suggested that a larger clerestory window or a larger break between the clerestory and the commercial window could be used to create a more distinctive looking street facing façade.

    a. The Board recommended a condition to introduce secondary architectural features to create scale and a cohesive design on the street facing façade. **(CS2-A-2,-DC2-B, DC2-D-2, DC-4-A)**
    b. The Board recommended a condition to install protection at the top of the cedar siding to prevent the planting and standing water from degrading the wood finish. **(DC-4-A)**

5. **Roof Parapet**: The Board questioned the proposed height of the parapet, since there is no public access to the roof. The Board also asked if the parapet could be half the current height with the use of a rail system with fall protection measures, a number of feet back from the edge of a shorter parapet. The Board stated that while the design is very simple and restrained, why there couldn't be a cornice or other details that mark the top of the second floor and top of the building. The Board said that they would rather see something that further decorates the building in addition to the 'green crown', vegetative planting.
    a. The Board recommended a condition to install planters on the rooftop and level three along the street facing building façade. **(DC2-B-1, DC2-B-2-b, DC3-C-2)**
    b. The Board recommended a condition that the rooftop planters shall stay low if they are placed on the outside of the parapet. If placed inside the parapet, the planters shall be elevated so that the vegetation can spill out over the edge of the parapet. **(DC2-B-2-b, DC3-C-2, DC4-D)**

6. **Lobby and Amenity Area:** The Board support the response to EDG with the modified design of the amenity space so residents no longer need to cross through the amenity area to gain access to the trash room. The Board observed that because the amenity space is not located in a convenient location nor is it a destination locale, the space is unlikely to be used to any extent. However, the Board declined to recommend a condition to change this aspect of the design.

   The Board questioned the location of bike parking in the lobby entryway and the lack of seating in the lobby. The Board suggested that the project design could be improved by replacing the two bedroom unit on the south side of the building with a lobby, bike parking, and amenity space that flowed from the front of the building into the back area. The Board observed that the placement of a barbeque unit located directly underneath an overhang and immediately adjacent to the operable windows of two living units could prove to be a problem. After deliberation, the Board declined to recommend conditions for either one of these observations.

   The Board stated that the amenity space does not have a relationship to the building and recommended conditions to resolve the issue:

   a. The Board recommended a condition that the windows facing the amenity area should be aligned with the occupied amenity spaces. **(CS2-B-3, DC1-A-2, DC3-C-2)**
   b. The Board recommended a condition to create more of an indoor – outdoor relationship of the amenity space with the rest of the building. **(CS2-B-3, DC1-A-2, DC3-C-2)**

**DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES**

The priority 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.

| **PUBLIC LIFE** |
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| **CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.** |

**CS1-B SUNLIGHT AND NATURAL VENTILATION**

**CS1-B-1. Sun and Wind:** Take advantage of solar exposure and natural ventilation available onsite where possible. Use local wind patterns and solar gain as a means of reducing the need for mechanical ventilation and heating where possible.

**CS1-B-2. Daylight and Shading:** Maximize daylight for interior and exterior spaces and minimize shading on adjacent sites through the placement and/or design of structures on the site.

**CS1-B-3. Managing Solar Gain:** Manage direct sunlight falling on south and west facing facades through shading devices and existing or newly planted trees.

**CS2-C. RELATIONSHIP TO BLOCK**

**CS2-B-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 where it is

already present, and respond to datum lines created by adjacent buildings at the first three floors. Where adjacent properties are undeveloped or underdeveloped, design the party walls to provide visual interest through materials, color, texture, or other means.

**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. Note that existing buildings may or may not reflect the density allowed by zoning or anticipated by applicable policies.

**CS2-D-2. Existing Site Features:** Use changes in topography, site shape, and vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent proper-ties; for example siting the greatest mass of the building on the lower part of the site or using an existing stand of trees to buffer building height from a smaller neighboring building.

**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. Factors to consider:

a. Distance to the edge of a less (or more) intensive zone;
b. Differences in development standards between abutting zones;
c. The type of separation from adjacent properties (e.g. separation by property line only, by an alley or street or open space, or by physical features such as grade change);
d. Adjacencies to different neighborhoods or districts; adjacencies to parks, open spaces, significant buildings or view corridors; and
e. Shading to or from neighboring properties.

**CS2-D-4. Massing Choices:** Strive for a successful transition between zones where a project abuts a less intense zone. In some areas, the best approach may be to lower the building height, break up the mass of the building, and/or match the scale of adjacent properties in building detailing. It may be appropriate in other areas to differ from the scale of adjacent buildings but preserve natural systems or existing features, enable better solar exposure or site orientation, and/or make for interesting urban form.

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

## PUBLIC LIFE

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

**PL3-C RETAIL EDGES**

**PL3-C-1. Porous Edge:** Engage passersby with opportunities to interact visually with the building interior using glazing and transparency. Create multiple entries where possible

and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.

**PL3-C-2. Visibility:** Maximize visibility into the building interior and merchandise displays. Consider fully operational glazed wall-sized doors that can be completely opened to the street, increased height in lobbies, and/or special lighting for displays.

**PL3-C-3. Ancillary Activities:** Allow space for activities such as sidewalk vending, seating, and restaurant dining to occur. Consider setting structures back from the street or incorporating space in the project design into which retail uses can extend.PL4 Active Transportation: Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.

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

**PL4-A. ENTRY LOCSATION 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.

**PL4-B. PLANNING AHEAD FOR BICYCLISTS**

**PL4-B-1. Early Planning:** Consider existing and future bicycle traffic to and through the site early in the process so that access and connections are integrated into the project along with other modes of travel.

**PL4-B-2. Bike Facilities:** Facilities such as bike racks and storage, bike share stations, shower facilities and lockers for bicyclists should be located to maximize convenience, security, and safety.

**PL4-B-3. Bike Connections:** Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project. Design bicycling access points so that they relate to the street grid and include information about connections to existing trails and infrastructure where possible. Also consider signage, kiosks, building lobbies, and bicycle parking areas, where provided, as opportunities to share bicycling information.

## 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 by considering the following:

a. a location at the crossroads of high levels of pedestrian traffic;
b. proximity to nearby or project-related shops and services; and
c. amenities that complement the building design and offer safety and security when used outside normal business hours.

**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, particularly activities along sidewalks, parks or other public spaces.

**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. In addition, special situations such as very large sites, unusually shaped sites, or sites with varied topography may require particular attention to where and how building massing is arranged as they can accentuate mass and height.

**DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass**: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects. Consider creating recesses or indentations in the building envelope; adding balconies, bay windows, porches, canopies or other elements; and/or highlighting building entries.

**DC2-B ARCHITECTURAL AND FAÇADE COMPOSITION**

**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. These may include:

a. newsstands, ticket booths and flower shops (even if small or narrow);
b. green walls, landscaped areas or raised planters;
c. wall setbacks or other indentations;
d. display windows; trellises or other secondary elements;
e. art as appropriate to area zoning and uses; and/or terraces and landscaping where retaining walls above eye level are avoidable.

**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. Pay special attention to the first three floors of the building in order to maximize opportunities to engage the pedestrian and enable an active and vibrant street front.

**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.

**DC3 Open Space Concept: Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.**

**DC3-A OPEN SPACE USES AND ACTIVITIES**

**DC3-A-1 Interior/Exterior Fit:** Develop an open space concept in conjunction with the architectural concept to ensure that interior and exterior spaces relate well to each other and support the functions of the development.

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

**DC4-A BUILDING MATERIALS**

**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. Highly visible features, such as balconies, grilles and railings should be especially attractive, well-crafted and easy to maintain. Pay particular attention to environments that create harsh conditions that may require special materials and details, such as marine areas or open or exposed sites.

**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. Choose plants that will emphasize or accent the design, create enduring green spaces, and be appropriate to particular locations taking into account solar access, soil conditions, and adjacent patterns of use. Select landscaping that will thrive under urban conditions.

**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. It may be necessary to create a landscaping plan for various stages of plant maturity, such as 5, 10, and 20 year plans in order to ensure the landscaping will perform and function as needed over the life of the project.

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

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

At the time of the Recommendation meeting, no departures were requested for massing Option C, the applicant's preferred massing option.

**BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

The recommendations summarized below were based on the design review packet dated November 20, 2017 and material shown and verbally described by the applicant at the November 20, 2017 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, the three Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and departures, with the following conditions:

1. Incorporate secondary architectural features using cornice detail, banding or other elements. **(DC2-C)**

2. Provide greater integration of the transom windows with the commercial windows by using any of the following: one integrated storefront window system; all black vinyl windows; or integrated trim that brings both window systems together or increasing the height of the transom. **(DC2-A)**

3. Incorporate secondary architectural features to create scale and a cohesive design on the street facing façade. **(CS2-A-2,-DC2-B, DC2-D-2, DC-4-A)**

4. Install protection at the top of the cedar siding to prevent the planting and standing water from degrading the wood finish. **(DC-4-A)**

5. Planters are installed on the rooftop and level three along the street facing façade. **(DC2-B-2-b, DC3-C-2, DC4-D)**

6. Rooftop planters shall stay low if they are placed on the outside of the parapet. If placed inside the parapet, the planters shall be elevated so that the vegetation can spill out over the edge of the parapet. **(DC2-B-2-b, DC3-C-2)**

7. Align the windows facing the amenity area with the occupied amenity spaces. **(CS2-B-3, DC3-C-2)**

8. Create more of an indoor – outdoor relationship of the amenity space with the rest of the building. **(CS2-B-3, DC3-C-2)**