



**FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE  
 NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Record Number: 3028950-LU  
 Address: 4727 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE  
 Applicant: Jacob Young, Citizen Design  
 Date of Meeting: Monday, December 10, 2018  
 Board Members Present: James Marria (Chair)  
 Dan Rusler  
 Katy Haima  
 Board Members Absent: Brian Bishop  
 Anita Jeerage  
 SDCI Staff Present: David L. Landry, AICP, Land Use Planner

**SITE & VICINITY**

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed – University District with height limit of 75-240 (M1) [SM-U 75-240 (M1)]

Nearby Zones: North – SM-U 75-240 (M1)  
 South – SM-U 75-240 (M1)  
 East – SM-U 75-240 (M1)  
 West -- SM-U 75-240 (M1)

Overlay Districts:  
 University Community Urban Center Village  
 University Station Area Overlay District  
 Frequent Transit (No minimum parking required)

Project Area: 4,500 square feet (sq. ft.)



The top of this image is north.  
 This map is for illustrative purposes only.  
 In the event of omissions, errors or differences, the documents in SDCI's file will control.

**Current Development:**

The proposal site is a mid-block parcel located on the east side of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE between NE 50<sup>th</sup> St. to the north and NE 47<sup>th</sup> St. to the south. The site is currently occupied by a wood-framed single-family residential structure built in 1907, currently used as a triplex, a gravel parking area accessed from alley at the rear or west side of the residence and two large Big Leaf Maple trees approximately 30 inches in diameter.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

The proposal site is located in the western portion of the University District neighborhood, within the smaller confines of the University Station Area Overlay District and the University Community Urban Center Village. The site is located midblock on 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE which is a designated bike route, between NE 52<sup>nd</sup> St and NE 50<sup>th</sup> St.

The property located immediately to the north of the proposal site consists of a wood frame motel built in 1961 designed with three floors of units over a parking garage. To the south is a recently constructed 6-story residential building.

Other nearby development includes: early 20<sup>th</sup> century single-family residences; older residential structures converted for commercial use; contemporary 4-6 story residential mixed-use buildings, an 11-story reinforced concrete apartment building built in 1971, and 1-2 story commercial buildings. . Located to the north of the apartment building is surface parking with two more contemporary multi-story apartment buildings located to the north with a single story commercial building located further to the north at the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and NE 50<sup>th</sup> St.

This stretch of 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE is residential in character with an abundance of street trees and other landscaping between the sidewalk and the street curb. The remaining single –family residence have traditional bermed front yards, and front yard setbacks consistent with single family residential development north of NE 50<sup>th</sup> St.

**Access:**

Vehicular access to the site is via 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, with a rolled curb and driveway adjacent to the southern property line.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

The site is not located in an Environmentally Critical Area.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This is a proposal to construct a seven-story apartment building with 60 small efficiency dwelling units and seven apartment units. No parking is proposed. Existing structure to be demolished.

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE March 12, 2018**

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3028950) 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:

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

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

At the EDG meeting, the following comments were provided:

- Asked if trash could be moved to the opposite side of the building.
- Expressed concern that the 'sunken' walkways located along the north and south of the building designed as emergency egress for basement units will become throughways and loitering spaces for transients as they are connected directly to the alley. As such, the commenter requested that gates be installed to discourage any unauthorized use of those walkway spaces.
- The owner of the hotel was concerned about view impacts into their units and asked if floor level heights of the proposed structure would be the same as the motel.
- Concerned that the building of 64 residential units without parking would be an impact and suggested that a building manager would even have a car – thus needing a place to park.

One purpose of the design review process is for the Board and City to receive comments from the public that help to identify feedback and concerns 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, traffic and construction impacts are reviewed as part of the environmental review conducted by SDCI and are not part of this review. Concerns with building height calculations, bicycle storage standards, and other zoning compliance issues are addressed under the City's zoning code and are not part of this review. Neither SDCI, nor the Design Review process have authority over parking enforcement.

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 siting and design guidance.

- 1. Massing Options:** While the Board supported the preferred alternative, Option A, they questioned why the elevator tower was placed in the same location for all three massing options. The Board asked if the applicant had considered a massing that included residential units that face the street and placing the elevator tower in an alternative location. The Board asked if this design approach set a precedent for the future in the context of an evolving neighborhood. The Board did not request additional design options which featured the placement of the elevator in different location. **(CS3-A, DC1-A, DC2-E)**
  
- 2. Architectural Concept:** The Board recognized the applicant's attempt in creating a unique design concept with the use of bold angles and differing façade depths. The Board enjoyed the images located at the rear of the packet depicting the inspirational imagery for this innovative design approach. The Board also appreciated the two-story expression of the singular column which helped emphasize the design proposal's uniqueness. However, the Board noted that there might be too many different concepts being brought together in one design, and suggested emphasizing just one concept. Other suggestions included making the design more unique and creative by bringing more differentiation and changes to the building form and making the column more massive, or reducing or eliminating the use of color all together. While the Board liked the same column form duplicated at the roof deck, they suggested that covered roof deck may not be allowed per building code requirements. If that is the case, the same column form could be maintained by simply creating an un-covered vertical framed element using the same design language.
  - a.** The Board approved of the overall design as a unique concept and supported the creative direction the project has taken to date. Further develop the design with more rhythm and composition, and demonstrate a design justification for the parti being represented in the architectural forms. **(DC2-B, DC2-E, DC3-A, DC4-A, DC3-I)**
  - b.** The Board was concerned with the amount of blank façade facing the street especially at the upper levels and two floor height at the street. The Board observed that the precedent images gave some idea of the possible use of wood slats and lighting but did not give specific direction, other than noting that there are a multitude of ways to address blank walls. **(DC4-A, DC4-I)**
  - c.** The Board asked for additional details how the expression of the building fabric will be expressed in relationship to the location of the elevator/ public space and lobby as seen from the street. **(DC1-A, DC4-A, DC4-I)**
  
- 3. Trash:** The Board noted that while the proposed trash would be located immediately adjacent to the north property line and the motel to the north, it would be located next to a 14 foot vertical retaining wall and not in close proximity of unit windows. The Board didn't support the alternative of placing the trash along the southern property line, which would have more of a visual impact. However, the Board noted that the trash placement

would have impacts at either side of the property, and suggested that the trash could be placed to the interior of the building.

- a. The Board directed the applicant to create an enclosed trash room in the footprint where the trash is currently indicated on page 29 of the EDG packet. The Board was also ok with either relocating the trash room to the area of the mechanical room, or placing it in a more centralized location, making it easier to install a trash chute. **(CS2-II)**.

4. **Respect for Adjacent Sites:** The Board observed that the design proposal did not respond to the location of the elevator corridor of the adjacent building to the south. The Board noted that the units on the south facing façade might be too close to the adjacent building's elevator corridor. The Board suggested further review of the floor layout and possibly setting the proposed development back from the adjacent building elevator core. The Board also agreed with the public comment that the 'sunken' walkways located along the north and south of the building could be used as throughways and loitering spaces, as they have direct access to the alley. Board members discussed how the sunken walkway spaces could possibly be broken up with a combination of hardscapes, landscape, or terraced landscaping instead of stairs, but declined to make this a specific directive.

- a. Install gates to discourage any unauthorized use of the sunken walkway spaces. **(PL2-B, CS2-II)**

5. **Sidewalk and Right of Way Improvements:** The Board agreed with SDOT's recommendations and strongly encouraged the installation of a 6' planting strip on the frontage of the site and to upgrade the existing sidewalk to the minimum standard width of 6' as 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE is a designated neighborhood greenway. **(CS3-A)**

#### INITIAL RECOMMENDATION October 1, 2018

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the record number (3028950-LU) at this website:

[http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Project\\_Reviews/Reports/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

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**Mailing Public Resource Center**

**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
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**Email:** [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments offered at this meeting.

One purpose of the design review process is for the Board and City to receive comments from the public that help to identify feedback and concerns 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, traffic and construction impacts are reviewed as part of the environmental review conducted by SDCI and are not part of this review.

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## 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. Architectural Concept & Response to Guidance:** The Board suggested that while the design retained the major elements from original EDG design, they also felt that there might still be too many individual elements on the street facing facade. They also thought that while the overall organization of the design is still on the right track, they also felt that composition hadn't changed much since EDG. Of primary note is the elevator core placed prominently at the street edge and the large amount of blank wall created as a result. Board members suggested that placing the elevator and resulting blank wall so prominently along the street does not set the right design precedent for street facing facades in the neighborhood, as described in Initial Recommendation item #2.

The Board acknowledged that at EDG they recognized the fun and playful aspects of the different elements on the street facing façade which included the entry and front canopy, the balconies, the wood accent, the framed box, and the various angled elements. The Board supported the three story groupings of balconies and windows, the column element and the two story entryway. They also supported the different façade depths that the balconies and other elements helped to shape. However, the Board struggled to see how of these elements work together to create one nicely composed façade. The Board suggested that if the design language centered on columns or groupings of three, then those elements could be deployed across the whole of the design as one approach. Finally the Board disagreed with the Design Team's assessment that the long skinny site was a detriment but rather a rare situation in which unique things could be done to create visual interest.

- a. The Board noted that the communal balconies on the lower floors are too small and probably would not be used. Due to their small size, they do not assist in creating a relationship between the building and street edge. As such the Board suggested that the balconies would be more usable as additional living space for the living units, possibly glazed to make them more

transparent and engaging with the street. **(PL2-B-1, PL2-B-3, DC2-B-2, DC1-A-4)**

- b. The Board recommended that there should be a consistent design language or hierarchy established for the exterior building façade. **(DC4-A, DC4-I)**
- c. The Board suggested that the design team embrace the 45-foot wide site as an opportunity rather than a constraint by using the narrow dimensions to emphasize and expand the fun elements that they have already brought into the design. **(CS2-I, CS2-II, CS3-A-2)**
- d. The Board requested further information demonstrating the design the top of the building and how the top strengthens the overall design concept. **(CS3-A-2, DC2-B-1, DC4-A-1, DC4-I-i)**
- e. The Board stated that while the rear building façade is located on an alley and is less active, the rear façade should be designed to be consistent with the other facades. **(CS2-II, CS3-A-2, DC2-B-1, DC2-B-1)**

**2. Elevator Tower:** The Board asked if the design team considered placing the elevator core back away from the street, possibly swapping it with one of the living units. The Board stated that in its current form they did not support the design of the elevator tower and recommended that it could either be relocated allowing for the placement units along the street edge for greater transparency and street engagement, or redesigned in a manner that would allow the elevator core to engage directly with the street itself. One possibility could be the use of a transparent elevator or an intervening amenity space such as a lounge between the street and the elevator.

- a. The Board requested that the applicant develop an alternative location or design for the elevator tower that better aids in activating the street. **(PL2-B-1, PL2-B-3,**
- b. The Board voiced that they would support not placing or having a street facing residential unit at grade in between the elevator and the street, if it aided in resolving their issue with the current location of the elevator tower. The Board suggested that the space could be redesigned to accommodate a lobby, bike storage or other use. **PL2-B-3, (DC1-A-4, DC1-A-2)**

**3. Materials:** The Board supported the choice of materials especially the wood composite material.

- a. The Board stated that the vertical wood element reaching upward from the communal balcony is successful and should be retained. **(DC4-A, DC4-I, DC2-B-1)**

**4. Side yard and Landscaping:** The Board questioned the two continuous sunken walkways outside of the basement units, which appear to be paved and landscaped consistent with the primary entry. The Board felt that in their current configuration the sunken walks with the four different gateways would present a degree of confusion as to where the primary entryway is located. The Board noted that the walkways as seen directly from the street

incorrectly emphasizes the spaces as the primary pedestrian access points. The also stated that the gates should not be the defining visual queue for the front entry transition.

- a. The Board directed the applicant to resolve the entry transition so that there is more deliberate entry sequence and visual cues for where the lobby entry is located. **(PL2-B-1, DC1-A-1, DC2-E-1,**
- b. The Board directed the applicant to reduce the amount of paving within two continuous sunken walkways and introduce more unique landscaping elements, such a variety of vegetation. They suggested that the treatment could also include some form of vegetative screening for the adjacent properties as well as provide visual interest to the basement units. **(CS2-II, DC4-I, DC4-I-v)**

5. **Plant Palette:** The Board supported the proposed plant palette and stated that it has good deal of variety not typically seen, which makes it fun and visually interesting. **(DC2-B-2.b, DC2-B-2.f)**

#### FINAL RECOMMENDATION December 10, 2018

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## 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. Architectural Concept & Response to Guidance:

- a. The Board supported the changes that were made to the building and acknowledged that they have resulted in an overall improvement to the street facing façade. **(PL2-B-1, PL2-B-3, DC2-B-2, DC1-A-4)**
- b. The Board supported the simplified design language which now features a hinge point as one of three clear parts designed to overlap to create a better sense of integration. The Board also appreciated the location of the balcony poles and how they reinforce the building's hinge point. **(DC4-A, DC4-I)**
- c. The Board agreed that the removal of the elevator tower from the front façade and away from the street edge is an enormous improvement to the overall design, allowing the building to relate better to the street. **(PL2-B-1, PL2-B-3, DC1-A-4, DC1-A-2)**
- d. The Board appreciated how the center balconies are carved-out elements, while stitching together the dark vertical metal siding with the lighter white Hardie-panel. **(PL2-B-1, PL2-B-3, DC2-B-2, DC1-A-4)**

### 2. Entry Transition

- a. The Board agreed that moving the elevator tower away from the street has opened up the elevator lobby, creating more space for building users and a better entry sequence as well. **(PL2-B-3, DC1-A-4, DC1-A-2)**

### 3. Rear Building Façade:

- a. The Board approved of the redesign of the rear building façade and how it more closely resembles the other facades. The Board also appreciated how the façade uses clean forms and sits on a simple concrete base. **(CS2-II, CS3-A-2, DC2-B-1)**

### 4. Materials:

- a. The Board appreciated the change from white vinyl windows to black vinyl windows as the change made the design looks 'more crisp'. **(DC4-A, DC4-I, DC2-B-1)**
- b. The Board appreciated the design of the venting details and the fact they have been placed primarily on the side of the building **(DC4-A, DC4-I, DC2-B-1)**

**5. Side yard and Landscaping:**

- a. The Board recommended that their concerns about two continuous sunken walkways outside of the basement units with the different gateways had been visually resolved by re-orienting the front entry sequence, providing a bench element, adding a change in ground texture, and adding view obscuring vegetation in front of the sunken walkway. **(PL2-B-1, DC1-A-1, DC2-E-1)**
- b. The Board was satisfied with the reduction in the amount of paving material within two continuous sunken walkways and the increased installation of unique vegetative landscaping elements. **(CS2-II, DC4-I, DC4-I-v)**

**6. Lighting:**

- a. The Board supported the ‘zig-zag’ lighting pattern at the front as an interesting design detail. **(PL2-B-2)**

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

At the time of the Final Recommendation meeting, no departures were requested.

**DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES**

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

<b>CONTEXT &amp; SITE</b>
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***University Supplemental Guidance:***

**CS2-I Responding to Site Characteristics**

**Context**

The pedestrian-oriented street streetscape is perhaps the most important characteristic to be emphasized in the neighborhood. The University Community identified certain streets as “Mixed Use Corridors”. These are streets where commercial and residential uses and activities interface and create a lively, attractive, and safe pedestrian environment. The Mixed Use Corridors are shown on Map 1 (page 3).

Another important site feature in the University Community is the presence of the Burke Gilman Trail. The primary goal is to minimize impacts to views, sunlight and mixed uses while increasing safety and access along the trail.

**Guideline**

For properties facing the Burke Gilman Trail, new buildings should be located to minimize impacts to views of Mount Rainier, Cascade Mountains and Lake Washington, and allow for sunlight along the trail and increase safety and access.

**CS2-II Respect for Adjacent Sites**

**Context**

This Seattle Design Guideline is particularly important where a building’s back side, service areas or parking lots could impact adjacent residential uses. Map 2 on page 4 shows potential impact areas—these are where Lowrise zones abut commercial zones.

**Guideline**

Special attention should be paid to projects in the zone edge areas as depicted in Map 2 on page 4 to ensure impacts to Low-rise zones are minimize

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

**CS3-A EMPHASIZING POSITIVE NEIGHBORHOOD ATTRIBUTES**

**CS3-A-1. Fitting Old and New Together:** Create compatibility between new projects, and existing architectural context, including historic and modern designs, through building articulation, scale and proportion, roof forms, detailing, fenestration, and/or the use of complementary materials.

**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-3. Established Neighborhoods:** In existing neighborhoods with a well-defined architectural character, site and design new structures to complement or be compatible with the architectural style and siting patterns of neighborhood buildings.

**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.

**PUBLIC LIFE**

**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.

**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;
- 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-B ARCHITECTURAL AND FACADE COMPOSITION**

**DC2-B-1. Façade Composition:** Design all building façades—including alleys and visible roofs— considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all façades are attractive and well-proportioned through the placement and detailing of all elements, including bays, fenestration, and materials, and any patterns created by their arrangement. On sites that abut an alley, design the alley façade and its connection to the street carefully. At a minimum, consider wrapping the treatment of the street-facing façade around the alley corner of the building.

**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
- f. terraces and landscaping where retaining walls above eye level are unavoidable.

#### **DC2-E FORM AND FUNCTION**

**DC2-E-1. Legibility and Flexibility:** Strive for a balance between building 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.

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

#### **DC3-A. BUILDING-OPEN SPACE RELATIONSHIP**

**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. 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.

***University Supplemental Guidance:***

**DC4-I Exterior Finish Materials**

**DC4-I-i. Desired Materials:** See full Guidelines for list of desired materials.

**DC4-I-iii. Discouraged Materials:** See full Guidelines for list of discouraged materials.

**DC4-I-iv. Anodized Metal:** Where anodized metal is used for window and door trim, then care should be given to the proportion and breakup of glazing to reinforce the building concept and proportions.

**DC4-I-v. Fencing:** Fencing adjacent to the sidewalk should be sited and designed in an attractive and pedestrian oriented manner.

**DC4-I-vii. Light Standards:** Light standards should be compatible with other site design and building elements.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendation summarized above was based on the design review packet dated Monday, December 10, 2018, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the Monday, December 10, 2018 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 no conditions.