



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

D.M. Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE  
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**

**Project Number:** 2502312  
**Address:** 1611 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East  
**Applicant:** Joseph Kolmer, Architect, Weber Thompson,  
for Carol Cambers

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Master Use Permit to establish use for the future construction of a three-story residential building containing three residential units. Accessory parking will be provided at grade underneath structure. The existing structure will be demolished under separate permit.

The following Master Use Permit components are required:

**Administrative Design Review** - Section 23.41, Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) with Development Standard Departures:

- 1. Lowrise Zones – Parking and Access (23.45.018.B)

**SEPA DETERMINATION:**  Exempt  DNS  EIS  
 DNS with conditions  
 DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Site Development

The subject site is rectangular in shape and comprises a land area of approximately 4,920 square feet in the of Madison Park neighborhood overlooking Lake Washington. The development site is located one block west of the Lake Washington shoreline and is within a Multifamily Lowrise Three (L-3) zone with a density limit of one unit per 800 square feet.



The subject site is an interior lot located along the west side of 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East, between East Garfield Street and East Blaine Street, with views of Lake Washington and Mount Rainier. The street frontage (43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East) is fully improved with sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. A 14 foot wide hard surface alley abuts the subject site along the west property line - which in turn will require a Code complying one foot dedication. The site is elevated above the street and is nearly flat over its entire length with a slight elevation change of approximately two feet adjacent to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East street frontage. The development site contains one existing residential apartment structure located mid-depth on the subject lot. The two-story residential structure was built in 1963. From the 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East frontage the site features modest landscaping which includes ground cover, hedges and shrubs. The rear is paved over to provide surface parking for four vehicles.

### Area Development

The site is on a block that has views to Lake Washington and Mount Rainier to the east and south, respectively. Residential structures in the area are a mix of post-modern and arts and craft styled residential structures. Contemporary structures feature large plate glass windows facing east. Two residential towers located to the east of 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East dominate the streetscape and skyline, obscuring views to the Lake Washington and further east. Zoning in the vicinity includes Multifamily, L-1 & L-2 to the north and northwest, with L-3 to the north and east; Residential, Single Family 5,000 (SF 5000) across the alley to the west, and SF 7200 to the south. To the north along East Madison Street, the zone changes to Neighborhood Commercial One with a 30 foot height limit. This area includes restaurants, banks, general retail, and office uses supported by the Madison Park community. Seattle Parks' Madison Park is located one block north of the subject site. The immediate residential neighborhood is a mixture of older lowrise apartments and single family homes. Given the current zoning, it is likely that redevelopment will occur on other nearby properties, particularly those developed with single family homes in multifamily zones.

### Proposal

The owner proposes to demolish an existing two-story apartment building and erect a three (3)-story, three (3) - unit residential building. The structure would be setback from the 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue street frontage to allow the primary residential open space within the front setback area. The main entry will be mid-point along the south façade that is access from a pedestrian pathway running along the length of the south property line. The design proposes a finished façade supplemented with masonry brickwork, and will incorporate decks, bay windows and cornice elements to reflect the vernacular of the area. The three-story building will feature one level parking garage at grade level. The parking area will be underneath the cantilevered portion of the structure, behind a decorative metal mesh screen along the sides. Parking will be access from the alley which has triggered this Administrative Design Review process, at the applicant's request. The applicant proposes add one tandem stall per each unit for a total 4.5 stalls (1.5 stalls per unit). Each floor will be devoted to one residential unit, for a total of three units.

### Public Comments

Date of Notice of Application:	September 15, 2005
Date End of Comment Period:	September 28, 2005
# Letters	1

The Department received one comment letter during the public comment period and nine letters were received during the EDG public comment phase for a total of ten letters. The one letter received during the comment period did not support the departure requests to allow vehicle access from the alley. The letter addressed concerns of pedestrian and bicycle safety for a development that proposed vehicles from the alley. The applicant has requested a development departure to allow vehicle access through the alley that will be discussed later in this document.

Three of the letters nine letters received just wanted to receive notice of when the decision would be published. The other letters received focused attention on the proximity of the proposed building upon abutting properties and parking location and access. Several letters directed attention to accessing parking stalls off the alley. Across the centerline of the alley to the west is a less dense Single Family 5,000 residential zone and loading the alley with additional parking will have an adverse impact. (The applicant will reduce the number of units from 6 to 3 and provide an additional parking space for each unit, resulting in a net increase in available parking by two stalls. If the tandem stalls were removed, the proposal would have a net decrease in on-site parking availability from existing conditions.)

Also, reducing available parking within the right-of-way was a concern, but since no curb cuts are proposed within 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East this concern has been made mute. Other concerns included location of the proposed building on development site, and impacts related to height, bulk, and scale. The structure went through several design iterations to address many of the concerns raised by the public. One comment letter wanted to inform us that they had not received notification that existing units were slated for demolition and that they would be requesting Tenant Relocation Assistance.

## **ANALYSIS - DESIGN REVIEW**

### **Guidelines; Design Response & Recommendation**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site, design context provided by the proponents, and reviewing public comment, the Department of Planning and Development has identified the guidelines below to be of high priority identified by letter (A, B, and C, etc.) and number (1, 2, & 3) those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*".

The analysis below presents the priority guidelines first, followed by a description of the applicants design response and then the Directors recommendations are stated.

#### ***A Site Planning***

##### ***A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics***

***The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities.***

##### ***A-2 Streetscape Compatibility***

***The siting of buildings should Acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.***

**A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street**

*Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.*

**A-6 Transition between Residences and Street**

*For residential projects, the space between the building and sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.*

**A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access**

*Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.*

- The overall scale of the structure should be compatible with other buildings in the immediate area and a fine scale should be employed.
- A pronounced pedestrian gateway entrance should be created to take advantage of topographic conditions and design features should be developed to create a visual focus points for the entry path.
- The proposed building should make a bold statement at the street edge to strengthen its presence along the street.
- Access from the alley should be the preferred alternative to help create a better street front environment on 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East. Any parking off the alley needs to be well designed and screened. Lighting and pedestrian scaled pervious paving should be included.
- The parking area design should attempt to achieve similar designed character evidenced along the alley in existing garages, fencing, and landscaping.

Design Response

The revised design submitted to DPD staff on September 8, 2005, strengthened the proposed building's presence by siting the building behind a landscaped garden, approximately 28 feet from the 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East street frontage. The front façade will feature large plate windows with views out to Lake Washington. (*Guidance A-1*)

The proposed design enhances the pedestrian experience along 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East by setting the building back approximately 28 feet. The area between the sidewalk and front façade will be landscaped to provide horizontal and vertical depth. The front landscaped garden steps down in one area to the bottom unit's semi-private open space, and steps up to the primary entrance along the building's south facade. The placement of the structure will maintain a sense of openness with increased quality vegetation at the development site; in an area where the 80 foot wide right-of-way is visually open with sparse vegetation in the planting strip. Further north along 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East mature trees within the right-of-way are found in close proximity to Madison Park. (*Guidance A-2*)

The reconfigured primary pedestrian access located adjacent to the terraced and landscape open space has been visually design to be read easily from the street frontage. The pedestrian access visually framed on the horizontal plane with the adjacent open space that leads to the entry alcove. The entry path features overhead canopies, bridges (over window wells) with handrails, and scored concrete to further demark the pedestrian entry door. (*Guidance A-3*)

The updated design submitted to DPD addressed the concern of the horizontal space between the front facade and street by greening-up the grade around the structure's street frontage with quality landscaping. Privacy and security has been addressed along the street frontage in structural design of landscape terraces and limited pedestrian access points. The number and size of the plate glass windows increases the sense of security with more opportunities for inhabitants look out onto the streetscape. On the upper two levels residential decks provide opportunities for additional eyes and interaction with activity within the right-of-way. The interplay of the residential open spaces at grade, balconies, and large windows on the façades encourages neighbors and residents to interact in and around the development site. (*Guidance A-6*)

As noted on sheet A1.0, vehicle access and parking will be taken from the alley running parallel to 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East. A one foot dedication will be required for the alley to allow access to surface parking. The alley will be the primary conveyor of vehicle traffic which will minimize conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists. The net result of parking impacts accessed from the alley would be the addition of 3 tandem stalls (one for each unit), which is anticipated to increase available on-street parking demand for the neighborhood. If access to parking were to be obtained from 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, the driveway would take away at least one curbside parking. The parking stalls will be screened behind a metal mesh screen. (*Guidance A-8*)

#### DPD Recommendation

Overall, the design has adequately addressed the guidelines. In order to achieve a more prominent visual residential entry from the street frontage, DPD encourages vertical features and other design considerations near the street front.

#### ***B Height, Bulk and Scale***

##### ***B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale***

***Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by , less-intensive zones.***

- The site is surrounded by properties of similar or greater height, so there is no bulk transition issue. Be mindful of scale impacts upon the single family zone located across the alley to the west.
- Take advantage of the rhythm and proportion of existing structures in the surrounding area, in particular the buildings to the north, in order to create a similar human scale and proportion. The design should be respectful in design to the adjacent buildings, honoring historic characteristics and view outlooks.

#### Design Response

The updated design submitted to DPD was informed by buildings in the neighborhood taking cues from their modulation, roof top features, fenestration, and building details. The building design stayed within scale of similar sized buildings in the area. The application of the design details including reinterpretation of classic design themes, brick façade materials, fenestration, decks and windows along the street facades has visually reduced the building's scale. (*Guidance B-1*)

DPD Recommendation

Therefore, DPD finds that the design meets this guideline.

**C Architectural Elements and Materials**

**C-1 Architectural Context**

*New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complements the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.*

**C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency**

*Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its façade walls.*

**C-4 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.*

- The proposed structure should take into consideration deck and other modulation features to add character, texture that creates visual interest along the streetscape.
- Street level facades for the lower half of the structure should provide design themes that enhance pedestrian experiences along the right-of-way and create a fine scaled appearance of the structure's bulk.
- Utilize finished materials and colors that pick up on patterns used on nearby structures.
- See comments in Site Planning.

Design Response

As noted under B-1, the architect canvassed the neighborhood to inform design detail at the development site. The finished materials of brick, glass, and concrete are proposed to be sensitive to materials used on existing buildings in the vicinity. (*Guidance C-1*)

The exterior materials are composed of brick, hardscape, metal, and large glass. The proposed building has achieved a simple eloquence with the chosen material and fine detailing throughout. The facades feature use of quality brick materials with accentuated rowlock horizontal banding and a soldier course to cap the parapet wall are an example of a design committed to quality. The east and west façades emphasize opening the interior to the outside with the placement of large windows has increased transparency that provides greater depth to the proposal. Additionally, masonry glass blocks have been introduced at the southwest corner to increase natural light into the upper level units. (*Guidance C-4*)

DPD Recommendation

DPD supports the proposed design of the three (3)-story brick structure, which includes quality landscaping, textured pedestrian pathways, parapet, and façade projections to reduce the appearance of bulk along the street frontage. The soldier course cap on the parapet provides a subtle crown on an elegantly styled building. The visual strength of the exterior street façade is

represented in the T-shaped brick pattern anchoring the structure to the ground with horizontal metal banding to separate each floor with large windows to open the building's interior to the outdoors. The building introduces classic residential loft design themes scaled to fit within a moderate sized multifamily zone. The balconies are sized to accommodate passive recreation areas to encourage use other than providing outdoor storage space, to further distinguish the strength of its residential presence. (*Guidance C-2*).

## ***D Pedestrian Environment***

### ***D-2 Blank Walls***

***Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.***

### ***D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures***

***The visibility of all at grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.***

- Blank walls should be avoided whenever possible along all frontages.
- Design and siting of parking and parking structure should be minimized and sensitive to abutting residential pedestrian.

## **Design Response**

The updated design submitted to DPD includes a decorative mesh screen to add additional character to the structure. Parking stalls are located partially underneath the cantilevered portion of the structure in the rear. A decorative metal mesh screen will drape down to visually soften the surface parking stalls. From the rear, parking stalls will be visible. Additional screening in the form of a 6-foot wood fence will be along the length of the side property lines. (*Guidance D-5*)

## **DPD Recommendation**

DPD supports the proposed design of the three (3)-story brick structure, which features large plate glass windows, balconies that makes a bold statement at the street edge. (*Guidance D-2*)

## ***E Landscaping***

### ***E-1 landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites***

***Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.***

### ***E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or site***

***Landscaping, including living plants, special pavement, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.***

### ***E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions***

***The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.***

Where appropriate, landscaping should enhance the prior guidelines, by creating interesting and creative displays of hanging gardens and trellising at grade and above.

### Design Response

The updated design submitted to DPD includes a richly landscaped area adjacent to the primary pedestrian entrance, which features a variety of ground covers, vines, low trees, terraced benches. The right-of-way planting strip will be richly landscaped to complement the variety of vegetation at the development site. (Guidance E-1)

See L1.0 for further discussion of the landscape plan. The development site will be framed with vigorous landscape features including lush vegetation, decorative paving, and terraced planting. This landscaping frame extends to the curbs in the right-of-way. DPD will require permanent planter boxes be affixed to the railings on balconies. (Guidance E-2)

### DPD Recommendation

DPD supports the proposed landscaped design, which will take advantage of an interior lot with eastern exposure. (*Guidance E-3*)

### Departure from Development Standards & Director's Analysis

The following **departure** from the standards set forth in the Land Use Code was requested by the applicant.

1. *Parking and Access in Lowrise zones -- to allow alley access to a parking area within a Lowrise Three (L3) zone when the development site is located across the alley from a Single-family zone:* The Code requires street access when apartment developments occurs within L3 and is across the alley from a Single-family or Lowrise Duplex/Triplex zone. (SMC 23.45.018.B.2). The applicant has proposed to reduce pedestrian conflict along 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East and enhance the pedestrian experience with quality landscaping in and around the planting strip by maintaining the existing alley access to the development site. The existing 6-unit apartment building has four parking stalls off the alley. The applicant proposes to reduce the unit count to three units and provide a tandem parking stall for each unit. The proposed building will cantilever over a portion of the tandem parking stall spaces and will be screened with a decorative metal mesh along the exterior walls.

DPD supports the departure for access off the alley to minimize potential adverse impacts on the pedestrian environment within street the right-of-way. On-street parking availability will be maintained through this design proposal. If a 10-foot wide (Code required) curb cut were proposed, at least one on-street parking space would be removed from the neighborhood. Vehicles exiting the site from this location could potentially increase the risk of pedestrian and bicyclists' conflicts on the sidewalk which further supports the departure request. Without the addition of the curb cut the pedestrian experience would be made safer and more pleasurable with increased landscaping. A landscaped area between the curb edge and front façade provides a subtle frame that adds elegance to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue frontage. **In support of Design Guidelines A-3, C-1, D-5,**

and E-1 design features have been incorporated to better define and provide visual interest upon the streetscape. Access to the rear entrance have not been ignored where practical landscaping, colored scored cement have been introduced. The rear facade features subtle architectural detailing and balconies to open to the alley which is in keeping with A-3, C-4, D-5, and E-2.

**Table: Departure Summary**

<i>Development Standard</i>	<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Comment/Rationale</i>	<i>Recommendation by DPD</i>
<i>1. Access to parking – Street access required 23.45.018.B.2.c</i>	<i>In Lowrise 3 zones, apartments are prohibited across an alley from Single family zones or Lowrise Duplex/Triplex zones.</i>	<i>Alley access</i>	<i>An additional curb cut along the street frontage negatively impacts the pedestrian experience and imposes vehicle dominance upon an urban influenced design.</i>	<i>Approved</i>

**ANALYSIS and DECISION – DESIGN REVIEW**

Summary

Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans submitted on January 17, 2006. After considering the site and context, considering public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, DPD **APPROVES** the subject design including the departure from the development standards.

Director’s Decision

The design review process is prescribed in Section 23.41.014 of the Seattle Municipal Code. The design of the proposed project was found by DPD to adequately conform to the applicable Design Guidelines. DPD finds the proposed design to be consistent with the City of Seattle Design Review Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings. Therefore, the Director **approves** the proposed design, including the one (1) departure request from the development standards subject **to the conditions identified below.**

**CONDITIONS – DESIGN REVIEW**

Non-Appealable Conditions

The owner(s) and/or responsible party(s) shall:

1. Embed all of these conditions in the cover sheet for the MUP plans prior to issuance permit and for all subsequent permits including updated MUP plans, and all building permit drawings.

2. Any proposed changes to the exterior of the building or the site or must be submitted to DPD for review and approval by the Land Use Planner (Bradley Wilburn, 615-0508). Any proposed changes to the improvements in the public right-of-way must be submitted to DPD and SDOT for review and for final approval by SDOT.
3. Embed colored elevation drawings and as updated, into the MUP plans prior to issuance, and also embed these colored elevation drawings into the Building Permit Plan set in order to facilitate subsequent review of compliance with Design Review.
4. Arrange a pre-construction conference with the contractor and the Land Use Planner.

Prior to Issuance of MUP

5. Update plan set to illustrate permanent planter boxes on upper level balconies.
6. Update plan set to include entry arbor/gate at pathway entrance near 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue or near the structure.

Prior to Start of Construction Activities

During Construction

The following condition(s) to be enforced during construction shall be posted at the site in a location on the property line that is visible and accessible to the public and to construction personnel from the street right-of-way. If more than one street abuts the site, conditions shall be posted at each street. The conditions will be affixed to placards prepared by DPD. The placards will be issued along with the building permit set of plans. The placards shall be laminated with clear plastic or other waterproofing material and shall remain posted on-site for the duration of the construction.

7. All proposed changes to the exterior facades of the building and landscaping on site and in the ROW must be reviewed by a Land Use Planner prior to proceeding with any proposed changes.

Prior to Issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy

8. Compliance with the approved design features and elements, including exterior materials, parapets, facade colors, landscaping and ROW improvements, shall be verified by the DPD Planner assigned to this project or by the Manager of the Urban Design Program. Inspection appointments with the Planner must be made at least 3 working days in advance of the inspection.

Prior to Issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy and for the Life of the Project

9. The proposed landscaping within the right-of-way shall be installed and preserved.

Compliance with all applicable conditions must be verified and approved by the Land Use Planner, Bradley Wilburn, (206 615-0508) or the Manager of the Urban Design Program, Vince Lyons, (206 233-3823) at the specified development stage, as required by the Director's decision.

The Land Use Planner shall determine whether the condition requires submission of additional documentation or field verification to assure that compliance has been achieved. **Prior to any alteration of the approved plan set on file at DPD, the specific revisions shall be subject to review and approval by the Land Use Planner.**

Signature: (signature on file)  
Bradley Wilburn, Land Use Planner  
Department of Planning and Development  
Land Use Services

Date: March 16, 2006