

Capitol Hill Design Guidelines Update - Work Group meeting #8

Meeting Summary

April 17th, 2018

Work Group Members present

☐ Leslie Bain	☐ Jess Blanch	☒ Lincoln Ferris	☐ Erik Rundell
☒ Brian Baker	☒ Lana Blinderman	☐ Whitney Fraser	☒ Saunatina Sanchez
☒ Matthew Benedict	☒ McCaela Daffern	☐ Rob Ketcherside	☐ Alicia Daniels Uhlig
☒ Don Blakeney	☐ John Feit	☒ Mike Mariano	

Staff present

☒ Christina Ghan (SDCI)	☒ Patrice Carroll (OPCD)	☒ Aaron Hursey (OPCD)
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Additional Attendees

☒ Garry Papers
(OPCD)

On April 17th, 2018, the eighth work group session was held at 12th Ave Arts (1620 12th Ave) in the Capitol Hill Neighborhood of Seattle. This meeting was cohosted by the City of Seattle's Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) and Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) and the Capitol Hill EcoDistrict, a project of Capitol Hill Housing. The work group, which consists of over a dozen renters, homeowners, and business owners who live, work, and/or socialize in the Capitol Hill Neighborhood, will help with the update of the current Capitol Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines. The goals of the meeting were to review and discuss elements of the Design Concept section of the Capitol Hill Design Guidelines. Rather than discussing each element of the Design Concept section, city staff recommended the work group discuss eight major elements of the Design Concept section.

The meeting was attended by eight work group members and four city employees. The meeting was facilitated by Patrice Carroll, of OPCD. The meeting began by discussing future community outreach opportunities and updates related to the guideline revision process such as the establishment of a new Design Review Board for the Central Area, potential updates to the Green Factor rules (part of the MHA zoning changes), and recent passing of parking legislation. City staff then updated the work group on changes to Design Review process, which will require applicants to coordinate with neighborhood organizations earlier in the process.

Patrice Carroll then led the discussion on updates to the Design Concept section of the Capitol Hill Design Guidelines. The work group reviewed and provided feedback for each of the following subcategories in the Design Concept section.

DC1. Project Uses and Activities

- Vehicle access and circulation – The Work Group encouraged guidance that addresses facilities for alternative transportation as it relates to the unique topography of the Capitol Hill Neighborhood, and noted that east west streets are most affected by slope- important ped connections to transit and downtown. Group members then stressed the importance of

providing adequate loading and unloading zones for ride sharing services that are well marked and located near the residential and/or commercial entrances of buildings. Work group members also suggested guidance on providing adequate loading zones for delivery services. The group then discussed providing guidance to support demarcated areas for short term parking for dock-less bike share. The Work Group then discussed the “10-foot sight triangle” that is required vehicular entrances. Group members agreed the site triangle implies priority for the vehicle over the pedestrian and can prevent the project team from minimizing the width of vehicular entrances along the street façade, while using other strategies to ensure pedestrian safety. Group members then agreed to provide guidance on how to minimize the width of vehicular entrances.

- Melrose Promenade – The work group requested that the DGs support the Melrose Promenade in every way they can.
 - Parking access for flexible use parking - Patrice noted that the parking legislation requires garage access from the street so we no longer need to include this in the design guidelines.
 - Service uses – The Work Group suggested referring to specific streets and/or areas where this is an issue.
 - Daycare – The Work Group asked if it was appropriate to include guidance to avoid locating daycare uses on major pedestrian streets.
- Trash Storage – Encourage adequate size for trash/ garbage room.

DC2. Architectural Concept

- Massing – The Work Group began by discussing the issue of matching architectural elements (such as window patterns) from adjacent buildings. Unless the adjacent building is identified as an historic or character building, the group members discouraged guidance that strongly encouraged the matching of architectural elements from adjacent buildings. The work group then discussed issues around building massing. Work group members then agreed that several negative issues with new buildings have less to do with massing than it does with the quality and scale of materials.
- Blank walls – the Work Group agreed there is a difference in how blank facades are perceived on old vs. new buildings. Group members elaborated by saying older facades typically include textured and human scaled materials while new construction does not. The work group then suggested providing guidance on how to use murals to enliven blank facades. Group members also suggested guidance on using vegetation and textures to enhance blank facades. The group then discussed providing separate guidance for blank facades located at street level.
- Scale and texture – The work group began this discussion by emphasizing the importance of including human scaled materials, specifically along the street level and within window treatments. The work group agreed guidance should address the scale, quality and execution of chosen materials. Group members stressed the importance of the citywide design guideline, which advises developers to pay attention to the first three floors of the building in order to maximize opportunities to engage the pedestrian and to enable an active and vibrant street front and encouraged additional neighborhood specific guidance to expand on this. But some details e.g. trims, are most important at street level.

DC3. Open Space Concept

- Open space – The work group agreed that opportunities to view private or semiprivate open space from the public realm can increase visual interest while creating an appreciation for the space. Group members then suggested guidance to encourage the placement of open space to directly relate with the surrounding context. The group then agreed to provide guidance that prioritizing open space in residential areas rather than commercial areas, stating that open space can help reduce the overall scale and massing of a building within a residential area but might have a negative affect on the street level experience in busy commercial areas. Several work group members suggested providing guidance on outdoor amenity areas such as decks that will encourage the design of decks that are recessed within the building façade.

DC4. Exterior Elements and Finishes

- Exterior finishing materials – The work group discussed providing information and technical details addressing the quality of highly used building materials so to discourage the use of low quality materials. Details could include the durability of exterior materials used within the pacific northwest climate. The group then suggested guidance to limit the number of materials used on any one project.
- Signage – The work group suggested guidance to encourage signage that is well integrated with the scale of the building/individual commercial space while having a high degree of pedestrian visibility.

Summary of Additional comments submitted online [NOT DISCUSSED IN DETAIL AT MEETING]:

DC1 – Gathering Space

- Add language about providing adequate glazing, lighting and signage to advertise interior use.
- If there are exiting or anticipated pedestrian routes through or around a given site, consider providing a semi-public “short-cut or alternative route through the building to engage/ activate the street level spaces, provided that adequate security can be maintained by creating defensible spaces.

DC1 – Flexibility

- Emphasize space needs to be flexible to accommodate both smaller spaces/ lower rents critical to maintaining rich and diverse commercial tenant. Retail continues to evolve in the Amazon era and the ability for ground floor space to adapt to new uses and occupancies is important.

DC1 - Access

- When providing parking on a sloping site, the lowest point meeting the ROW will usually be the most economical vehicular access point.
- Tucking the parking access into the slope may make these east west ped connections less welcoming.
- Hugo House building had to place the parking entrance on the flatter green street (11th) because the ramping needed if entrance was off the hillside too up too much floor area. Is this what we want- more expensive or more area for ramps?
- Will SDOT staff weigh in on DGs, especially as relates to Melrose Promenade?
- Pedestrians need places to sit and rest.
- Can we encourage better wayfinding for pedestrians accessing a shared parking stall from the garage entry? REO Flats in Pike Pine has great signage work emulating. I feel safer when ped pathways are clearly delineated.
- Quality garage doors with either graphics or nice transparency of materials. Old Value Village site has a nifty garage door graphic (see DRB packet).
- We need more bike racks in front of buildings. (New parking regs have increase number of short term biking spaces required).
- I don't love pavement where it could be permeable or accommodate pedestrians or habitat on every new development site. Can we encourage bike parking within setbacks or work with SDOT to convert in street row to bike corral or other? Need to ensure bikes do block ADA access points.

DC2 Service

- Adequately consider trash access and garbage room sizing during design. Does SPU have suggestions how design might increase composting/ recycling rates? Reduce emissions from haulers?
- How can design support better bin storage in townhouses (e.g. some owners have to move their car in order to put their bins out). Would centralized bin storage be better?

- DRBs address parking entries well. But, would like DRV to pay as much attention to circulation for ride sharing, care sharing, EV stations, etc. as they do to parking garage entrances.
- ECODistrict parking study found there is a lot of extra capacity in existing parking garages. New developments are building too much parking. Can we encourage developers to present what if any measures they've taken to encourage shared parking?
- Malden and 14th Ave E have residential uses facing service edge of commercial.

DC2 Massing

- Disagree with suggested massing approach, especially those that call for different cladding. Better materials and a finer level of detail are what's needed. Large buildings are not inherently bad – as suggested- its' those that are clumsily detailed.
- Aligning floor levels actually is counter to the stated goals. A variety of floor levels (and roof parapet/ roof heights) is a powerful tool in mitigating a dominant building.
- Reducing perceived mass is not an absolute positive in all cases. It may be appropriate along a property line that abuts a step down in zoning. But, increasing perceived mass may be appropriate when holding a prominent corner site. Context matters.
- Massing may be best communicated through illustrations, or examples rather than words.

DC2 Blank Walls, Visual Depth

- Well designed buildings do not need art to cover up poor design.
- Small scale retail should be flexible in its demising

DC2 Scale and Texture

- Glass facades can be quite nice. But when they are interested too frequently with fake and or large columns that they begin to lose their effectiveness. The type of framing and glass used has more of an impact than the extent of the glazing.
- If private residential space is proposed, it should be large enough to be useable.
- Planting strips size need to reflect what kind of street it is on: busy street = more robust, etc.
- Avoid material changes on outside corners.
- Compose facades to reinforce and strengthen the original design concept and massing choices.
- Incorporate secondary architectural features that service and reinforce the original design concept and massing choices. These features should complement the façade composition and further articulate a unified design. Avoid secondary architectural features that appear tacked on or added as an afterthought to similarly meet this DG.
- Building details should contribute to a unified design approach by reflecting and reinforcing the original design concept and massing choices. Details should be germane to the façade composition by using compatible materials and methods of attachment.

DC3 – Multifamily Open Space

- Provide language requiring adequate setbacks for the open space activities and users proposed. Demonstrate through section drawings or other graphic techniques that there is adequate room for all landscaping, bike racks, retail display, café seating, pedestrian activity, etc.

- Highly visible features such as balconies, grilles, and railings should be especially attractive, well-crafted and easy to maintain. This is an example of good intentions gone bad: many/ most/ all balconies and railing on projects are pre-manufactured, somewhat cheap elements. This is most likely the result of asking for such features, but a project not having the budget for them. Another reason not to ask for extras.

DC4- Building Materials

- Choose modern materials that are compatible with and complement more traditional materials.
- Use materials that are dimensionally stable, stay flat, and will not rust (unless intended to), rot, or otherwise decay, unless they are natural such as wood. Also, materials that have sophisticated /concealed/interesting means of attachment. How about an integrated finish (or none like brick)?
- Avoid materials that don't do above. Maybe that show the mold it was made in, unless intended as part of a concept such as form liners in concrete, as opposed to cheese cloth on hardi board. Materials that have a rough unfinished edge when cut.