



## SECOND EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE SOUTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3014176

Address: 3210 California Avenue SW.

Applicant: Jodi Patterson-O'Hare, for Intracorp

Date of Meeting: Thursday, June 27, 2013

Board Members Present: Myer Harrell (Chair)  
Laird Bennion  
Todd Bronk  
Daniel Skaggs  
T Frick McNamara

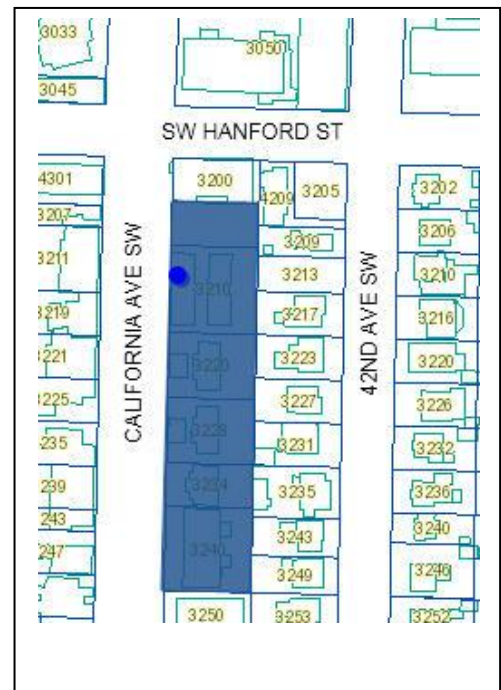
DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC2-40'

Nearby Zones: (North) NC2-40'  
(South) NC2-40'  
(East) SF 5000  
(West) NC2-40'

Lot Area: The site is rectangular in shape, sharply sloped downward from east to west and totals 44,692 square feet in size.



**Current Development:** The site is currently occupied by a surface parking lot and a mixture of five single and two-story residential and commercial buildings that are scheduled for demolition. There are a few smaller trees on site, and some street trees within the planting strip running along California Avenue SW. A large sequoia, designated by the City as an “exceptional” tree lies just east of the development site and a third of the way south of the north edge of the site. Provisions will be undertaken by the developer to protect the tree and its root zone.

**Access:** There is no alley connecting to the site and two new curbcuts along California Avenue SW are proposed as access to the site. Six existing curbcuts would be removed.

**Surrounding Development:** Directly to the north and south of the site are two modest, three-story multi-family structures that bookend the site. Lowrise multi-family and commercial structures run along the opposite side of California Avenue SW. Directly across SW Hanford Street to the north is a church building and parking lot, and northeast of that sits West Seattle High School. Directly north of those sites lies Hiawatha Playfield and north of the playfield the core commercial area that embraces a narrow strip along SW Admiral Way as well as California Avenue SW. The site lies within the Admiral Residential Urban Village. Outside the cruciform urban village lies large swaths of single family zoning developed with single-family residences. That vicinity characteristic of generally small-scale single family residences is the condition directly to the east of the development site

**ECAs:** There are steep-slope identified environmentally critical areas on or abutting the site to the east. The site is generally level along California Avenue SW, but rises approximately 6 feet from its southwest the four hundred plus feet to its northwest corner.

**Neighborhood Character:** As noted, the site lies along the narrow central spine of the Admiral Urban Village and is located south of the central junction of SW Admiral Way and California Avenue SW. An older pattern of development, intermittently in place along California , is that of low scale commercial buildings and surface parking lots, with some homes converted, or partially converted to commercial uses abutting California Avenue SW. Newer mixed-use buildings, with commercial/retail space at grade and residential above are gradually overlaying the older pattern along the arterial.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes a five-story mixed-use building containing approximately 155 residential units, 4,800 square feet of commercial space and 3,400 square feet of live-work space at grade, and parking for approximately 171 vehicles.

<b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: April 11, 2013</b>
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## **DESIGN PRESENTATION**

At the first Early Design Guidance meeting, the third and preferred scheme presented by the applicants pulled its mass further from the east property line and the upper floors were separated by a courtyard at the second residential level in order “to create the appearance of 2 separate buildings.” In this scheme, both residential and live/work units would connect to the sidewalk, the residential units through use of “stoops.” A departure would be required since a proposed residential unit would not meet setback or height requirements from the sidewalk. A shared amenity space would be located above the lobby area at the notch in the building.

One feature of the design as presented was the protection of an “exceptional” sequoia, located to the east of the site and located in a neighbor’s rear yard. It was noted that the existing street trees would be kept and probably added to. Street improvements and Landscaping along the California Avenue SW frontage would be enhanced to provide an “uninterrupted passage” for pedestrians along the sidewalk. It was also noted that, despite the dual entries/exits for the new structure, the parallel parking on the street would be added to since some 160 feet in curb cuts would be eliminated by the proposal.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the first EDG meeting, the Board recommended that the project should return for a second Early Design Guidance Meeting at which time issues and concerns raised by the Board and public should be addressed. In particular, at the second EDG meeting the applicants should:

- Provide a fourth massing alternative, one that would more adequately mitigate for the length of the building; it should be a scheme that breaks the building’s mass into three pieces instead of two.
- Explore how the commercial component, moved to the north end of the structure, might invigorate the pedestrian experience along that portion of the west façade.
- Provide more detailed renderings of the façade treatments, including modulation, terraces, amenity spaces, etc., respond to comments under the Guidelines above.

- Offer a brief review of other successful projects in the City of Seattle approximating the proposed length of this project, together with a brief analysis of how they had succeed in an architectural sense.

<p><b>SECOND EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: June 27, 2013</b></p>
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The major changes in the project as presented at the Second Early Design Guidance Meeting were as follows:

- The structure was divided into three discernible parts instead of two
- The northernmost break was centered on the exceptional redwood tree east of the site
- A glazed sky-bridge was inserted across this break reducing the number of mechanical penthouses
- The 4,700 square feet of commercial space was moved to the northern end of the structure
- There were no residential units at street level along California Avenue SW
- The live/work units were moved to the south end and presented as convertible to “true commercial”
- The California Avenue SW façade was divided into 25-foot modules

The applicants’ presentation also included, as had been requested by the Board, a brief comparison of two other projects in Seattle with roughly similar façade lengths, the Prescott in Wallingford (at 420 feet) and the Curve in the U-District (at 485 feet). It was noted that the preferred scheme for 3210 California Avenue SW broke the building into three parts, similar to the massing solution proposed for the Curve project.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

After asking clarifying questions of the applicant, the Board elicited comments from members of the public. Approximately 20 members of the public attended the meeting; 12 signed in to become “parties of record.” Among the comments offered were these:

- A question, will the provisions for accommodating the tree really protect the tree’s root system?
- Three different buildings should mean three different buildings;
- The proposal remains out of scale for the neighborhood;
- The structure needs additional modulation on the east side as well as the west side;
- A major erosion of the top floor takes place on the Prescott building in Wallingford, something that would mitigate the height and bulk of this building along California Avenue SW;
- Larger openings between the three massing blocks would allow for more sunlight to the east (and for the tree);
- The massing of the building ought to be captured from the street level along 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW;

- The east façade needs more work and attention;
- Likes the quiet spaces provided on the east side of the development;
- Likes the suggested 25-foot modules along California Avenue SW; perhaps a 50-foot module is needed at the location of the Exceptional Tree;
- The fifth story should be set back along both the west and east facades;
- Needs to show greater respect for adjacent sites along 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW, especially access to the sun; design for solar exposure;

## 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 guidance.

The Chair began the Board’s deliberations by identifying the following “big-issues” for consideration:

1. The overall massing of the proposal;
2. The arrangement of the parking entries and their relationships to the existing structures on either side of the proposal;
3. The tree and the design responses to it;
4. The quality of the open spaces and residential building amenities;
5. Modulation, fenestration, materiality and general treatments along the east façade;
6. Material pallet for the entire structure, the skybridge included.

While these issues set a general framework for the Board’s discussion, other comments and points were introduced by Board members that slightly broadened the deliberations. It was generally agreed among the Board members that the revised preferred scheme, with the “three buildings,” was a marked improvement over the “two building” scheme from the first Early Design Guidance meeting. The Board was pleased with the thorough analysis that accompanied the latest presentation. The placement of the commercial space at the north end of the ground floor, doing away with the ground level residential movements and provisions to make the live/work spaces totally transformable into genuine commercial spaces were welcomed moves in the design along California Av SW. The design team was commended for making these changes and for the way the building now related to the sidewalk and street. There were improvements in the slopes of driveways that allowed for safer approaches to the sidewalk grades. There was some concerns voiced regarding the scale of the entries, of views in and views out, of the possibility of redirecting views from some of the back units to the west through the shaping of these gaps. There was concern raised regarding the impact of the north parking entry on the residential entry of the neighboring building to the north.

Some time was spent discussing the width of the spaces between building and suggestions for a wider gap in front of the redwood to provide more sunlight to the tree. There was some discussion about moving the skybridge to connect the gap between the second and third buildings, counting from the north, and about the width limits for a bridge, whether north or

south. One suggestion for consideration was to push the lobby area and entry away from the street, a gesture that would relate the entry more dramatically to the two gaps between buildings.

One particular area of concern was the east façade of the building. While the applicants voiced a desire to keep that façade “quiet” and simple, the Board did not want the design team to make it too bland. The Board members urged the designers to go all away around the building with design; “don’t lose interest in the rear of the building,” one Board member cautioned.

Although there were many elements of a project this size which had not had exhaustive treatment or discussion, the Board agreed that the project could proceed to design refinement and MUP application and then return to the Board for a Recommendation Meeting. In doing so, the Board gave this specific guidance:

- Provide a panoply of renderings to convey the qualities of the gaps and from street-level views into the gaps and along the street front.
- Study a wider gap at the north, one that might provide greater solar benefits to the tree.
- Provide an arborist report; provide comments from by Bill Ames of SDOT about the report and about the tree.
- Converse with the neighboring property owner to the north about the impacts of the proposed vehicle access on the existing pedestrian entry to that building.
- Offer a more detailed study of the east façade and the ways its windows, etc. will interact with neighbors to the east, their privacy and comfort. Show a façade that is responsive, quiet and simple, but not bland or with a “back of the building look.”
- As a guideline for the material pallet that will be settled upon: think of a vocabulary that speaks of three separate but closely related buildings.

## DESIGN DEPARTURES

No departures from development standards are requested for the Revised Preferred Scheme.

Otherwise, the general guidance for future design development should be that contained in the Guidelines and accompanying guidance determined to be of particular relevance to the site and proposal as specified at the first Early Design Meeting enumerated below:

### A. Site Planning

- A-1 **Responding to Site Characteristics.** The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

*The **Admiral Residential Urban Village Design Guidelines** , for sites abutting single Family Zoning, specifically call for “composing the structure’s massing to enhance solar impacts on adjacent structures....”*

**A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.**

*Varying façade heights, the variety in east and west facades would appear to be a component of existing desirable spatial characteristics of the California Avenue SW right-of-way. The project needs to show respect for the different relationships called for in each of the two main facades, employing a kit of parts that deals with both vertical and horizontal modulation and variation in façade heights. It would not be a successful building that replaced the current positive feeling of vibrant variety along the streetfront with drab sameness.*

**A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites. Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.**

*In choosing this to be of high priority in guiding the design, the Board discussed the opportunity to provide something other than a monolithic façade on the east exposure by providing variation and even an erosion of the façade. They questioned the sameness and the usability of the sunken terraces proposed for the lower units and suggested that the presence of the “exceptional” tree called for an architectural response to its presence from the building.*

**A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the buildings and sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.**

*The Board noted that the street-level residential units might be better suited to the southern end of the development, with true retail/commercial uses provided at the north end of the side. While the spaces with residential components might well be served by setbacks and stoops, however, entrances to the retail/commercial spaces should be at the sidewalk and at-grade requiring some significant adjustments that need to be addressed in the proposed structure.*

**A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to minimize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.**

*The viability of the sunken private open spaces adjacent the hillside and SF 5000 zoning was questioned while encouraging a fresh look at providing larger, common amenity spaces, strategically located with a better relationship to modulating massing impacts*

*and more obvious responses to topography and adjacencies. How these amenity spaces related functionally and were integrated within the whole building would be important for their success and the Board would be waiting to see how the details of these areas were worked out in the design.*

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

- B-1 Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility.** 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. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk, and scale between anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

*The Board was agreed that because of its context the impacts of the length and height of the building needed more mitigation than they had been shown in the three alternative schemes. They wanted the applicants to return with a scheme that showed the building divided into three chunks rather than one or just two as in the preferred scheme. The proposed structure stood in need of greater vertical modulation than had been shown.*

## **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 complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

*The Board observed that although there might be a lack of any “well-defined and desirable character” strictly speaking, especially since it was a neighborhood in transition, nevertheless there was the context of the platting which could provide a kind of palimpsest. This could then be read to create spatial patterns and should suggest opportunities for rhythmic aggregation, modulation, and separations that could be more contextual than what had been shown.*

- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency.** Building design elements, details and massings should create a well proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept.



*The Board acknowledged that it was a particular challenge in a building of this length to provide architectural consistency or a discernible architectural concept, but encouraged a greater effort in that regard. The exceptional length of the street façade in particular called out for variegation, but the building should not become a hotchpotch of different stuff just for variety's sake.*

**C-3 Human Scale. The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements, and details to achieve a good human scale.**

*The Board noted that the questions of scale and human interaction were matters of special concern along the northern portion of the structure along California Avenue SW where genuine commercial/retail spaces should be provided for.*

**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 Board indicated that the “stitchery” of the street-facing façade elements would be an important part of a successful design as would be the choices in cladding materials.*

**C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.**

*The parking entry at the north end of the site would seem to interfere with the notion of providing viable and active street-level commercial uses there. Additionally, the safety and comfort of pedestrians moving along California Avenue SW, as mentioned by more than one of the public commentators, is a concern at both parking entrances. To address these concerns, at the very least the driveways must meet the sidewalk at a level from the inside so that visibility is optimal for drivers. This guideline should be considered in tandem with Guideline D-5.*

**D. Pedestrian Environment**

**D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.**

*Board members commented that while the applicants were proposing one main residential entry on California Avenue SW, , they would like to see a more thorough*

*investigation into the location and distribution of retail spaces and an examination of locating as many as three residential entries, perhaps off street-level plazas, on California Avenue SW.*

- D-2 Blank Walls.** Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

*The Board considered this guideline too be particularly applicable to the design of the north-facing and south-facing façades.*

- D-5 Visual Impact of Parking Structures.**

See the comments under Guideline C-5, above.

## **E. Landscaping**

- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and /or Site.** Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

*There appears to be plenty of opportunities for landscaping not only at the street level but as part of the amenity spaces above ground. The applicant is encouraged to work with SDOT regarding the health of the existing street trees and to make a determination of the distinctive characters of landscaping to be provided on California Avenue SW.*

- E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions.** The landscape design should take advantage of special onsite 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.

*The presence of the “exceptional” tree adjacent the east property line provides an opportunity for a design response on the east façade(s) of the structure, including the orientation of windows, amenity areas, etc.*