



**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE  
EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Project Number: 3028872

Address: 2301 East Union Street

Applicant: Ed Weinstein, Weinstein AU for Lake Union Partners

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, January 24, 2018

Board Members Present: Curtis Bigelow (chair)  
Barbara Busetti  
Kenny Pleasant  
Andrew Haas  
Melissa Alexander

SDCI Staff Present: Carly Guillory, Senior Land Use Planner

**SITE & VICINITY**

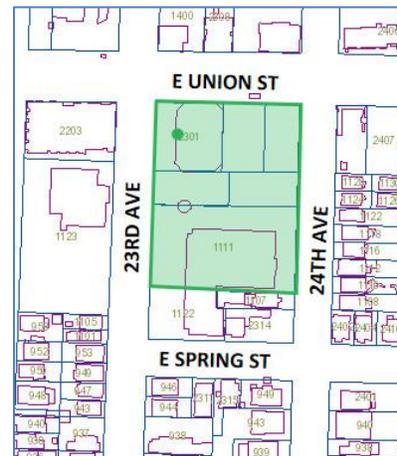
Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 2 – with the Pedestrian overlay, a 65-foot height limit, and M1 suffix NC2P-75(M1) and NC2-75(M1)

Nearby Zones: (North) NC2P-75(M1) and NC2P-65  
(South) NC2P-75(M1) and NC2-76(M1)  
(East) NC2-55(M), Lowrise 2 (LR2) , and Single Family – 5,000-square foot minimum lot size (SF5000)  
(West) NC2P-65 and NC2P-55(M)

Site Area: 82,860-square feet

**Current Development:**

The subject site is nearly one city block, bounded by E Union St to the north, 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave to the west, and 24<sup>th</sup> Ave to the east. Abutting to the south is an approximately 95-foot by 240-foot site, the site of the future Africatown project (a Master Use Permit (MUP) application has not yet been submitted for this site). The subject site is currently identified as *Midtown Center*, and is occupied by one-story structures containing uses such as a post office, barber shop, and coffee stand. A majority of the site is occupied by surface parking.



### **Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

The site lies within what has been historically known as Seattle's Central Area or Central District, and occupies the geographical core of the northernmost node of the 23rd & Union-Jackson Residential Urban Village. It is identified as such in the 23rd Avenue Action Plan Urban Design Framework. Surrounding development includes commercial uses to north, east, and west and residential uses to the north, east, and south. There is a variety of residential and commercial uses in immediate vicinity of the project along the East Union/Union Street and 23rd Avenue corridors. The neighborhood character is evolving with blocks of significant development of residential and commercial development and proposed development interspersed along the main east-west/north-south arterials. Varied architectural styles and building exteriors are present in this area which is moderately pedestrian and transit oriented due to its proximity to bus transit along East Union/Union Street and 23rd Avenue.

### **Access:**

Existing vehicular access to the site is provided via a total of eight curb cuts provided on the following streets: E Union, 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave, and 24<sup>th</sup> Ave. Proposed vehicular access is proposed via one curb cut on 24<sup>th</sup> Ave.

### **Environmentally Critical Areas:**

None.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Design Review Early Design Guidance application proposing a seven-story apartment building containing 435 units, with retail and restaurant spaces at ground level. Parking for 286 vehicles to be provided below grade. Existing structures to be demolished.

The design packet includes information presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number at this 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 Public Resource Center**

**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000

P.O. Box 34019

Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**Email:** PRC@seattle.gov

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE January 24, 2018**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following public comments were offered at this meeting:

- Excited about the project, particularly the small retail spaces.
- Street life was identified as a priority.

- The relationship of the building to the street is important.
- Recommended designing the building to activate the street, rather than relying on the programming of the space to activate the street.
- Recommended a design that signals the portals and central courtyard are a safe, shared space.
- Noted that community is important and recommended designing a space that can be used by all generations.
- Supported the project, and recommended a permeable design to activate the street.
- Recommended the ground floor residential meet the street with genuine stoops.
- Recommended a future pedestrian cross walk at the corner of E Union St and 24<sup>th</sup> Ave, north to the Liberty Bank site.
- Appreciated the massing moves; however, expressed concern about the height along 24<sup>th</sup> Ave. Concerned this height is too tall at this zone transition.
- Recommended a curb cut on 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave rather than 24<sup>th</sup> Ave as 24<sup>th</sup> Ave has a residential character.
- Supported the courtyard concept.
- Recommended a design that is consistent with the future Africatown project (abutting to the south).
- Recommended including African references in the design of the project.
- Described 23<sup>rd</sup> and E Union as an important entrance to the block and recommended a plaza at this intersection.
- Noted that not many people walk along 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave currently.
- Recommended a space that could accommodate makers space – a space that offers opportunities to inspire business growth, intentional interaction, and community identity.
- Applauded the project’s vision of providing shared spaces to cultivate entrepreneurs.
- Supported Massing Option 3, the preferred option, and encouraged the Board to also support this option.
- Concerned about locating the fountain at the corner of E Union and 24<sup>th</sup> Ave. The proximity to the street and curb cut pose potential vehicle-pedestrian conflicts. Recommended this fountain be moved further south along 24<sup>th</sup> Ave to the place between this project and Africatown to the south, or within the courtyard.
- Described 24<sup>th</sup> Ave as full of on-street parking.
- Street life was reiterated as very important.
- Concerned the portals are too narrow.
- Concerned the courtyard space will not generate activity on its own, without proper programming.
- Described the corner of E Union and 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave as an important community location.
- Did not support the ground level setback at the corner of E Union and 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave as it resulted in a large, looming mass above. Suggested columns to provide visual support.
- Noted the existing bus stop on the site (on E Union St) is busy.
- Recommended a design that will ensure the courtyard remains activated and vibrant.
- Recommended a design that creates a designation for this important corner site.
- Recommended a public open space design that embraces the African American culture.
- Noted that much community input has been contributed to this site and project thus far.
- Noted that a vibrant public space that is connected to the street is of utmost of importance.
- Noted the importance of the affordability element of the project.
- Recommended providing direct access from the southern courtyard (to be shared with the future Africatown project to the south) to the central courtyard.

- Described the current proposal as utilizing rectilinear moves and recommended more Afrocentric shapes and designs.
- Recommended a design that creates identity and serve as a catalyst to inform future development.
- Recommended a porous design to activate the street and to make it clear the courtyard is a shared, public space.
- Noted the draft Neighborhood Design Guidelines, and appreciated that the proposal responded to and incorporated this work.
- Noted that this project offers opportunity for community empowerment.
- Noted that the community voice is an important element in shaping the development of this project.
- Recommended a design that incorporates historical references.

DCI staff also summarized design related comments received in writing prior to the meeting:

- Supported the increase in density while still accommodating the single-family character of the surrounding neighborhood.
- Supported Option 3, the preferred alternative because it appeared to provide the best access to the courtyard.
- Recommended a classic design that incorporates brick as it would age well over time.
- Recommended murals on the outside or inside of the courtyard that reflect the community.

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.

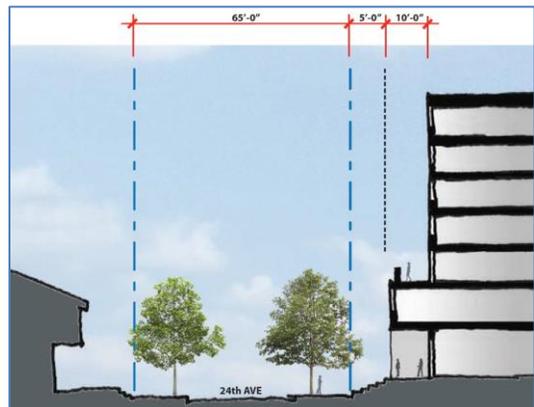
All public comments submitted in writing for this project can be viewed using the following link and entering the project number: <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/edms/>.

## 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 & Context.

- a. The Board noted that it is imperative that the design be respectful of adjacent properties – especially to single-family development east, across 24th Ave. In response to this context, the proposed massing included ground level setbacks of five-feet with upper-level massing



setting back an additional 10-feet from the west property line (page 19 of the EDG Packet). The Board appreciated these setbacks and residential stoops for the townhouses fronting 24th Ave. The Board agreed that the use of appropriately scaled residential elements were encouraged to better relate to the human scale. (CS2-D)

- b. The massing at the corner of 23rd Ave and E Union St responded with a setback at ground level only, resulting in a second through sixth floor mass cantilevering above. The Board expressed concern that this created a somewhat ominous form to the corner. The Board requested further development of this corner response, with additional details and study presented at the next meeting. (CS2-D)

## **2. Neighborhood Character.**

- a. The Board agreed with public comment that the proposed development ought to respond to the unique Central Area historical character and identify by retaining, respecting, and encouraging the extension of existing positive attributes of the surrounding neighborhood character. (CS3-A, CS3-B)
- b. Public comment described the site as a cultural anchor for the surrounding area. In response, the Board agreed the project should enhance the Central Area's identity and sense of arrival by providing street furniture, public art, landscape elements, pedestrian lighting, varied paving materials, and open space at grade to expand the width of the right-of-way. The design, siting and selection of these elements should be informed by 1d above. (CS3-A, CS3-B)

**3. Relationship to Abutting Neighbor.** The project proposed an internal courtyard, accessible via a portal from 23rd Ave, E Union St, and 24th Ave. This publicly accessible courtyard provides connections through the site, supporting pedestrian connections within and outside the project. In further consideration of connecting the site with its context, the Board discussed the possibility of a pedestrian connection from this courtyard to the future project to the south, Africatown. The applicant described the future Africatown courtyard as intended to be for private use by the residents. While some Board members felt this strong connection is important, other members acknowledged the benefits of maintaining a private courtyard for residents. In conclusion, the Board requested further exploration of providing a connection between the site and the future Africatown development to the south. (PL1-B)

**4. Access.** The Board agreed the proposed location of the driveway on 24th Ave near E Union St offered the best response to the context and was supported. The Board recommended the driveway width be as narrow as possible. (PL1-B)

**5. Active Uses.** The Board agreed with public comment that the site is an important destination for the community, and ought to include pedestrian-focused neighborhood commercial with a mix of commercial and residential uses, grounded by locally-owned businesses and institutions. The applicant described incubator focuses commercial spaces at grade, including a possible shared commercial kitchen opportunity for use by a number of independent restaurant users. The Board and public supported incubator type spaces described at this location. (PL3-C)

## 6. Courtyard.

- a. Public comment noted the importance of sunlight within the central courtyard, and recommended upper level setbacks along the south mass to allow for greater availability of sunlight. The Board supported this concept, and recommended further exploration of massing moves to allow for a greater availability of sunlight in the central courtyard. Provide exploration studies at the next meeting, including sun studies. (CS2-D)
- b. The activation of the courtyard was identified by public comment and the Board as a priority. The applicant described a possible fitness room facing the courtyard. The Board discussed this use within the courtyard and agreed it ought not be only a residential amenity space/fitness room for residents only, and should rather be a use available for the community that will help to activate the courtyard. (PL3-C)
- c. The programming of the courtyard was identified as a priority. Agreeing with public comment, the Board recommended uses at grade that will activate the courtyard during all times of the day. Further, the programming of the courtyard itself ought to provide amenities appropriate to the community, such as multi-generational and family oriented activities. (DC3-B)
- d. Public comment described the courtyard as exhibiting a more Western rectilinear response, and recommended further study of alternative solutions. The Board was curious about this observation, and agreed that further exploration was necessary. The Board recommended further development of the courtyard space, with careful attention paid to how non-rectilinear solutions might influence the space. (DC3-B)



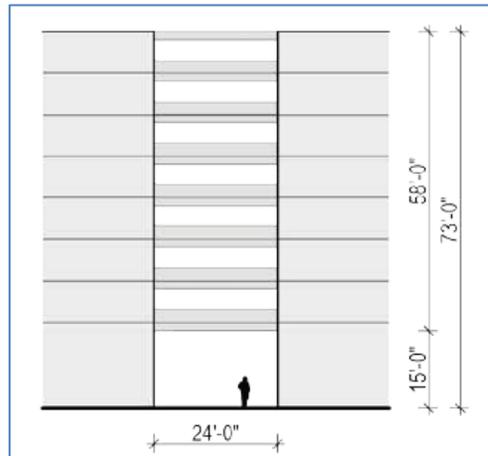
## 7. Corners.

- a. In addition to activating the courtyard, the encouragement of human interaction and activity along the streets was also identified as a priority. Specifically, the Board expressed concern that the proposed drug store use at the northwest corner was not porous enough, and risks turning its back on the corner and community. Opportunity for operable, roll-up doors at this corner were described by the applicant. The Board supported such a response, and recommended the corner design include greater porosity to avoid an insular retail space. Benches, lean rails, and/or other seating at this corner and at the bus stop on E Union St were also recommended. The Board recommended additional details be presented at the next meeting that describe the 23rd Ave and E Union corner response. The wider sidewalks proposed were supported. (PL3-C)
- b. Public comment expressed concern about the re-location of the James Washington Memorial Fountain, proposed at the corner of E Union St and 24th Ave, and recommended locating the

fountain within the courtyard instead, well away from the proposed curb cut on 24th Ave. The Board acknowledged public concern about the possible pedestrian/vehicle traffic conflicts in this area, and recommended the applicant explore locating the fountain elsewhere, such as in the courtyard as was suggested by the public. The location should encourage pedestrian interaction with the fountain. (DC3-B)

## 8. Breezeways and Portals.

- a. The use of breezeways, portals, and through-block connections help to lessen the mass of the overall building and add to the existing network of pedestrian pathways. The Board discussed the three portals proposed, each offering pedestrian connection from the public right-of-way to the internal courtyard. The Board expressed concern that the width of the portals was not sufficient to clearly communicate to pedestrians that these are a public entry into a shared courtyard. The Board agreed that the success of the courtyard rested on the success of the portal spaces, and that making these spaces feel public is important. The Board requested additional details be presented at the next meeting. See additional guidance provided under DC4 below.



- b. Page 52 of the EDG packet described the east elevation of the northwest corner commercial spaces as a feature wall, for possible use as a movie wall or display for community artwork. The Board supported this concept, and recommended it be designed as an integral part of the design concept. The Board agreed with public comment and recommended using resulting blank walls and surfaces for public expression of art that references the history, heritage, and culture of the community. (DC2-B)
- c. As noted in guidance for CS2-D above, the Board expressed concern that the width of the portals was not sufficient to clearly communicate to pedestrians that these are a public entry into a shared courtyard: the success of the courtyard rested on the success of the portals. The applicant described that a high level of transparency is being considered for the pedestrian bridges within the portals (providing for internal circulation). The Board supported this material response, and requested additional details be presented at the next meeting. Details should include precedent photos of examples that are closer in scale to the proposal – the Board was not satisfied that the examples shown on page 17 of the EDG packet were of a comparable scale. (DC4-B)

9. **Materials.** The Board encouraged a common palette of materials expressed differently across the project. Materials of a high-quality are expected. In support of public comment, the Board agreed the design concept should embody the history of the site as well as the future history of the site. Include in the Recommendation packet material details. Provide a detailed materials and colors board at the Recommendation phase. (DC4-A)

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based on the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guidelines priorities and achieve a better overall project design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance the following departures were requested:

1. **Driveways (SMC 23.54.030.D.2.):** The Code requires a 22-foot wide driveway for non-residential driveways accommodating two-way traffic. The applicant proposes to reduce this width to 20-feet.

The Board indicated preliminary strong support for the departure request as the reduced width minimizes the presence of the driveway and serves as a traffic calming measure. The Board recommended a driveway width as narrow as possible. (CS2-C)

2. **Curb Cut Width (SMC 23.54.030.F.):** The Code allows a minimum curb cut width of 22-feet, a maximum width of 25-feet, and an exception to allow for a 30-foot width if truck and auto access are combined. The site's frontage along 24<sup>th</sup> Ave would allow for a total of four curb cuts. The applicant proposes one curb cut at a width of 35-feet to provide auto access to the garage and loading berth.

The Board indicated preliminary support for the departure request finding that one curb cut on 24<sup>th</sup> Ave located as close to E Union St as possible offered an acceptable response to the existing context with single-family development located along the east side of 24<sup>th</sup> Ave at the sound end of the block. The reduction of possible impacts of these service uses on the building aesthetics and safer pedestrian circulation is important. (DC2-C)

At the time of the Early Design Guidance the following Type I requests (determinations are made administratively by SDCI) were reviewed by the Board who provided SDCI with the following feedback:

1. **Street Level Facades (SMC 23.47A.008.A.3.):** The Code requires that all street-level street-facing facades be located within 10-feet of the street lot line, unless a wider sidewalk, plaza, or other approved landscape or open space are provided. The applicant proposes a building with two portals into a central courtyard. This results in approximately 44- total feet (20-feet along E Union St and 24-feet along 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave) of street-facing façade that is not within 10-feet of the street lot line and requests that this area meet the definition of wider sidewalk, plaza, or other approved landscape or open space.

The Board was supportive of the Type I request agreeing that the wider sidewalks that reinforce this significant neighborhood intersection with high pedestrian activity with portals into the central courtyard met the intent of this code requirement (CS2-B, DC1-B).

2. **Driveway Slope (SMC 23.54.030.D.3.):** The Code allows for a maximum driveway slope of 15% except as provided in subsection 23.54.030.D.3. The applicant proposes a 20% slope.

The Board was supportive of the Type I request agreeing the request met the criteria of SMC 23.54.030.D3.

## DESIGN 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.

### CONTEXT & SITE

#### **CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.**

##### **CS2-C Relationship to the Block**

**CS2-C-1. Corner Sites:** Corner sites can serve as gateways or focal points; both require careful detailing at the first three floors due to their high visibility from two or more streets and long distances.

##### **CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale**

**CS2-D-1. Existing Development and Zoning:** Review the height, bulk, and scale of neighboring buildings as well as the scale of development anticipated by zoning for the area to determine an appropriate complement and/or transition.

**CS2-D-3. Zone Transitions:** For projects located at the edge of different zones, provide an appropriate transition or complement to the adjacent zone(s). Projects should create a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zone and the proposed development.

**CS2-D-4. Massing Choices:** Strive for a successful transition between zones where a project abuts a less intense zone.

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

#### **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.

##### **CS3-B Local History and Culture**

**CS3-B-1. Placemaking:** Explore the history of the site and neighborhood as a potential placemaking opportunity. Look for historical and cultural significance, using neighborhood groups and archives as resources.

**CS3-B-2. Historical/Cultural References:** Reuse existing structures on the site where feasible as a means of incorporating historical or cultural elements into the new project.

## PUBLIC LIFE

**PL1 Connectivity: Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.**

### PL1-B Walkways and Connections

**PL1-B-1. Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Connect on-site pedestrian walkways with existing public and private pedestrian infrastructure, thereby supporting pedestrian connections within and outside the project.

**PL1-B-2. Pedestrian Volumes:** Provide ample space for pedestrian flow and circulation, particularly in areas where there is already heavy pedestrian traffic or where the project is expected to add or attract pedestrians to the area.

**PL1-B-3. Pedestrian Amenities:** Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian oriented open spaces to enliven the area and attract interest and interaction with the site and building should be considered.

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

### PL3-C Retail Edges

**PL3-C-1. Porous Edge:** Engage passersby with opportunities to interact visually with the building interior using glazing and transparency. Create multiple entries where possible and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.

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

**PL3-C-3. Ancillary Activities:** Allow space for activities such as sidewalk vending, seating, and restaurant dining to occur. Consider setting structures back from the street or incorporating space in the project design into which retail uses can extend.

## DESIGN CONCEPT

**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 facades—including alleys and visible roofs—considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned.

**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.

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

**DC3-B Open Space Uses and Activities**

**DC3-B-1. Meeting User Needs:** Plan the size, uses, activities, and features of each open space to meet the needs of expected users, ensuring each space has a purpose and function.

**DC3-B-2. Matching Uses to Conditions:** Respond to changing environmental conditions such as seasonal and daily light and weather shifts through open space design and/or programming of open space activities.

**DC3-B-3. Connections to Other Open Space:** Site and design project-related open spaces to connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby public open space where appropriate.

**DC3-B-4. Multifamily Open Space:** Design common and private open spaces in multifamily projects for use by all residents to encourage physical activity and social interaction.

**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.

**BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.