



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012499

Address: 2334 Elliott Ave.

Applicant: NK Architecture for Pauls Corporation

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, August 23, 2011

Board Members Present: Gabe Grant (Chair)
Sheri Olson
Pragnesh Parikh

Board Members Absent: Mathew Albores
Brian Scott

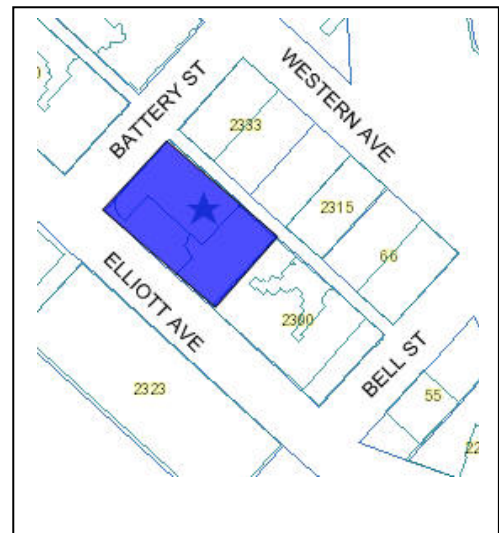
DPD Staff Present: Scott Kemp

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMR/C 86/65

Nearby Zones: (North) DMR/R 85/65
(South) DH2 65
(East) DMR/C 86/65
(West) DMR/C 86/65

Lot Area: 211,600 sq. ft.



Current Development:	The site is vacant.
Access:	The site faces on a public alley and two streets.
Surrounding Development:	Multi story commercial buildings have been built throughout Belltown, including adjacent to the south of the proposal site and across Battery Street to the northwest. Across Elliott Ave. are multi-story commercial buildings. Across the alley to the northeast is a church building and to its east, multi-family buildings.
ECAs:	No Environmentally Critical Areas are mapped or known to exist on the site.
Neighborhood Character:	Part of the Belltown Urban Center Village, the area is characterized by newer, large scale residential and commercial development replacing older, smaller structures with similar uses.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is a seven-story apartment building consisting of five wood-framed floors organized around a courtyard above a podium housing additional residential units (139 total units) with parking for approximately 83 cars, and 3,262 sq. ft. of retail use.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include the same basic program elements.

The first scheme (Option A) showed a proposal utilizing five stories of wood frame construction over a three level concrete base. It was “U” shaped opening to the west and a large setback from Battery St. and the fifth level.

The second scheme (Option B) showed five levels of wood frame construction over a two level podium with the courtyard opening facing the uphill alley to the east.

The third scheme (Option C) showed a proposal utilizing Type-I construction throughout with 9 level, not courtyard cut, a large setback from Battery St. and a moderate sized modulated insert along Elliott Ave.

PUBLIC COMMENT

One member of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Stated that she supports the project going forward, that the courtyard facing Elliott is a smart addition and that units on Battery Street opening onto the street would be important.

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. The Board identified the Downtown Development Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

A. Site Planning & Massing

Responding to the Larger Context

A-1 Respond to the Physical Environment. Develop an architectural concept and compose the building’s massing in response to geographic conditions and patterns of urban form found beyond the immediate context of the building site.

Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:

- A. Develop the architectural concept and arrange the building mass to enhance views. This includes views of the water and mountains, and noteworthy structures such as the Space Needle;**
- B. The architecture and building mass should respond to sites having nonstandard shapes. There are several changes in the street grid alignment in Belltown, resulting in triangular sites and chamfered corners. Examples of this include: 1st, Western and Elliott between Battery and Lenora, and along Denny;**
- C. The topography of the neighborhood lends to its unique character. Design buildings to take advantage of this condition as an opportunity, rather than a constraint. Along the streets, single entry, blank facades are discouraged. Consider providing multiple entries and windows at street level on sloping streets.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board identified the adjacent building and the sloped site as important elements of the physical context to address. The multifamily building adjacent to the southeast has a “notch” providing light and air to windows of units which should be addressed in a complementary way, most likely with a matching setback.

The sloping site would present challenges in the way the building relates to the sidewalk along Elliott Ave. where it would be important to create a strong pedestrian experience.

Any live/work units included should be truly commercial in their character.

The Board did not express support for a departure to begin at a higher point matching the plinth of the neighboring building, stating that this did not provide a better solution to the guidelines which would call for building setbacks at increasing elevation.

B. Architectural Expression

Relating to the Neighborhood Context

B-1 Respond to the Neighborhood Context – Develop an architectural concept and compose the major building elements to reinforce desirable urban features existing in the surrounding neighborhood.

Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:

Belltown has a rich architectural context, with a wide variety of architectural styles represented within the neighborhood. Contemporary methods of building can potentially create visual conflicts with older buildings due to differences in scale, massing, and degrees of articulation. Sometimes new buildings add exteriors that mimic past architectural styles, creating a sense of unauthentic design. These guidelines emphasize the concept of historical continuity, or in other words, the relationship of structures over time. This relationship encourages diversity within a coherent whole, reinforcing the unique and evolving character of Belltown.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated it is important for the building to help create and enhance the positive aspects of the neighborhood character. Bland street facing facades should be minimized. Entries and windows should meet the sidewalk to the greatest extent possible. A large, wide open, transparent lobby would be a positive element.

Of the examples of existing buildings to draw inspiration from, the H2O and Broad Stone were found most appropriate and useful. The 222 was also staid to have some positive elements.

B-4 Design a Well-Proportioned & Unified Building. Compose the massing and organize the publicly accessible interior and exterior spaces to create a well-proportioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated that this is an important principal to be incorporated into the building design.

C. The Streetscape

Creating the Pedestrian Environment

C-1 Promote Pedestrian Interaction. Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should be open to the general public and appear safe and welcoming.

Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:

- A. reinforce existing retail concentrations;
- B. vary in size, width, and depth of commercial spaces, accommodating for smaller businesses, where feasible;
- C. incorporate the following elements in the adjacent public realm and in open spaces around the building: unique hardscape treatments, pedestrian-scale sidewalk lighting, accent paving (especially at corners, entries and passageways), creative landscape treatments (planting, planters, trellises, arbors), seating, gathering spaces, water features, inclusion of art elements
- D. **Building/Site Corners:** Building corners are places of convergence. The following considerations help reinforce site and building corners: provide meaningful setbacks/ open space, if feasible, provide seating as gathering spaces, incorporate street/ pedestrian amenities in these spaces, make these spaces safe (good visibility), and iconic corner identifiers to create wayfinders that draw people to the site.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the importance of creating a good pedestrian environment at this site. The Board stated it is important for the building to address and relate to the sidewalk and pedestrians along each frontage and that this would be particularly challenging along the steep Battery St. frontage. It asked that the equipment vault shown along a sidewalk be recessed into the building behind an intervening use.

C-3 Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades. Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated this guideline was one of particular applicability.

C-5 Encourage Overhead Weather Protection. Encourage project applicants to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major pedestrian routes.

Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:

Overhead weather protection should be designed with consideration given to:

- A. the overall architectural concept of the building (as described in Guideline B-4);
- B. uses occurring within the building (such as entries and retail spaces) or in the adjacent streetscape environment (such as bus stops and intersections);
- C. minimizing gaps in coverage;
- D. a drainage strategy that keeps rain water off the street-level facade and sidewalk;
- E. continuity with weather protection provided on nearby buildings;
- F. relationship to architectural features and elements on adjacent development, especially if abutting a building of historic or noteworthy character;
- G. the scale of the space defined by the height and depth of the weather protection;
- H. use of translucent or transparent covering material to maintain a pleasant sidewalk environment with plenty of natural light; and
- I. when opaque material is used, the illumination of light-colored undersides to increase security after dark.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board listed this guideline as one of high importance.

D. Public Amenities

Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space

- D-1 Provide Inviting & Usable Open Space. Design public open spaces to promote a visually pleasing, safe, and active environment for workers, residents, and visitors. Views and solar access from the principal area of the open space should be especially emphasized.**

Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:

As a dense, urban neighborhood, Belltown views its streets as its front porches, and its parks and private plazas and spaces as its yards and gardens. The design and location of urban open spaces on a site or adjoining sidewalk is an important determinant in a successful environment, and the type and character of the open space should be influenced by the building's uses.

Residential open space: Residential buildings should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated that it does not favor putting a driveway along a street frontage. It is not being asked for a departure for this element as it is not a development standard which can be departed from through Design Review. The Board indicated that the negative impacts of curb cuts and driveways should be minimized.

D-2 Enhance the Building with Landscaping. Enhance the building and site with substantial landscaping—which includes special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, and site furniture, as well as living plant material.

Belltown-specific supplemental guidance:

Landscape enhancement of the site may include some of the approaches or features listed below, where appropriate:

- A. emphasize entries with special planting in conjunction with decorative paving and/or lighting;**
- B. use landscaping to make plazas and courtyards comfortable for human activity and social interaction;**
- C. distinctively landscape open areas created by building modulation, such as entry courtyards;**
- D. provide year-round greenery - drought tolerant species are encouraged to promote water conservation and reduce maintenance concerns; and**
- E. provide opportunities for installation of civic art in the landscape; designer/artist collaborations are encouraged**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that, given the topography of the area, some upper levels will be observable from surrounding areas and that a well developed landscape would be important.

E. Vehicular Access & Parking
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Minimizing the Adverse Impacts

E-1 Minimize Curb Cut Impacts. Minimize adverse impacts of curb cuts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated this would be a high priority were curb cuts to be incorporated in the final plan.

E-2 Integrate Parking Facilities. Minimize the visual impact of parking by integrating parking facilities with surrounding development. Incorporate architectural treatments or suitable landscaping to provide for the safety and comfort of people using the facility as well as those walking by.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated that this guideline also indicates alley access should be utilized.

- E-3 Minimize the Presence of Service Areas. Locate service areas for trash dumpsters, loading docks, mechanical equipment, and the like away from the street front where possible. Screen from view those elements which for programmatic reasons cannot be located away from the street front.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated that utility vaults should not be located along street frontages and that dumpsters location and loading areas should be shown at the next meeting.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

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

The following departures are likely to be requested at the Recommendation Meeting:

- 1. Side Setbacks (SMC 23.49.166):** The Code requires side setback of 20 feet above 65 feet in height. The applicant proposes to raise the height at which the setback occurs to match the level of at which a similar setback occurs on the building to the south.

The Board indicated they did not see a design advantage in granting such a departure and were not initially inclined to do so.

- 2. Lot Coverage (SMC 23.49.158):** The Code requires a maximum of 65% lot coverage between 65 and 85 feet in height. The applicant proposes 68.7% lot coverage between 65 and 85 feet in height.

The Board indicated because the rationale for this departure is connected to that for the upper level side setback departure, this one also seems to lack merit.

- 3. Projections into View Corridor (SMC 23.49.024.B):** The Code requires a view corridor setback above 50 feet along Battery St. The applicant proposes open railings and planter boxes at the edges of roof top open space elements.

The Board indicated they might be in favor of such a departure where doing so would provide a design benefit such as visible landscape or attractive architectural elements when looking down the view corridor from the east.

4. **Maximum Enclosed Common Area (SMC 23.49.010.b.2):** The Code requires a maximum ratio of 1:1 of enclosed to open of common open space.

The Board indicated they might be in favor of such a departure where doing so would provide a design benefit.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forwards to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.

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