

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF
CAPITOL HILL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
July 11, 2001**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Project Number:	2103146
Address:	2305 E. Madison St.
Applicant:	Robin Abrahams and Elizabeth Maher of Abrahams Architects
Board members present:	Tom Phillips (Chair) Merv Gorasht Rob Humble
Board members absent:	Greg Wharton Anne Sarofalyeng
DCLU staff:	Michael Jenkins

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is proposing a new mixed-use building comprised of ground floor commercial uses with three floors of apartments above and parking to be provided at grade underneath the apartments. The site is currently occupied by a one story abandoned commercial structure that will be demolished as a result of the project.



The site, located at the intersections of 23rd Ave, E. Madison and Denny Way, is located in an NC2-40 zone. The development site also includes a portion of structure that will not be altered as a result of the project. The structure, a 4-unit multi-family dwelling, is located immediately to the east on the portion of the site fronting Denny Way. The structure is primarily located in an L-2 zone, but the portion that is located on the development parcel is zoned NC2-40. No alteration to this structure is anticipated as a result of this project. As referenced, the site is located immediately to the north and west of an L-2 zone along 23rd Ave and Denny Way. The uses associated with this zone are primarily single family and lower density multi-family uses. The portion of the site fronting E. Madison is zoned NC2-40 and contains similar mixed use and commercial projects as well as smaller scale residential uses.

The applicants also requested three design departures:

- A reduced landscape buffer and no fencing along the east property line (SMC 23.47.016D2)
- Increase in the allowed number of small spaces and a decrease in the required number of large spaces (SMC 23.54.030B2)
- Reduce the size of the driveway widths for mixed use buildings from 22 feet to 12 feet (SMC 23.54.030D2)

PUBLIC COMMENT

8 members of the public attended this meeting. The following issues and concerns were raised during the meeting:

- The proposed size of the apartments
- What will be done to allow for passage on the site after path has been removed
- What will the garage entrances look like and will entrances be secured
- Desire to develop south facing façade to ensure it is harmonious with adjacent structures
- Exit onto E. Madison seems reasonable
- An imaginative project that takes into account a difficult site
- Existing and proposed sidewalk widths
- Outcome of existing street trees
- Moving or angling of stair/elevator tower on Madison to provide more open space
- Where location of commercial signage will be located
- Desire to maximize open space in response to higher density development
- If it is possible to create formal path after existing path that crosses between Denny and Madison is removed
- Type of materials

PRIORITIES

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by proponents and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance, identifying by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*" that are of the highest priority to this project:

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 features.

The Board noted that the location and prominence of the parcel made the site a potential landmark for the area. The Board also noted that the applicant did a good job in trying to design the site around the slope that falls towards the east.

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

The Board felt that the location of the stair/elevator penthouse along Madison detracted from the project's street presence and the ability of the commercial spaces to be viable and should be moved within the building.

A-3 Entrances visible from the street – Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street

The Board felt that a residential presence should be made by having a residential entrance on E. Madison but scaled back not to interrupt the commercial continuity along E. Madison.

A-4 Human Activity - New Development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

As with previous guidance, the Board felt that the movement of the stair tower from Madison would enhance the streetscape. The Board was interested in looking at detail in elevation and cross section of the streetscape on E. Madison.

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.

The Board did indicate that keeping some sort of a pedestrian path across the site was desirable but also acknowledged the practical and legal issues with recreating the path. In regard to the departure that is related to this request, the Board was interested in seeing design detail on how the revised landscaping and lack of fencing in relation to the adjacent structure would work, but acknowledged that the blank wall on the house facing the proposed garage would mitigate this condition.

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

The Board felt that a residential entrance on the east side of the building would allow a more prominent commercial space along E. Madison as well as increasing the landscaping and possible areas for open space in relation to E. Madison.

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

The Board felt that the public comment to improve the amount and quality of open space along the street was important to the project.

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.

In evaluating the departure request, the Board felt it was important to further understand how the vehicular access points along Denny Way could be modified to allow for reduced ingress/egress widths as well as the need for an exit onto E. Madison.

A-10 Corner Lots - Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

The Board felt that this was obviously a high priority.

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 the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

The Board felt that the applicant had done a good job in trying to scale the building massing down as it approached the L-2 zone. The Board did indicate that additional work on the South façade along Denny needed interest to meet this guideline.

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.

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 facade walls.

The Board indicated that it was important to have a unified appearance given the complicated site and resulting building forms. There was also a brief discussion on how the type of construction could facilitate this solution.

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

High priority.

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.

Board members wanted to see this developed with specific details at the next meeting.

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

The Board felt that this guideline was important in relationship to the requested departure, but gave no specific direction other than acknowledging public comment on reducing the profile in relation to the streetscape.

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.

The Board reiterated their direction in Guidelines A-1, A-2 and A-4 through A-7.

D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks - Parking lots near sidewalks should provide adequate security and lighting, avoid encroachment of vehicles onto the sidewalk, and minimize the visual clutter of parking lot signs and equipment.

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.

The Board felt that these were important guidelines to consider, especially in relation to the requested departures.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security - Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

The Board noted that this guideline would be important especially if the residential entrance is moved to the east side of the building.

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 plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen wall, planter, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

The Board noted that the design departure request for reduced/modified landscaping along the east property line would be evaluated by how the applicants develop the project around these two guidelines. The Board also acknowledged that the response to E-2 would mitigate the effect that granting the departure would have on Guideline E-1

DEPARTURES FROM DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

As indicated above, the Board retained specific comment on the request until the project had been developed further.