

From: [Andrew Kirsh](#)
To: [PRC](#)
Subject: Project 3020338 EDG comments, 2939 E. Madison St.
Date: Wednesday, July 13, 2016 5:44:22 PM

Dear Ms Hogness,

These are my comments on Project 3020338.

"Seattle is fortunate to have a rich inventory of buildings and architectural styles throughout the city developed over many decades. One measure of design excellence is the ability of new buildings to fit seamlessly into that inventory" (Seattle Design Guidelines, Introduction, p iii).

"The design guidelines reflect these values through their emphasis on:

- beginning the design process with an understanding of the natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings;
- designing individual buildings within the larger context of a street, neighborhood, and city;"

SDG, Introduction, p v.

Comment: Of the many projects I have seen over the course of many years of design reviews in Seattle, this proposal is unfortunately one of the least sensitive to its context.

At a time when the stated and admirable goal of the City is to increase tree canopy coverage, the proposal would destroy more than 20 mature trees, many quite large (including several Bigleaf Maples) in an area that has been partly reclaimed from invasive species and is part of a larger natural area that extends north and east and includes additional urban forest.

The bulk and scale of the proposed building are mammoth in comparison with other commercial and residential buildings in the neighborhood, which has a desirable granularity that makes for a very pleasant pedestrian experience. The applicants have done a good job of bringing the proposed structure north from the neighboring houses to the south in their preferred alternative, but the proposed transition to the lower intensity single-family zone on Dewey Place is insensitive: the height of the 46 foot-high proposed wall on Dewey Place is only 6 inches lower than that of the proposed frontage on Madison Street in the commercial zone. The proposed buffer on Dewey Place is, if I understand the regulations correctly, only the minimum required by Seattle Public Utilities for a setback where power lines exist.

Below are listed design guidelines I believe should be given high priority in design review of this project.

Thank you,

Andrew Kirsh

CS1

Natural Systems and Site Features

Use natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings **as a starting point** for project design.

CS1

"D. PLANTS AND HABITAT

1. On-Site Features: Incorporate on-site natural habitats and landscape into project design and connect those features to existing networks of open spaces and natural habitats wherever possible. Consider relocating significant trees and vegetation if retention is not feasible.

2. Off-Site Features: Provide opportunities through design to connect to off-site habitats such as riparian corridors or existing urban forest corridors. **Promote continuous habitat, where possible**, and increase interconnected corridors of urban forest and habitat where possible.

CS2 A, 1 and 2:

Sense of Place: Emphasize attributes that give Seattle, the neighborhood, and/or the site its distinctive sense of place. Design the building and open spaces to enhance areas where a strong identity already exists, and create a sense of place where the physical context is less established. Examples of neighborhood and/or site features that contributed to a sense of place include patterns of streets or blocks, slopes, sites with prominent visibility, relationships to bodies of water or significant trees, natural areas, open spaces, iconic buildings or transportation junctions, and land seen as a gateway to the community.

Architectural Presence: Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly. A site may lend itself to a

“high-profile” design with significant presence and individual identity, or may be better suited to a simpler but quality design that contributes to the block as a whole. Buildings that contribute to a strong street edge, especially at the first three floors, are particularly important to the creation of a quality public realm that invites social interaction and economic activity. Encourage all building facades to incorporate design detail, articulation and quality materials.

CS2 D. HEIGHT, BULK, AND SCALE

- 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.
- Existing Site Features: Use changes in topography, site shape, and vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent properties; for example siting the greatest mass of the building on the lower part of the site or **using an existing stand of trees to buffer building height from a smaller neighboring building.**

- 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.**

Factors to consider:

Distance to the edge of a less (or more) intensive zone;

Differences in development standards between abutting zones;

The type of separation from adjacent properties (e.g. separation by property line only, by an alley or street or open space, or by physical features such as grade change);

Adjacencies to different neighborhoods or districts; adjacencies to parks, open spaces, significant buildings or view corridors; and

Shading to or from neighboring properties.

- Massing Choices: Strive for a successful transition between zones where a project abuts a less intense zone. In some areas, the best approach may be to lower the building height, **break up the mass of the building, and/or match the scale of adjacent properties in building detailing.** It may be appropriate in other areas to differ from the scale of adjacent buildings but preserve natural systems or existing features, enable better solar exposure or site orientation, and/or make for interesting urban form.
- Respect for Adjacent Sites: Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

DC3. C. DESIGN

- Reinforce Existing Open Space: Where a strong open space concept exists in the neighborhood, **reinforce existing character and patterns of street tree planting, buffers or treatment of topographic changes.** Where no strong patterns exist, initiate a strong open space concept, where appropriate, that other projects can build upon in the future.
- Support Natural Areas: **Create an open space design that retains and enhances on-site natural areas and connects to natural areas that may exist off-site and may provide habitat for wildlife.** If the site contains no natural areas, consider an open space design that offers opportunities to create larger contiguous open spaces and corridors in the future with development of other public or private projects.

