

From: [Wallis Bolz](#)
To: [Hogness, Magda](#); [PRC](#)
Subject: Project #3020338, Wallis Bolz comments for Early Design Guidance
Date: Tuesday, July 12, 2016 10:20:02 PM
Attachments: [Wallis Bolz EDG comments on project number 3020338.pdf](#)

Regarding: Project #3020338, 2925 E Madison St, Seattle, WA 98112
Comments for Early Design Guidance

Dear Ms. Hogness,

Please find attached to this email my comments and priority guidelines for the Early Design Guidance meeting to be held for project 3020338 on July 13, 2016. If you have any questions regarding my letter, or if additional information would be helpful, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best regards,
Wallis Bolz

July 12, 2016

Department of Construction and Inspections
Attn: Magda Hogness (magda.hogness@seattle.gov)
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124

Regarding: Project #3020338, 2925 E Madison St, Seattle, WA 98112
Comments for Early Design Guidance

Dear Ms. Hogness,

My name is Wallis Bolz, and I am a resident of the Arboretum neighborhood and a member of the Mad P-Patch community garden in Madison Valley. I write to comment on the proposed redevelopment of the City People's Nursery property at 2925 E Madison St.

Madison Valley is a small in scale, calm and quiet commercial and residential district in central Seattle. Our neighborhood includes the Washington Park Arboretum & Playfield, the F.A.M.E. MLK Community Center, Bailey Boushay House, the Mad P-Patch community garden, the Ida Mia P-Patch community garden, the Shambala Meditation Center, the Valley School, the Alder Creek Natural Area, the Mercer-Madison Woods and the Harrison Ridge Greenbelt.

Our valley is green, and our most significant neighborhood asset is our trees. The Washington Park Arboretum links the great green belts of the west--St. Mark's and Interlaken, to Madrona and the lake, by way of the Alder Creek Natural Area at 26th and E Prospect, the Mercer-Madison Woods at 30th and E Mercer and the Harrison Ridge Greenbelt at 32nd and E Denny. We are the green back of Capitol Hill and downtown Seattle, an offset to the concrete-centric urbanization of the city's core.

As noted above, our business district is small in scale, with buildings representative of just about each decade of commercial building in Seattle. It is home to many small businesses, both retail and service. A charming mix of retail businesses and restaurants front E Madison St from 27th Ave E to the lip of the valley at 30th Ave E; the district is approximately three blocks in length and served by two traffic lanes, one in each direction. The shop windows are a treat for passersby.

Madison Valley is an incubator of small business, the birthplace of Fran's Chocolates and Hoa Nail Salons. City People's Nursery is a successful small business of 28 years; a successor to Clifton's Nursery, the latter in business at that site since 1959. Retail businesses close at 6 p.m.,

restaurants close at 10 p.m. Notable buildings include the Schuster Group Madison Center enclave at 2800 - 2816 E Madison St, with its charming interior courtyard and passage from E Madison St to 28th Ave E, and 2705 - 2713 E Madison St, with its brick terrace, stepped back facade and elegant passage mid block from E Madison St to E Arthur Pl.

The City People's property is at the eastern end of our business district, perched above the Dewey Basin. The Dewey Basin was created in the early part of the last century when folks with a penchant for earthworks replaced the E Madison St trestle with an earthen dam, cutting Madison Valley in two. The slopes of the basin are fill, a century-old man-made midden pile, an artifact. The floor of the basin is peat. The Dewey Basin is a natural extension of the Washington Park Arboretum, and, like the Arboretum to the north of the trestle, is mature urban forest on its east and west slopes, a green edge that delineates slope from valley, and a buffer for residents from commercial activity. The west slope of the Dewey Basin (the City People's property) comprises half of the mature tree canopy on the slopes of the basin: 22 big trees of Red alder, Big leaf maple, Lombardy poplar and Thuja plicata 'Zebrina'. Seattle Department of Transportation property, including the street trees of E Madison St, and the Mercer-Madison Woods, a park property, support the other big trees of the Dewey Basin.

On the floor of the Dewey Basin you will find the Mad P P-Patch community garden and a short city block of modest single family homes. It is "a charming, pea-patched cul de sac...Madison Valley looks like and is a charming neighborhood, and "the bowl" [Mercer Bowl/Dewey basin] a delightfully tucked away part of it." Knute Berger, Crosscut, April 19, 2007, "What killed Kate Fleming?"

The proposed redevelopment of the City People's property is the work of a Michigan-based strip mall developer, a journeyman architect and a property owner of remarkable avarice; unsurprisingly, it is little more than an effort to monetize every square foot of the property. On an odd lot of 38,592 square feet, Velmeir Companies proposes to construct a six story structure: two floors of exposed parking garage (facing Dewey Pl E), one floor of retail, and three floors of market-rate apartments. Despite the architect's insistence that "the development will be designed in keeping with the specific character of the surrounding neighborhood context in its architectural elements, building scale, and massing," there is no evidence thus far to support this assertion. The facade of the E. Madison storefront is close to one full block of Madison Valley business district and proposes to host two tenants, a supermarket/grab-and-go food retailer and a cafe. In contrast to the architect's proposal for the site, Madison Valley commercial buildings of any size host several storefronts. An exposed two-level underground parking garage has no precedent in the Madison Valley business district and neighborhood, and there is no precedent in Madison Valley for a building of this size, with

so few commercial tenants. It is a building one might find up the street, in Madison-Miller, or to the northwest, in Ballard.

If the architect and property developer wish to design a building in keeping with the specific character of the neighborhood, they should look at the neighborhood. Madison Valley is not Ballard; it lacks the capacity of Ballard to accommodate building on such a scale. An appropriate approach to development in Madison Valley does the following:

- It excludes the west slope of the Dewey Basin and maintains it as an open space buffer, in keeping with the natural topography of the site and in recognition of an existing network of natural areas, open spaces, park property, habitat and view corridors;
- It recognizes and supports neighborhood amenities of high value--the Dewey Basin walking route and the Mad P-Patch community garden, through its arrangement of uses on-site, including parking garage entries;
- It does not provide parking in excess of required capacity, and, in fact, seeks to reduce parking requirements to half of the preferred option, in recognition of emerging patterns of urban mobility;
- It creates discrete, related structures (2800-2816 E Madison St) to reduce building mass on an idiosyncratic lot;
- It does not look to the lesser buildings in the commercial district for inspiration (2818 E Madison St, 2835 E Madison St) but to the better buildings in the commercial business district for inspiration (2800 - 2816 E Madison St, 2705 - 2713 E Madison St);
- It retains a passage from E Madison St to Dewey Pl E.

Below you will find my priority guidelines, from the Seattle Design Guidelines, for the proposed project, with specific comments. My comments precede the guidelines.

With best regards,
Wallis Bolz

Comments on

Seattle Design Guidelines for Project #3020338, 2925 E Madison St, Seattle, WA 98112

Sun diminution/shade increase. Preferred option reduces, in great measure, the light of neighbors, the adjacent public garden (the Mad P-Patch) and the southern edge of the Washington Park Playfield. (Guideline CS1: B2)

Natural systems and site features, urban pattern and form, open space connectivity, architectural concept, open space concept. The property proposed for development includes the west slope of the Dewey Basin. The site is a steep slope and a liquefaction zone and hosts a mature tree canopy. The west, north and east slopes of the Dewey Basin are the walls of a “room,” a contiguous belt of green space, multi-layered and rich in habitat value. On the floor of this “room” are the Mad P-Patch community garden and an enclave of modest single family homes. All options remove the entire west slope of the Dewey Basin and replace it with two levels of exposed parking garage and an 8-18 foot high retaining wall that runs the length of Dewey Pl E. Natural topography on site is eliminated. It is a significant change to the nature of the room.

The preferred option fails to exploit an opportunity to enhance existing open spaces and connect with natural areas that exist off site: the SDoT right of way at 30th & E Mercer St, the Mad P-Patch community garden and the Mercer-Madison Woods. These properties are located on the north slope of the Dewey Basin, adjacent to the site. The preferred option ignores the value of contiguous habitat. The preferred option eliminates on-site natural areas (the west slope of the Dewey Basin, the City People’s yard).

With removal of the west slope of the Dewey Basin, the property is no longer in harmony with the north and east slopes of the Playfield and Arboretum to the north; removal of the slope eliminates a link in an existing urban forest corridor, comprised of the the Union Bay Natural Area, St. Mark’s Greenbelt, Interlaken, the Alder Creek Natural Area, the Washington Park Arboretum & Playfield, the Mercer-Madison Woods, the Harrison Ridge Greenbelt, the SPU detention pond at 30th and E John and Madrona Woods.

Replacement of the mature tree canopy is not possible, given proposed setbacks. Landscaping on site is to the benefit of new residents, with little benefit to the existing neighborhood.

The preferred option does not build on the character of existing open space. It does not complement nor contribute to the existing network of open spaces or the connections among them. It does not value the slopes or habitat value of the Dewey Basin. (*Guidelines CS1: C1, 2, D1, 2; CS2: A1, B3, D3d; PL1: A1; DC2: B2; DC3: B3, C1, C3*)

Urban pattern and form, sense of place. The preferred option ignores the small scale and porous nature of the Madison Valley business district, with its many storefronts and passages that link one street to another, and its diversity of small retail and service businesses. The long storefront devoted to a single retailer is not in keeping with the existing business district, in which any one building houses several small storefronts. The preferred option eliminates the “yard” of City People’s Nursery, a semi-public garden and passage from E Madison St to Dewey Pl E. The preferred option erects a wall between neighbors north and south of E Madison St.

The preferred option reduces and erodes significant public views and compromises the E Madison St segue to the Washington Park Arboretum and Lake Washington Blvd. In butting the hard edge of a building on E Madison St right up to the west edge of the “trestle,” the preferred option erodes the soft green edge of E Madison St at the trestle. This soft edge (tree canopy) spans the trestle, connects the Arboretum to Madison Valley from north to south, and serves as a gateway to Lake Washington Blvd, an Olmsted boulevard. In addition, the preferred option eliminates the soft (tree) edges of the public view south from E Madison St, a high elevation view (above the Dewey basin) of upper Madison Valley to Madrona, a lovely and serene view of trees and neighborhood.

The height of the building eliminates existing views from E Madison St of the west slope of Madrona as well as near and far views of trees and sky. The height of the building creates a canyon effect in a small commercial district. (*Guidelines CS2: A1, A2, B2, D3d*)

Neighborhood character. The Madison Valley business district is small in scale, host to many small retail businesses, restaurants and providers of services. The better, large buildings host a number of small businesses and provide pedestrian passage through buildings by way of corridors or small, charming open spaces. Many of the buildings provide parking, most often it is above ground, in the back of the building, in an alcove, its use and presence invisible to pedestrians.

The preferred option takes its cue not from the existing business district, but from the E Madison St segment of the Madison-Miller neighborhood up the hill. The Madison-Miller neighborhood abuts two significant transportation corridors--E Madison St (four lanes of traffic plus a parking lane) and 23rd Ave. Its new buildings occupy large lots and are monolithic. Thus far, the Madison-Miller neighborhood is a charmless corridor, a commercial district lining both sides of a city highway, with zero street presence. The architect is better served by looking at the buildings of the Schuster Group at 2705-2713 and 2800-2816 E Madison St for inspiration. The site is better suited to a development smaller in scale, boasting a series of discrete and connected structures that include interior and exterior open spaces, with passage from E

Madison St to Dewey Pl E and preservation of the west slope of the Dewey Basin. (*Guidelines CS3: A3, 4*)

Urban pattern and form, project uses and activities: mobility vs car storage. The Madison Valley business district is a pedestrian zone. The provision of parking in excess of city requirements in support of a regional supermarket and future residents, with the entry and exit to the garages on both E Madison St and Dewey Pl E, puts many cars on the sidewalk in two pedestrian zones. Cars on sidewalks impede mobility in a pedestrian district, discouraging a quality public realm and invitations to social engagement. Provision of parking in excess of city requirements ignores emerging patterns of mobility in the city, embodied in services such as Uber, Lyft, light rail, Bus Rapid Transit, the Microsoft Connector and Car2Go. The preferred option supports an antiquated assumption of car ownership, use and storage that comes at great cost to the natural and built environment as well as urban mobility.

The placement of the residential parking garage entry on Dewey Pl E introduces a high volume of traffic into the Dewey Basin, which is a cul-de-sac, creating unsafe and unattractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers. Dewey Pl E is both a narrow street and a segment of a popular neighborhood walking route, which includes the Mad P-Patch, a peaceful and beautiful public space. The introduction of seventy-five vehicles into the cul-de-sac compromises the walking route, our public space and neighborhood mobility. (*Guidelines CS2: A2, DC1: A1*)

Priority Seattle Design Guidelines for

Project #3020338, 2925 E Madison St, Seattle, WA 98112

Context and Site

*CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: **Use natural systems and features of the site and its surrounding as a starting point for project design***

B Sunlight and Natural Ventilation

*2 Daylight and Shading: Maximize daylight for interior and exterior spaces and **minimize shading on adjacent sites** through the placement and/or design of structures on the site.*

C Topography

*1 & 2 Land Form and Elevation Changes: **Use the natural topography and/or other desirable landforms or features to inform the project design.***

***Use the existing site topography when locating structures and open spaces on the site.** Consider “stepping up or down” hillsides to accommodate significant changes in elevation.*

D Plants and Habitat

*1 & 2 On-site Features, Off Site Features: **Incorporate on-site natural habitats and landscape elements** such as: existing trees, native plant species or other vegetation into project design **and connect those features to existing networks of open spaces and natural habitats** whenever possible. Consider relocating significant trees and vegetation if retention is not possible.*

*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 Urban Pattern and Form

A Location in the City and Neighborhood

*1 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.*

*2 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 interactions and economic activity. Encourage all building facades to incorporate design detail, articulation and quality materials.

B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces

2 *Connection to the Street: Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and carefully consider how the building will interact with the public realm. **Consider the qualities and character of the streetscape--its physical features (sidewalk parking, landscape strip, street trees, travel lanes, and other amenities) and its function (major retail street or quieter residential street)--in siting and designing the building.***

3 *Character of Open Space: Contribute to the character and proportion of surrounding open space. **Evaluate adjacent sites, streetscapes, trees and vegetation, and open spaces for how they function as the walls and floor of outdoor spaces or “rooms” for public use.** Determine how best to support those spaces through project siting and design (e.g. using mature trees to frame views of architecture or other prominent features).*

D. Height, Bulk, and Scale

3. *Zone Transitions: For projects located at the edge of different zones, provide an appropriate transition or complement other adjacent zones(s). Factors to consider:*

*d. Adjacencies to different neighborhoods or districts, **adjacencies to parks, open spaces, significant buildings or view corridors.***

CS3 Architectural Context and Character

Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood

A. Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes

*3 & 4 **Established Neighborhoods, Evolving 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. 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.***

Public Life 1 Connectivity

Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them

A Network of Open Spaces

*1 **Enhancing Open Space: Design the building and open spaces to positively contribute to a broader network of open spaces through the neighborhood. Consider ways that design can enhance the features and activities of existing off-site open spaces. Open space may include sidewalks, streets and alleys, circulation routes and other open areas of all kinds.***

Design Concept

1 Project Uses and Activities

Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site

B Vehicular Access and Circulation

*1 Access Location and Design: Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that **minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists** wherever possible. **Emphasize** use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and **attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.***

2 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.

B Architectural and Facade Composition

*2 Blank Walls: **Avoid large blank walls along visible facades** 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.*

3 Open Space Concept

Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.

B Open Space Uses and Activities

*3 Connections to Other Open Space: Site and design project-related open spaces should connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby public open space where appropriate. **Look for opportunities to support uses and activities on adjacent properties and/or the sidewalk.***

C Design

*1 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, so that other projects can build upon in the future.*

*3 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.*

From: [Wallis Bolz](#)
To: [PRC](#)
Cc: [Hogness, Magda](#)
Subject: Project #3020338, Mad P-Patch comments for Early Design Guidance
Date: Tuesday, July 12, 2016 10:26:35 PM

To whom it may concern,

Please note that I have submitted two sets of comments for project number 3020338. The first letter is on behalf of the Mad P-Patch community garden, signed by Liz Brandzel, Andrew Kirsh and myself. The second letter is my comment alone on the project.

I would appreciate it if the public record is updated to reflect the authorship of each letter. The first letter should be attributed to the Mad P, the second to me (Bolz).

Thank you.

Wallis Bolz