

**Early Design Guidance
of the
DOWNTOWN SEATTLE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

FEBRUARY 27, 2007

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3004769

Address: 114 Pike St

Applicant: Ev Ruffcorn and Erik Mott, [Ruffcorn Mott Hinthorne Stine](#)
For Jeff Schoenfeld, [Urban Visions](#)

Board Members Present: Dana Behar (now recused)
Wilmot Gilland (chair)
Marta Falkowska
Jim Falconer
Kelly Mann

Board Members Absent: None

City Staff: Scott A. Ringgold, Land Use Planner

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a 14-story mixed-use structure with ground-level retail, offices, and apartments (extent of each use is currently unspecified). Parking is to be located within the structure and is to be accessed from the alley.

VICINITY AND SITE

The site is located on the north side of Pike St,¹ midblock between First and Second Avenues, one block from the Pike Place Market in downtown Seattle.

The site is bounded by Pike St to the south, by the

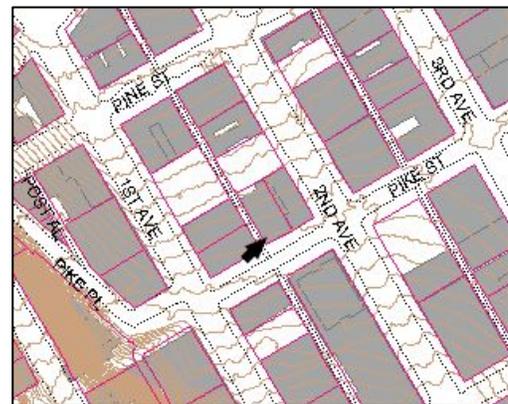


Figure 1. Local topography

¹ In this area of downtown, the platting pattern orients to the northwest. Avenues are considered to run N-S and streets E-W.

existing Nimmer building to the east, by the 1521 2nd Avenue tower (currently [under construction](#)) to the north, and by an alley to the west. The Broderick Building is located across the alley on Pike St. Second Avenue is a minor arterial for one-way (westbound) traffic, and is classified as a Class I Pedestrian Street. The site and vicinity slope gradually down to the south (see Figure 1).

The site is zoned Downtown Mixed Commercial with alternative height limits of 240' for portions of buildings in nonresidential use, and between 290 and 400' for residential portions, subject to bonus criteria (DMC 240/290-400). Properties across the alley to the west are zoned Downtown Mixed Commercial with a 125' height limit (DMC 125). To the east along 3rd Avenue, land is zoned Downtown Retail Core with a base height limit of 85', or 150' subject to conditions (DRC 85-150). The property is located in the Commercial Core Urban Center Village.

In this vicinity, SMC [23.49.058 E](#) limits certain towers higher than 160' that are within 200' of an existing tower on the same block. The site's proximity to the [1521 2nd Avenue](#) condominium has caused the design to adopt a 160' height limit.

Development in the vicinity is a mix of uses, architectural styles, and building scales, including the [Newmark condominium tower](#) (1991), the Nimmer building (also the [Eitel](#), 1904, currently proposed for redevelopment as a 22-story mixed use building, partially within the existing facades, DPD project #[3004150](#)), and the complex of buildings within the [Pike Place Market](#) district. The site's owner/developer also owns the parking lot on the southeast corner of 2nd Ave and Pike St: currently proposed for redevelopment as a 35-story mixed use building with 200 residential apartments (DPD project #[3004728](#)).

The site is regularly shaped, approximately 60' by 117', or 6,990 square feet, with its longer dimension along the alley. Due to the substandard alley width, originally platted as 16', the applicant must dedicate two feet of the southwestern portion of the property to the alley per Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) [23.53.030 B2 & F1](#), which results in a site area of about 6,757 square feet. The site slopes to the south, about 6' in all (See Figure 1). No portion of the site is designated as an Environmentally Critical Area on City maps.

The site is currently developed with a two-story structure (the Liberty building, built 1924) finished in terra cotta and occupied by retail uses. Virtually all of the site is built. There is no substantial on-site vegetation on-site; there are three street trees (cherries) in the adjacent

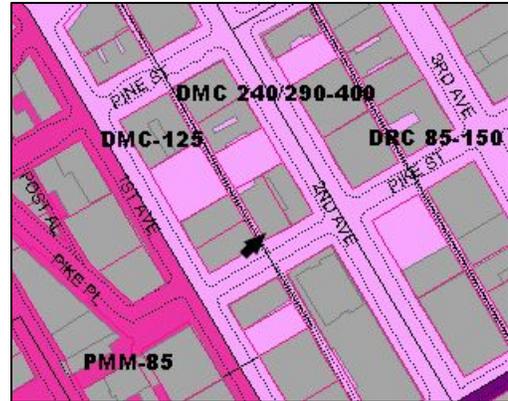


Figure 2. Vicinity zoning



Figure 3. Aerial View

sidewalk. Existing sidewalks are substantially wider than standard: according to SMC [23.49.022](#) and [Map 1C](#), a 15' sidewalk is required along the north side of Pike where approximately 26' currently exists.

The site is intensively served by public transit. Nearby routes service virtually all of the city and region.

APPLICANT'S PRESENTATION

Jeff Schoenfeld of Urban Visions briefly introduced the project. This site is located at a well-traversed portal to the Pike Place Market and to the downtown retail core.

Ev Ruffcorn presented the preliminary design. He gave a brief overview of the site and context, including much of the information discussed above. He showed the site in the context of the 1521 tower's ground floor plan, to illustrate the proposed vehicle access points in the alley. Preliminary massing also considers the redevelopment of the Nimmer Building to the east.

The design currently envisions principal pedestrian access on Pike, through a lobby to elevators serving offices and residences. A retail space would be located on Pike, with residential parking and loading located on the alley. The development program involves offices to the maximum extent allowed by Floor Area Ratio (FAR) limits, with residences filling out the balance to the 160' height. Residences are likely to be fairly large and would involve about 1-2 parking spaces per unit, roughly at grade within the structure. No on-site parking is proposed for the offices. Below grade, the design envisions accessory storage space.

Mr. Ruffcorn showed three concept alternatives, each representing subtle massing variations on a maximum Code-permitted volume, and each showing some preliminary articulation between the office and residential uses. As the design abuts the property lines with the Nimmer and 1521 buildings, those two facades will be opaque, but they possibly offer opportunities for a "vertical garden on a shared property line". Concept alternatives include some corner notching, which might provide for increased fenestration at upper levels.

Pike is a very active pedestrian street. With 40' of frontage remaining [excluding the lobby], the site's retail opportunities are somewhat limited. However, the design envisions continuous overhead weather protection and retail windows that wrap to the alley for improved exposure.

The applicant currently requests no design review departures for the proposed project.

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS BY THE BOARD

Tell us more about the opaque north and east sides. That's a function of building code requirements for fire protection. The constraint exists, and the idea is to experiment with green, planted walls.

Massing alternatives are starting to push in and out on the north and south sides. The east and west sides are the most visible. Is there any such manipulation on the east side? To be honest, we're not there yet. This is a similar scale to the [5th & Madison](#) building. There we relied on materials to activate it and make it interesting. I don't know if we'll rely much on modulation here.

Describe how this project might relate to the adjacent redevelopment of the Nimmer Building. We've got a similar footprint to the Nimmer tower. The scale will be somewhat shorter. Even though co-development isn't currently envisioned, we intend to progress with the proposal.

Is there any thought on making this building into a common project with the Nimmer redevelopment? We've had that discussion, but it hasn't materialized – we haven't found that solution. We encourage any considered efforts in that direction.

What sort of physical separation needs to occur between this site and the Nimmer? A one-foot joint, no need for a bay.

You own the southeast corner of 2nd and Pike. What relationship do you envision between these two kitty-corners? We're looking at how to make them work well together and to be additive to each other. Hopefully they can be a positive influence on the neighborhood. There are separate design teams, but we share conversations back and forth.

More of a request – In the review of the 1521 tower, we spent a lot of time discussing the alley, and there were lots of design choices to make it a different place than elsewhere downtown. Tell us about how you're handling the alley and the back-side of the building. How does it relate to 1521? Work with what they're doing and enhance it. Make a connection all the way down the alley. We're huge believers in making alleys nice livable areas. We agree. There are 10 dumpsters there now.

At 160' tall, the roof will be highly visible from adjacent buildings. Some human occupation of the rooftop would be a huge advantage. We've taken that approach elsewhere, and we're thrilled with how it works. We'll look at how to make it active, visually pleasing, an amenity space – not just a place to put the mechanical systems.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Thirteen members of the public signed in at the Early Design Guidance meeting on February 27, 2007. Most comments from the meeting focused on design considerations under the Board's purview. Other comments and questions related to proposed tenancy, number of residential units, construction timeframe, and impacts to views from nearby sites. Comments related to design review included the following:

- The Board should review this project with the development proposed at the [adjacent] Nimmer building. The Nimmer is a landmark, and we need it in some form. Together these buildings frame the market. (Applicant responded, they had approached the next-door owner and that joint development of the two sites currently seems unlikely)

- Consider saving this building from the bottom. The inside wood paneling is the only thing like it.
- If the design objective is to feed the street, it would be better served by a two-story building. We've seen 120' by 108' towers. I worry about all the narrow towers.
- Any discussion of context ought to look at lots in all directions and development potential in all directions. I don't think they did it. There are maps and photos, but no analysis. The design should be further engaged – this site is not only full of history, but the neighborhood is now actively transforming itself.
- This small lot cries out for good design.
- I wish them luck with 6-8 stories of green wall.
- If the Nimmer building goes up, there will be another 8 stories of party wall above it.
- Each lot is totally inefficient: two elevators, no access to the alley for services [for the Nimmer site], two stairwells each.
- The issues of a joint design, under separate ownership, would be beneficial from the public's perspective.
- Pike St is so iconic. It's probably one of the most significant portals in the city, maybe even in the region.
- Pay attention to the vista, the way it's being framed by this development.
- There isn't enough analysis of the urban design and the architectural context.
- An essential component of the urban design context is its unmistakable human scale, particularly in the openings and fenestration.
- There's a datum line of 2-4 stories. The Nimmer building is higher, but there's a 2-4 story solid expression of the pedestrian realm. Ev noted that the current massing drawings are rough, but they're not showing that deference to the pedestrian scale – they blow it out a bit. Make sure that these pieces assert themselves and continue to follow the “human scale” lead.
- Treat the blank facades that way too.
- In this context, it's more in keeping with the surrounding urban design to have these small sites rather than an aggregated urban renewal project.
- I applaud the early indications of alley activation.
- I love new development, especially when it's friendly to the sidewalk.
- It's nice to be covered from the rain.
- I agree that the alley should be pedestrian friendly.
- I love the rooftop garden idea: there should be more greenery downtown.
- It would be nice to coordinate the project with the neighbor.
- I'm concerned about what the blank wall will look like for future residents of the 1521 tower. There should be something to reduce the impact of a big blank wall.
- There's a certain character to the older building – it would be good to preserve the existing façade and the inside wood paneling.

DPD also received three letters from the public. Two requested to be parties of record only. One questioned whether the two adjacent projects were too large for their sites.

GUIDELINES

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 siting and design

guidance described below and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines of highest priority to this project, found in the City of Seattle's [Design Review Guidelines for Downtown Development](#).

A. Site Planning and 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.

A-2 Enhance the skyline.

Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline.

Guidance – Site Planning

Design materials should acknowledge a complex environment here: the streetscape, the rooftop, the alley wall, the entrances. Flesh out the internal organization and design that to a very sensitive urban context. The differentiation of the retail, office, and residential uses is an opportunity.

While not a tall building in relation to its existing and imminent neighbors, this design will be seen from a distance and from the waterfront.

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.

B-3 Reinforce the positive urban form & architectural attributes of the immediate area.

Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.

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.

Guidance – Architectural Expression

The Board supported public comment about the neighborhood's existing human scale and urged that the design respond to its different scales. This is an entrance to the city and to the market,

with some fine historic buildings. This design should enunciate the existing scales and reinforce them, it should knit the more historic scale into its proposed 160'-high volume.

C. The Streetscape

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.

C-2 Design facades of many scales.

Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and materials compositions that refer to the scale of human activities contained within. Building facades should be composed of elements scaled to promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation.

C-3 Provide active – not blank – facades.

Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.

C-4 Reinforce building entries.

To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce the building's entry.

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.

C-6 Develop the alley façade.

To increase pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest, develop portions of the alley facade in response to the unique conditions of the site or project.

Guidance – The Streetscape

The Board supported the design objective to activate the alley. The alley facade is particularly visible, so it's important that it be visually grounded.

Party walls should be activated to the extent possible.

Entries and the ground plane should be designed with pedestrian safety and appropriate lighting in mind. Overhead weather protection is required – design it carefully, with detailing. The Board supported the idea of wrapping the retail space at the alley.

D. Public Amenities – *Enhancing the Streetscape and Open Space*

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.

D-3 Provide elements that define the place.

Provide special elements on the facades, within public open spaces, or on the sidewalk to create a distinct, attractive, and memorable “sense of place” associated with the building.

D-4 Provide appropriate signage.

Design signage appropriate for the scale and character of the project and immediate neighborhood. All signs should be oriented to pedestrians and/or persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood.

D-5 Provide adequate lighting.

To promote a sense of security for people downtown during nighttime hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building facade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.

D-6 Design for personal safety & security.

Design the building and site to enhance the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.

Guidance – Public Amenities

The top of your building will be visible, particularly from the Newmark. Make it a model. Landscaping above the street and visible to pedestrians might be appropriate.

The Board encouraged the design team to define the space with artwork or distinctive materials. The corner expression at the alley might be an opportunity for placemaking.

E. Vehicular Access & Parking – *Minimizing the Adverse Impacts*

E-1 Minimize curb cut impacts.

Minimize adverse impacts of curb cuts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

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.

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.

Guidance – Vehicular Access & Parking

As shown, the design appears to appropriately locate the driveway access, and to visually diminish on-site parking.

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DEPARTURE FROM DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The applicant requested no departures from the Land Use Code development standards:

<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Board Recommendation</i>
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