



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**RECOMMENDATION MEETING
Of
AREA 6, THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

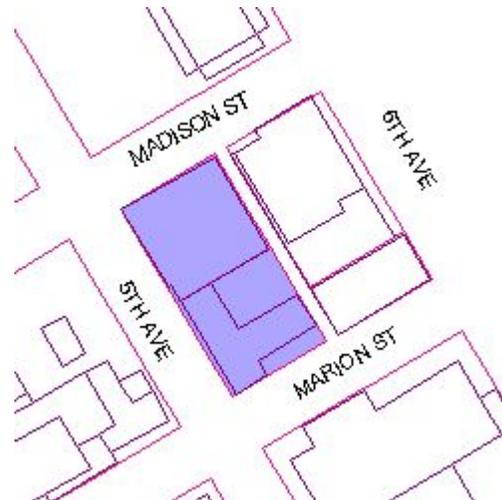
Meeting Date September 11, 2007

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Project Number: 3006834
Address: 505 Madison Street
Applicants: Chris Appleford of NBBJ Architects for Schnitzer Northwest, Developers
Board Members Present: Bill Gilland, Chair
Jim Falconer
Kelly Mann
Marta Falkowska)
Dana Bahar
Matt Allert, Get Engaged Representative
Project Land Use Planner: Art Pederson

PROJECT AND SITE DESCRIPTIONS

The project proposes to construct a 39 story office structure consisting of one level of retail / commercial use at street level and topped by a second level tenant amenity “business commons” and 37 stories of office space. Parking for approximately 525 vehicles will be provided in seven + levels of below grade parking. The project proposes vehicle access from both the alley and Marion Street. Parking access is required from the alley but can be allowed by the Director from the street under certain circumstances. The existing three-story office building and College Club buildings on site will be demolished.



The site measures 240 by 120 feet and is bounded by 5th Avenue to the west, a north to south alley along the east side and Madison and Marion Streets to the north and south respectively.

The site area is approximately 28,800 square feet. The topography is moderately steep with an elevation gain of 17 feet west to east along the north and south property boundaries, and an elevation drop of 12 feet north to south along the west (5th Avenue) and east (alley) property boundaries.

The surrounding development consists of the 27-story Madison Renaissance Hotel and the six-story Dover Residential Apartments across the alley to the east. Both front on 6th Avenue across from Interstate 5. A public amenity open-space occupies the southern portion of the Renaissance Hotel site, extending from the alley to 6th Avenue; it is about 35 feet above the alley elevation and 10 feet about the 6th Avenue sidewalk. However, a land use permit has been issued to allow the replacement of the amenity open space with an 11,191 square foot structure containing a ballroom and ancillary support spaces. The new ballroom structure would be approximately the same height as the Dover Apartments.

The surrounding blocks consist of the 42-story Bank of America Plaza tower to the south, the two-story United Methodist Church campus southwest across 5th Avenue, the 42-story Union Bank of California tower to the west along with the recently completed new residential tower. Across Madison Street to the northwest is the Seattle Public Library Main Branch. Directly across Madison Street to the north are the Nakamura Federal Courthouse and its large park-like setback facing 5th Avenue.

The site and surroundings are zoned Downtown Office Core 1 with a 450 foot height limit (DOC 1-450). Fifth Avenue is a Class I Pedestrian Street. Madison and Marion Streets are Class II Pedestrian Streets.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION - RECOMMENDATION MEETING

Steve McConnell of NBBJ Architects, described the proposed project as outlined in *Project and Site Description* above and outlined how the proposed design responds to the Early Design Guidance. The developer, Mike Nelson of Schnitzer NW, made additional comments about the project's aim of maximizing the amount of retail space along the 5th Avenue frontage.

The proposed design continues the direction of EDG Option 3 with an almost full site two to three level podium supporting a smaller footprint curved façade tower.

The contextual "forces" shaping this design are:

- The Nakamura Courthouse open space to the north,
- The adjacent Renaissance Madison Hotel to the east, and
- The varied surrounding architectural context of the Central Library, Nakamura Courthouse, Methodist Church, and Union Bank site residential tower.

In response the design proposes to:

- Set back the proposed tower from the Madison Street frontage to allow greater light access to the Courthouse lawn and to locate some on-site open space above the second podium level to form an open space connection with the Courthouse site,
- Have a gentle sweeping curve along the tower's east and west facades. The east façade curve, in conjunction with the open space area on the site's north end, will preserve substantial views from the adjacent hotel tower. The west façade curve is a compliment to that on the east façade and also serves to increase light penetration to the street level,
- Not over manipulate the façade design and tower shape but have a "simplicity and clarity" that will confuse the surrounding architectural context.

The location of the proposed parking garage access points was discussed at length. Because of the site topography and surrounding traffic circulation and volumes, access for the proposed approximately 525 parking spaces would be most efficient with two garage entries, one each by

Madison and Marion Streets. The presented two-entry design placed both vehicle access points on the alley as required by Code. Although vehicle access in downtown zones is not eligible for a *Design Departure*, but may be allowed as a DPD Director's Decision under narrow circumstances, the applicants presented to the Board a split alley and Marion Street alternative in order to have a Design Review Board advisory opinion for the Director's consideration. At the time of the Recommendation meeting the applicants are still preparing a formal request to DPD's Director.

According to the applicants, post MUP application engineering development has determined that the ramping required from an alley access point by Marion Street to the below grade parking levels will not allow the extent of 5th Avenue retail frontage as shown in the MUP submittal. The revised ramping would now leave an approximately 8-foot deep area between the proposed 5th Avenue street level façade and ramp wall and thus allow only a passageway and display area from the site's southwest corner to the retail area that would begin north of the center of this façade. In contrast, with a Marion Street garage entrance the driveway ramp would begin at a lower point and drop down to the north beneath the proposed loading docks thus allowing a normal depth of retail frontage extending back to the elevator core.

Additional benefits of the split alley and street vehicle access scheme are the ability to have a southwest entry plaza and to create a direct connection between the proposed north facing open space and Madison Street. The EDG preferred option and original MUP application proposed an entry plaza at the buildings southwest corner; this was supported by the Board. However, because of the now expanded space requirements for the driveway ramp and concomitant loss of street front retail space next to the ramp, the design now proposes to enclose the southwest plaza for a retail space. According to the applicants, the ability to have Marion Street vehicle access would both allow for expanded retail space along 5th Avenue and the inclusion of a southwest entry plaza.

A vehicle access ramp from Marion Street was described as making possible a reconfiguration of the proposed alley access ramp at the building's north side that would allow more flexibility in the design of the proposed Madison Street second level open space plaza. This reconfigured Madison Street frontage would be stepped to provide direct access from the street level to the raised open space plaza. Proposed open space would be at the second and mezzanine levels, and also on the east side of the tower roof.

Four *Design Departure* requests were presented. See *Departures from Code Standards* and *Design Departure Matrix* below.

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES, EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING OF MARCH 27, 2007.

The Early Design Guidance meeting was held March 27, 2007. After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, the Design Review Board members identified by letter and number the following siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Downtown Development*" of highest priority to this project:

- A-1 Respond to the physical environment.
- A-2 Enhance the skyline.
- B-1 Respond to the neighborhood context.

- B-3 Reinforce the positive urban form & architectural attributes of the immediate area.
- B-4 Design a well-proportioned & unified building.
- C-1 Promote pedestrian interaction.
- C-2 Design Facades of Many Scales.
- C-3 Provide active—not blank—facades.
- C-4 Reinforce building entries.
- C-5 Encourage overhead weather protection.
- C-6 Develop the Alley Façade.
- D-1 Provide inviting & usable open space.
- D-2 Enhance the building with landscaping.
- D-4 Provide Appropriate Signage
- D-5 Provide Adequate Lighting
- E-1 Minimize Curb Cut Impacts
- E-2 Integrate Parking Facilities.

The detailed EDG Guidance is included below in *Italics* along with the Board’s Recommendations on the presented Master Use Permit design response.

DEPARTURES FROM CODE STANDARDS

Four *Design Departures* have been requested as part of the MUP proposal. At the EDG meeting three *Design Departures* were requested. One *Design Departure* at each meeting was for a reduction in the amount of open space to be provided. *However, Downtown open space is not departable (SMC 23.41.012.B.16); the required amount of open space can be provided off site per (SMC 23.49.016.C.3). See Design Departure matrix at the end of this document for details of requested and allowed Code Design Departures.*

PUBLIC COMMENT

Eight members of the community attended the Recommendation meeting and submitted these comments and concerns:

- The design with two primary forms and other minor ones is “nice and classically modern”.
- The proposed tower tops are interesting, but they should step down to the west – the opposite of shown.
- The departure from continuous overhead weather protection (OHWP) is not necessary – it can be stepped along the hilly streets and extend continuously along 5th Avenue.
- The bottom of the curtain wall should be altered to be distinct from the larger “field” of it above.
- The proposed parking is a “while elephant” in relation to the benefit it will bring to the project.
- Having vehicle egress from the alley onto Madison Street will help reduce traffic congestion on 6th Avenue at Madison.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the September 11, 2007 *Recommendation* meeting the Design Review Board reviewed the design submitted in response to the EDG and further developed in conjunction with the project planner and discussed the three requested and allowed *Design Departures*. Following clarifying questions and deliberation the Board provided the following additional guidance and recommendations design guidelines based on the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Downtown Development*". The Board's comments and recommendations follow EDG Guidance that is in *Italics*.

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.*

Early Design Guidance

The building design should continue to:

- *Maximize the retention of westerly views from the adjacent hotel,*
- *Maximize solar access to the Nakamura Court House lawn and by the tower placement at the site's south end and curved western façade,*
- *Maximize solar access to 5th Avenue and Madison Street with a curved tower façade.*

The developing design should also:

- *Consider view potentials from adjacent sites and the streets surrounding the subject site and toward the Central Library and Methodist Church. The curved podium facades at the corners are a good approach to this goal.*
- *Increase view and light maximization to the west from the adjacent Dover Apartments,*
- *Locate the proposed upper roof open space so it is oriented toward the west and Puget Sound, Olympic Mountain, and waterfront views.*

Recommendation Meeting: The Board feels the proposed curved tower and podium facades respond to the relevant guidance given. However, the design does not show how it will increase light and view maximization to the adjacent Dover Apartments and it does not locate the tower roof open space to face the west. Consequently,

- The Board ***Recommends*** the project return to the Board with responses to these two items.

A-2 Enhance the skyline. *Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline.*

Early Design Guidance

The slender two plus-part tower concept is overall an appropriate design direction. Further design development should:

- *Explore the breaking-down of the tower massing for greater visual interest,*
- *Generate detail studies of the design and materials proposed for the mechanical penthouse,*
- *The two-part, two-level roof top expression should be developed further, after addressing the guidance on roof-top open space location in A-1 above,*

- *Consider visual impacts from the roof top design to the existing and increasing number of residential buildings to the east.*

Recommendation Meeting: The Board feels the shape of the proposed tower responds to the guidance given. However,

- The proposed design and materials for the mechanical penthouse and tower above level 39 are incomplete and greater development and detail is required at a ***Recommended*** second MUP Design Review meeting. This should include further developed façade materials that should display a “liveliness of the building skin”.

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.*

Early Design Guidance

The developing design should:

- *Look for detail and material cues from the best examples of downtown buildings,*
- *Continue to be responsive to the court house lawn, library, and Methodist church; this project could be a key transitional piece between the contrasting architectural styles of the library and court house,*
- *The adjacent street slopes are an opportunity for creating a smaller scale of street level building elements that will engage the sidewalk, such as entries to multiple interior building levels.*

Recommendation Meeting: The Board feels the proposed detail and material response is moving in the right direction for responsiveness to the surrounding downtown context, with the exception of the comments in A-2 above. The location and quality of the southwest building entrance is uncertain because of the unresolved alley vs. Marion Street access.

- After determining with DPD what access location will be permitted, the applicant’s should return to the Board with details about the location and quality of the southwest entrance and the how the stepping of the Madison Street frontage will provide a connection between this proposed open space and the street (see *D-1* below).

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.*

Early Design Guidance

See *B-1* above.

Recommendation Meeting: The Board noted that the tower’s massing, with the proposed west side extended screen wall, is at odds with the downward slope of the site and surroundings, as well as in conflict with the proposed roof top open space, which should be oriented toward the

west, as noted in A-I above.

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.

Early Design Guidance

The slender stepped tower concept should be further refined to achieve “elegance”. Now it appears extruded, but without sufficient interest. This can be done through:

- *Greater articulation of the upper tower and roof top,*
- *A better scale change between the street (podium) levels and tower,*
- *Differentiation but consistency between the tower sections.*

Recommendation Meeting: As noted above, the Board would like to see further development and details of the transition and relationship between the tower and the rooftop and tower top designs.

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.

Early Design Guidance

The lobby entries on 5th Avenue and Madison, along with the opening of these corners through the curved and recessed podium façade, should be further developed to support pedestrian interaction. Again, the slopes on Madison and Marion Streets are an opportunity, not a liability for creating small scale sidewalk to building connections.

Recommendation Meeting: The Board supports the proposed stepping and open space connection of the Madison Street frontage as described above, the maintenance of maximum retail space along 5th Avenue, and the provision of a southwest plaza building entry. Because the possibility of making the second level “business commons” public as a way to provide the required open space, a southwest plaza entry to this level would be beneficial.

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.

Early Design Guidance

Although not of “highest” priority, this guideline is still applicable. The key here is to design the façades to appropriate scales, not necessarily many scales. Appropriate human scale at all street levels is important. The base should be elegantly matched to the tower and not heavy and squat.

Recommendation Meeting: The Board feels the proposed base design is responding to this guideline but more details must be provided following resolution of the vehicle access issue.

C-3 Provide active—not blank—facades.

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

Early Design Guidance

The “P” (Pedestrian) street designations for all three streets should assure this is addressed. However, the design does not have to limit itself to the minimum transparency requirements of both sloped streets. Changes in floor level and multiple entries to meet the grade changes should be considered.

Recommendation Meeting: In addition to creating a better connection between Madison Street and the proposed north side open space, stepping of the grade change and access to the proposed Madison Street open space will reduce blank walls along the street; this should be continued. Regardless of the final vehicle access configuration,

- All facades without an adjacent use should be designed for visual interest.

C-4 Reinforce building entries.

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

Early Design Guidance

With the increasingly heavy pedestrian traffic on Madison Street and orientations toward the library and court house lawn, the proposed Madison Street entry design should easily meet this guideline with further development. The Marion Street entry (s) will be a challenge due to less pedestrian and vehicle traffic volume and no strong architectural or pedestrian supportive context across the street. Building entries on this side should then create a draw for pedestrians and building users.

Recommendation Meeting: The Board is strongly supportive of a southwest corner building entry to the second level “business commons”. Details of this should be presented at the next Recommendation meeting.

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.

Early Design Guidance

Always important, even though required by Code. The weather protection should respond to the increased corner set-backs / plaza areas and the slopes of Madison and Marion Streets and respond to the site, not the minimal Code requirements.

Recommendation Meeting: The design proposes a *Design Departure* from the requirement for continuous overhead weather protection (OHWP). Because of the proposed open space and tower set-back along Madison Street the Board **Recommends** approval of this request at this location, except for the Madison Street entrance. However, the Board does not support

excluding the Code required OHWP along 5th Avenue or Marion Street. The Board also **Recommends** the design include OHWP at any southwest corner or Marion Street entry.

C-6 Develop the Alley Façade.

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

Early Design Guidance

The alley façade should have a level of detail and interest that acknowledges the outward views across the alley from the adjacent hotel and Dover Apartments. The upper levels of the tower facing the alley should likewise be responsive to the hotel and also to views from across I-5 toward the proposed tower.

The development of the alley façade should respond to the continued presence of the Renaissance Madison Hotel, if the proposed ballroom does not occur.

Recommendation Meeting: The Board feels the alley podium façade is excessively utilitarian. Further development of this façade that responds to the above guidance and includes details of the southeast corner response (the chamfered corner discussed) to maximize light and air to the adjacent Dover Apartments should be presented at the next meeting.

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.

Early Design Guidance

A Design Departure from providing the full amount of open space has been requested. Street level open space in the form of corner plazas or nearby Green Street improvements could replace some of the area asked to be reduced. Extraordinary treatment of the street level would be better than creating marginal upper roof top open space. But the proponents must show why any amount of roof top open space could not achieve the directives of this guideline.

- *The sidewalk entry area designs should include features that will help achieve the intent of this guideline.*
- *The project proponents should work with DPD on determining if off-site Green Street improvement opportunities exist, or similar types of improvements would be possible adjacent to the site.*
- *The lower level open space should have exemplary features that create a well used exterior connection to the court house open space to the north.*

Planner's Note. At the time of EDG it was incorrectly assumed a Design Departure could be allowed for open space quantity Downtown. The amount of on-site open space can be varied based on the provisions in SMC 23.49.016.C. Any open space required on site must follow the *Design Guidance* given.

Recommendation Meeting: The Board supports the stepping of the north side open space that allows direct street access and the plaza entries at the northwest and southwest corners.

Regardless of the outcome of the vehicle access question, these should be continued. The stepping of the north side should be broken into smaller increments to reduce the size of the retaining walls.

As noted in *A-1* and *B-3* above, the rooftop open space should be oriented toward the west to take advantage of solar exposure and views. Additionally, relocation of the tower top to the east side will respond to the guidance given in *B-3* above.

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.

Early Design Guidance

For the surrounding streets, opportunities for some urban context landscaping (hard-scape as well as soft-scape from the list above) should be explored.

Recommendation Meeting: Details of the north side open space, plaza entries, and rooftop open space should be provided for the next meeting.

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 façade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.

Early Design Guidance

The project design should start to consider the anticipated signage and lighting schemes and present these to the Board when the building design is further developed.

Recommendation Meeting: Details of the design response to this guidance should be provided for the next meeting.

E. Vehicular Access and Parking

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.

Early Design Guidance

The Board supports the Land Use Code requirements for alley access to avoid driveways across sidewalks downtown. At the same time it encouraged the building design to provide adequate

interior street level area for retail spaces that will achieve the relevant guidance throughout this report. A substantial loss of that retail space would not be welcome.

The applicant should work hard to come up with the way to provide the required ramping to achieve both alley access and adequate retail and lobby space. A Design Departure could be entertained for reducing the loading dock requirements. Could some loading functions could be by elevator? The idea of possibly having one two-way ramp on Marion Street was offered for exploration. But the Board realizes that the Code criteria to allow this are very narrow. However, they could possibly express their support of DPD allowing this alternative if it were clear there was no possible alternative.

Recommendation Meeting: Based on the information provided by the applicants regarding the impacts of the vehicle access location on the possible area for 5th Avenue retail, the Board requests DPD consider allowing Marion Street vehicle access in conjunction with north alley access.

If Marion Street access is allowed, the proposed design should minimize impacts to pedestrians and respond to the guidance above regarding stepping of the north side open space connection to Madison Street. If full alley access is required, the proposed design should response to the guidance and comments above to create an interesting 5th Avenue frontage, provide a southwest entry, and reduce the scale of the retaining walls along Madison Street.

SUMMARY OF DEPARTURE REQUESTS

Land Use Code Standard	Proposed Amount of Reduction	Applicant’s Rationale for Request	Board Recommendation
<p>Street Façades Set-Backs. Between 15 and 35 feet above street level no more than 40 percent of the façade may be further than 2-feet from the street property line (SMC 23.49.056)</p>	<p>Approximately 29 percent of the 5th Avenue façade and 25 percent of the Madison Street façade would comply (reductions of approximately 71 and 75 percent). This requirement does not apply to Marion Street.</p>	<p>The preferred design includes curved end-façades at the north and south ends of the two-plus story height podium. The glazing between these curved ends will be recessed behind the expressed columns that support the tower. Both the curved and recessed glazed areas will allow for a more open sidewalk area and architecturally respond to the surrounding context, but be more than 2 feet from the property line. <i>B-4, D-1</i></p>	<p>The Board noted that pulling back the podium façade at these corners supports the creation of “pocket plazas” and could Recommend approval following review of the overall design response at the next DRB meeting.</p>
<p>Upper Level Development Standards – Maximum Façade Length. Different maximum façade lengths apply for façades at various elevations. (SMC 23.49.058)</p>	<p>Project proposes to exceed maximums for given elevations by: 20’ more than 155’ maximum for elevations 86’ through 160’; 50.5’ more than 125’ maximum for elevations 161’ through 240’; 60’ more than 100’ maximum for elevations 241’ through 500; and,</p>	<p>Project design proposes a curved tower for a more slender expression, instead of rectilinear assemblage of modulated sections. This will also allow more sunlight onto the Nakamura Courthouse open space. <i>A-1, A-2, B-4</i></p>	<p>The Board could Recommend approval following review of the overall design response at the next DRB meeting.</p>

Land Use Code Standard	Proposed Amount of Reduction	Applicant's Rationale for Request	Board Recommendation
	60' more than 80' maximum for elevations 500' and above.		
<p>Overhead Weather Protection. Continuous overhead weather protection along street facades unless façade is set back more than 5-feet. (SMC 23.49.018)</p>	<p>Provide discontinuous canopies along 5th Avenue and Marion Street and no canopies along Madison Street in areas where the façade is set back less than 5 feet as follows: 5th Avenue: 30 feet, Marion Street: 5 feet, Madison Street: 25 feet.</p>	<p>The proposed break in the canopies will reinforce building entries and distinguish retail areas. Other than the building entry at the corner, the Madison Street frontage will be predominately set back for open space planters. C-5</p>	<p>The Board Recommends no OHWP along Madison Street, except at the building entry. The Board does not support this request along 5th Avenue or Marion Street for the reasons cited in this document.</p>

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The project must return to the Design Review Board for final Recommendations on the outstanding design issues outlined in this report. Many of these outstanding issues depend on whether partial street vehicle access will be allowed. This question therefore must be resolved before presentation to the Board.

The applicant should continue to work with the project planner and submit the necessary traffic and design information for assessment of whether partial street access can be allowed by the Director.