



City of Seattle

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

FOURTH EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING
OF THE
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD 6 DOWNTOWN

Project Number: 3007548
Address: 1200 Stewart Street
Applicant: Jay Reeves, Project Architect, Sclater Partners
Douglas Scott, Owner Representative, Lexus
Company LLC
Meeting Date: November 25, 2008
Report Date: December 25, 2008
Board Members Present: Bill Gilland, Chair
Dana Behar
Marta Falkowska
Dan Foltz (substitute)
Board Members Absent: James Falconer
Kelly Mann
Staff Members Present: Bradley Wilburn, Land Use Planner

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Site Description

The development site combines seven parcels of land to establish a total land area of approximately 59,700 square feet, near the northeast edge of Downtown Seattle. The site is zoned Downtown Mixed Use Commercial with a height limited 240/2490 – 400 feet (DMC 240/290-400) and occupies an entire city block; with street frontage on Minor Avenue to the west, Denny Way to the north, Yale Avenue to the east, and Stewart Street to the south. The block is irregular in shape due to a shift in the street grid system. The subject site is also located within the Denny Triangle Urban Center Village, and Downtown Design Guideline area. The site is not located in a designated Environmentally Critical Area (ECA).



The site is developed with three commercial buildings, surrounded by hard surface parking lot, and a vacant land at the corner of Denny and Yale Avenue. The combined development site is essentially a flat lot with a slight downward slope to the west. The abutting streets are fully developed rights-of-way with asphalt roadway; curbs, sidewalks and gutters. Denny Way (principal arterial) and Stewart Street (principal transit street) convey heavy traffic volumes past the site. An improved alley, running perpendicular to Stewart, bisects the development site. The applicants are seeking to vacate the alley to unify the development site.

Area Development

The site is located just south of the less intensive Seattle Mixed zone across Denny way and west of Interstate Five (I-5) at the northeastern edge of Downtown. The site is within the Denny Triangle Urban Center Village (UCV) in the Denny Triangle neighborhood of Downtown. Some surrounding buildings of note include, REI's signature building within three blocks of the subject site. Immediately to the north across Denny is a one-story Greyhound bus garage built in 1940. Across Stewart to the south are the metal clad Metropolitan Park commercial buildings. The area is in transition as more lands are being considered for, or are under construction. Surface parking lots and modest sized buildings are typical in this area.

Zoning in the area includes Seattle Mixed with a height limit of 125 feet (SM 125) to the north, Multifamily Mid-rise zone with a height limit of 60 feet (MR) east of I-5, and Downtown Mixed Commercial zone with varying heights. This area contains a mix of commercial uses that include surface parking lots, office, retail, and lodging uses. Of the residential uses in the area, apartments/condominiums dominant the uses within the upper levels of the existing structures.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

The owner seeks to construct two 36-story towers above an 8-story base containing both residential and commercial uses. The proposed uses include retail, physical fitness center, childcare center, office, 300-room hotel, and approximately 326 residential units. Parking for 800 vehicles will be provided below grade. An alley vacation is being requested to allow a more integrated design proposal.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING

This report is based on notes taken during the fourth Early Design Guidance Meeting held on November 25, 2008. The First Early Design Guidance Meeting was held on September 25, 2007; the Second Early Design Guidance Meeting was held on December 4, 2007; and the Third Early Design Guidance Meeting was held on May 13, 2008. (The meeting reports and design review packets can be retrieved from DPD's Design Review Web page; www.seattle.gov/dpd/design_review_program/project_review/reports, or in the MUP file at DPD.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

Jack McCullough, of McCullough Hill, P.S., opened the presentation with an update on significant events since the previous meeting held back in May. Applications have submitted to SDOT requesting an alley vacation. On October 16, 2008, Seattle Design Commission convened to evaluate several projects including the 1200 Stewart Street project before you. The

Commission thanked the design team for their presentation and conditionally approved the adequacy of the public benefit package as presented, with a number of recommendations. The presentation before the Board on November 25, 2009, has incorporated Commission recommendations. Guy Michaelson, Berger Partnership PS, provided the public benefit analysis featuring cut out courtyards with specialty paving, urban gardens, and reinvigorated streetscape through application of landscaping and street furniture. Paul Thoryk, lead design architect, then presented a detailed design response to previously established guidelines and guidelines from the Third EDG Meeting. Mr. Thoryk provided schemes based on a relationship of the base and the two tower concept. The presentation included contextual relationship of the two towers to its surroundings including; adjacent street alignment, area topography, massing study including existing and proposed buildings, and geometry of the development site. A number of character studies were shown depicting podium street-level presence, interplay of rooftop crowns, and tower massing. Under all design schemes the alley would be vacated and two towers would extend above an 85 foot podium. The design objectives include: design a thoughtful building massing that takes advantage of territorial views, pedestrian street presence with connections to surrounding uses; and creation of an architectural image that would be a positive addition to the neighborhood. No design departures have been identified or requested by the design team at this time.

In response to the previous EDG Guidance meetings focused attention continues to be directed to the importance of the pedestrian street-level experience along all street frontages, porte-cochere, residential amenity areas, tower massing, and landscaping concept detail.

Departures may be requested depending on the next design iteration.

BOARD CLARIFYING COMMENTS

The Board began their inquiry surrounding the function of the Stewart Street frontage as it relates to the pedestrian and vehicle experience. It appears greater emphasis has been placed on vehicle related activities which is troubling to the Board. The design team responded by noting the hierarchy of architectural detail to locate and segregate vehicle from pedestrian traffic. Paving materials, ceiling height are but two elements punctuating the difference between the two uses. The Board noted differences in the floor plans and elevation drawings which needed additional explanation. Next, the Board turned their attention upon the frontage along Denny Way. The proposed building does not appear to fit within the neighborhood context. The Board asked the design team what examples of the areas architectural vernacular have been carried forward in this proposal. The design team used the Escala development in Belltown to emphasize a commitment to quality design. The design team has sought to improve on what has been done in the area by providing a gracefully designed building employing fenestration, modulation, and landscaping that vastly improves upon surrounding buildings. The design team reiterated it's commitment to reinvigorate the existing area's architectural vernacular.

The materiality of the podium level's exterior façade has yet to be resolved to the satisfaction of the Board. Glazing on the upper podium level floors is unreadable, from the outside one is unable to determine types of activities that may be occurring within. The design team explained that the podium level is meant to feel as light as air with the volume of glass surrounding heavily boned elements. The concept represents a design approach using assembly of spaces through

application of architectural design to create a sense of openness while solidly rooting the building to the ground. The Board was curious why the exterior materials did not take into consideration internal activities. The proposed athletic club on levels two and three is not definable from the outside. Lastly, the Board wanted the design team to confirm what LEED classification was being sought. The design Team responded that they are seeking LEED Silver.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Seven public members in attendance filled out the sign-in sheet. Public comments and clarifying questions focused on the following issues:

- Where and how is the development going to achieve energy efficiency?
- What green design elements are anticipated?

Most of the public comments are incorporated into the guidance from the Board.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Downtown Board members provided the siting and design guidance described below and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Downtown Neighborhood District*" of highest priority to this project.

The Board opened up their deliberation with identifying and commenting on a number of positives design concepts presented during the meeting before establishing specific recommendations for the project's next phase. The Board felt the design team has done admirable job of locating eight levels of parking below grade, and development of the site's street-level experience has advanced from the previous meeting. Still left unresolved in the opinion of the Board are the podium level relationship to the twin towers above and the towers relationship to each other. The integration of the podium to the landscaping appears at odds; the landscaping reflecting a more contemporary design whereas the podium conveys a more formalized symmetrical design. Reexamination of the function of the podium level is warranted and recommended.

Vehicle related use seem out of scale with pedestrian uses, especially along Minor. With three vehicles access points along Minor (parking entry, loading dock access, and internal arrival entry court [porte-cochere]), readability of pedestrian entries appears to get lost in the background with little to no visual cues to direct movement and secure pedestrian safety. As evidenced in the building's elevation drawing taken from the Minor perspective, pedestrian activity in the right-of-way would encounter at least three potential hazards with vehicle movement. The overall scale invokes Las Vegas styled architecture which is not be appropriate for this neighborhood. The application of glazing and type of glass (oblique vs. transparent) does not help to understand internal spaces from the outside. The podium lacks readability to help inform internal activities. It may be an oversimplification to equate the volume of glass applied on the podium level as being light as air, as describe by the design team previously. Additionally, the base feels like a

curtain hiding the continuation of portions of the upper level down to finished grade. The design of the base has a 70's post-modernist over scaled feel about it. There appears to be little architectural drama in the base level's design. Additionally, the application of the Minor and Denny frontage stonewall seems out of character with the rest of the building.

The designs of the towers above the base are going in the right direction. The Board would like to understand what architecturally is driving the roof level design. The shapes appear arbitrary, lacking coherence to the rest of the building and vicinity. Some facades of the towers appear to be adequately grounded at the site. A physical model or 3-D renderings would be very helpful to better understand the entire proposal.

The next time the proposal comes before the Board several items must be provided including; clear development of the podium level with materiality; its relationship to existing or proposed buildings, and greater acknowledgement to the "Seattle design sensitivity" (bring scale down).

Early Design Guidance: On November 25, 2008, the Downtown Design Review Board, met for the fourth time to provide additional guidance statements on this project. The plain text below is from the previous three Early Guidance meetings while the text in italics is from the November 25, 2008 meeting. An asterisk has been added in front of the guidelines to indicate what the Board determined to carry forward from the directions of the November 25, 2008 meeting.

A Site Planning

*** 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.

- Pay particular attention to the zoned height limit and datum line of 125 feet (SM-125) across Denny Way.
- Site should be treated as a gateway to downtown and design with this in mind.
- Apex of triangles should be more reflective of this unique location – additional study is warranted.
- *Greater attention should be directed towards demonstrating sustainability commitment, taking greater advantage of natural light, etc. (Provide images to illustrate components)*

A-2 Enhance the Skyline

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

- Careful attention should be directed to the roof line.
- Sculpting the upper levels need not be symmetrical, but need to have a dialogue with each other - Several options should be developed.
- Explore roof tops options that play off each other, expressing a different vocabulary.

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.

- Be sensitive neighboring iconic buildings including the REI building.
- Take advantage of the opportunity to design an attractive building that responds to the transit system in a neighborhood that is in transition.
- *Provide perspectives from Capitol Hill*

B-2 Create a Transition in Bulk and Scale

Compose the massing of the building to create a transition to the height, bulk, and scale of development in nearby less intensive zones.

- The two towers and their relationship to the podium and street are key design considerations moving forward to reflect sensitivity to the 125 foot zoned height limit across Denny.

*** 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.

- Symmetrically designed towers may not be the best solution. Seek to create greater dynamism between the towers.
- The 85 foot tall podium seems imposing and lacks humanscale for pedestrians, which will need to be resolved in the next design iteration.

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.

- Focused attention needs to be directed along all street frontages, with special attention around the porte-cochere as it relates to the pedestrian experience. More large-scale detail is warranted to convey the pedestrian experience.
- *Adding pedestrian seating in the recessed areas would be an added benefit, be mindful of scale and introduction of quality materials.*

*** C-2 Design facades of many Scales**

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

- *Design should focus on the human scale by delineating a hierarchy of entries that are readable from different perspectives.*

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.

- Open up Denny frontage to engage pedestrians within the right-of-way.

*** 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.

- *Thoughtful development is warranted to enhance street-level experience, contributing to readability.*

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.

No specific guidance provided

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.

- *Additional refinement surrounding the porte-cochere is warranted to visually open the pedestrian experience both from within the site and from the right-of-way.*

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 materials.

- Landscaping should be employed to mitigate traffic impacts from the busy streets. Pedestrians should be invited into protected spaces where possible.

*** 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.

- Podium level should seek to enhance the site's identity defined by the two towers.

- *Daylighting the porte-cochere should be considered*
- *Take advantage of the site's irregular shape, triangles help to define space.*

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.

- *Minor Avenue access to parking and service areas will need careful attention to safeguard pedestrian security.*
- *Revisiting the stone wall around the service area is warranted, the pedestrian experience should be a major consideration in its design.*

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.

- *The proposed alley-like passageway should open up to the sky.*

Summary: The Board agreed that the proposal could move forward to MUP application. The Board wants the design to engage the streetscape wherever possible and scale the design to integrate itself into area at a site with four street frontages; Denny Way, Yale Avenue, Stewart Street, and Minor Avenue.

Departure from Development Standards:

The applicant did not request or identify possible departures from the Land Use Code development standards. The Board will entertain future departure requests so long as the applicants can show clear evidence of how the overall design meets these priority guidelines.

<i>Development Standard</i>	<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Comment/Rational BY Architect</i>	<u><i>Board Recommendation</i></u>
<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>

Board and Staff Comments:

The architect should submit the Master Use Permit (MUP) application to DPD with the following:

- *Provide detailed graphics of the pedestrian street experience, with and without landscaping. Include development of entries.*

- More specific indication of the physical relationship of the project to the general and changing context, especially to higher quality architectural projects in the area.
- Present any updates from Seattle Design Commission, SDOT, Sound Transit, and Metro Transportation meetings, and how these recommendations will shape the design proposal. Include a full indication of the status of the alley vacation possibilities.
- Consult with King County Metro Transit on integrating the bus stops into the building structure and omitting standard metro bus stations.
- Provide more developed plans of all functionally different floor levels, include scale.
- Continue sections through the scheme cut in two different directions to show the spatial qualities of the base in relation to the towers.
- Continue large enough schematic elevations (of the whole project) to give an indication of scale, articulation of facades, and materiality.
- Provide alternative studies of the base articulation of elements to seek a vocabulary which better integrates the towers with the base. Include alternative studies of the Stewart and Minor corner, plus apex at Stewart and Yale.
- Provide rendered perspectives of the whole project from ground level at different vantage points and showing context.
- Submit specific study (perspectives, etc.) of the porte-cochere space; relationship of vehicle to pedestrians, light quality, transparencies, etc.
- Include developed landscaping design at grade.
- Provide studies of evening illumination and signage.
- The rooftop design should be refined and incorporate elements which respond to sustainable design wherever possible.
- Additionally, include a narrative and graphic rationale for granting any requested design departures.
- Identify and illustrate Green LEED elements, if any.

Please call Bradley Wilburn at 206.615.0508, or when you have scheduled your MUP intake appointment.