

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES

OF

QUEEN ANNE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Meeting Date: July 2, 2008

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3009234

Address: 601 Westlake Ave. N.

Applicant: David Yuan, NBBHJ for Vulcan Inc.

Board members present

Matt Roewe, Chair
John Rose
Bill Vandeventer
David Nemens
Mark Garrell

Land Use Planner present:

Scott Kemp

Site, Vicinity and Initial Proposal



The development site in the South Lake Union area of Seattle is zoned SM 65' (Seattle Mixed with a 65 foot height limit). The full block site, while appearing level, drops approximately 10 feet from south to north across the site. Most of it is mapped with a potential liquefaction environmental area designation. Two of the three buildings on the site are designated as City of Seattle Historic Landmarks; the Pacific McKay building and the Ford McKay building.

The City of Seattle has a plan to widen Mercer St. along the south property line of the site. In this plan the southern 70 feet of the site would be purchased by the City or taken through eminent domain.

The applicants propose to preserve the landmarked features of the two buildings by removing them from the existing structures, demolishing those structures and reattaching them to new structures north of the proposed new Mercer Street with new office building structure on the remainder of the site. The historic facades and some interior features would be integrated into the total project in a way directed and approved by the Seattle Landmarks Board through a Certificate of Approval process.

Of the three alternative massings presented it was the third, preferred, alternative which elicited the most public comment and upon which the Board focused its attention.

Public Comments

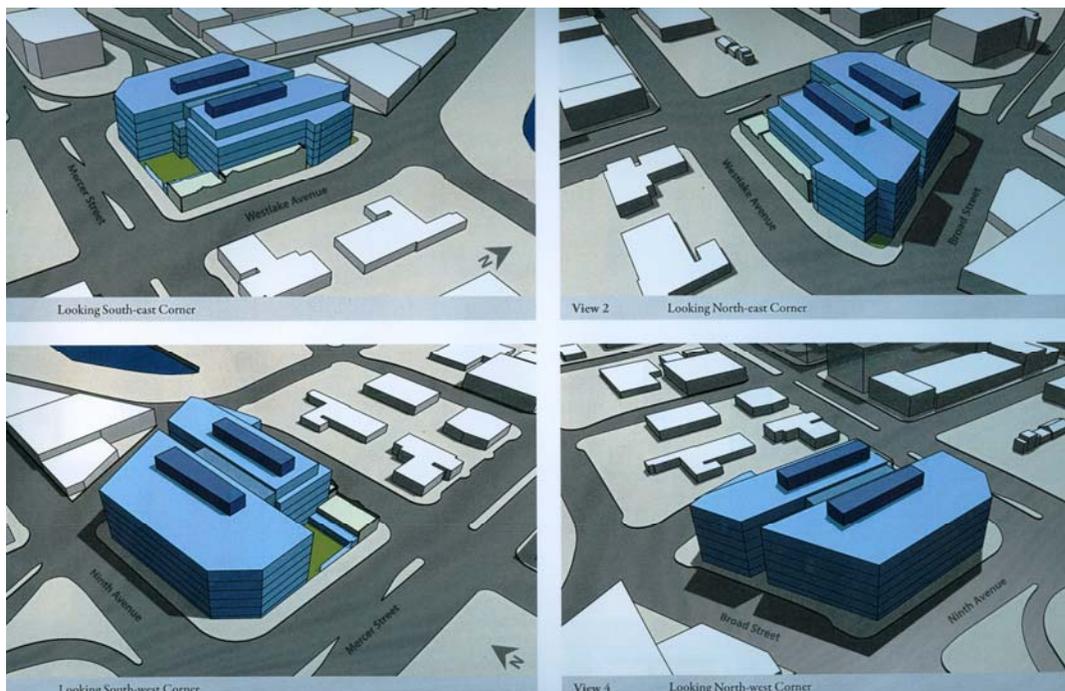
Public comment was received. The Board was urged to address the historic building context in their comments and in the building massing favored. It was stated that the proposal appeared to be too massive as viewed from 9th Ave. There could be two articulations of the building on 9th, similar to the duality of expression in other areas of the proposed massing. Those public members present seemed most interested in the success of the historic preservation aspects of the proposal.

PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED:

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 found in the City of Seattle’s “*Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*” of highest priority to this project. The guidance and recommendations made were agreed to by all of the Board members present, unless otherwise noted. While the notes below indicate the area the Board found most important, all of the Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings apply as well as those found in the SLU neighborhood design review guidelines.

- A-1 **Responding to Site Characteristics** - The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation, and views or other features.
- A-4 **Human Activity** - New Development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.
- A-2 **Streetscape compatibility** - The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.
- A-3 **Entrances Visible from the Street** - Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

The site is an entire block with four street frontages and it has two historic buildings to be incorporated into the new development. The Board prefers the third massing option.



The Board discussed whether the 17 foot setback above the historic building expression along Westlake Ave. N. is enough. They requested the applicants to come back with eye level drawings of this aspect and will be interested in the opinion of the Landmarks Board or its Architectural Review Committee.

A “gasket” expressing the location of the former alley entering the site from Broad Street was endorsed by the Board although they asked whether it should not be wider; so the design would read more as two buildings and allow more light and air into the office spaces along it.

The chamfer at the corner of Ninth and Broad St. was questioned as it does not seem to relate to the overall building expression. It is suggested that the applicants look to the architecture of the building and not just the oddity of the property line in deciding how to address this corner.

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility - Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less-intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance

- Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through building placement, scale and details with specific attention to regional transportation corridors such as Mercer, Aurora, Fairview and Westlake. These locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements.
- Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.
- Relate proportions of buildings to the width and scale of the street.
- Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that relate to the existing structures or existing pattern of development in the vicinity.
- Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as:
 - landscaping;
 - trellis;
 - complementary materials;
 - detailing;
 - accent trim.

The Board thinks that this guideline, with its unique additional language for the South Lake Union area, needs some form of application to this 65 foot tall, full block building. A “wedding cake” expression should be avoided.

C-1 Architectural Context - New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency - Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

The new building needs to be designed to be integrated into the historic building features.

- C-3 Human Scale - The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.**
- D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances - Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.**

The Board endorsed the provision of a plaza area along Mercer St. in the location of the historic service garage function.

The Board indicated that the street environment along Broad St. and Westlake Ave. N. will be across from the South Lake Union Park and has the opportunity to be an active area from a pedestrian perspective. Street level features of the building should be designed with this active pedestrian environment in mind and should include features which would encourage retail or restaurant uses within the building.

Departure Requests

A departure is being sought from the requirement that buildings set back no more than 30 feet from a property line. The Board indicated preliminary support for the proposed plaza area on Mercer St. with a 60 foot setback shown in the materials presented.

Next Steps

The Board found the design at this early design guidance level to be very well thought out and headed in a very good direction. They like the placement of the buildings in Scheme 3. The applicant is encouraged to move on to MUP application.