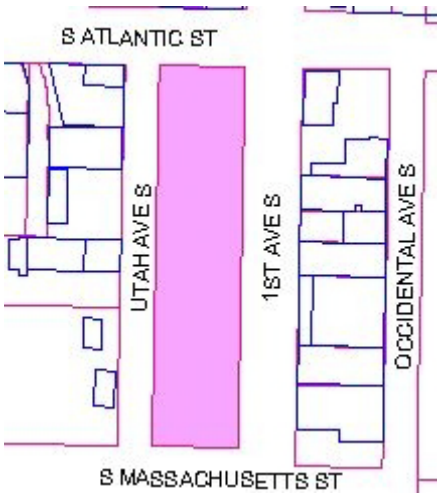
City of Seattle, Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
D.M. Sugimura, Director

FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING
OF
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD 6 Downtown Board
Meeting date: August 25, 2009
Report date: August 28, 2009

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number:	3009470 (former project was MUP 3003306)
Address:	1520 Utah Avenue South
Applicant:	Arthur Chang of Freiheit & Ho Architects for Gull Industries
Board members present:	Bill Gilland, Chair Marta Falkowska Brian Scott Jan Frankina
Board members absent:	Dana Behar
Land Use Planner present:	Holly J. Godard, Land Use Planner

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:



The site is zoned IC 85 and is located in the Stadium Transition Overlay, between Downtown and the Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Overlay. The site is a full block, located between Utah Avenue South, 1st Avenue South, South Atlantic Street and South Massachusetts Street. The existing legal nonconforming use is a principal use parking lot for 299 vehicles. Gull Industries intends to make application for a Master Use Permit with SEPA and Downtown Design Review.

The proposal is for a new retail and office building with approximately 293,000 sq. ft. of office located on a site of an existing principal use surface

parking lot. The proposal also includes one level of below grade parking and two levels of above grade parking below a portion of the building. The total number of parking stalls would be approximately 640 stalls. Up to 299 stalls are grandfathered in, and thus available to supply and use by the project and general public, from an earlier DPD interpretation. The project also includes an additional approximately 44,000 sq. ft. of FAR-exempt street level retail or customer service use.

AREA DEVELOPMENT

The zone in this area is Industrial Commercial Zone (IC)along with the blocks both north and south. General Industrial 1 (IG1) zone is across Utah Avenue. The area has industrial uses in older buildings and relatively new sports stadiums. The Safeco Field baseball stadium is caddy corner to the NE of this site.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE

Early Design Guidance was offered in November of 2008. Meeting notes and early design guidance available on the DPD website at
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Overview/

THE MASTER USE PERMIT WAS SUBMITTED IN APRIL 2009.

FIRST RECOMMENDATION MEETING July 28, 2009

A recommendation meeting was held July 28, 2009. The Board asked for further explanation of several aspects of the project and another recommendation meeting was scheduled for August 25, 2009. The notes that follow reflect the conversations of the July 28, 2009 recommendation meeting.

Project Team's Presentation

Bill Low, the project's proponent, began with some background information on the reasoning behind the redesign from the earlier Master Use Permit (MUP Application number 3003306). The current design is result of several factors including: WSDOT taking the northerly 24 feet of land along Atlantic Street, 2) the changing market conditions which warranted constructing the project in phases, 3) the loss of a single user. The previous design was more conducive to a single tenant use. It was deemed necessary to redesign the project to accommodate multiple users.

Arthur Chang, Principal Architect, followed next by providing background information from the EDG meeting for the new Board members. The current design presented was a progression of Option 3 from the EDG meeting, which was the Board's favored massing option. The architect reviewed the immediate and historical context of the site, a transitional area where one can find

different kinds of designs, architectural vocabularies, as well as a range of uses from industrial to recreational to class A office.

The design goal is to create a clean modern office and retail building with a pleasant pedestrian experience. The proposal is to have the multistory office structures over parking. One level of underground parking is proposed and two stories of parking at and above grade in the south building and one level of parking at grade in the north building. The project is using a grandfathered parking determination from the last MUP project proposal to provide more than code allowed parking. The parking on the upper floors of Building 2 will be open, but screened. A green screen will be used to screen ground level parking on Utah Avenue. Exposed concrete slab edges will break up the storefront on the upper levels giving it a somewhat weightier look. Small tower elements are proposed on the north and the south of the block as well as interior to the plaza. The plaza elements signify the building entries and vertical circulation. There are several areas where upper level outdoor plazas are proposed adjacent offices. These small plazas will be landscaped. Materials at the lower floors are proposed to be brick with clear storefront. The upper floors of both buildings are proposed to be colored and tinted glazing as well as spandrel panels running through the green-blue spectrum.

Central to the design is the mid-block plaza. Pulling the plaza southward toward the mid-block point allows for a high quality gathering space by separating the plaza from the heavy truck traffic along S. Atlantic Street, by breaking up the building massing, and providing retail on the plaza. There is a strong diagonal axis through the plaza leading to the Home Plate entrance to Safeco Field. On either side of this axis, fully glazed tower elements call out the main entries to each building. Public art, landscaping, and water features shape the proposed plaza space. The edges of the plaza will be activated by restaurant and retail uses. Awnings at the 1st Avenue facade are proposed to help create a pedestrian scale at the sidewalk level. The plaza will be populated with foot traffic from the proposed new office spaces at Home Plate and from the adjacent Stadium Technology Center across Utah and from event crowds. The plaza includes an area that is smaller waterfall garden.

Ray Robinson, Principal Landscape Architect, continued by presenting the features incorporated into the plaza and other areas open to the public. Discussed first was the sidewalk area at the corner of South Atlantic Street and First Avenue South. This area was designed to be generously wide to accommodate the anticipated crowds that would be coming and going from sporting events. Secondly, the designs of each of the rights-of-way were presented as follows:

-Atlantic and Massachusetts will receive columnar street trees at 25 feet on center and aligned with the buildings' columns. Each of the trees will include 5 foot square tree pits with an assortment of low water-use shrubs and groundcovers. The sidewalk will be cast-in-place concrete with decorative banding that also aligns with the buildings' columns;
-Utah will also receive columnar trees at 25 feet on center that align with the buildings' columns. The trees will be placed in a planting strip with an assortment of low water-use shrubs and groundcover. The sidewalk will receive similar treatment as Atlantic and Massachusetts.
-First Avenue will receive all the features of Atlantic and Massachusetts with the exception of the right-of-ray located immediately in front of the main plaza area. This portion of the right-of-ray is proposed as a drop-off area / loading zone and is proposed to

not include street trees. Instead, decorative bollards are proposed at a tighter spacing. The decorative concrete banding proposed for all other rights-of-way will only be omitted immediately in front of the plaza.

The main plaza was described as a large gathering space with dramatic site sculptures that are combined with water features. Linearly oriented decorative pedestal set paving, seat walls and plantings are proposed to accent the axial view of Safeco Field to the northeast from the esplanades located in the plaza. A simple planting palette that features timber bamboo as the large primary planting was proposed. Also discussed was access to event parking which is accessed from the plaza's main esplanade for Building 1 and from the sidewalk along First Avenue in Building 2. Dining courts are proposed immediately adjacent to the anticipated restaurants and cafes along the retail frontage.

The proposed waterfall court located just to the west of the main plaza and adjacent to Utah Avenue, was described as a more contemplative space, a little removed from the main gathering space of the main plaza. This area focused on a 4-story waterfall feature that is on axis with a view towards Safeco Field. This area may have other elements such as a terraced shade and rain garden, smaller seating areas and a decorative fence and gate off of Utah Avenue.

Lastly, the phasing of the plaza was described briefly where the majority of the main plaza would be constructed as part of the first phase because the water features and site sculptures are an important and integral part of the overall design. The first phase would maintain the southern half of the existing surface parking lot and the existing driveways. In addition, a drop-off lane is proposed to ease possible congestion during sporting events. Additional plantings were also proposed as a transition between the existing parking lot and the new plaza.

<u>Board Clarifying Questions and Discussion</u>

Concern was expressed by board members that there is little brick on the building. The architect pointed out where there is proposed brick.

The board members expressed concern about the size of the plaza in that it may be too large. The plaza will serve as a gathering space for significant numbers of people who work in the office portions of the project during business hours and before, during and after events at the adjoining stadiums. The FAR requirements in this transition zone essentially limit the amount of square footage that can be built on the site. Therefore, there is resultant open space.

What are the canopy materials? Canopies are glass and steel along 1st Avenue and only steel adjacent to the other streets.

What are the uses in the adjacent Stadium Technology Center on Utah? The uses are retail, restaurant, office, and light manufacturing.

Clarify the treatment of above grade parking. Parking along 1st Avenue will be open but screened to a certain height. Cars will not be visible to pedestrians. Parking within the building along Utah Avenue will be fully screened with vine-covered mesh or a "green wall."

What is the reasoning behind the plaza design and the on-site drop off in the Phase 1 development plan? Wouldn't the plaza elements/water feature be in the way in Phase 2? The plaza is phased along a below grade construction joint and anything constructed to the south of this joint would become an obstacle during Phase 2 construction. The southernmost water feature and other plaza elements will be required to be dismantled and reconstructed when starting phase 2, but it is important enough to the character of the plaza that it must be included in Phase 1 to maintain the integrity of the plaza design.

Steps shown at Utah Avenue plaza entrance would not meet ADA requirements. This will be worked out as the design progresses.

What sustainable features will be incorporated in to the building? Using geothermal heating had been explored, but the cost was prohibitive. Use of photovoltaic on the rooftop is being considered now. Water features will be supplied by water collected and stored in the rainwater drainage system thereby reducing water consumption. Most of the points that are being pursued are not necessarily visible on the exterior, but the project will be pursuing LEED Gold Certification.

Board members expressed concern for the potential for homeless and vagrants loitering in the plaza. The applicant is keenly aware of the homeless problem in the area and is prepared to provide security and patrols to mitigate the potential problem. Also, a security fence and gate is proposed to secure the Utah Avenue side of the plaza during hours when there is no business or event activity. The fence materials and design will be open in nature to enable surveillance from both Utah Avenue and the plaza area.

Public Comment

Comment was received from one member of the public. Greg Steinhauer of American Life, the developer of the neighboring Stadium Technology Center, commented that he was in favor of the Home Plate Center development as it was presented at this meeting.

Board Deliberations

During the Board's deliberation, members were pleased to see the progress the design team had made since the EDG. In particular, Board members praised the design team for a very detailed response to items raised at the EDG meeting. The Board commended the applicant on relating to the context and developing on a challenging site. Board members also liked the diagonal axis of the plaza. The inclusion of public artwork in the design also received commendation.

Some members of the Board had questions about the parking and screening for the above-grade parking levels in Building 2. Many of these concerns were eased as the architect presented further detail about the method and locations of screening. A Board member also suggested that temporary screening could be used to separate the plaza from the on-grade parking during Phase 1, but as discussion went on about this between the Board members, no further direction was requested by the Board.

Overall, the Board was quite pleased with the massing and overall feel of the design. The design was commended for how it dealt with the volume of this long block and delivering a strong

emphasis on the horizontal. They stated that they were happy with that portion of the design and no further development was needed.

It was suggested that a balcony be introduced on Building 1 facing the plaza to help activate the space.

The Board raised a few points of concern related to the façade and material choices and requested that an alternative or two be explored. While the Board liked the clean and modern feel of the upper stories the Board suggested tweaking this portion of the façade to be a little bit less suburban in appearance. They suggested using bolder, more contrasting colors and/or materials or increasing the impression of moving or sliding forms along the façade.

The plaza received quite a bit of attention from the Board. Some Board members initially had concerns about the large scale of the plaza but through deliberation they became comfortable with the size. The Board generally expressed a positive feeling for the sliding or interlocking hardscape plaza elements, however the Board requested to see more detail regarding the three dimensional appearance of these elements and their features. As mentioned before, the diagonal axis of the plaza from Safeco Field was universally regarded as a very positive feature by the Board. At the west side of the plaza there is a large waterfall feature and a narrower portion of the plaza leading to a proposed mid-block crossing to connect to the adjacent Stadium Technology Center across Utah Avenue. This space has a different character than the main plaza and the Board expressed some concern about this space and would like to see more information about this area to better understand its character. It was also suggested by some Board members that the waterfall feature be removed and the money be better spent elsewhere in the main plaza. Some Board members felt that the west side of the plaza should be more integrated thematically with the main plaza area. A Board member questioned the purpose of the proposed gate off of Utah Avenue. The Board member felt this would not be helpful to the usability and quality of the space. The Board was interested to see the phase one site plan to understand that it would be in keeping with the Board's review.

After lively deliberation the Board asked the designers to come back to another design review board meeting. They recommended that the designers bring back studies and proposals for several elements of the proposed design: The plaza design, the façade treatment, and phase one site plan.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING – August 25.2009

Project Team's Presentation

The project team briefed the Board on the focus items for the evening's presentation. At the previous meeting the Board asked to see more information on the phase 1 plan, the plaza design and façade materials update. Arthur Chang presented the materials boards and the latest iterations of the façade colors and materials. The materials include more colors than the initial presentation and some slightly contrasting colors, metal, and concrete. The plaza design has a larger plaza area fronting 1st Avenue and a smaller plaza near Utah Avenue. The smaller plaza has a direct indoor and outdoor relationship and can be secured as a function space apart from

the larger plaza. The design includes water features; water walls, weirs, pools and interactive water features throughout both plazas. Other landscape features are proposed to include site furniture, art installations, decorative paving and plants. The phase 1 stand alone plan was distributed to the Board and describe by the landscape architect. The phase one will include Building 1, the north building, most of the plaza and temporary planting and paving south of the demising line.

The applicant also asked for support from the Board, and DPD with SDOT's approval, a midblock crossing on Utah which would help pedestrians who work in the Stadium Technology Building access the plaza opening. Planner note: The Board does not make design decisions for development in the right of way, but can make recommendations and voice their support for design proposals that SDoT will review.

Design Departure matrix

The applicant asked the Board to consider the following development departures.

	Development Standard	***Required***	***Proposed***	***Departure amount***	***Board action***
1	SMC 23.74.010C1b	Building façade to be within two feet of street property line.	Varying setbacks at the plazas and façade modulation.	variable	The Board recommends granting this departure.
2	SMC 23.50.016.A	Street trees are required along 1st Avenue	Some street trees are proposed to be omitted along 1st Avenue	About 13 trees are proposed to be omitted	The Board does not recommend this departure**.**
3	SMC 23.74.010.C.5	Principal pedestrian entrance is to be on 1st Avenue	Some entrances to be off of the plaza	Some entrances on 1st Avenue some off of the plaza	The Board recommends granting this departure
4	23.54.030.G.2	Site triangles required	Reduced or no site triangles	Reduced or no site triangles	The Board recommends granting this departure with the recommendation that audible warnings not be used**.**

<u>Board Clarifying Questions and Initial Comments</u>

The Board asked clarifying questions of the design team which included the following:

- If one is northbound what is the walking path into the plaza and the building lobbies?
- How does the water wall and the proposed fence and gate intersect?
- How will the ponds be designed to be attractive in times when the water is off?

- How will the light well to the parking entry under Building 1 be recognizable from the plaza? There should be planting, lighting, a canopy and or other architectural cues to signify the entry.
- The Board asked about detailing in the plaza at the light well and commented that detailing at the post and beam connections, water features, paving and site furniture is not depicted in the proposal, but is of paramount importance for the proposal.

Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

Board Deliberation and Recommendation

The Board discussed the salient issues beginning with the façade materials and colors. The Board appreciated the additional color choices and reiterated their support of the architectural references to shipping containers--colors and unitized concept. They noted that the containers are highly attractive in their repetitive units and random colorization in each port side container stack. This concept is beginning to show on the façade of this building, but the color and material choices still need to be enhanced and be more colorful, in well designed classic building façade units. The color palette needs to be stronger and the unitization refined.

The Board discussed the plaza improvements and, in general, approved the direction of design development. The Board expressed interest and concern for the details of the plaza. The full menu of landscape elements should be organized and interrelated to define and support the plaza uses and pedestrian gathering and wayfinding. All elements should be very well detailed from a pedestrian point of view. Wall heights, materials and plant choices should function as transparent, semi transparent or screening in a thoughtful and cohesive whole for the plaza's varied uses. The intentional plaza forms and uses should be reinforced and communicated with the design materials. Currently the linear aspects of the design appear to disrupt the uses and appear to be out of step with the plaza functions.

The Board approved the phase one plan and supports efforts to secure a mid block pedestrian crossing on Utah.

After considering the proposed design and the project context, hearing public comment, and reviewing the design priorities, the Board feels that the guidance has been addressed by the applicant. The Departure requests 1, 3 and 4 are **approved and conditionally approved**. Departure requires number 2 is not recommended by the Board.

Design Review conditions of the MUP decision should include the following unless they are fully addressed by the design team in advance of the publication of the director's decision:

1. Provide the DPD planner a detailed façade materials and color proposal that is more colorful and textural to reflect the port shipping container context while proposing a sophisticated and classic composition.

2. Provide the DPD planner plaza design and details to effectively communicate uses, design intentions, entries, exits and gathering spaces, including the plaza garage entry sequence and lighting.

3. Provide a lighting, signage and illumination plan for planner review.

4. Provide the DPD planner site triangle mitigation, That does not use audible warnings.