



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Diane Sugimura, Director

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CAPITAL HILL SEATTLE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD TO DPD DIRECTOR

May 6, 2009

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3009856

Address: 2026 E. Madison St.

Applicant: Weinstein AU Architects for Jim Mueller and Lis Soldano

Board Members Present: Sharon Sutton, Chair
Brian Cavanaugh
Evan Bourquard
Lisa Piccard
Wolf Saar

Board Member Absent: None

DPD Representative: Scott Kemp

BACKGROUND:

This project proposal revises an issued Design Review MUP decision for the site issued under project number 2204305. That design was never constructed. Now under the



control of another ownership group, the proposal has been redesigned and presents a substantially different architectural expression. It continues to be a six story, mixed-use building with underground parking and frontages on three streets. In addition the SEPA environmental review is approaching the end of its maximum allowed five year life. A new MUP application was made to seek Design Review approval of the new architectural design and to conduct a new SEPA review. This Recommendation Meeting was based upon the new MUP documents and makes use of the Early Design Guidance rendered for the site during the former MUP review.

At this meeting the applicant provided Board members with floor and elevation plans, landscape plans, and samples of materials to be used to construct the mixed-use project.

PROJECT AND VICINITY DESCRIPTION

The site, zoned NC2-65 and NC3P-65 is located at the northwest corner of E. Madison St. and E. Denny Way. An alley segment running east and west through the site has received preliminary alley vacation from the Seattle City Council. A north/south alley segment remains in place and connects E. Denny Way and E. Madison Streets.

Development in the area is a mix of residential and locally serving restaurant and commercial uses. E. Madison is a focus of retail and restaurant uses. Immediately north thereof uses become multi-family residential and single family residential without commercial use or character.

Proposed Project

The applicant proposes to construct a six-story mixed-use structure with retail at grade and five stories of residential floors above. The design is organized around an internal courtyard with three pedestrian entry points from the perimeter of the site. A highly transparent street frontage would run along E. Madison street, through a two story breezeway from that street into the courtyard and around the corner on to E. Denny Way for the depth of the commercial use. Along the remainder of the street frontage there are residential uses with landscaped areas and porches with steps separating them from the public sidewalk.

As part of the provision of public benefit in exchange for the alley vacation on the site, the development is proposed to step back 7.5 feet from street facing property lines at the first floor. In the sidewalk areas, generous landscape and street tree planting is proposed. In the commercial areas the paved sidewalk area continues across the additional setback to the commercial glass wall. In the residential areas this additional setback is landscaped to complement the public sidewalk realm and for placement of steps and stoops affording connection between residential units and the sidewalk.

The building exterior is comprised cementitious siding in a range of painted colors, white vinyl windows on residential units, sealed concrete in the base story, aluminum storefront window and door systems along commercial spaces and metal accent pieces. Overall the proposed building presents a modern architecture.



PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was received. Questions and comments included:

- The project is more refined and attractive in this second iteration. The atrium pathway into the courtyard works well.
- E. Madison St. is very heavily trafficked and a landscape buffer would help assure the vitality of the retail uses along it.
- Across Denny Way is a bus stop the users of which would be likely to frequent a bakery or coffee shop at the corner of the proposed building.
- The pocket park adjacent the alley and E. Madison St. is partially a parcel owned in common with the property to the west and the location of a surface parking space designated for use in conjunction with that building.

- The breezeway path from E. Denny Way across the site to the alley should have sightlines which encourage members of the public to walk across the site.
- The location of trash and recycling along the alley was pointed out in response to a question.
- A roof top open space was asked for, and the applicants indicated this was unlikely to happen as they have been able to locate their open space and landscape on the grade levels without the necessity of providing elevator and stair access to the rooftop.
- It was pointed out that the rooftop will be visible from properties up hill and that penthouses and equipment on the roof should be architecturally screened in an attractive manner.
- The additional setback of the top floor along E. Denny Way was complemented as the measure will allow more light to reach the street level while lessening the appearance of overall building height.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and drawings showing the proposal, the Design Review Board members **recommended approval** of the design and the requested **departures** with some recommended **conditions** as described below.

After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, drawings of the proposal, the Design Review Board members offered further comments and recommendation to the DPD Director.

The Board found that the east/west pedestrian path across the site from E. Denny Way to the alley is not apparent enough to the public and may not get used. They found that there needs to be a “draw” into the site. Creating a visible sight line along the path from the street to the alley was discussed, but not insisted upon. The use of pavements to signify the public path was discussed. The applicants have proposed areas of wood walks on top of the concrete deck in some areas and concrete surfacing in others. The applicants indicated the wood treatment along the two breezeways in the east/west path would invite pedestrian entry. The Board was not convinced this treatment would read as public rather than private. The Board indicated there needs to be a focal point of some sort, visible from the two entry points, E. Denny Way and the alley, which reads as a public amenity and invites pedestrian entry. In addition they recommended that a entry signifying element be incorporated on the external façade along E. Denny Way and that the wood surface treatment, if used, be extended out of the breezeway tunnel into the sidewalk realm as indicator it is a public path.

The lighting treatment of all publically accessible areas is an important detail needing to be addressed at the design review stage. A plan for lighting which will ensure the street fronting areas under building overhangs, the three breezeways and the interior public

courtyard area are well lit, safe and inviting needs to be developed and incorporated into MUP plans.

Requested Departures: The Board recommended approval of the four development standard departures requested and listed below.

Departure Request #1

23.47A.008 A3: Setbacks

Standard:

Street-level street-facing façades must be located within 10 feet of the street lot line unless wider sidewalks, plazas or other approved landscaped or open spaces are provided.

Proposed:

Allowing setback greater than 10-feet (12'-8") at the main residential entry along E Madison Street and (14'-10") at the restaurant entry on E Denny Way. Also propose waiving maximum setback requirement at the openings to the courtyard from E Madison Street and E Denny Way.

Rationale:

Due to the narrowness of the sidewalk along E Madison Street, the commercial envelop is set back 7'-6" from the street lot line to provide a generous sidewalk. To provide a similarly scaled experience along the east leg of E Denny Way, the commercial envelop is set back at approximately 12'-0" from the street lot line. The residential lobby and restaurant entries are further inset to differentiate them from the adjacent commercial frontage.

To provide access to the courtyard from the street as a condition of the alley vacation by SDOT, two openings on E Madison Street and E Denny Way, provide no built edge at street level though the building is continuous above. We request that the maximum setback requirement be waived in order to permit this public benefit.

Guidelines A-2 and A-4.

Departure Request #2

23.47A.008 B3b: Height & depth of nonresidential space

Standard:

Nonresidential uses at street level must have a floor-to-floor height of at least thirteen feet.

Proposed:

Propose reducing the floor-to-floor height of the retail space west of the residential entry on E Madison Street from 13'-0" to 12'-0".

Rationale:

The first floor slab will step in accordance with the changing grade of E Madison. This strategy will provide opportunities for multiple entry points and tenants, fostering smaller scale retail spaces. The grade change between the site low point and the highest retail slab is approximately 2'-7". Maintaining the minimum floor-to-floor height of the street-level commercial at the high side of the site would reduce the potential buildable area at the uppermost level or require a more complex and costly roof framing strategy. A reduction in the street level commercial floor-to-floor height at the western end of the retail spaces would permit a structurally efficient approach. The proposed reduction would still maintain an average floor-to-floor height above the 13'-0" requirement. To offset the effects of the reduced height, the proposed design provides generous glazed areas continuously along the E Madison Street frontage as well as intermittent glazing on the rear and sides of the impacted commercial space.

Guideline A-1.

Departure Request #3

23.47A.008 D2: Residential street level requirements

Standard:

Either the first floor of the structure at or above grade shall be at least 4 feet above the sidewalk grade or street-level façade shall be set back at least 10 feet from the sidewalk.

Proposed:

Propose the three western-most townhouse units be located between 2 feet 9 inches and 3 feet five inches above grade and setback between 7 and 9 feet from the sidewalk.

Rationale:

While neither the minimum elevation above sidewalk grade nor the minimum setback from the sidewalk are achieved, the combination of the setback provided (7' to 9'), elevation above sidewalk grade (2'-9" to 3'-5"), and intervening stoop and plantings satisfy the intent of the land use code by providing separation and maintaining privacy.

Guidelines A-2 and D-1

Departure Request #4

23.54.030 G2: Sight triangle requirements

Standard:

A sight triangle on the side of the driveway used as an exit shall be provided and kept clear of obstructions for a distance of 10' from the intersection of the driveway with a curb intersection.

Proposed:

Reduce sight triangle required distance to 5'-8" and supplement with visual warning device.

Rationale:

The 10' requirement would result in a deep inset condition on the unmonitored alley side of the building. The proposed design provides a 5'-8" inset at the intersection with the alley and a visual warning device would eliminate any potential conflicts. This approach meets the pedestrian safety intent of the code provision while providing a better building street frontage.

Guideline A-8.

Recommended Conditions The following conditions of design review approval were recommended.

1. A focal point of some sort shall be included in the interior courtyard, visible from the two entry points, E. Denny Way and the alley, which reads as a public amenity and invites pedestrian entry.
2. An entry signifying architectural element shall be incorporated at the breezeway entry along E. Denny Way and the wood walkway surface treatment, if used, shall be extended out of the breezeway tunnel into the sidewalk realm (staying within the property line) as an indicator that it is a public path.
3. Develop a plan for DPD review and approval for lighting which ensures the street fronting areas under building overhangs, the three breezeways and the interior public courtyard area are well lit, safe and inviting and incorporate the plan into the MUP and construction permit plans.