



City of Seattle

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

***EARLY DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES
OF THE
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD 6 DOWNTOWN***

Project Number: 3009932
Address: 2700 Elliott Street
Applicant: Dean Clark, Project Architect, LMN Architects
Belltown Development Partners II, Owner

Meeting Date: June 23, 2009
Report Date: July 17, 2009

Board Members Present: Bill Gilland, Chair
Dana Behar
Jan Frankina
Brian Scott

Board Members Absent: Marta Falkowska, Reclused

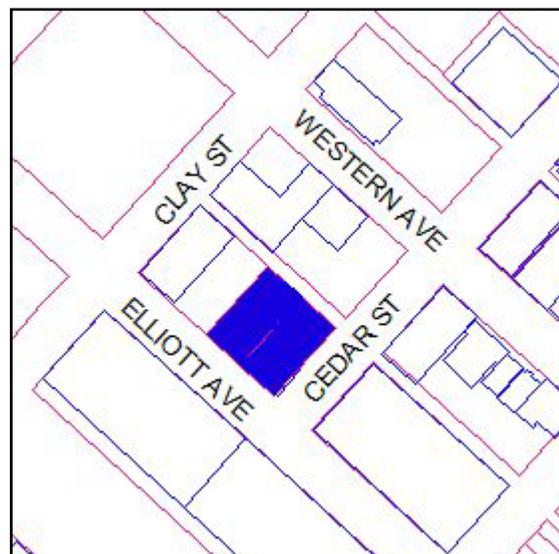
Staff Members Present: Bradley Wilburn, Land Use Planner

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Site Development

The development site is square in shape and comprises a land area of approximately 14,400 square feet in Seattle's Downtown Belltown neighborhood. The development site is located within a Downtown Mix Residential/Commercial zone with a height limit of 65 (commercial)/ 125 (residential) feet (DMR/R 65/125). Additionally, the site is located within the Belltown Urban Center Village Overlay District and the Belltown Neighborhood Design Review Guidelines area.

The site is on a corner that abuts Elliott Avenue along its west property boundary line and Cedar Street to the south. A 16 foot wide paved alley abuts the site along its east property line. The lot



slopes moderately downward from the east to west, approximately 14 feet over a distance of 120 feet. The site is currently developed with two commercial buildings ranging in height from one and three stories with accessory surface parking off Elliott Avenue and the alley frontage. The existing three-story building with the Cedar Street frontage was originally constructed in 1910 currently supports an office use. The one-story office building on the north half of the development site located near the alley was constructed in 1965.

Elliott Avenue is a Class II Pedestrian Street/Primary Arterial Street abutting the subject site to the west and provides primary access. Cedar Street abuts the site to the south and is classified as a Green Street; to enhance the pedestrian streetscape experience in the right-of-way.

Area Development

This area of Belltown features a mix of old and new structures of various design styles incorporating brick, wood, stone, and concrete constructed on a west slope of a moderately downward sloping hill towards the waterfront. During the turn of the century (1900) the area to the east was leveled to remove Denny Hill to spur development north of Downtown.

Property located immediately south and east of the site is zoned DMR/C 125/65'. Property north of Clay Street is zoned DMR/R 125/65'. A new 13-story mixed-use building with residential and retail use abuts the site to the north. To the east, across the adjoining alley two residential towers are located; one tower measuring 13 stories and the other is five stories. Across Elliott Avenue (a southbound one-way street), the Real Networks Building (formally, The American Can Company Building) is located in Downtown Harbor Two zone with a height limit of 65 feet (DH2-65). The five-story building measures approximately 550 feet in length. Uses in the general area are a mix of retail, residential and office. Mature street trees provide a canopy that filters direct sunlight at street level.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

Mark Schuster, of The Schuster Group, opened the presentation with an overview of his company's commitment to the area, including program goals, neighborhood assessment and their connection to Downtown. Wendy Pautz, Project Architect, followed the opening statements with the primary design context presentation. Ms. Pautz provided a historic and site context analysis of the immediate area; emphasizing contextual relationship of the development site to surrounding properties and adjacent street alignment. Additionally, she stressed the importance of in-fill projects taking cues from adjacent structures, open spaces, and street systems in the immediate area. The architectural character of the proposed building will draw upon its unique corner block location, site topography, adjacent buildings, and influences from surrounding streets to create a visually active street presence. The design objectives include; a thoughtful building mass that takes into consideration solar orientation, territorial views, and pedestrian street experience with connections to surrounding uses, and creation of an architectural image that would be a positive addition to the neighborhood.

All three design schemes featured similar street level floor plan layouts with primary pedestrian access taken off Elliott Avenue. Access to parking and service areas will be taken off the alley. Due to the site's topography parking ramps leading to the lower level parking garage pinch off

floor area along Cedar Street which limits the depth of commercial use and activity. The Land Use Code requires a two-foot alley dedication.

After Ms. Pautz provided the context which informed three proposed conceptual design schemes she compared the schemes, noting advantages and disadvantages of each scheme. Design Alternative “1” depicted an upper level “C”-shaped building mass opening up towards the north to allow greater efficiency of the residential unit floor plan. Under this scheme the building will feature a tiered mass that steps back (at its furthest extent 50 feet from the north property line to accommodate a terraced courtyard. The roof level mass would be sculpted to accommodate roof decks and utility penthouses. The building’s mass will be loaded towards the east and center of development site. The design scheme establishes a strong corner presence at the Elliott and Cedar intersection. Some disadvantages identified by the design team were limited allowable glazing facing Bellora to the north, close proximity to internal property lines due in part to green street setbacks, and height of podium level along Cedar Street. No departures from development standards would be required under this proposal.

Design Alternative “2” is a similarly designed to Option “1” with the exception of a podium level would be reduced by one story to be more closely relate to the existing context. Under this scheme the upper level massing would be boxed shaped. Design advantages include more elegant portions of the tower’s relationship to its base, and simplicity of residential unit floor plan. Disadvantages cited are similar to the ones found in alternative “1.” One departure from lot coverage development standards would be required under this scheme.

The “Preferred” Alternative (“3”) introduces an upper level residential tower that is more gracious in its relationship to adjacent uses and site location. The upper level tower will be sculpted to maximize opportunities to optimize views and openness of some neighboring residential units in acknowledgement of previously identified territorial views. The upper level will feature modulations both horizontally and vertically to create a building mass that seeks to be both bold and sympathetic at its unique corner lot location. The design seeks to balance demands between both the public and private domains. One design advantage with the sculpted building mass is creating greater spacing between adjacent residential buildings and the proposal. Five departures have been requested under this scheme from the following development standards; lot coverage, maximum wall dimension, rooftop features, overhead weather protection, and green street setback.

Additional departures may be requested depending on the final design configuration.

BOARD CLARIFYING COMMENTS

The Board was not satisfied with the massing study analysis; the options lack clear identification of the relationship with activity areas and building form of adjacent properties. The Board expressed concern that a more thorough alternative analysis was needed to fully understand viable design options. The Board turned their attention to the preferred scheme. They directed their first series of questions around the abutting pedestrian experience along the Green Street (Cedar). What is the design vision for the pedestrian experience along Cedar Street with the apparently proposed limited commercial presence? The design team responded by stating the site’s topography and internal vehicle access ramps worked together to limit commercial activity.

The street level façade would be animated to address the pedestrian experience. The Board inquired about the use and amenities proposed within the alley and its relationship with adjacent properties and pedestrians at street level. The design should provide an attractive lower level building that is both safe and secure in order to be a successful in-fill project. The design team informed the Board that they intended to make the alley façade visually exciting with amenities. Continuing this line of questions, the Board asks several questions around layout, program of service areas and vehicles ramps.

The Board wanted further elaboration of the design approach of upper level façades along the north and east elevations and its relationship on adjacent properties. The Board asked how the sculpting of the upper level massing would respond to the existing buildings to the north and east given their close proximity. Specifically, how are the units at the adjacent properties going to be visually impacted by the new structure? The design team shared their perspective but lacked graphics to help illustrate their point. The Board is concerned that the design alternatives were not fully evolved, too many unanswered questions remained. The proposed design concepts need additional focused attention, exploring options that minimize massing impacts where appropriate upon adjacent properties.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

A number of the public members present had comments to offer. Twenty public members in attendance filled out the sign-in sheet. Public comments and clarifying questions focused on the following issues:

- If trash is located in the alley it will invite problems with vehicles maneuverability, therefore it should be avoided.
- Trash and recycling pickup should occur within the building to keep alley open.
- Landscaping within the Green Street is a problem to the east of the project site; effort should be directed to have a management plan to maintain an attractive street presence.
- Project should seek a landscaping balance with plants in the Green Street and private open space.
- Where possible neighboring courtyards should be considered in the design to preserve sunlight.
- The upper level floor plate should be cut back to give greater relief to adjacent buildings along the north and east elevations.
- Would like to see amenities in the alley for pets.
- Avoid blank walls were possible, walls should be animated.
- External wall should be light in color and be made of high quality materials.
- Would like to see upper level terraced to the north and east to allow more light between structures.
- Building should be sculpted along the alley to preserve views as much as possible.
- All interior lot building corners should be softened to increase light onto adjacent properties.
- Building mass should be pushed to street side edges to allow greater separation from interior lot lines.
- Encourage a pyramid styled massing design.

- Podium level should respect neighboring properties.
- Would like to see Parc Condominium's view corridor preserved.

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 and the Design Guidelines for the Belltown Urban Center Village*" of highest priority to this project.

The Board pointed out several positive design elements that included; applicant's acknowledgement and response to a previous (MUP #2200459) EDG guidance, resolution of access to underground parking on a challenging site, rooftop sensitive to adjacent properties, and sculpting of building mass. Overall, the Board was underwhelmed with the Design Review packet. The Board felt that the proposed building's mass studies were not fully realized as they relate to relationships with adjacent properties; of particular concern was visual character and penetration of light and air upon adjacent properties to the north and east. An opportunity exists to provide a vibrant contribution to the City's skyline and streetscape at a location that is highly visible. The proposed building's scale is not that bad, however there appears to be a lack of graciousness in proximity to neighboring buildings.

The number of items needing more clarity led the Board to request a second EDG meeting. Context analysis of the proposed building design upon adjacent properties must be understood prior to moving forward. The central unanswered question is how the proposed building should allow light and air upon adjacent properties. The Board acknowledged that it is willing to grant development standard relief from upper level setbacks along the green street to increase setback from interior lot lines. The design team should consider sculpting the building's corner along the alley to maximize light and air to penetrate further into interior areas. How the building program and form articulates visual and spatial relationships with adjacent buildings will be critical to achieving a successfully proposal. The Board encouraged the design team to further develop their concept design for the pedestrian experience along Cedar Street by including a good connection at street level, with existing Green Street elements and design to the east of the development site.

The guidelines from the previous EDG were chosen to carry forward by the Board to be high priority. Bulleted items are Belltown-specific supplemental guidance.

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.

- **The topography of the neighborhood lends to its unique character. Design buildings to take advantage of this condition as an opportunity, rather than a constraint. Along the streets, single entry, blank facades are discouraged. Consider providing multiple entries and windows at street level on sloping streets.**

The topography of the project site could potentially result in areas of blank façade along Cedar Street. The Board stated that the design of the project should avoid blank façades at street level.

A-2 Enhance the Skyline

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

The Board encouraged the applicant to consider the project's view from water as well as the view from the upper Belltown neighborhood when designing rooftop features. The Board was favorably inclined to allow flexibility in designing an attractive building top and contributing to skyline.

B. Architectural Expression: Relating to the Neighborhood Context

B-3 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.

- **Use regulating lines to promote contextual harmony, solidify the relationship between new and old buildings, and lead the eye down the street.**

The Board commented on the unsuccessful design of a number of recent projects in the vicinity. The applicants were encouraged to design an interesting building against the repetitive bland design of existing neighboring structures. Use of color, shadow lines, and relief in facades was recommended. The Board recommended incorporating whimsy or playfulness distinctive of the Belltown neighborhood.

C. The Streetscape: Creating the Pedestrian Environment

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.

The project should include continuous overhead weather protection along public streets.

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.

- **Services and utilities areas, while essential to urban development, should be screened or otherwise hidden from the view of the pedestrian.**

The Board recommended designing an attractive alley facade for the benefit of the neighbors across the alley and uphill from the site.

D. Public Amenities: Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space

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.

No specific guidance provided.

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.

- **Consider incorporating art that relates to the established or emerging theme of that area.**

The design should attempt to involve artists along the Cedar “Green” Street facade and on any blank facade areas. One member of the Board suggested that use of “something funky” at the street level would be appropriate for the site.

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 on overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.

- **Install lighting to illuminate distinctive features of the building, including entries, signage, canopies, and areas of architectural detail and interest.**

Attractive lighting fixtures at street level should be included to complement the overall design of street facades.

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.

The Board noted that parking access and access to service areas should be at the alley as proposed.

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.

The Board appreciated the proposed concept design for the accessory garage: access from the alley, the interior above-grade parking space to be separated from the street by residential spaces.

Summary: The Board wants the design team to come back for a second EDG meeting and present a more focused conceptual design presentation with viable options that explores design relationships with adjacent properties. The Board wants the design to engage the streetscape wherever possible and scale the design to integrate itself into an area with unique characteristics at its corner lot location. The Board would entertain granting some relief from Green Street setback to allow greater separation or sculpting from adjacent buildings along interior lot lines.

Departure from Development Standards:

The applicant is requesting 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/Rationale by Architect</i>	<i>Board Recommendation</i>
<i>Percent of Coverage Permitted by lot size SMC 23.49.158.A.1</i>	<i><u>Elevation</u></i>	<i><u>Coverage</u></i>	<i><u>Coverage</u></i>	<i>The resultant overall building area matches the area allowable in the same number of floors.</i>	<i>The board will continue to entertain this departure but needs to show clear evidence of how the overall design meets these priority guidelines.</i>
	<i>0 – 65 ft.</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>94%</i>		
	<i>66 – 85 ft.</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>75%</i>		
	<i>86 – 125 ft.</i>	<i>65%</i>	<i>75%</i>		
<i>Green Street Setback SMC23.49.166.B</i>	<i><u>Elevation</u></i>	<i><u>Setback</u></i>	<i><u>Setback</u></i>	<i>The proposed concept results in better overall massing than prescribed by the code requirements and better meets the intent of the development standards.</i>	<i>The board will continue to entertain this departure but needs to show clear evidence of how the overall design meets these priority guidelines.</i>
	<i>65 – 85 ft.</i>	<i>10 ft.</i>	<i>10 ft. minimum, up to 18 ft.</i>		
	<i>86 – 240 ft.</i>	<i>18 ft.</i>	<i>10 ft. minimum, up to 18 ft.</i>		
<i>Maximum Wall Dimensions SMC 23.49.164.A</i>	<i><u>Elevation</u></i>	<i><u>Length</u></i>	<i><u>Length</u></i>	<i>The perceived width of the building on Elliott Avenue will be 90 feet, which meets the intent of the development standard.</i>	<i>The board will continue to entertain this departure but needs to show clear evidence of how the overall design meets these priority guidelines.</i>
	<i>65 – 125 ft. (on avenues)</i>	<i>90 ft.</i>	<i>98 ft.</i>		
	<i>65 – 125 ft. (on streets)</i>	<i>120 ft.</i>			

<p><i>Rooftop features SMC 23.49.008.D.2</i></p>	<p><i>Rooftop features that exceed the height limit are limited to 35% of the roof area.</i></p>	<p><i>Unknown</i></p>	<p><i>The effect of this proposal would be to limit the combined area of the tall rooftop features – stair penthouses, elevator penthouses, and mechanical equipment – to 35% coverage. Low elements such as railings, parapets, planters, and clerestories would be unlimited in coverage</i></p>	<p><i>The board will continue to entertain this departure but needs to show clear evidence of how the overall design meets these priority guidelines.</i></p>
<p><i>Overhead Weather Protections SMC 23.49.018.A</i></p>	<p><i>Continuous overhead weather protection is required along the entire street frontage(s) Elliott Avenue & Cedar Street</i></p>	<p><i>Continuous overhead weather protection along Elliott with intermitted canopies along Cedar at entries.</i></p>	<p><i>Continuous canopies on Cedar Street will not allow the development of the green street to include viable landscaping at the building's edge which is intended.</i></p>	<p><i>The board will continue to entertain this departure but needs to show clear evidence of how the overall design meets these priority guidelines.</i></p>

Board and Staff Comments:

A second EDG meeting is required by DPD. At the time of the second EDG meeting the architect should include the following in the EDG packet submitted to DPD:

- A true analysis of the project context (beyond pictures) including activities, building forms etc. and further indication of the impact of the context on the specific design of this project.
- A verbal and visual indication of response to the board identified high priority guidelines – and guidance given at this meeting.
- Diagrammatic plans of all different floor levels – including parking and rooftop to help in understanding the proposed building organization.
- Sections of the proposed structure cut both E-W and N-S and showing building heights and relationships to adjacent structures and their program elements.
- Schematic conceptual elevations of proposed building facades to suggest scale and articulation. Show in context with elements of existing adjacent structures.
- Rendered perspectives of the whole building as seen from street level (and other appropriate vantage points) placing the building in the existing context.
- Initial more detailed development of the building's base including canopies, entrances, landscaping, and alley servicing.
- Continued development of landscape plans and information covering both ground level

and appropriate other levels of the building. Special attention to the continuity of Cedar as a “green street” and “view corridor”.

- Sun and shadow impact diagrams as appropriate.
- Continued clarification of departure requests as needed indicating the benefits occurring from the granting of such departures.
- A physical study model of the project in the context of nearby buildings.
- Present outcomes from SDOT, and Metro meetings, and how it will shaped design proposal.
- Identify and illustrate Green LEED elements, if any.

Please call Bradley Wilburn at 206.615.0508, when you have developed your 2nd EDG (11 X 17) design proposal.