



INITIAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3009932

Address: 2700 Elliott Ave.

Applicant: Steve Cox and VIA Architecture for the Schuster Group

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Board Members Present: Brian Scott, Chair
Mathew Albores
Gabe Grant
Sheri Olson
Pragnesh Parikh

Board Members Absent: None

DPD Staff Present: Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMR/C 125/65

Nearby Zones: (North) DMR/C 125/65
(South) DMR/C 125/65
(East) DMR/C 125/65
(West) DH2 / 65



Current Development: Surface parking on approximately two thirds of the site and a three story, wood frame, office building on the remainder.

Access: Access can be had from the alley though the full block and from each of the two surrounding streets.

Surrounding Development: The proposal site is an infill site in an area of recently developed mid-rise and high-rise multi-family and commercial development. The subject block is developed in quadrants with two 12 story and one seven story residential towers. The subject site constitutes the southwest quadrant of the block.

ECAs: None mapped on the site.

Neighborhood Character: Located along the busy Elliott Ave., two blocks south of the Olympic Sculpture Park the neighborhood character is of large multi-family structures built in the Belltown Neighborhood in the past couple decades. Cedar street which rises uphill to the east past the proposal site has been designated as "Green Street" and is the subject of special landscape and sidewalk paving efforts in areas to the east.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a quarter block retail and residential development of 13-stories containing 132 residential units above 3,577 sq. ft. of retail at ground level. Parking for 76 vehicles is proposed to be provided below grade.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

In response to early design guidance and requests from residents of other buildings on the subject site, the massing above the "podium" base is set back between 16 and 21 feet from the north property line and the Bellora residential tower resulting in a requested reduction in the required upper level setbacks from the green street (Cedar St.). Open space atop the podium level on the north side complements similar open space at the Bellora. Above the podium level the south façade, along Cedar St., is splayed to open toward the west providing a sense of added space for those looking westward down the right-of-way. The pedestrian entry is along Cedar St. next to the alley allowing for pedestrians to access Belltown areas most directly. Vehicular access is proposed to be from the alley at a point near the mid-block property line.



Street Level Landscape Plan

The streetscape is designed to provide a landscaped, urban, setting focused on a sylvan treatment of the designated green street, Cedar St. The sidewalk on Cedar would “wander,” in a similar manner to what has been done to the east, with two rows of trees, one on each side of the sidewalk and a planted, low understory. Along the busy Elliott Ave. paving elements, sidewalk furniture and street trees are intended to wrap the green street experience in a way appropriate to the context there. At the pedestrian entry point of Cedar St. the green street landscape is connected to the building entry. On the alley the paving treatment, building glazing and some landscape is used to wrap the corner and transition the green street context into the alley itself.



south elevation along Cedar Street

South Elevation Along Cedar St.



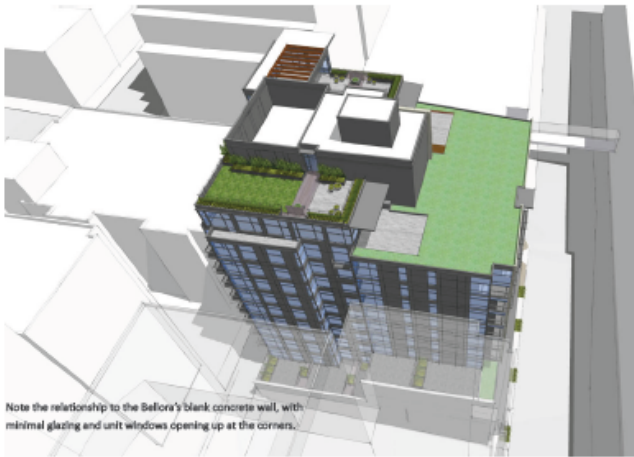
corner at Cedar Street and the alley, view shown ghosted in foreground

Corner Alley/Cedar



east elevation at alley, with Belfors to the right

East Elevation Along Alley



Note the relationship to the Belfors's blank concrete wall, with minimal glazing and unit windows opening up at the corners.

above: aerial view showing north elevation, with Belfors shown ghosted in foreground



North facade design language folds around the corner to the Elliott Avenue facade, while the concrete frame vocabulary expresses and reinforces the street edge. All of this is perched above the continuous glass curtain of the Elliott Avenue street-level retail.

The concrete frames "hold" the property lines and define the "box" of the tower, while the secondary grid of metal panels expresses areas added or subtracted from the geometry---

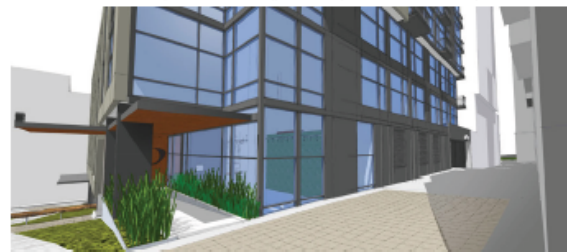
POGO

above: west elevation at Elliott Avenue (Belfors not shown for clarity)

below: entry at corner of Cedar Street and alley



West Elevation along Elliott Ave. and Building Details



PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately three members of the public attended this Initial Recommendation meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- The landscaping of the podium level is important as neighboring buildings will look into it. It should be of high quality and durable with a large amount of planting.

- The safety of the garage entry is of concern as the alley has much traffic already and cars accenting a steep ramp to the alley level could have impaired visibility and be moving under substantial power into the alley itself.
- The colors shown have a dark value. It is a pretty grey city at times. Should the values used be brighter?
- The rooftop and other “eyebrow” elements used as a building theme need to be well executed. How are they actually to be built? They should be designed to a more detailed state to thoroughly depict how they would be executed.
- Is the landscape near the pedestrian entry a forest or a grove? What is the landscape design intent there?
- The pedestrian entry point at the corner of Cedar St. and the alley could pose a safety issue as there is much traffic and there may be a tendency to stop or slow at the sidewalk, not at a building entry point accessing the alley north of the property corner and sidewalk.

BOARD 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 expressed appreciation of the overall design of the proposal, reached a unanimous position of **initial support for the four development standard departures** requested and identified several areas for additional design development.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board reviewed the following requested Development Standard Departures and in each case found that each one would result in a building design which would meet the objectives of the applicable Design Review Guidelines as well or better than the code prescriptive approach. The Board’s rationale for each departure is also stated in the matrix below.

REQUIREMENT	PROPOSAL	RATIONAL	BOARD RECOMMEN- DATION
<u>LOT COVERAGE</u>			
<i>SMC 23.49.158 A1</i>			
Elev. Permitted Coverage	Elev. Proposed Coverage	The proposed concept results in superior massing to that prescribed by the Land Use Code by avoiding a forced two step setback pattern and instead make that first step early, to lower	
0 - 65 ft 100%	0 – 65 FT		
66 - 85 ft 75%	90%		
86 - 125 ft 65%	66 - 85 FT		

	75% 86 – 125 FT 75%	the podium level about 2 floors -- better suiting the context, establishing a better pedestrian scale at both Cedar Street and Elliott Avenue, and mitigating the apparent mass of the building's bulkiest component. The proportions of the building are improved, and the relationship between the podium and the top is vastly enhanced, thereby supporting the Design Guideline to <i>Design a Well-Proportioned and Unified Building</i>	
<u>GREEN STREET SETBACK</u>			
<i>SMC 23.49.166 B</i>			
Elev. Setback 65 - 85 ft 86 - 240 ft	Required 10' 18'	Elev. Proposed Setback 65 – 85 ft 10' 86 - 240 ft 10'	The reduced setback above 65' allows balance between competing interests, by opening up the space above the green street and allowing more distance between the project and its neighbors to the North and the Northeast. As noted in the previous departure rationale, making the step early – well below the 65' threshold – enhances the green street as well, and offers a superior walking scale along Cedar Street.
<u>MAXIMUM WALL DIMENSIONS</u>			
<i>SMC 23.49.164 A</i>			
Elevation Maximum Length	Elevation Proposed Length	The maximum projected length of the Elliott Avenue façade is 93'-10", although the maximum	

<p>65 - 125 ft 90' on Avenue</p> <p>65 - 125 ft 120' on Street</p>	<p>65 – 85 ft 93'-10" on Elliott</p> <p>86 - 240 ft 120' On Cedar</p>	<p>perceived façade length is a little less than 88 feet.because the 3'-10" projected length beyond the maximum occurs approximately 60' back from Elliott Avenue.</p> <p>Part of the increased wall dimension is represented by the smaller 5' deep "bumps" along the north side of the building - important to the livability of the units along that side as they allow some views to the east and west and help mitigate the oppressive bulk of the Bellora's tall, blank concrete wall. The proposed approach to wall articulation would result in a building for which betterfits the area context and artfully provides the visual interest intended by the masimum wall length standard.</p>	
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VERTICAL BAY WINDOW

SMC 23.53.035.A.4.c

<p>The maximum length of bay window shall be 15' and shall be reduced in proportion to the distance from such line by means of 45° angles drawn inward, reaching a maximum of 9' along a line parallel to and at a distance of 3'</p>	<p>We propose a bay window near the corner of Elliott and Cedar, to project 2'-0" over the Elliott Avenue property line for a length of 15'-0. We request an exception only to the requirement that the sides of a bay</p>	<p>The proposed bay window is a small but strong gesture. It creates a signal along the Elliott Avenue approach heralding the green street, supporting the Design Guideline to <i>Provide Elements that Define the Place</i> (D-3). It also reinforces the building's lower pedestrian scale along Cedar and offers an indicator of the Cedar Street lobby and entrance. The geometry of the building contains</p>	
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<p>from the line establishing the open area.</p>	<p>window be reduced by 45 degree angles to a max face of 9'-0". The proposed bay window is square-sided with a face of 15'-0".</p>	<p>no 45-degree angles, and a bay window element thus defined would represent an anomaly. A bay window per the development standard would result in an 3'-0" deep overhang beyond the property line occupying 36 sf; the proposed bay window is smaller at 30 sf with an overhang of 2'-0"</p>	
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ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

The Board observed that the Cedar St. façade was successful and requested that the Elliott Ave. façade be further designed to reflect and relate better to the one on Cedar St. The Cedar St. façade has a “frame” expressing a base which should be more closely approximated on Elliott Ave. It stated that Cedar St. façade “wants to” wrap around the corner. And while the sharp angularity of the bay window element is OK, it needs to be deeper to be more obvious.

The Board stated they want to see detailing of the railings and of the “eyebrow” overhang elements at the next meeting. Concern was expressed that the features might fail to convey substance and quality and be a positive addition to the building if they were not properly designed and executed.

The relationship between the alley and the building, especially the pedestrian entry element, caused the Board some concern over the interaction of pedestrians and automobiles. It requested that further work be done on this element, especially on ways to insure pedestrian safety exiting the building.

NEXT STEPS

The applicants are encouraged to return to a future Board meeting with further refinements in the proposal made in response to the comments above.