



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Diane Sugimura, Director

Early Design Guidance Queen Anne/Magnolia Design Review Board

October 7, 2009

Project Number: 3010494
Address: 501 8th Avenue North

Applicant: Victoria Buker, Vulcan

Attendees: Victoria Buker, Vulcan
Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Vulcan
Andy Clinch, Perkins+Will
Kelly Schnell, Perkins+Will
Tess Schiavone, GGN, Ltd

Jill Morelli
John Person
Lloyd Douglas
Don Bennett
Laurie Roth

Board Members: John Rose Jr., Chair
David Nemens
Mark Garrell
Dan Foltz (substituting for Lipeka Mukerji)
David Delfs (absent)

DPD Staff: Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner

BACKGROUND AND VICINITY INFORMATION

The proposed project is UW Medicine Phase 3.1, located at 501 8th Avenue North, in the South Lake Union neighborhood, is bordered by 8th Avenue North on the east, Dexter Avenue North on

the west, Republican Street on the south and Mercer Street on the north. The site is an element in what has become a Life Science/Biotech Hub in South Lake Union which includes Fred Hutchinson Research Center, Seattle Biomedical Research Institute, PATH, Novo Nordisk and Merck/Rosetta Informatics.

The current zoning is SM-65 which allows for building heights up to 65 feet with provisions for 85 feet where equipment is added in the areas of additional height. The zone does not contain provision to limit Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and has no setbacks, landscape or open space requirements. Rooftop mechanical systems may extend up to 15 feet above the maximum height limit. The planned widening of Mercer Street, to the north of the site reduces the block area but does not affect the Phase 3.1 site area. Republican Street and Dexter Avenue North are Class 2 Pedestrian Streets. No upper-level setbacks are required in this zone. The topography is mostly flat but slopes gently east towards Lake Union with an overall elevation change of 11 feet.

Zoning to the north, east and west is SM-65. Zoning to the south is SM-85. Buildings to the west and south are composed of modest one- and two-story retail and office buildings. The facades of the buildings are primarily brick and stucco. Buildings to the north are slated for demolition for the proposed Mercer Street Improvements. Buildings to the east are the UW Medicine Phase 2 project and are 5 stories at 85 feet in height. The facades of those buildings are primarily glass curtain wall. On the project site are three small buildings: Vacant 1- story building at 501 8th Ave N, The Barking Lounge, a dog daycare, at 500 Dexter Avenue North and the vacant Boyd Building at 522-24 Dexter Avenue North. The Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board recently denied landmark status to the Barking Lounge and Boyd Building.

The City Council has under consideration a proposed Land Use Code Text Amendment to increase the height limit on this block from 65 feet to 125 feet with a maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 5. The Text Amendment is a non-project proposal. The Master Use Permit associated with this project will govern project design. The height increase is consistent with adopted 2006 South Lake Union Goals and Policies to support the growth of innovative industries in the South Lake Union Urban Center.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

At the Early Design Guidance meeting, Victoria Buker, Vulcan, introduced the architecture team. Andrew Clinch, Perkins+Will, described the project and provided an overview of the neighborhood, site design analysis and development objectives to the Board and the public.

UW Medicine Phase 3 is a continuation of the UW research complex in South Lake Union, which includes Phases 1 and 2 on the block to the east, and will consist of three buildings, 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. The project would be built in phases over the course of approximately 10 years. Phase 3.1, on the southeast corner of the site, would be the first of three towers to be built and is the subject of this Master Use Permit. Phase 3.1 would be 7 stories and 144,200 SF. Phase 3.1 also includes build-out of a 4-story below-grade structure on the southern two-thirds of the block. One below-grade floor would house 60,000 SF of research and building support space. There would be 3

levels of below-grade parking totaling 204 parking spaces for Phase 3.1 occupants, and room for 187 future spaces for Phase 3.2 occupants.

Phase 3.2, on the southwest corner, is 158,500 SF and 8 stories. Phase 3.3, on the northern portion of the site, is 157,700 SF and 7 stories. Phases 3.2 and 3.3 will be applied for as separate MUP applications.

Development objectives for all three sub-phases of Phase 3 include build out of 420,000 SF, phased build out of the buildings, optimized floor plates for laboratory use and passive open space for occupant use and public use.

Clinch highlighted the South Lake Union Design Guidelines which the project proponents judged to be most pertinent to the project:

Site Planning:

- A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics
- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility
- A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access
- A-10 Corner Lots

Height, Bulk and Scale:

- B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

Architectural Elements and Materials:

- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency
- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials

Pedestrian Environment:

- D-1 Pedestrian Open Space and Entrances
- D-2 Blank Walls

Landscaping:

- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site

The architect then compared three massing options against the South Lake Union Guidelines.

Massing Alternative 1 had no Text Amendment increase and complies with current zoning. It is a single building with 5 and 6 stories high and builds out the entire site to achieve the development objective for 420,000 SF. Disadvantages of this alternative are as follows:

No usable open space on the site;

Large floor plate sizes are not appropriate for laboratories; and

Does not easily allow for phased build-out of 3 buildings because the entire site is built out as a single building.

Massing Alternative 2 has the same SF as Alternative 1, but the area is separated into three buildings with 7 and 8 floors.

Advantages of this alternative are as follows:

North-south public open space will receive mid-day direct sunlight;

East-west open space provides mid-block access through the site and connection to Phase 2; and

Massing concepts are consistent with the adjacent UW Medicine Phase 2 site.

Disadvantages of this alternative are as follows:

The courtyard edge is not dynamic in form and
The building façade along 8th Avenue North is not modulated

Massing Alternative 3 This alternative, the applicant’s preferred scheme, also has the same SF as Alternatives 1 and 2 and the area separated into three separate buildings with 7 and 8 floors. Alternative 3 has a new design concept, a faceted, “fractal,” glass façade along the courtyard to provide a more dynamic form at the pedestrian level.

The advantages are as follows:

North-south public open space will receive mid-day direct sunlight;

East-west open space provides mid-block access through the site and connection to Phase 2; and

Building facades along the courtyard edge are shaped in a way that creates visual interest.

A disadvantage of this alternative is that the “fractal” façade is new building vocabulary for South Lake Union.

Departure Request

The architect requested one departure, from Seattle Zoning Code 23.48.010, requiring that no rooftop features be located closer than 10 feet to the edge of the roof. In this design, portions of the mechanical penthouse are brought out to the edge of the building. This allows the penthouse to read as part of the building volume, and also allows more usable space for a green roof. UW Medicine Phase 2 used a similar approach to the mechanical penthouse.

PUBLIC COMMENT

One member of the public, a resident of Mirabella, said the first massing alternative wasn’t a real option, leaving only two alternatives to review, the project had no setbacks and no view corridors and access should be off 8th since Republican is too busy. He recommended that the public space on Phase 3 be more usable. He indicated that no increased setbacks, view corridors or public amenities are being provided to mitigate the height of the building proposed. A rule for balance wherein height of building should be about 2/3 of the width was proposed. He stated that the existing phases of the UW Medicine project are “walled off” behind locked doors and darkened windows.

A resident of Veer Lofts said she would appreciate a more neighborhood feel to the buildings and that the noise from the air conditioning system on Phase 2 was audible from her condominium. She described the proposed architecture as a “monolithic, fractal, cube of ice that does not say neighborhood.”

Another neighborhood resident was concerned about the lot line to lot line development. The proposed building shape would rise straight up from the sidewalk level along Mercer St. and, with an additional 15 feet of mechanical equipment on top of the 125 foot tall building, would rise 140 feet straight up.

BOARD DELIBERATION

A-4 Human Activity - New Development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance

- **Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.**
- **Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.**
- **Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.**
- **Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.**
- **Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.**
- **Create businesses and community activity clusters through co-location of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.**
- **Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.**

The Board spent some time discussing the size and nature of the open space. The comments they made are listed below.

The dimensions of the open space should not be reduced in subsequent phases of the project.

The size of the open space should be proportional to the height of the project.

The open space should be inviting to the public.

The open space should be activated and invite the public in.

Pedestrian scale is important.

Connections should be well-lit.

There should be transparency into the buildings.

While the Board appeared to agree to each of these comments their consensus on the open space design appeared to be that the proponents need to continue to think about and develop the open spaces. These should be soft and inviting; in contrast to the hard, formal surfaces of the proposed building. They also asked if the designers had considered orienting the central open space in different ways to open up more and to see what kind of connection to other areas of South Lake Union can be achieved.

The Board felt that the hard, urban, edge of the preliminary design would be appropriate on Dexter and Mercer streets but not as much so on Republican or on the southern portion of 8th. On the southern side of the proposal site there should be a softer context; one which invites pedestrians to walk along the site and to look into it and walk into it where appropriate. There needs to be a sense of welcome given to the South Lake Union neighborhood to the south.

Uses which have commercial like activities, like cafeterias, lobbies, reception areas, etc., should be placed where they can be observed from the public realm. Dark windows and drawn shades would be a disquieting influence either on public sidewalks or on the interior courtyard space.

There should be a strong sense of arrival at the site, especially from Republican Street.

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.

The Board discussed their desire to understand the bulking and height of the building proposed in context with its surroundings, both built and potential build out. They also want to see it in relation to the project site both in its interim condition with a single building and with the second and third phases added.

Departure

The Board they did not have concerns about the request for the design departure for bringing portions of the mechanical equipment out to the edge of the building along 8th Avenue.

Next Steps

The Board requested more clarity and more information about the design in subsequent reviews, and approved the applicant's moving ahead to MUP submittal.