



## Department of Planning and Development

Diane Sugimura, Director

### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD TO DPD DIRECTOR

August 4, 2010

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**Project Number:** 3011312

**Address:** 501 Eighth Avenue North

**Applicant:** Victoria Buker, Vulcan

**Board Members:** John Rose Jr., Chair  
Jill Kurfirst  
David Delf  
Dan Foltz (substituting for Lipika Mukerji)

**DPD Representative:** Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner

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#### UW Medical Center (Phases 3.1 & 3.2)

**Presentation By:**

Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Vulcan  
Andy Clinch, Perkins + Will  
Jennifer Guthrie, GGN

#### **Background**

The applicant has applied for a Master Use Permit with a Design Review component. At the DRB meeting, John Rose, explained that there were two prior public meetings for Early Design Guidance, October 7, 2009 and June 2, 2010. At these meetings, floor and elevation plans and landscape plans were presented. A record of that guidance can be found in the MUP file for this application or on line here [http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Project\\_Reviews/Reports/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

### **Proposal Description**

The proposal site, located on two-thirds of a block in the South Lake Union area of Seattle, is bordered by Mercer Street to the north, Republican Street to the south, Eighth Avenue North to the east and Dexter Avenue North to the west. Zoned Seattle Mixed 65 with an Urban Village Overlay, the site slopes downward approximately 13' from north to south. Ordinance #123215, approved January 11, 2010, allows the maximum height of buildings on this block to increase to 120 feet (with an additional 15 feet of height for rooftop mechanical space). The ordinance also requires the following:

- The street-facing façade along Eighth Avenue North is required to have a minimum of ten percent occupied by general sales and services;
- The Floor Area Ratio cannot exceed 5;
- The maximum number of floors cannot exceed 8;
- The applicant is to strive to achieve a LEED Gold rating or better and at a minimum earn Silver;
- 20 percent of the lot area is required to be ground level, useable open space with public art or water feature;
- The landscaping is to achieve a Seattle Green Factor score of .30 or greater;
- The Master Use Permit is to include a Transportation Management Program with no more than 40 percent of the trips using single-occupant vehicles; and
- The MUP is to include an Energy Management Plan.

UW Medicine Phases 3.1 and 3.2 would consist of approximately 295,560 square feet of new research laboratory space on the southern portion of the block. The project would have one level of below-grade research space and two levels of below-grade parking with two research structures above (7-story on the east side of the site and 8-story on the west side of the site). A courtyard runs between the three planned buildings on the full block site which would provide mid-block pedestrian connection in the east/west direction and a connection south to Republican. The central courtyard's access to mid-day direct sunlight is maximized through a north/south orientation of the buildings. The connection between UW Phase 3 and UW Phases 1 and 2, located immediately to the east across Eighth Avenue North, would be strengthened by a continuation in Phase 3 of the cross-block connection established in Phase 2. The plaza spaces would be designed and operated to encourage pedestrian use, both by those working in the buildings and by the public.

Phasing: Phase 3.1 is to be completed before 3.2. In the interim, the area above the below-grade garage where 3.2 would eventually be located would be landscaped with a permeable surface that would allow for the collection of water, which would be deposited in a holding tank for irrigation use.

The building massing is articulated as multiple volumes of different widths and heights, similar to the vocabulary that was established one block east in UW Medicine Phase 2. The building height increases as it approaches Dexter Avenue North, which is a larger-scale, wider street. Modulations and recesses in the buildings at the south end of the site invite pedestrians on Republican Street to enter the courtyard. Pedestrian circulation is activated through site entrances on Dexter Avenue North, Republican Street, and Eighth Avenue North, cross block plaza/connections, and a proposed retail space on Eighth Avenue North.

The project in its entirety would exhibit a consistent architectural concept, but each elevation would be articulated differently in response to the character of the adjacent streetscape. Materials would be similar to those that were used at the adjacent Phase 2 site, and would be utilized in a way that responds both to solar orientation and to surrounding street frontages. Building canopies and the placement of transparent building elements (highly fenestrated building forms) would occur along the ground-level façade at Eighth Avenue North, with a focus on engaging the pedestrian at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Republican Street.



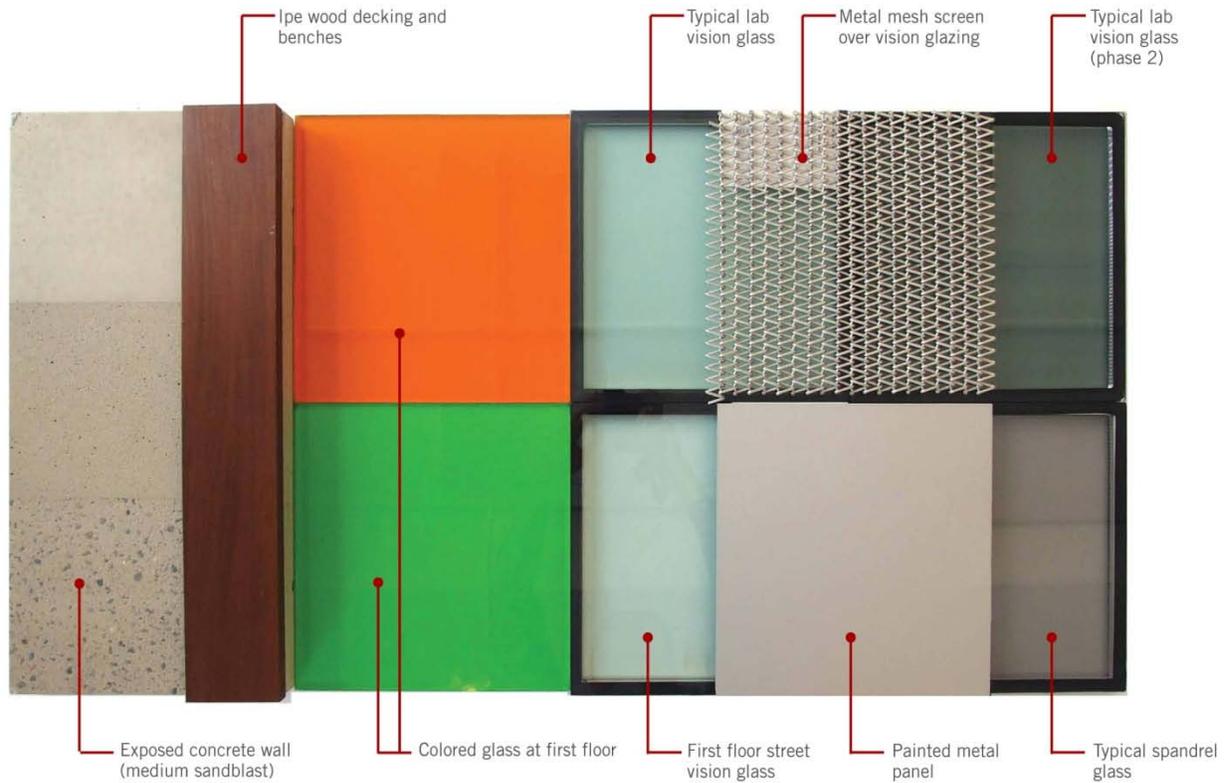
Building corners adjacent to street intersections would be expressed with highly transparent glass elements that would provide a view into activities occurring within the building. These corners would be further emphasized by the use of glass building canopies, located twelve to sixteen feet above sidewalk level.

A retail space is proposed along Eighth Avenue North near the Phase 3.1 building entrance, cross-block connection, and plaza area. The placement of retail and a building entrance in this location would enhance the cross-block connection and would provide varied uses and character in the street façade along Eighth Avenue North. In response to the EDG comments, the east façade of the retail space is brought forward to meet the public sidewalk, and the retail storefront and entrance is announced with colored glass and canopy signage.

The courtyard façade is comprised of vertical glass ‘ribbons,’ which bend at different angles to reflect light with intent to create a dynamic experience for the pedestrian. These ribbons would contain both spandrel (opaque) and vision (transparent) glazing, and the exposed edges of the ribbons provide additional opportunities for interesting color.



The overall building materials palette would be similar to that of Phase 2, with the addition of clear glass and colored glass at the ground level.



### Landscaping Plan

The north-south courtyard would be graded to provide zones of movement and areas of ‘pause,’ where seating would be provided. Planting in this area would create a sense of enclosure when sitting within the courtyard. Plant heights would allow one to see beyond into the building. The proposed water feature responds to the art requirement in the text amendment, and would be a combination of a flat scrim of water below the walking plane and a raised water table. In both cases, the water feature would bounce light and provide light sound. It would be designed to be sculptural, as well as purposeful as a seating edge when turned off. A widening of the walking surface at the south end of the courtyard would encourage pedestrians on Republican Street to enter the courtyard. The east-west corridor would provide a sequence of ‘outdoor rooms,’ with places to sit and meet. Planting would be verdant and lush, consisting of Pacific Northwest understory species. The site would be ADA accessible off of Republican Street and Dexter Avenue, and through the building off of the entrance on Eighth Avenue North. Permeable paving, street trees, and open tree pits would be provided at sidewalks on Eighth Avenue North, Republican Street, and Dexter Avenue North. Curb bulbs would occur at the mid-block crossing of Eighth Avenue North, and the sidewalk width would be increased to improve the pedestrian environment. The scale of the plantings on Dexter Avenue North would at maturity be consistent with the larger scale of the street. Lighting in the east-west corridor would be well-integrated, blending in with the planting. Lighting in the north-south courtyard would be accent lighting along benches and the water feature, in the spirit of the overhead lighting on Phase 2.



Section A: 8th Avenue Streetscape



Section B: Republican Streetscape



Section C: Dexter Streetscape

### **Public Comment**

Public comment was received at the meeting. One person commented on the following:

- EDG Meeting notes were not posted online.
- Courtyard open space was constrained since the space is 30 feet wide and 100 feet high, and the skybridges further reduced the expansiveness of the open space.
- The buildings overhang the sidewalk unnecessarily encroaching on the sidewalk realm.
- Opposed all three design departures as not being justified, not meeting code and not being in the public interest. Adding 15 feet in perceived height to an element of a street facing façade is not trivial and is contrary to the Neighborhood guideline calling for increased upper level setbacks for tall buildings. The alleged fact that smaller cars are driven to these facilities is not logical and not supported by data. Transparency along Republican is important to the community and transparency is a stated design guideline priority. If the garage entry were to be included in the blank façade calculation it would approach 40% of the south facades. (Note the garage entry is a ramp to below grade parking with transparent building façade beyond it.)
- The retail should have been at the corner of Eighth and Republican (A Board member explained that this location had been determined by the Board at the June 2, 2010 EDG).
- Would the exclusion of large stalls lead to an insufficient availability of parking for carpool vans?

### **Board Deliberations**

The Board continued to appreciate the corner elements of transparency and height and the sense of connection between the buildings and the surrounding community they provide.

The Board agreed with public comment stating the pedestrian bridges as designed tend to “block” and fill the open space between the two buildings. There needs to be fewer levels of bridge, perhaps with each level that is provided having an open walkway atop it providing a crossing path for the building level above. The bridges should also be lighted in a way that creates a unique element of the buildings and courtyard at night. The bridges and their lighting should be artistic, architectural elements.

The Board also shared a concern expressed in public comment that the courtyards need to “read” a public spaces. A message of public welcome needs to be designed into them. Some potential methods to accomplish this were mentioned including way-finding signs, colors in surface materials, and plaques in sidewalks.

In response to the applicants statements that the faceted interior facade walls of the two buildings might have to be “value engineered” to a less expensive form the Board expressed its direction that while some minor simplification of the faceting might be appropriate, the basic form and look should remain. The ribbon look and the cants of the glass elements are thought to be an essential element of the approved design.

The Board directed that the architecture of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. façade should better express the building entry there.

Largely in response to public comment, the Board again discussed the proposed departure to allow a penthouse element to extend to the property line on each building; one on 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. N. and one on Dexter Ave. N.

### **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 subject **design**. **They also approved the three departures** with the following **recommended conditions** (all recommendations were by all members agreeing unless otherwise indicated). The recommendations summarized below were based on plans submitted at that meeting.

The Board members expressed both appreciation of many measures taken by the applicants in response to their Early Design Guidance and appreciation of the points made in public comment. The expressed disappointment that John Pearson could not stay for their deliberation or for them to express how they had considered and responded to his comments.

### **Board Recommendations**

1. That the proposed “ribbon wall” at the courtyard is needed to animate the courtyard. If the ribbon wall is too costly as designed, it is appropriate to simplify the design (move to a wider module of ribbon, for example), as long as the movement and dynamism of the ribbon wall is maintained. It would not be acceptable to go to a plain wall because it would strip the courtyard of its lively, inviting character. If there are changes to the ribbon wall design as proposed to the DRB at the August 4, 2010 meeting they must be approved by DPD Planning staff.
2. The pedestrian bridges in the courtyard need to be further designed to so they are more of an architectural amenity and do not act to block light and vision through the central courtyard. Applicant should reduce their scale, make them feel lighter and more transparent and perhaps two floors of space between them with an open walk above each. The revised form of these bridges shall be approved by DPD Planning staff.
3. The main entrance along Eighth Avenue needs to be more strongly expressed in the architecture, similar to the how the entry on the Dexter Street façade is expressed.
4. A vine wall along the Eighth Avenue façade should be provided in the multilayered form shown as a condition of the departure to allow additional blank façade.

5. Measures shall be incorporated into the design and implementation of the internal courtyards to convey a message of public welcome. These measures shall be incorporated into the MUP plans in a form approved the DPD Planning staff.

### **Departure Requests**

The applicant requested three departures:

#### **1.) Departure from SMC 23.48.010, location of mechanical penthouse on the roof**

This departure would allow the mechanical penthouses to be aligned with the Eighth Avenue North side of Phase 3.1, the Dexter Avenue side of Phase 3.2, and portions of the Republican Street side of both buildings, rather than being set back 10 feet from the edge of the roof. At the June 2, 2010 EDG, the Design Review Board requested a sun/ shadow study to ensure that this location of the penthouses would not result in more shade below. The architect produced a shadow study demonstrating that pushing the penthouses out to the building edge does not result in additional shade on the sidewalk.

**Rationale/Benefit:** This departure would facilitate a better scale at the courtyard space by moving the equipment penthouses away from the courtyard facades. The penthouse space would read as part of the building volume, with taller laminations at the outer edges of the site, where the scale is more appropriate. This arrangement of penthouses would be consistent with the context provided by Phase Two of UW Medicine South Lake Union across 8<sup>th</sup> Ave to the east. Finally, it allows more usable, contiguous space for a green roof.

**Applicable Design Review Guidelines include:** C1 Architectural Context and C2 Architectural Concept and Consistency.

#### **2.) Departure from SMC 23.54.030 B2.c, mix of parking stall sizes**

The request is to reduce the requirement of 35% of large parking vehicle stalls to 20%. Based on a parking utilization study at UW School of Medicine Phase 2, the majority of cars driven to the site are smaller vehicles. The user does not require this proportion of large stalls.

**Rationale/Benefit:** More efficient use of parking space allowing one less floor of parking to be needed thereby lessening the presence of parking structured spaces in the project.

**Applicable Design Review Guidelines include:** A8 Parking and Vehicle Access

#### **3.) Departure from SMC 23.48.018.B2, Blank Façade requirements**

On Class 1 and 2 Pedestrian Streets (Republican Street and Dexter Avenue North fall into this category), blank facades are required to be no more than 15 feet wide to provide more pedestrian interest at grade. The request along Republican Street is to allow wider blank facades at Phases 3.1 and 3.2 because core elements of the structure have been shifted to the north and south ends

of the buildings. There is a blank façade length of 22 feet on Phase 3.1 and a blank façade length of 24 feet on Phase 3.2.

**Rationale/Benefit:** The blank walls along Republican Street would be made visually interesting through the use of patterned concrete panels and a colorful vine wall at grade extending at least one story and possibly two stories. The wall faces south, so the plantings would be quite lush. A colorful vine with red fall coloring, such as Virginia Creeper, would easily climb up one to two stories. Filling in the gaps and providing seasonal interest would be Coral Honeysuckle, which would add bright color and fragrance in the spring and summer. A programmatic need for the occupants of the building is utilized to add verticality and rhythm to the landscape elements along the south end of the proposal. The vine walls are a superior approach to the blank façade problem than other measures, such as display cases, which are a code allowed solution in many situations.

**Applicable Design Review Guidelines include:** D2 Blank Walls