



# City of Seattle

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Mike McGinn, Mayor  
**Department of Planning & Development**  
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**RECOMMENDATION  
OF  
THE DOWNTOWN SEATTLE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD (AREA 6)  
July 12, 2011**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Project Number: 3012188  
Address: 225 Cedar Street  
Applicant: Sean Sullivan, Hewitt Architects, for Third & Cedar LLC  
Board members present: Mathew Albores  
Gabe Grant (Chair)  
Sheri Olson  
Pragnesh Parikh  
Brian Scott  
Land Use Planner present: Michael Dorcy

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The 25,920 square foot Downtown development site is bounded by Cedar Street on the north, 3rd Avenue on the east, by Vine Street to the south and an alley on the west. Included within the development site is a single-story commercial building completed in 1954 and currently occupied as the American Lung Association building and the two-story Metropolitan Press building (occupied as a Rite Aid pharmacy). There is on-grade parking for 14 vehicles just off the alley.

The proposed development will include demolition of the existing American Lung Association building and elimination of the surface parking. All the parking for the proposed new development will be located below grade. Third Avenue is a principal transit corridor and the right-of-way directly in front of the proposed new structure has recently undergone development to accommodate the Rapid Ride transit system.



The site and surrounding block, together with the full block to the south and half blocks to the east and west are zoned DMR/R240/65. The block to the north is zoned DMR/C 125/65. There are six different zone designations within a two block radius of the development site within this section of the Belltown neighborhood. The area exhibits a variety of buildings, interspersed with surface parking lots, with a large, newer mixed-used/residential development, the Seattle Heights building, directly across the alley to the west. A 165-foot residential tower above an office and retail base, the “Alto” apartments, has been approved and has begun construction directly to the east across Third Avenue.

The site slopes perhaps five feet from east to west between Third Avenue and the alley as it mimics the waterwards slope of Cedar Street which cascades toward Elliott Bay more precipitously once it crosses First Avenue. Cedar Street is a designated Green Street with special street level requirements, including a combination of design features to enhance the pedestrian environment and its experience.

The residential portion of the 28-story proposed structure would consist of approximately 310 units. Although there is no requirement for it, parking for 160 vehicles would be available in below-grade parking. A ground-floor would provide a residential entry lobby as well as some 4,000 square feet of retail uses.

### **ARCHITECT’S PRESENTATION**

The Board chair opened the meeting at 5:30. The project description, the Board chair explained, was for a 27-story residential tower above at-grade retail space, for an overall height of 240 feet. The Board’s role was to determine whether the applicant had adequately responded to the Early Design Guidance that the Board had earlier articulated for the proposed development.

The DPD Land Use Planner, Michael Dorcy, noted that, although a residential tower project in the same location and by the same applicant as the present project had earlier been reviewed under a 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue address, the address assigned for the present project was *225 Cedar Street*.

David Hewitt of Hewitt Architects made the presentation to the Board on behalf of the Design Team. The existing buildings on the site are a Rite Aid Pharmacy ( the Metropolitan Press Building) and the American Lung Association building. Mr. Hewitt explained that the present proposal is part of a larger a two-phase project that would eventually address the potential for expansion above the Metropolitan Press building. Phase One, the proposal before the Board for the evening, was for a residential tower on the north half of the site.

The proposal was for a refined articulation of the third massing scheme presented at the Early Design Guidance meeting of April 12, 2011. As in the earlier presentation, the structure would consist of an articulated base with two major “steps” in the tower element as it faces Cedar Street. The massing pattern was said to maintain a rhythm with the Seattle Heights building and, it was explained, would respect its massing by canting portions of the proposed tower away from the alley and the neighboring tower. The preferred scheme provided a profile that was essentially slender, with the metal and glass of a high span window wall system providing for both versatility and an overall feeling of a “light” composition.

Following the presentation, the Board members asked some questions of the applicants to clarify for themselves elements of the presentation prior to opening the meeting to public comment.

- the ground floor of the structure as proposed would be set back from 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and even more so from Cedar Street;
- in addition to a two-foot dedication, the building would be set back an additional foot-and-a-half from the alley to increase maneuvering room on the alley;
- the entry to the underground parking had been adjusted away from the parking entry to the Seattle Tower;
- no departures from development standards were being requested;
- the building would have operable windows;
- while no major development was being proposed atop the Metropolitan Press (or Rite aid) building at this time, at a point slightly less than 65 feet above grade the top twenty stories of the proposed structure would cantilever over the Metropolitan Press structure which would be retained on site; any other development at that portion of the site would be required to go through design review; due to Land Use Code requirements a tall tower similar to the one proposed could not be built on the Metropolitan Press site.

### **Public Comment**

Even with a proposed 3.5 foot dedication, the alley was thought to still be too narrow to accommodate the demands of traffic; the loss of views now afforded the Seattle Tower was lamented.

### **Board Discussion and recommendations**

The Board commented favorably on how the orthogonal base re-enforced the existing urban form while still leading the pedestrian around the corner at Third and Bell, creating a lively pedestrian environment enhanced by substantial landscaping. The proposal more than adequately had complied with Design Review Guidelines A-1, B-2, C-1, C-6, D-2, chosen by the Board as of highest priority for the success of the project.

The Board noted favorably the additional setback from the alley and the canting of the west-facing bays away from the alley. The overall massing of the tower was regarded as thoughtful and the composition was regarded as a well-integrated scheme appropriate for the site. The proposal more than adequately had complied with Design Review Guidelines A-1, B-2, C-6, D-2, E-2 and E-3, chosen by the Board as of highest priority for the success of the project.

There was some discussion regarding the effectiveness of the treatment and of the subtleties, perceptibility, and desirability of gestures undertaken to establish a sense of continuity between the proposed lower portions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue façade with the existing Metropolitan Press building. The majority of the Board finally felt that the proposed treatment showed respect for the neighboring building. It neither neglected the existing façade nor was it an obsequious response to it. The treatment generally worked and was thought to be a desirable effort, one that

complied with Design Review Guidelines B-1, B-2, and B-3, chosen by the Board as of highest priority for the success of the project.

Another question was raised by one Board member asking whether the rooftop treatment appeared “too busy.” Again, the majority of the Board thought that the treatment worked and that there were no vantage points from which *busy-ness*, if any, would be perceived. The building was thought to comply with Guideline A-2, chose by the Board to be of highest priority for a successful design.

Finally, a question was raised regarding the effectiveness of the treatment of the south-facing façade which would remain largely visible since tall development above the Metropolitan Press building would likely be restricted for a long period of time. Several members of the Board pointed to significant design development that had occurred to the south façade since they had viewed the proposal at the Early Design Guidance meeting. One of the Board members, however, strongly suggested that there was still room for consideration and improvements and the other Board members agreed that as a part of the Board’s approval of the project, the design team be requested to take a “second look” at that façade treatment and work with the Land Use Planner to tweak and improve the overall effectiveness of the design and treatment of that façade. With that additional provision, the design was determined to comply with Guideline C-2, B-4 and the other Guidelines chosen to be of highest priority for a successful project at this site.

Having discussed and resolved the above issues, the Board agreed in their recommendation that the project should be approved as presented and conditioned at the meeting.