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**INTERIM EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE  
QUEEN ANNE/ MAGNOLIA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

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Project Number: 3012351

Address: 801 Dexter Ave N

Applicant: Weber Thompson for Holland Residential<sup>1</sup>

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, November 2, 2011

Board Members Present: David Delfs (Chair)  
Jacob Connell  
Lipika Mukerji

Board Members Absent: Jill Kurfirst  
Mindy Black (recused)

DPD Staff Present: Colin R. Vasquez, Senior Land Use Planner

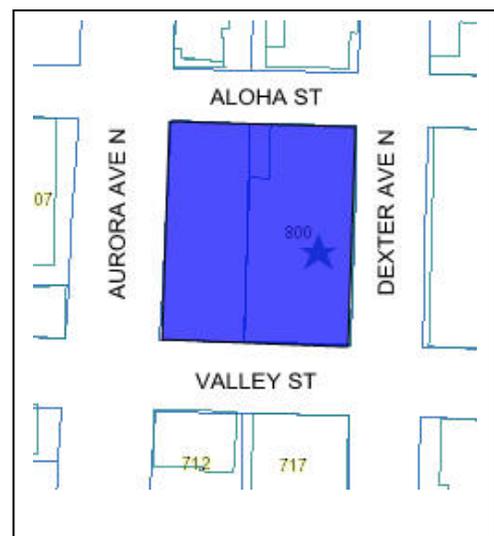
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**SITE & VICINITY**

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed — SM-65

Nearby Zones: North: SM-65  
South: SM-65  
East: SM-65  
West: CI-165

Lot Area: 53,456 SF



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<sup>1</sup> Presented by CollinsWoerman

The western portion of the site is currently used as a surface parking lot. There are two curb cuts on Aurora Avenue (one entry, one exit) and a curb cut on Aloha Street for service vehicles. This portion of the site is relatively flat - the land is built up from original grade with retaining walls along Aloha and Valley Streets, and between the parking lot and the existing building on the eastern portion of the site.

Current  
Development:

The eastern portion of the site is occupied by an existing 2-story warehouse and office building with approximately 83 parking spaces on the roof. The ground floor of the building is composed of predominantly blank walls with service entrances and utility access doors on Dexter Ave N. The current building entry is on Aloha Street.

The existing building is fairly typical for the older building stock in the area, but the area has been steadily developing over the last decade. Newer buildings in the area are typically multi-story, mixed use buildings and low- to mid-rise office buildings.

Access:

Primary pedestrian access would be from Dexter Av N. Vehicle access would be from Valley and Aloha streets.

Surrounding  
Development:

The area surrounding the site has been predominantly low-rise commercial and light industrial buildings, although this area, like South Lake Union as a whole, is seeing a significant shift to mid-rise mixed use buildings. North of the site, most properties along Dexter Avenue N are multifamily or commercial uses, with hotel, recreational, and commercial uses along Lake Union. South of the site, lowrise commercial and light industrial buildings and surface parking lots are prevalent.

ECAs:

Steep Slope Area.

Neighborhood  
Character:

There is new residential development under construction/and or proposed to the north and south of the site as well as the Neptune and similarly scaled nearby office development forming a coherent street wall along the Dexter corridor. While historically the street wall along Dexter has been sporadically defined, these new projects will set the stage for a new urban character in this neighborhood. Much of the existing building stock is relatively low density, warehouse/loft/industrial types of buildings. Several auto sales and service businesses are located near the site along Dexter to the south of the site. Though pedestrians and any feeling of urban density and vitality have been limited in the neighborhood, the area will develop due to its proximity to downtown Seattle, South Lake Union employment center and the amenities of Lake Union.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is to build a mixed-use structure that optimizes use of the site under zoning and land use regulations, create viable retail and commercial uses along Dexter Ave N that is appropriate to current and future conditions, and build residential units that take advantage of the site's transportation connections and views to Lake Union, downtown Seattle, and Capitol Hill. The residential unit objective is to build approximately 300 units of housing, in a mix that includes live-work units, studios, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units. Retail uses along the Dexter Ave N facade will provide opportunities for retail uses, live-work units, and the primary entrance to the residential portion of the building. The intent is to create space that could accommodate two retail spaces, each approximately 1,500 SF, and four live-work units, each approximately 700 SF. These live-work units could be converted to retail if and when that becomes appropriate. Parking objective is to provide approximately 0.8 structured parking spaces per residential unit, and approximately 6 structured parking spaces to support the potential retail uses (55 additional structured parking spaces within the building will be shared with adjacent building users). An approximate total of 300 structured spaces is planned. No parking uses or driveways will face onto Dexter Ave N. Parking garage entries are proposed on Aloha Street and Valley Street. On-street parking exists on the three streets that front the site, and is generally available throughout the neighborhood.

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: September 21, 2011**

## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three alternative design schemes were presented.

The first scheme (**Option A**) shown as a full block alternative is configured as two C shaped buildings joined together to form a doughnut shaped plan at the typical residential floor. Its design endeavors to maximize the amount of courtyard space at the interior of the block to provide a large exterior open space for units not facing the street. In order to accomplish this, the street facades of the building have been extended to the property lines with modulation along Dexter Avenue North accomplished by setting the center portion of the building set back, dividing the building mass into three major elements when viewed from the Aloha and Valley Street intersections. The building height steps with the grades, creating several breaks in height along Valley and Aloha streets, and progressively smaller floor plates as the building height increases. Live-work units, residential amenity space and retail at street level along Dexter Avenue N will provide pedestrian interest in small increments and create an interesting visual scale at street level. Two Design Departures would be required — 1) to allow 2 two-way curb cuts for vehicle access (one at Valley Street and one at Aloha Street) versus the single two-way curb cut allowed by code for this site. 2) To allow minimum façade height at limited location to be a minimum of 17' versus a minimum of 25' as required by code for this site.

The second scheme (**Option B**) showed it is an E shaped building with the open ends of the E oriented towards Dexter Avenue. The wings forming the E are elongated to join with the wing that fronts Aurora, with a portion of the courtyards between the wings filled in along Dexter Ave N. It provides building modulation along Dexter above level 4, by breaking the building mass into three major elements. Two longer and narrower exterior courtyards are created at the interior of the block, that

are partially open to the east above level four. Live-work units, residential amenity space and retail at street level along Dexter Avenue N will provide pedestrian interest in small increments and create an interesting visual scale at street level. Design Departure — allows a 2 two-way curb cuts for parking access (one at Valley Street and one at Aloha Street) versus the single two-way curb cut allowed by code for this site.

The third scheme (**Option C**) showed is comprised of two E shaped buildings joined together, creating a double doughnut shaped plan at the typical residential levels with two smaller internally oriented exterior courtyards. It provides building modulation along Dexter Avenue in the form of two notches facing the street breaking the facade into three massing blocks. This articulation provides two small elevated private courtyards along Dexter Avenue N. The building steps up two stories along Valley Street and Aloha Street. Live-work units and retail or amenity space at street level along Dexter Avenue N will provide pedestrian interest in small increments and create an interesting visual scale at street level. Two Design Departures would be required —1) Allow 2 two-way curb cuts for parking access (one at Valley Street and one at Aloha Street) versus the single two-way curb cut allowed by code for this site. 2) Allow minimum facade height at limited locations to be a minimum of 17' versus a minimum of 25' as required by code for this site.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately five to seven members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- A member of the public noted that the alternatives are all orient everything facing Dexter and little attention has been paid to the elevation along Aurora. How will the Aurora façade be treated to make a pleasant elevation, provide good units and control street noise within the units? The Architect noted that there will be units facing Aurora with widow fenestration to provide visual interest. Close attention will be paid to unit and façade design along Aurora: the mass of the building can be further articulated with notches and setbacks of the building façade, but generally the Dexter façade will have more articulation than along Aurora. Aurora offers a view corridor for units and also allows western sun exposure, but is noisy and has bad air quality. All of these issues will be considered in the final façade design.
- A member of the public noted that with only two parking garage entries traffic may back up onto Aurora; how will this be addressed? The Architect stated that traffic and mitigation will be studied at a later point in the review process.
- A member of the public noted a concern with the driver vehicle sight lines on Valley St for access to Aurora. The Architect stated that presently there are curb bulbs protecting the access onto Aurora; the building will not impede views to the south necessary for access onto Aurora.
- A member of the public encouraged the architect to provide sound absorption along Aurora. The Architect stated that Highway 99 has special considerations for traffic flow and sight line; and the sound issue will be addressed.
- A person who presently lives in the Alterra prefers Alternative 1 and noted that narrow courtyards can create problems of noise between units. The Board noted that it would be good to show the sight lines and façade relationships to the Alterra in future presentations.

## PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

### A. Site Planning

**A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics. The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that along Dexter there is an opportunity to create the feel of an urban environment, but Dexter is not the greatest retail street.

At Interim EDG Meeting, the proposed design emphasized retail use at the north end of Dexter to create synergy with other retail at the intersection w/ Aloha St. Southern portion from Valley St to the main lobby is proposed as Live / Work

**A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that the design team should consider relating each façade to the opposing street front context. It would be good to break down the lengths of the facades on the side streets.

At the Interim EDG, the design responded to the side streets by articulating the massing vertically in relation to the grade. Dexter façade was broken to expose the courtyard and reinforce the three grade related uses of retail, lobby and live work. The Aurora Façade is articulated in larger pieces to respond to its scale and the experience of viewing it at speed. The board expressed approval of the direction in façade development.

**A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.**

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that Aloha and Valley are really not pedestrian driven streets. They may get some activity due to bus stops on Aurora.

**A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites. Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that roof modulation is also important but hard to evaluate at the stage since units are not configured.

At the Interim EDG the design showed roof articulation at Valley and Aloha that follows the grade and reinforces the rhythm of the building articulation.

**A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.**

**A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.**

**A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access. Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties, and pedestrian safety.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed parking access on Aloha should be aligned with 901 Dexter project to the north.

At the Interim EDG the design presented 2 access points, one each at Valley and Aloha. The board supported the two entrance approach. The planned reported that John Shaw, DPD transportation planner also supported the scheme.

**B. Height, Bulk and Scale**

**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 anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that the sidewalk to roof is over 60' and proportions of the vertical building mass should be considered. Single courtyard alternative works best and articulation is necessary. The building seems to be an odd size and the design team might consider looking at a taller base element (2/4 versus the current 1/5 depiction). Additional articulation is required.

At the Interim EDG the design showed a taller 2/4 base as previously recommended. Additional vertical massing moves are incorporated at all facades. He board expressed approval of the way massing is used to define the use zones on Dexter and the relationship to grade at the side streets.

## C. Architectural Elements and Materials

**C-1 Architectural Context. New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.**

**C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency. Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the current base/top of the building relationship seems more office park like; stronger base could also help define the retail. The design team should consider a stepping roof line, modulated base and relationship with buildings to the north of the site.

At the Interim EDG the design showed a taller 2/4 base to enhance the retail presence as previously recommended. The board commented that the building continued the rhythm of 901 (to the north) nicely.

**C-3 Human Scale. The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements, and details to achieve a good human scale.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that there is a need to resolve the expression of the building at the corners; live/work units should have appropriate transition zone from the sidewalk to front door.

At the Interim EDG board repeated the guidance to develop a transition zone at the Live Work unit entries. Landscaping would be one desirable element.

**C-4 Exterior Finish Materials. Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.**

**C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.**

## D. Pedestrian Environment

**D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.**

- D-2 **Blank Walls.** Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.
- D-5 **Visual Impacts of Parking Structures.** The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.
- D-7 **Personal Safety and Security.** Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.
- D-9 **Commercial Signage.** Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.
- D-10 **Commercial Lighting.** Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.
- D-11 **Commercial Transparency.** Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.
- D-12 **Residential Entries and Transitions.** For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

<b>E. Landscaping</b>
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- E-2 **Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site.** Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

At the Interim EDG the board recommended landscaping to help define the transition zone between the sidewalk and the Live / Work Entries

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The Board’s recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based upon the departure’s potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall

design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departures were requested:

1. **Option A:** requires two design departures — 1) to allow 2 two-way curb cuts for vehicle access (one at Valley Street and one at Aloha Street) versus the single two-way curb cut allowed by code for this site. 2) To allow minimum façade height at limited location to be a minimum of 17' versus a minimum of 25' as required by code for this site.

The Board has not indicated their position on the departures.

2. **Option B:** requires one design departure — that allows 2 two-way curb cuts for parking access (one at Valley Street and one at Aloha Street) versus the single two-way curb cut allowed by code for this site.

The Board has not indicated their position on the departure.

3. **Option C:** requires two design departures — 1) Allow 2 two-way curb cuts for parking access (one at Valley Street and one at Aloha Street) versus the single two-way curb cut allowed by code for this site. 2) Allow minimum facade height at limited locations to be a minimum of 17' versus a minimum of 25' as required by code for this site.

The Board has not indicated their position on the departures.

At the time of Interim Early Design Guidance, the following departures were requested:

1) to allow (2) two-way curb cuts for vehicle access (one at Valley Street and one at Aloha Street) versus the single two-way curb cut allowed by code for this site.

The board did not make a formal recommendation for approval but expressed support for the departure because it appears to have a positive impact on traffic flow to and from the site. The planner reported the DPD Traffic planner John Shaw has also expressed support.

2) To allow minimum façade height at limited location over the lobby at Dexter to be a minimum of 23' versus a minimum of 25' as required by code for this site.

The board did not make a formal recommendation but expressed support for the departure because it will strengthen the relationship between the street and the L3 courtyard.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

**At the conclusion of the 9/21 EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should return to the Board for an additional EDG meeting.**

### **Summary of DRB recommendations on designs**

1. Aurora Avenue North
  - a. Provide articulation at the Aurora façade to increase visual interest taking into consideration the quality of the unit environment, as well as the noise and air quality impacts from Aurora
  - b. Consider access off Aurora onto Aloha as a major neighborhood entry point
2. Dexter Avenue North
  - a. Provide additional public open space and transparency at the corner of Aloha and Dexter
  - b. Consider widened sidewalk or setback facades including landscaping as a pedestrian amenity
  - c. Use elements that consider human scale at the ground level
  - d. Provide transition zone at live/work units
  - e. Provide additional building modulation and façade articulation
  - f. Consider vertical articulation of building base to top relationship
3. Valley and Aloha Streets
  - a. OK for parking entries (align with adjacent parking entries)
  - b. Breakup the perceived length of the building with modulation and façade articulation
  - c. Consider building modulation related to steps in roof line
  - d. Relate façades to elements of buildings across the streets from the site
4. Building massing
  - a. Single courtyard preferred to create more desirable resident environment
  - b. Consider stepping of roof line and setbacks at upper levels to create visual interest
  - c. Consider relationship of base to top of building relationships to create more appealing building proportions.

**At the conclusion of the 11/2 Interim EDG meeting, the Board approved the project to proceed to MUP submittal and a Recommendations Meeting.**

**Summary of new DRB recommendations on designs**

1. Aurora Avenue North
  - a. Applicant is encouraged to make sure articulation and landscape are robust.
  - b. Consider access off Aurora onto Aloha as a major neighborhood entry point
2. Dexter Avenue North
  - a. Enhance Transition zone to Live work entries. Consider Landscape as one element of the zone.
  - b. Approve of the opening in the façade and the organization to reinforce the three street level use zones.
  - c. Consider variation in base height to differentiate the street level uses.

3. Valley and Aloha Streets
  - a. OK for parking entries (align with adjacent parking entries)
  - b. General massing and articulation approved. Good response to grade.
  
4. Building massing
  - a. Consider visibility of roofs from adjacent sites.

**End of Meeting Minutes**