



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012441

Address: 2720 Fourth Avenue

Applicant: Julia Nagele, Hewitt Architects, for 4th & Denny LLC

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, August 09, 2011

Board Members Present: Matthew Albores
Gabe Grant (Chair)
Pragnesh Parikh
Brian Scott

Board Members Absent: Sheri Olson

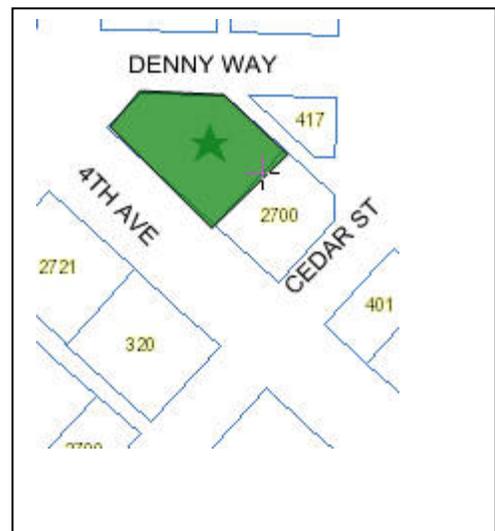
DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMR/R 125/65

Nearby Zones: (North) SM 85
(South) DMR/L 240/125
(East) DMR/R 125/65
(West) DMC 85

Lot Area: Pentagon-shaped, relatively flat,
circumscribed by Denny Way, 4th
Avenue and an alley.



Current Development: Surface parking lot.

Access: Single access from the alley located northeast of the site.

Surrounding Development: Development on the block consists of commercial and residential structures, varying between two and six stories in height. Across 4th Avenue are two residential structures, one 3-stories and the other 5-stories in height. Across Denny Way to the north is the Fisher Broadcasting Plaza, a development which consists of two substantial commercial buildings that fill the entire block.

ECAs: There are no environmentally critical areas on site.

Neighborhood Character: The immediate Belltown neighborhood is a mixture of important older historic buildings and newer buildings. The public area along 4th Avenue sports a rich canopy of mature oak trees. The site is just south and west of Tillicum Place, an recognizable and established urban node dating from the earlier twentieth century with small scale retail shops, mature street trees and a landmarked statue of Chief Seattle. The development site lies within a pedestrian friendly enclave that is only a short distance from Denny Park and many of the Seattle Center's main attractions, including the Pacific Science Center, the Space Needle, the Experience Music Project and the Dale Chihuly Glass Exhibition pavilion and garden just now undergoing construction.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed mixed-use residential project will be comprised of ground level retail shops totaling approximately 5,000 square feet and 12 floors of approximately 162 residential units. The structure will contain three stories of below-grade parking for 105 cars accessed off the alley.

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DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

David Hewitt of Hewitt Architects made the presentation for the design team, noting the rich opportunities offered by the site. The first scheme (A) was said to allow for a more regular building geometry and regularity of unit shapes. The massing, stepped on each of the building facades, provided for more relief from Denny Way and the Fisher Communication buildings across that street. Distant views to Lake Union and Elliot Bay were maximized and the scheme provided for more ground-level outdoor space along Denny Way.

Scheme B was said to allow for a strong architectural expression at the intersection of 4th Avenue and Denny Way and facilitated uniquely shaped units that could produce a diversity in unit types. Those along Denny Way could be oriented away from looking directly into Fisher Plaza.

Scheme C was said to blend the regular quality of the first scheme with the uniqueness of Scheme B while maintaining a well-defined street edge along Denny Way.

The site design for any of the alternative schemes would address the two street frontages (Denny Way and 4th Avenue) in two distinct treatments. The treatment along 4th Avenue would retain the mature street trees and improve their condition by expanding the pit openings and the ground cover adjacent the trees. On Denny Way the existing street trees would be replaced with more robust specimens and with a continuous planted buffer to provide greater comfort for pedestrians traversing the sidewalk paralleling the high volume traffic path. Where the two streets meet the existing maple trees would remain with the at-grade retail façade set back from the property line to allow for a broadened landscape area along this edge.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

- Stated that corrugated metal siding should be eschewed as a cladding material and that highly reflective glass in storefronts, diminishing transparency into the interiors of the building, was as bad as a blank wall.
- Encouraged activation of the alley by treating it as more than just a utilitarian and functional space; something like a café on the alley was also encouraged.
 - Concerned with graffiti as a problem in the area.
 - Encouraged providing ample parking spaces so spaces could be leased to those living and working nearby who were without parking.
 - Retail spaces should not be too small.
 - Use of large stones as part of landscaping pallet was discouraged sine gathering such materials and using them to break glass storefronts was viewed as a problem.
 - Overhead weather protection welcomed.
 - Preserve existing quality of light in the alley.

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 Downtown Design Guidelines of highest priority for this project.

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

A. Site Planning & Massing

Responding to the Larger Context

- A-1 Respond to the Physical Environment. Develop an architectural concept and compose the building’s massing in response to geographic conditions and patterns of urban form found beyond the immediate context of the building site.**

The Board agreed with the applicants’ choice of this guideline as one of highest priority for the success of the project, noting the high visibility of any development on the site.

- A-2 Enhance the Skyline. Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline.**

At the Early Design Guidance MeetingThe Board noted that the site sat at the edge of a transition zone, both literally as a land use designation and as a neighborhood designation, and emphasized that the transition needed to be reflected especially in the upper facades.

B. Architectural Expression

Relating to the Neighborhood Context

- B-1 Respond to the Neighborhood Context – Develop an architectural concept and compose the major building elements to reinforce desirable urban features existing in the surrounding neighborhood.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted the proximity to Tillicum Place and briefly discussed the importance of cognizance of that fact without going into detail about how that proximity should impact actual design choices that were to be made as design development took place.

- B-2 Create a Transition in Bulk & Scale. Compose the massing of the building to create a transition to the height, bulk, and scale of development in neighboring or nearby less intensive zones.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board once again emphasized the notion that the site stood at the edge of a zone shift.

- B-3 Reinforce the Positive Urban Form & Architectural Attributes of the Immediate Area . Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.**

One of the characteristics of nearby older development is a sense of intimacy that structures have with the street and the pedestrian realm; store fronts should avoid display of a generic relationship to the public realm at street level.

Choose an item.

- B-4 Design a Well-Proportioned & Unified Building. Compose the massing and organize the publicly accessible interior and exterior spaces to create a well-proportioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole.**

Choose an item.

This was identified as a guideline of highest priority by both the applicant and the Board.

C. The Streetscape

Creating the Pedestrian Environment

- C-1 Promote Pedestrian Interaction. Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should be open to the general public and appear safe and welcoming.**

Choose an item.

Echoing some of the remarks of members of the public, members of the Board discussed the potential negative impacts of hiding spots behind the columns and the recesses inviting unsavory and unwanted uses .

- C-3 Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades. Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.**

Choose an item.

In choosing this as a guideline of highest importance the Board referred to the remark by a member of the public stating that a storefront window of highly reflective glass could create a negative experience equal to that of a blank wall along a façade.

- C-4 Reinforce Building Entries. To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce the building's entry.**

Choose an item. #3012441

Choose an item.

This was selected as a guideline of highest priority but without further specificity on the part of the Board members.

- C-5 Encourage Overhead Weather Protection. Encourage project applicants to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major pedestrian routes.**

Choose an item.

The correct integration of pedestrian pathways recessed beneath upper portions of the structure and canopies or other forms of overhead weather protection along the various street fronts was regarded by the Board as “critical” to the success of the project and achieving the goals of establishing an inviting, comfortable and safe pedestrian environment.

- C-6 Develop the Alley Façade. To increase pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest, develop portions of the alley façade in response to the unique conditions of the site or project.**

Choose an item.

The alley should in this instance be considered a special place and, among other considerations, future design development should explore whether the parking entrance/exit should be the only “opening,” conceptual or actual, onto the alley.

D. Public Amenities

Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space

- D-1 Provide Inviting & Usable Open Space. Design public open spaces to promote a visually pleasing, safe, and active environment for workers, residents, and visitors. Views and solar access from the principal area of the open space should be especially emphasized.**

Choose an item.

- D-2 Enhance the Building with Landscaping. Enhance the building and site with substantial landscaping—which includes special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, and site furniture, as well as living plant material.**

Choose an item.

Both the enhancement of the existing 4th Avenue tree canopy area and the establishment of a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles along Denny Way were affirmed by the Board as significant and positive moves.

- D-3 Provide Elements that Define the Place. Provide special elements on the facades, within public open spaces, or on the sidewalk to create a distinct, attractive, and memorable “sense of place” associated with the building.**

Choose an item.

Choose an item. #3012441

An outstanding example of the successful interplay of private and public realms was less than a block away at Tillicum Place and

- D-4 Provide Appropriate Signage. Design signage appropriate for the scale and character of the project and immediate neighborhood. All signs should be oriented to pedestrians and/or persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood.**

Choose an item., the Board discussed...

- D-5 Provide Adequate Lighting. To promote a sense of security for people downtown during nighttime hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building facade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.**

Choose an item., the Board discussed...

- D-6 Design for Personal Safety & Security. Design the building and site to enhance the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.**

Choose an item., the Board discussed...

E. Vehicular Access & Parking

Minimizing the Adverse Impacts

- E-1 Minimize Curb Cut Impacts. Minimize adverse impacts of curb cuts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.**

Choose an item., the Board discussed...

- E-2 Integrate Parking Facilities. Minimize the visual impact of parking by integrating parking facilities with surrounding development. Incorporate architectural treatments or suitable landscaping to provide for the safety and comfort of people using the facility as well as those walking by.**

Choose an item., the Board discussed...

- E-3 Minimize the Presence of Service Areas. Locate service areas for trash dumpsters, loading docks, mechanical equipment, and the like away from the street front where**

Choose an item. #3012441

possible. Screen from view those elements which for programmatic reasons cannot be located away from the street front.

Choose an item., the Board discussed...

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:

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The Board indicated Click here to enter text.

2. Click here to enter text. (Click here to enter text.): The Code requiresClick here to enter text. The applicant proposes Click here to enter text.

The Board indicated Click here to enter text.

3. Click here to enter text. (Click here to enter text.): The Code requiresClick here to enter text. The applicant proposes Click here to enter text.

The Board indicated Click here to enter text.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should Choose an item.