City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

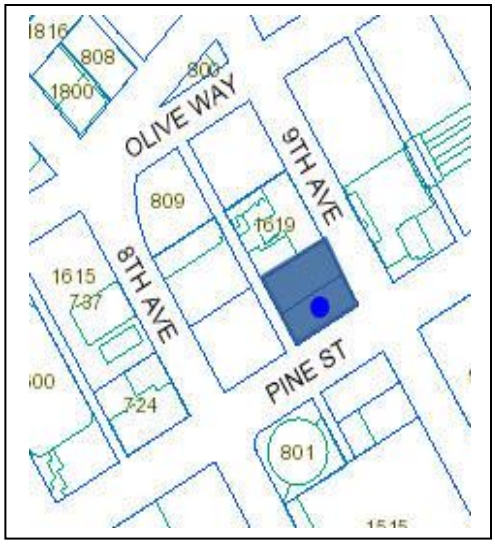
Project Number:	3012469
Address:	1601 9th Ave.
Applicant:	Runberg Architecture for Teutsch Partners
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, September 11, 2012
Board Members Present:	Gabe Grant (Chair) Matthew Albores Pragnesh Parikh Gundula Proksch Brian Scott
Board Members Absent:	None
DPD Staff Present:	Bradley Wilburn, Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DOC2 500/300-500

Nearby Zones: (North) DOC2 500/300-500
(South) DMC 340/290-400
(West) DOC2 500/300-500
(East) DMC 340/290-400

Lot Area: 13,335 sq. ft.



Current Development:	Surface parking lot adjacent to Camlin Hotel. The Bus/Light Rail Tunnel crosses under the site from east to west underlying 60% of the proposal site.
Access:	9th Avenue, Pine Street and alley running parallel to 9th Ave.
Surrounding Development:	Adjacent to the two historic landmark buildings; The Camlin Hotel and The Paramount Theater. To the east across 9th Avenue is the Convention Place Transit Center. Elsewhere in the immediate area new residential and office towers are replacing lower scale development.
ECAs:	None
Neighborhood Character:	Downtown mixed use, high-rise and mid-rise.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a six-story structure containing 74 residential units above street-level commercial and accessory residential use. Approximately 3,870 sq. ft. of retail use is proposed along Pine Street, with residential lobby/tenant amenity space located adjacent to 9th Ave. Parking for 35 vehicles will be provided within structure at ground level accessed from the alley.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: January 24, 2012

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include the mix of uses described above in a lot line to lot line building with parking above grade and within the structure. In each, a steel frame element is incorporated to aid in bridging the underground tunnel.

The first scheme (Option A) incorporated alley access to parking and, like the second alternative scheme, would require departures to allow a parking use along a Green Street, reduction of upper level setbacks from a green street and alternative dimensioning of structural building overhangs.

The second scheme (Option B) showed a curb cut off 9th Avenue necessitating an additional departure request for a curb cut on a Green Street.

The third scheme (Option C) showed alley vehicular access and upper level setback along 9th Avenue and would require a single departure for parking at street level along a Green Street.

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

- Noted that creative treatment should be applied to any blank wall element along 9th Ave.
- Stated that an expansion of the Washington State Convention Center may take place in the air space above the transit station across 9th Avenue from the project site and that this eventuality will add to the urban density surrounding the site.
- Encouraged the proposed building to add to the existing architectural diversity of the surrounding area which contains both new buildings and grand historic ones.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: November 30, 2011

DESIGN PRESENTATION
The design presentation included an analysis of the site context, structural challenges of bridging the Sound Transit bus/light rail tunnel directly below the development site, design sensitivity to the abutting landmark building (Camlin Hotel), forms and styles in the surrounding neighborhood. Detailed elevations, floors plans and landscape plans were shown along with a color and material palette.

The project incorporates a simplified massing cased in a modernist form intended to provide a design that does not overshadow the two neighboring landmark structures (Paramount Theater and Camlin Hotel) within the neighborhood context. The proposed building carries forward datum lines of the Camlin to give the building a subtle design aesthetic. The palette includes metal siding in dark grays, accented by patterning and modulation to give greater contrast and vibrancy. Large windows open the building up to provide visual interest and pedestrian engagement at street level. To give the building added warmth, wood soffits and rusticated metal art screens are included at street level along the 9th Avenue Green Street.

Primary residential entry will be taken off the 9th Avenue street frontage with a more residential emphasis. Commercial access is proposed adjacent to Pine Street. Access to vehicle loading and parking will be taken from the alley.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Approximately one member of the public attended the Final Recommendation meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Supportive of the design direction with the underlying site constraints and looks forward to seeing the existing surface parking lot redeveloped.
- The design team did a great job in their design solution in adding a gem to the neighborhood.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board indicated the façade design approach should be simple and elegant. Of the precedent images shown in the packet (p. 41) the one second from left in the bottom row was noted as showing a good relationship to a historic building. Also noted was the Agnes Lofts, particularly the way its front façade turns the corner for a distance.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board generally agreed this was an optimum presentation with lapses in the deployment of truss system and how it relates to the building's structural integrity upon the street facades. As viewed from the east along Pine Street, a perspective that will feature the highest visibility, the proposed building is compatible within its neighboring context.

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 discussed the massing of the preferred alternative. One member found it a bit boxy. It was observed that the building could maintain the Camlin façade line. A bay coming out right next to the Camlin appeared to crowd it. The bay it was stated could be shifted and it would be OK for it to be longer, even if a departure were required. The façade could be notched and, the Board indicated, the façade needs to be developed further. The Board indicated that the massing was generally acceptable with three members indicating that some "backing off from the Camlin" needs to be incorporated into the design.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, staff clarified that a departure for structural building overhang is narrowly defined in the Land Use Code and what was previously presented before the Board was no longer a viable design option to allow the building's massing to project into the right-of-way. The applicant responded with a design approach which no longer required a departure request. The Board was supportive of the design direction reducing the building's mass within the development site. With narrower horizontal shifts in the building's mass on the upper level, greater emphasis was directed towards how material and color transitions and building modulations occur. The Board agreed that the proposed building was sympathetic in scope and scale to its surrounding but noted its roof would be highly visible and needed further refinement. In the context of the surrounding taller buildings and topography, the roof top should be treated as if it were a façade, to create greater visual interest, not leaving a large portion of the roof top a blank canvas.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that they would like to see further activation of the Green Street (9th Avenue) frontage between the street level parking garage and the sidewalk. If the applicant could not create an environment promoting visual interest then they seek other solutions to relocate the parking garage and activate the space. Interior spaces should be readable from at street level.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board agreed that the large storefront windows along Pine Street, a heavily traveled pedestrian corridor, would provide opportunities to engage the public realm. The exposed metal trusses behind the storefront windows appeared artificial and disconnected from the upper level. The design team explained the truss system was engineered to meet the load capacity of the building while straddling the tunnel below. The Board noted that the continuous overhead weather protection will provide a safe haven and allow pedestrians to visually explore nuanced design elements along both street frontages, such as the exposed truss system and car stacking mechanism.

Along 9th Avenue, the street level design included a metal mesh screen layered behind a metal art panel and landscaping. The metal panels would be a laser cut design responding to the exposed trusses to create an organic form with openings into the mesh screen behind. The design concept was vetted through the Green Street program to

maintain a coherent design aesthetic throughout the length of the Green Street. The Board was encouraged with the design composition but felt additional design evolution was required once the Board understood how the car stacking mechanism would operate. Behind the screening wall is the parking garage that will feature a 3-car stacking device. The Board recognized a unique opportunity to allow the public a view into the inner workings of the car stacking device by opening greater visibility into the garage. The Board supported a street-level design along 9th Avenue featuring with warmer exterior wood materials, benches, vegetation, lighting and other details to engage the public.

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

At the Early Design Guidance meeting, all four Board members were concerned about the pedestrian experience along 9th Ave. where parking is proposed within the structure, without an intervening use for approximately 55 feet. Trading the pedestrian experience for parking, it stated, does "not ring true." While the Board did not indicate that the parking arrangement was unacceptable, it did indicate that obtaining a recommendation of a departure to allow it would be a challenge. It indicated that an option incorporating a human activated use, visible and interacting with the pedestrian experience in at least a good portion of the façade should be developed and shown to the Board the next time it reviews this proposal. Any alternative treatment of the area should involve extraordinary materials, art, landscape and textures.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, staff explained that the departure request to allow parking at street level was not in the purview of the Design Review program to grant, but was allowed per Code as a Type 1 decision (SMC 23.49.019.B.2.b). See C-1.

The Board felt the upper level façade was well conceived in its alignment to the datum lines of the adjacent landmark building (The Camlin Hotel). The modulated feature shifted to the corner was more gracious to the Camlin Hotel. At street-level the decorative layered metal screen with landscaping at the base needed additional refinement. Though the surface level parking garage is hidden behind a metal screen, it occupies a significant portion along the sidewalk and is not engaging the pedestrian realm. Once the applicant explained how the parking garage would operate with a stacking car device, the Board saw an opportunity to take advantage of this unique mechanism is Seattle and directed the applicant to allow openings so the public could have views into the garage where they could see it operating.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that they will look forward to reviewing the details of entries at the next meeting.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the design included accentuated entries to distinguish residential from commercial portals. The residential canopy offers a change in material and size extending from wood soffits creating a sense of warmth along the 9th Avenue Green Street. Access to commercial use will be taken from the commercially oriented Pine Street. The Board supported the location of the entries, but was concerned that the truss system did not look coherent. The Board sought a rationalization for why the truss system seemed disjointed from the upper level. The Board acknowledged the difficulty of erecting a building with unique constraints that the site presented, and application of visually exposed trusses. The Board directed the design team to further refine and make more coherent the truss system with the upper level structural vertical elements along Pine Street.

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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board reviewed a site plan and elevations of the proposed building in relation to the right-of-way. The proposed canopies will be continuous and extend approximately 8 feet from the exterior façade along both street fronts. Four different types of directional lighting will provide visual interest and increase safety around the structure's perimeter. Accent lighting is featured along 9th Avenue where LED channel lights will be introduced along the vertical edge of the reveals in the concrete to highlight the art screen in the evening. The Board supported the lighting plan including the down-lights upon the alley façade.

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.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board reviewed an analysis of the building massing and elevation profile within the surrounding context of existing and proposed structures. In deference to a new 38-story mixed-use tower proposed across the alley from the development site, the west (alley) façade offered a visually interesting design. For most Board members the upper level alley façade was the most successful in establishing a visual vocabulary with its selection of materials, color and fenestration. The building is modulated above the podium level to establish a lower level outdoor landscape court at the northwest corner to increase light and air to a number of units. The modern design of the proposed building is complementary to the adjacent Camlin in form and architectural styling.

D. Public Amenities

Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space

D-1 <u>Provide Inviting & Usable Open Space</u>. 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board encouraged the installment of a curb bulb and other right-of-way enhancements on 9th Avenue was the appropriate design solution. The Board also noted that the 9th avenue Green Street should impart a residentially oriented experience through landscaping, façade use and materiality.

<u>At the Final Recommendation Meeting</u>, the Board was pleased that the right-of-way improvements is richly landscaped with moderately sized planter boxes, green walls, and seat cubes encouraging social activity. When fully mature, 9th Avenue will provide a vegetated street edge framed by an elegantly sculpted street-level façade. See C-1.

D-2 <u>Enhance the Building with Landscaping</u>. 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.

<u>At the Final Recommendation Meeting</u>, the landscape design included roof top and podium level outdoor decks. At street-level, along the 9th Avenue Green Street a number of landscape layers are presented to help establish a sense of place. The commercially oriented Pine Street focused on façade appearance and the installation of the curb bulb due in part to proximity of existing street trees, two bus shelters and underground utilities circumventing the addition of landscaping. The lower deck (38' X 38") located at the northwest corner will provide ground cover and six deciduous trees to create visual interest for the upper level floors with units facing the outdoor space. The roof deck level (118' X 40') adjoins an interior common amenity area featuring a number of outdoor rooms all framed within a richly landscaped buffer along the south edge. The Board noted concern with the visible significance of the remaining roof top area when considered from a larger context of surrounding buildings. The remaining roof area is sterile in comparison to the roof deck and needs further refinement to add greenery.

With the exception of additional refinements to increase green elements on the roof top and opening up pockets to see into the car stacking device along 9th Avenue, the Board was supportive of the proposed landscaping improvements.

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.**

See D-1

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.**

See C-5.

E. Vehicular Access & Parking

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

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board was pleased that access to service areas, loading and parking will be fully accessed from the alley.

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.**

See C-1, C-5, & D-1.

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

See E-1.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) is 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).

At the Recommendation meeting, the following departures were requested:

1. **Upper Level Setbacks (SMC 23.49.058.F.2):** The Code requires that when a lot is located on a designated Green Street, a continuous upper-level setback of fifteen (15) feet shall be provided on the street frontage abutting the green street at a height of 45 feet. The applicant proposes to provide a zero foot setback at the upper level setback due in part to the structure's proposed height of 70 feet in contrast to what would be otherwise be allowed 300 – 500 feet above street grade.

   The Board unanimously recommended in favor of the proposed departure with respect to the structure's proposed six–story height in relationship to neighboring building. The Board agreed that stepping the upper level back for 2-stories creates a massing incongruous with the neighboring vernacular. The preferred design minimizes visual distraction from the abutting landmark building. (A-1, B-1, C-3, D-2, & D-3)

2. **Green Street Setbacks** (**SMC 23.49.056.F.4):** The Code requires a 2 foot wide setback from the street lot line along 9th Avenue Green Street within the Denny Triangle Urban Center Village and fifty percent of the setback area must be landscaped. The applicant proposes to provide 2 foot setback at street level and allow the levels above to encroach back into the setback area the full 2 feet. At grade at least fifty percent of the setback area will be landscaped. Wood soffits with recessed lighting will provide a warm and engaging element for the cantilevered portion of the structure.

   At the Recommendation meeting, the revised design with a more subtle horizontal modulation responded to the guidance though it was less dramatic, the Board voted unanimously in favor of the requested departure. (A-1, B-1, C-1, C-3, & D-5)

3. **Driveway Width (SMC 23.54.030.D.1.c):** The Code requires that a residential driveway of any length serving more than 30 parking spaces shall be at least 20 feet wide for two-way traffic. The applicant proposes to provide a 15'-4" width because of the unique installation of the car stacking device restricts vehicle mobility within the structure and at any one time vehicle mobility is limited by the car stacking device, one vehicle at a time.

   The Board unanimously recommended approval of the proposed departure with the understanding that opportunities to open up the inner workings of the car stacking device would be a major asset to the development proposal as viewed from the 9th Avenue right-of-way. (C-6, E-1, & E-2)

BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board recommended approval of the proposed design with the requested departures along with the following conditions:

1. The roof top should be treated as a façade and provide visual interest for properties looking down at its top and as viewed from neighboring buildings and sites. The northern expanse of the roof top is underwhelming and signifies neglect. An artistic move is required to add greenery to the roof top.

2. The design of the ground level base of the south façade should become more coherent with the spatial arrangement of the truss system to better align with the upper level and open view into the commercial spaces or provide a more substantial presentation of the need to maintain the trusses structurally.
3. The design of the layered art wall, green wall, and other landscape features along the 9th Avenue Green Street frontage should open up views into the unique car stacking mechanical device. An opportunity exists to allow the public a glimpse into mechanism that would be both engaging and firmly establish a sense of place.
4. The street-level façade surrounding the opening into parking garage along 9th Avenue should be artistically framed to visually engage the pedestrian realm.