



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

Project Number: 3012560 and 3012563

Address: 515 Westlake Ave N. and 500 9th Ave N

Applicant: Jodi Patterson O’Hare for City Investors LLC

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, June 06, 2012

Board Members Present: David Delfs (Chair)
Mindy Black
Jacob Connell
Jill Kurfirst
Lipika Mukerji

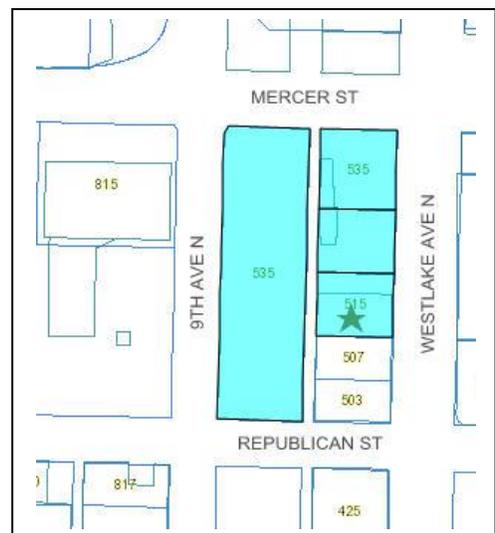
DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM-65

Nearby Zones: (North) SM-65
(South) SM-85
(East) SM-65
(West) SM-65

Lot Area: 80,986 square feet



Current Development: The site includes most of a block on both sides of an alley, with the exception of two parcels in the southeast corner of the block. The block is bounded by Westlake Ave N, Mercer St, 9th Ave N, and Republican St, and is located approximately one block south of Lake Union. One early 20th century two story building is located on a parcel at Westlake Ave N. The other parcels in this development site are occupied by surface parking lots.

Access: Existing vehicular access is via curb cuts on Republican St and Westlake Ave N, and via the alley. Existing pedestrian access to the building is from the sidewalk at Westlake Ave N.

The surrounding development is a mix of uses and age of structures. Two early 20th-century commercial buildings are located on the southeast parcels of this block.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character: Nearby development includes commercial, institutional, and residential structures, ranging from one to older 1-2 story commercial structures to newer 5-6 story mixed-use and commercial structures. Some historic landmarks are located within a few blocks in each direction.

Recreational opportunities include Lake Union one to the north and Cascade Playground a few blocks to the east.

The area offers frequent transit service, including the South Lake Union Streetcar adjacent to the site and several nearby bus routes.

ECAs: No Environmentally Critical Areas are on or adjacent to the property.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal includes an alley vacation to create an L-shaped alley entering on Republican and exiting on Westlake Ave N. The preferred option includes two six-story buildings separated by a mid-block pedestrian crossing, including a total of 375,000 square feet of office and 15,000 square feet of retail, with 546 parking stalls below grade. Parking for 527 vehicles would be provided below grade.

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DESIGN PRESENTATION

The EDG packet includes materials presented at the EDG meeting, and is available online by entering the project number(s) (3012560 and 3012563) at this website: http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp.

The EDG packet is also available to view in the 3012560 and 3012563 file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Mailing Public Resource Center
Address: 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

The applicant noted that they are also requesting an alley vacation to relocate the alley to connect to Westlake Ave N.

The site offers the opportunity for a gateway from Lake Union into the South Lake Union neighborhood via Westlake Ave N.

Increased bicycle use is anticipated along 9th Avenue N, as well as pedestrian and streetcar activity at Westlake Ave N. Vehicular access to the site is from the alley near Republican St, with loading at the south building and access to loading via freight elevators to the bridges to the north building.

The three options were based on various alley vacation considerations, as well as stepping the mass with grade which requires a step down of a story near the middle of the site. The preferred alley configuration would maximize the continuity with other nearby mid-block pedestrian connections.

The mid-block pedestrian connection would include wider entry points at the north and south end, with a series of stepped terraces through the connection, and a 'parasol' like structure to create weather protection above the connection. The intent of the parasol would be to provide visual interest and diffuse light penetration, as well as weather protection.

The 'social spaces' such as meeting rooms and break rooms could be located at the edges of the site to activate the sidewalks on adjacent street frontages, in addition to retail street frontage on Westlake Ave N. Building entries would be located on the street frontages and in the mid-block connection. The applicant noted that 9th Ave N may be set back at the ground floor to provide more pedestrian areas and opportunity for differentiated treatment at the sidewalk level.

Clarification: while the EDG packet mentions potential phasing, the proposed development doesn't involve a phasing plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 8 members of the public signed in at this Early Design Review meeting. Comments and questions included the following:

- Support for the alley and the pedestrian connection to break down the scale of the building.
- The lobby size should be the minimum necessary to function, because these spaces are mostly empty and don't provide human activity for the street level; would rather see cubicles or any activity rather than empty lobby space.
- Would like to see the two buildings have a different architectural character to break down the scale.
- The west façade should be visually broken up.
- Westlake is an important street for the neighborhood and a curb cut/alley entry may be better on 9th Ave N due to lack of activity.
- Retail could be difficult on 9th Ave N, if that's considered.
- The building is blocky; the design should include shaping of the mass. Setting back the ground floor may help, as well as articulation, and shaping of the corners. Focus on the pedestrian perspective.

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.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE:

- 1. Preferred massing option:** (A-1, B-1, D-8)
 - The Board noted that the analysis essentially includes only one option, since it's the one related to the proposed alley vacation. The other options don't relate to the proposed alley vacation configuration.
 - Guidance: The Board was satisfied with the preferred massing option, but the alley exit to Westlake should be designed for pedestrian safety and activation of the Westlake Ave street frontage.
- 2. Alley exit at Westlake:**
 - At the Recommendation meeting, the applicant will need to demonstrate adequate vehicular exiting at alley exit to Westlake and create pedestrian safety (mirrors, paving changes, etc.) (A-4, A-8, D-8)
 - The Westlake street frontage should be designed to maximize human activity, retail street frontage, and pedestrian safety (A-2, A-4)
- 3. 9th Ave N frontage:**
 - The design of this façade needs to include significant design moves to break down the appearance of the long façade and to respond to the human scale. (B-1, A-4, C-3)
 - This street frontage should be designed to enhance human activity at the street level. The applicant needs to clearly demonstrate how the proposed street level building program on 9th Ave N will meet this guidance. (A-4)

4. The mid-block crossing:

- The location and design should be designed to respond to the UW mid-block crossing to the west. (A-2, C-1, D-1)
- The Board would like to see a lighting plan at Recommendation stage, demonstrating the connection will be safe, well lit, and include maximum natural lighting with supplementary lighting strategies as needed. (D-1, D-7, D-10)
- Orientation of retail to the pedestrian connection is problematic; consider using the retail spaces to activate the street frontages and draw people into the mid-block crossing. (A-2, A-4, D-1)
- The corners of the building adjacent to the west end of the crossing should be eroded to enhance the connection with the UW Medicine mid-block crossing to the west. Consider transparent corners in this location. (A-4, D-1)
- The crossing should be designed to clearly appear public and not a private courtyard. (A-4, D-1)
- Design the connection to minimize wind tunnel effects and maximize pedestrian comfort. (D-1)

5. North façade on Mercer St:

- The Board noted this façade appears potentially problematic, due to the retail entries fronting on the pedestrian connection and the building turning its back on Mercer St. (A-3, D-1)
- The Mercer St façade should include a visible major pedestrian entry. (A-3, D-1)
- The use at that façade of meeting rooms is also potentially problematic, since these spaces are often unoccupied. The applicant should demonstrate how the street level facades will encourage an activated street frontage on Mercer St. (A-4)
- The design of this façade needs to include significant design moves to break down the appearance of the long façade and to create human scale. (B-1, A-4, C-3)

At the Recommendation meeting, the applicant should provide the following additional information:

- Show Mercer Street improvements and crosswalks adjacent to this site which are planned for Westlake Ave N and Mercer Street. (C-1, D-1)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The Board identified the following Citywide Design Guidelines of highest priority for this project.

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

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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Encourage provision of “outlooks and overlooks” for the public to view the lake and cityscapes. Examples include provision of public plazas and/or other public open spaces and changing the form or facade setbacks of the building to enhance opportunities for views.
- Minimize shadow impacts to Cascade Park.
- New development is encouraged to take advantage of site configuration to accomplish sustainability goals. The Board is generally willing to recommend departures from development standards if they are needed to achieve sustainable design. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design* (LEED) manual which provides additional information. Examples include:
 - Solar orientation
 - Storm water run-off, detention and filtration systems
 - Sustainable landscaping
 - Versatile building design for entire building life cycle

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

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

The vision for street level uses in South Lake Union is a completed network of sidewalks that successfully accommodate pedestrians. Streetscape compatibility is a high priority of the neighborhood with redevelopment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming and open to the general public.

- Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities, such as: tree grates; benches; lighting.
- Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Where appropriate, consider a reduction in the required amount of commercial and retail space at the ground level, such as in transition zones between commercial and residential areas. Place retail in areas that are conducive to the use and will be successful.
- Where appropriate, configure retail space so that it can spill-out onto the sidewalk (retaining six feet for pedestrian movement, where the sidewalk is sufficiently wide).

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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.
- Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.
- Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.
- Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.
- Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.
- Create businesses and community activity clusters through co-location of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.
- Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.

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.

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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through building placement, scale and details with specific attention to regional transportation corridors such as Mercer, Aurora, Fairview and Westlake. These locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements.
- Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.
- Relate proportions of buildings to the width and scale of the street.
- Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that relate to the existing structures or existing pattern of development in the vicinity.
- Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as: landscaping; trellis; complementary materials; detailing; accent trim.

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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Support the existing fine-grained character of the neighborhood with a mix of building styles.
- Re-use and preserve important buildings and landmarks when possible.
- Expose historic signs and vintage advertising on buildings where possible.
- Respond to the history and character in the adjacent vicinity in terms of patterns, style, and scale. Encourage historic character to be revealed and reclaimed, for example through use of community artifacts, and historic materials, forms and textures.
- Respond to the working class, maritime, commercial and industrial character of the Waterfront and Westlake areas. Examples of elements to consider include: window detail patterns; open bay doors; sloped roofs.
- Respond to the unique, grass roots, sustainable character of the Cascade neighborhood. Examples of elements to consider include: community artwork; edible gardens; water filtration systems that serve as pedestrian amenities; gutters that support greenery.

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

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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm, i.e. the transition zone between private property and the public right of way. The Board is generally willing to consider a departure in open space requirements if the project proponent provides an acceptable plan for features such as: curb bulbs adjacent to active retail spaces where they are not interfering with primary corridors that are designated for high levels of traffic flow; pedestrian-oriented street lighting; street furniture.

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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18-hour public activity. Methods to consider are: enhanced pedestrian and street lighting; well- designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street; police horse tie-up locations for routine patrols and larger event assistance.

D-8 Treatment of Alleys. The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.

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.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

No departures were requested at the Early Design Guidance Meeting.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forwards to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.