



# City of Seattle

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



## FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE QUEEN ANNE/ MAGNOLIA (WEST) DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012560 and 3012563

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

Applicant: Architect ZGF; Applicant Jodi Patterson O’Hare for City Investors LLC

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, January 16, 2013

Board Members Present: David Delfs (Chair)  
Mindy Black  
Jill Kurfirst

Board Members Absent: Jacob Connell  
Magda Hogness  
Lipika Mukerji

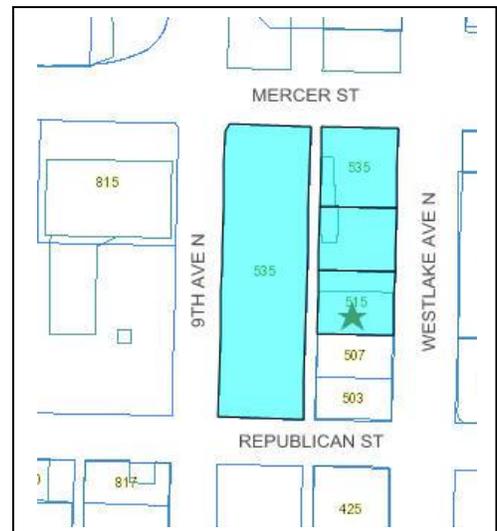
DPD Staff Present: Lisa Rutzick, substituting for Shelley Bolser

### 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 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 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 proposal includes two six-story buildings separated by a mid-block pedestrian crossing, including a total of 377,000 square feet of office and 15,000 square feet of retail, with 534 parking stalls below grade.

<b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: June 6, 2012</b>
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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](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](mailto: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 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue N, as well as pedestrian and streetcar activity functions 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 roof structure between the north and south buildings 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 does not 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 9<sup>th</sup> Ave N due to lack of activity.
- Retail could be difficult on 9<sup>th</sup> 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.

<p><b>INITIAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: November 7, 2012</b></p>
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The packet includes materials presented at the Recommendation meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3012560 and 3012563) at this website: [http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Project\\_Reviews/Reports/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

or contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

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The applicant noted that the proposed street level materials include wood and corten steel for greater visual interest, and the upper levels include precast concrete, metal, and glass curtain wall. EDG The floor plan has been modified since the EDG to provide retail at the northwest and northeast corners to activate the street frontages. The southeast corner is anticipated to include office related uses such as a dining room for employees. The mid-block connection bridges have been reduced since EDG, to be two stories tall instead of three stories tall. This allows an extra story of clearance between the mid-block connection walking surface and the bridges above.

Several 3.5-4" caliper trees would be used at the inset area on the north frontage to soften and create a visual break in the façade. A rooftop garden would be located on the south building.

Trash and recycling would be located beneath a building overhang at the proposed new alley.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- A mid-block crosswalk should connect the mid-block crossing at this site to the mid-block crossing on the block to the west.
  - DPD clarified that this is within the purview of Seattle Department of Transportation. The Board can offer opinions, but they can't recommend any conditions related to this item.
- If a mid-block crosswalk is not provided, the landscape plan should be designed to discourage people from crossing 9<sup>th</sup> Ave N mid-block.
- Appreciation for the proposed design of the street level planting, the mid-block connection design, and the design's responsiveness to nearby context.

### **FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: January 16, 2013**

The presentation and materials shown in the November 7, 2012 Recommendation meeting did not include the request for several required departures. Therefore, an additional Recommendation meeting was required to present the departures to the Design Review Board for recommendation.

The packet includes materials presented at the Recommendation meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3012560 and 3012563) at this website: [http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Project\\_Reviews/Reports/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

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## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- No public comment was offered at this meeting.

### **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 (JUNE 6, 2012):**

1. **Preferred massing option:** (A-1, B-1, D-8)
  - a. 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.
  - b. 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:**
  - a. 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)
  - b. The Westlake street frontage should be designed to maximize human activity, retail street frontage, and pedestrian safety (A-2, A-4)
3. **9<sup>th</sup> Ave N frontage:**
  - a. 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)
  - b. 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 9<sup>th</sup> Ave N will meet this guidance. (A-4)
4. **The mid-block crossing:**
  - a. The location and design should be designed to respond to the UW mid-block crossing to the west. (A-2, C-1, D-1)
  - b. 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)
  - c. 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)
  - d. 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)
  - e. The crossing should be designed to clearly appear public and not a private courtyard. (A-4, D-1)
  - f. Design the connection to minimize wind tunnel effects and maximize pedestrian comfort. (D-1)
5. **North façade on Mercer St:**
  - a. 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)
  - b. The Mercer St façade should include a visible major pedestrian entry. (A-3, D-1)

- c. 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)
- d. 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)

**INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS (NOVEMBER 7, 2012):**

**1. Alley exit at Westlake:**

- a. The Board recommended a condition to modify the design of the proposal near the alley exit at Westlake, through mirrors mounted on the building, visual alert systems for vehicles approaching the sidewalk from the alley, or other design techniques to increase pedestrian safety. (A-4, A-8, D-8)
- b. The Board would support placement of a bollard, textured paving, a stop sign, a speed bump or other technique to improve pedestrian safety at the south edge of the alley adjacent to Westlake Ave N. The Board was particularly concerned about the right-out exiting traffic, and the potential impact to pedestrian safety. The Board noted that the design of the alley is within the purview of SDOT, and they cannot recommend Design Review conditions for this item. (A-4, A-8, D-8)

**2. 9<sup>th</sup> Ave N (west) and Mercer Street (north) facades:** (B-1, A-4, C-3)

- a. The Board appreciated the response and the demonstration of how the massing responds to context.
- b. The Board supported the additional break in the façade (the option shown in the model and graphics of the presentation).
- c. The Board noted that the solar screens and fins help to further articulate the façade.
- d. The Board appreciated the use of framing to create pedestrian scale at the northwest corner, where the retail corner includes taller ceiling heights.

**3. The mid-block crossing:** (A-2, C-1, D-1, D-7)

- a. The Board was satisfied with the design of the mid-block crossing.
- b. The Board supported a crosswalk between this site and the mid-block crossing to the west, but noted that this is within the purview of Seattle Department of Transportation.

**4. Materials:**

- a. The Board was concerned that the NE and SE corners could appear monolithic with the spandrel in the same tone as the vision glass, but noted that sunshades on the south and west will help to articulate the glassy areas. The Board was satisfied with the proposed material palette. (B-1, C-2, C-3)
- b. The Board noted the weathered copper provides a patina that helps to break down the mass, and the painted finishes should only be used in the framing or field panels. (B-1, C-2, C-3)

## **FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS (JANUARY 16, 2013):**

The Board discussed the proposed departures and recommended the departures and conditions, as described, following the Design Review Guidelines section.

### **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**

The Board’s recommendation on the requested departures 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 departures.

- 1. General Façade Requirements (23.48.014.C):** The Code requires a maximum setback of 0’ for at least 70% of the façade length on Class 1 Pedestrian Streets (Westlake Ave N). The applicant proposes to place 13.5% of the façade length at the property line (0’) facing Westlake Ave N.

This departure would provide an overall design that would better meet the intent of Design Review Guidelines A-2, A-4, C-3, and D-1 by enhancing the mid-block pedestrian connection, increasing pedestrian safety near the alley exit, and providing additional sidewalk area near the building entry, the streetcar stop and retail spaces allowing for retail overflow space.

The Board unanimously recommended that DPD grant the departure, subject to the following condition:

*If the proposed nana-doors shown along the retail spaces along Westlake Ave North are eliminated due to the retail tenant build-out, then large, transparent glass windows should be provided along with pedestrian seating, bike racks and/or other pedestrian amenities.*

- 2. General Façade Requirements (23.48.014.D):** The Code requires a maximum street-level setback of 12' for structures not located on Class 1 Pedestrian streets, with landscaping in the area of setback (Mercer Street, 9th Avenue North, and Republican Street). The applicant proposes to exceed the 12' set back maximum in various areas on these three street frontages.

This departure would provide an overall design that would better meet the intent of Design Review Guidelines A-1, A-2, A-4, C-3, and D-1 by encouraging human activity near building entries and the mid-block connection, providing usable pedestrian areas at grade, and creating visual interest with modulation.

The Board was pleased with the enhanced transparency and access created by the increased setbacks and unanimously recommended that DPD grant the requested departure.

- 3. Blank Façade Limits (23.48.018.B.2):** The Code limits blank facades to 15' wide on Class 1 (Westlake Ave N) and Class 2 (Mercer and Republican) streets, unless the façade is enhanced with architectural detailing, artwork, landscaping, or other similar features. The applicant proposes a 27' wide blank façade on Republican Street.

This Board disagreed that the proposed wall treatment would provide sufficient visual interest, particularly at the pedestrian level. Therefore, per the Design Guidelines that address the issues of Human Activity (A-4) and Blank Walls (D-2) the Board unanimously recommended in favor of the proposed departure subject to the following condition:

*The section of blank wall along the south façade (Republican Street) should include artwork that provides visual interest and relief at eye level to activate the pedestrian experience.*

- 4. Screening and Landscaping (23.48.024.A.2):** The Code requires a maximum of 30% hardscape in required landscape areas. The applicant proposes to exceed the maximum hardscape in landscaped setbacks on Mercer St (48% hardscape), 9th Ave N (60.5% hardscape), and Republican St (51% hardscape). The varied setbacks and areas of landscaping are documented on the Final Recommendation packet.

This departure would provide an overall design that would better meet the intent of Design Review Guideline A-4, D-1 and E-2 by providing wider sidewalks and covered pedestrian areas near building entries, retail uses and streetcar stop.

The Board agreed that the southwest corner of the site would benefit from further activation and pedestrian amenities given the desirable solar exposure of this location and unanimously recommended that DPD grant the departure, subject to the following condition:

*The southwest corner of the site should include additional pedestrian seating.*

## **BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

**The recommendation summarized below was based on the design review packet dated January 16, 2013, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the January 16, 2013 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, the three Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and departures, with the following recommended conditions:**

1. If the proposed nana-doors shown along the retail spaces along Westlake Ave North are eliminated due to the retail tenant build-out, then large, transparent glass windows shall be provided along with pedestrian seating, bike racks and/or other pedestrian amenities. (A-2, A-4, C-3, D-1)
2. The section of blank wall along the south façade (Republican Street) shall include artwork that provides visual interest and relief at eye level to activate the pedestrian experience. (A-4, D-2)
3. The southwest corner of the site shall include additional pedestrian seating. (A-4, D-1, E-2)