



City of Seattle

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

**FINAL RECOMMENDATION
OF
THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
September 5, 2012**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3012732

Address: 1818 Fairview Avenue E.

Applicant: Brad Hinthorne, Perkins+Will, for Washington Real Estate Holdings LLC

Board Members Present: Wolf Saar (Chair)
Chip Wall
Bo Zhang (substitute)
Chip Wall

Board members absent: Dawn Bushnaq
Ric Cochrane
Lisa Picard

Land Use Planner present: Michael Dorcy

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:The Eastlake/South Lake Union development site is bounded by Fairview Avenue E. on the west, partially by Eastlake Avenue E. on the east, by unopened E. Howe Street to the north and E. Blaine Street on the south. The development site is irregular in shape, with most of the Eastlake Avenue E. property line a ragged line running southeast between E. Howe Street and a point where it intersects a trapezoidal- shaped lot bounded on the East by Eastlake Avenue E., on the south by E. Blaine Street, and on the west by Fairview Avenue E. The Eastlake Avenue E. flares to the east slightly as it runs from north to south. The overall site measures approximately 300 feet in the north/south direction and varies between 152 and 330 feet in the east/west direction. The site comprises approximately 75,500 square feet of land. A portion of the site at the north end is a mapped steep slope area.



There have been two structures and a portion of a third structure located on the site. The principal on-site structures were both removed within the past year. The southwest corner of the site lies within the Urban Maritime Shoreline environment. The development site is zoned C1-40.

The proposed development is for a 4 story office/lab building, containing approximately 197,000 square feet, with 3,000 square feet of commercial /retail space to be located at the southeast corner of the site. Mostly below-grade parking for approximately 200 vehicles will be located within the structure. . The parking garage would take access from Fairview Avenue E. . Project work would include landscape and pedestrian improvements primarily along E. Blaine Street and Fairview Avenue E.

ARCHITECTS' PRESENTATION

Developments in the design since the Early Design Guidance meeting were briefly presented to the Board. The façade treatments of the upper two stories opened the building to substantial views of Lake Union. The expansive glazing on these upper floors were composed both to provide shade and orient views from the building. A significant step had been taken to allow the atrium feature to energize the entire structure, as the Board had advised at the EDG meeting. The glazing of the atrium had been allowed to extend all the way to the sidewalk pedestrian level and to appear to protrude from the rest of the structure. The lobby had been relocated from the southeast corner to the atrium, strengthening its importance and allowing it to become vibrant active space.

A major change from the earlier presentation of the building was the relocation of the garage and loading entries from E. Blaine Street to the northwest corner of the site. Accompanying that move is the relocation of all service elements to the perimeter of the site, allowing a design that embraces the atrium as the heart of the building. The proposed scheme still allows the structure to engage Eastlake Avenue E. at its southeast corner, the intersection of E. Blaine Street and Eastlake Avenue E., where retail space is proposed

The landscape architect for the design team then provided details for a variety of streetscape and pedestrian pathway amenities calculated to generate a friendly and lively environment at the perimeter of the site.

The landscaping plan , it was explained, in response to Guideline E-3, “landscape design to address special site conditions,” was premised conceptually on an idealized or “abstracted” pre-development condition at the site. The choice of plant materials and earth forms along E. Blaine Street, including swales for stormwater capture, would convey an “abstracted wetlands”; that along Fairview Avenue E. would convey a sense of an “abstracted bluff meadow,” with feather grasses and stands of white Himalayan birch trees; the higher land along Eastlake Avenue E. would convey an “abstracted bluff forest,” with both trees and an understory of ferns.”

Upon completion of the design team’s presentation, the Board asked the team questions to clarify points of the presentation. Among them:

- Was SPU’s refusal to entertain any alternatives to the location of its generator above ground within the E. Blaine Street right-of-way related to cost? Ans.: No. The developers

had offered to relocate it with the building or elsewhere in the right-of-way at their expense.

- Please provide some greater clarity regarding what is happening on the north façade.
- Along Fairview Avenue, will there be visibility into the building? Ans. Yes, particularly into the lab spaces.
- What kind of retail space is proposed at Eastlake Avenue E.? Ans. Coffee shop or restaurant, with outdoor patio space aligned with entry and corner of E. Blaine and Eastlake Avenue.
- What is the architectural material palette for various internal and external parts of the building? Resp. Actual material samples, including glass, internal wood materials, cladding materials and materials for external shades were distributed and examined by Board members (see p.17, packet distributed for Board members, for representations of building materials).

Following the architect's presentation and clarifying questions, the Board then elicited comments from members of the public attending the meeting.

Public Comments:

Seven members of the public signed in to become parties of record at the meeting. Comments solicited from the public included the following:

- Existing parking in the Fairview Avenue E. and E. Blaine St. rights-of-way would be adversely affected by the proposed development on the site and competition for available parking spaces already acute in the area.
- A spokesperson for "Friends of Eastlake" stressed the potential of unopened E. Howe Street for connecting Capital Hill with Lake Union and told of an ongoing effort to create a pedestrian pathway from Eastlake Avenue E. to Fairview Avenue E. The Board was asked to encourage the E. Howe connection and to pay close attention to the north façade of the proposed building as it would interface with that pedestrian pathway.

The Board chair, while acknowledging the Board's sensitivity to the disruption and impacts to parking conditions and the desirability of pedestrian improvements within the E. Howe right-of-way, clarified for the public its own role in the recommendation of the building on-site, and the fact that right-of-way changes and improvements were beyond its purview and mission.

Board's Deliberations:

At the Early Design Guidance meeting the Board had identified three main issues that needed to be satisfactorily addressed by the development team as the project proceeded to full design development:

- Engaging the lake with the Fairview facade
- Allowing the atrium to energize more of the structure, including the western portion

- Not allowing the “diagram” of the preferred scheme, the central, energizing atrium feature, to get lost in the massing and architectural expression at the perimeter of the building.

The Board indicated their general satisfaction and pleasure with the moves taken by the design team to address the above issues, Specific elements of the resulting design were then referenced in the discussion regarding the recommendation of requested departures from development standards for the project.

Design Departures

Four departures from development standards had been identified by the design team:

1. To allow a floor- to- floor height of 17 feet in the trash loading area. SMC 23. Xxx would require a floor-to-floor height of 21 feet.
2. To allow a blank portion of the ground level façade along Fairview Avenue E. to exceed the maximum allowable width of SMC 23.xxxxx. The bland section of façade measures xxx feet in width.
3. To allow a blank portion of the north façade to exceed the maximum of 20 feet in width (SMC 23.xxxx). The proposed section of façade would be xxx in width.
4. To allow the required transparency along the north façade to be less than the required xxxx (SMC 23. Xxxx)

Regarding the first departure, the Board members acknowledge their satisfaction with the design team’s removal of any loading off E. Blaine Street, as the Board had requested at the EDG meeting. Having but a single garage entry as now proposed and locating the garbage/trash storage totally within the structure were the right moves and in keeping with Guideline C-2, providing for a much more unified building and a cohesive design.

As the Board had requested, the lower level of the Fairview Avenue E. had been opened up to Lake Union. The blank façade portion, accommodating loading and parking , was set well back from the curb line and, the Board agreed, amply landscaped . The design allowed for essential internal functions to be facilitated while allowing for even greater openness to the Lake at the upper levels, and provided for a clarity of architectural concept and cohesive design as the Board had directed at the EDG meeting.

Discussion regarding departures two and three

Within the discussion surrounding the first question, Board comments included the following: “the expression along Fairview is just a blank wall,” “too monolithic,” “too much wall”; “What if the atrium faced to the west?” Discussing the atrium, concerns were expressed regarding the powerful conceptual idea of the atrium getting lost, especially as it energized the overall external organization and expression of the building. As a powerful idea in organizing the internal parts of the building, it would be a shame if the atrium became too capsulized as perceived from outside the building and lost as the design engine it potentially was.

Since the structure would not be allowed to move eastwards to engage Eastlake Avenue N. except for a small portion of ton the southeast corner where the property line actually abutted the

right-of-way, there need to be a strong statement at the corner to compensate for the small amount of frontage on Eastlake.

Don't allow the needs for loading zones and spaces override what should be more broadly based design decisions.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting there was some discussion regarding a decision already made by Seattle Public Utilities to locate a standby generator for pumps related to the overflow sewer system in E. Blaine Street. The generator had been designed to rest above ground in the right-of-way just north of the curb on Blaine, without regard for any development to occur on the subject site. The applicants noted that they had been unsuccessful in requests to underground the generator or to move it to accommodate the design of the proposed structure. The Board noted that while they appreciated the need for the facility, SPU plans for the location of the generator were unfortunate. Ideally they would like "to see it disappear." Short of that they strongly supported any attempt to underground the facility or at the very least to take into account the impending development at the subject site and adjust the location of the public facility to more felicitously accommodate the functional and aesthetic needs of the private development site.

At this meeting the applicants reported that discussions with SPU had been to no avail, that offers had been made to relocate the generator within the proposed structure or elsewhere in the right-of-way at the applicants' expense. Offers to underground the facility were likewise rejected with, according to the applicants, no rationale being offered.

The Board desired to go on record, emphatically reiterating their comments from the earlier meeting, noting that the seemingly arbitrary decision to locate the generator within the E. Blaine Street right-of-way appeared to them to be devoid of any aesthetic sensitivity or adherence to established urban design principles, disdainful of pedestrian safety and comfort, and denigrating of the notion of a "public" utility.

The applicants were urged to continue a dialog aimed at relocating the generator and to elicit the Land Use planner's assistance in this endeavor. Failing any movement away from the current intransigent status quo, the applicants were urged to approach the generator as an unattractive and intractable object needing a landscape design solution calculated to diminish its perceptible presence.

This guideline reflects the Board's support of the overall massing of the preferred scheme, the importance of the atrium in the composition and comments regarding the orientation of the atrium and the workings of the inside/outside of the atrium and the perception of the atrium, both from the inside and the outside of the structure.

C. Architectural Elements and Material

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'

Develop a well-portioned 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. This guideline expresses the Board's concern that the articulation of the building (external, primarily) should not hide the conceptual diagram that gives the building its strength and coherency.

C-3 Human Scale

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

The Board considers the activation of each of the entrances at each of the southern corners important to the success of the project. A big challenge will be to provide for the parking and loading without introducing elements that run counter to providing for a desirable human scale.

D. Pedestrian Environment

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.

Thoroughly explore a variety of treatments of the street-level façade and landscaping along Fairview Avenue E. The façade should be designed so as not to be without character or pedestrian amenity or interest.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas

Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible.

Utilities and service spaces needed to find their rightful hierarchical space in the scheme of things.

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 the building. Blank walls should be avoided.

The Board thought that although the development of the building entry at the southwest corner and the retail space at the southeast corner were moves in the right direction for engaging the street corners, the treatment of the retail space in particular was “too heavy,” given the amount of area actually facing onto Eastlake. Likewise the west façade needed to engage the Lake in a more pronounced way.

E. Landscaping

E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions

The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions...view corridors...and off-site conditions....

The landscape architect for the design team then provided details for a variety of streetscape and pedestrian pathway amenities calculated to generate a friendly and lively environment at the perimeter of the site.

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should be designed with the goal of realizing the prioritized guidelines, should soften the edge conditions where appropriate, and should contribute to an attractive and usable interior open space, courtyard area. The design should incorporate specific treatments to provide for attractiveness and an allure to the pedestrian through-site pathway and establish a genuine neighborhood amenity. The Board would expect to see a comprehensive Landscape Plan, one that treats not only the on-site open space but the streets’ edges as well.

Departures from Development Standards:

The applicants requested four design departures at the Recommendation meeting.

It is the expectation of the Design Review Board and DPD that the applicant proceed to further design development as noted in the discussion cited above, namely, that the applicants would work with the DPD planner to:

1. expand the transparency along the north (E. Howe Street right-of-way) façade so as to allow for a better interface between building and future improved pedestrian pathway

between Eastlake Avenue E. and Fairview Avenue E. when such a pathway becomes feasible;

2. continue to negotiate with City of Seattle Public Utilities to relocate the generator located within the E. Blaine Street right-of-way, and, failing that, develop a landscape plan that would attempt to ameliorate and mitigate the visual and actual intrusiveness of the generator were it to remain as disruptively located.