



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013130

Address: 1099 Stewart St and 1050 Howell St

Applicant: Kristen Jensen of Touchstone

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, April 24, 2012

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

DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMC 340/290-400

Nearby Zones: (North) DMC 240/290-400
(South) DMC 340/290-400
(East) DMC 340/290-400
(West) DMC 340/290-400

Lot Area: 42,360 square foot, relatively flat rectangular site



Current Development: The existing site includes a surface parking lot, a two-story masonry building (built 1924), a one-story masonry building (built 1920), and a one-story parking structure (built 1950)

Access: Existing vehicular access is via curb cuts at Boren Ave and Howell St, and via the alley. Existing pedestrian access to the buildings is via Boren Ave and Stewart St.

Beginning at Howell and Terry, the site is bracketed by the former Regence Blue Shield Building, currently the site of Seattle Vault Self Storage Building. The waffle slab structure has a cast in place concrete exterior. The site includes an issued MUP for a 30 story building with retail at the streetscape and automobile drop off for the project on the alley.

Surrounding Development: East of the alley the site is defined by a surface parking lot at the corner of Howell and Boren. Moving North away from Howell, a partially subterranean, former service station is now used as a parking deck. Another surface parking lot occupies the middle of the block.

An older two-story building occupies the corner of Stewart and Boren, which includes a printing shop on the street level and a dance studio on the second level. Between this corner and the alley a single story retail building houses a former fitness facility.

At the corner of Stewart and Terry, the site is bordered by The Williamsburg Apartments, an older three level building.

ECAs: None

The site is located in the Denny Triangle area north of downtown in a pedestrian-oriented area with frequent transit service. The Convention Center and shopping areas are located to the southeast. The Convention Center transit tunnel entry is located two blocks to the southeast.

Neighborhood Character: To the north and west are a mix of older office buildings, limited residential development, and several surface parking lots. To the west and southwest are a number of newer developments including residential mixed-use, medical office, and other commercial structures.

Boren Avenue is a busy arterial carrying vehicles between South Lake Union and Capitol Hill. Stewart Street is a street heavily used by pedestrians, transit, and cars to access the Downtown core. Howell St includes moderate levels of vehicular traffic.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a 13-story, 445,000 sq. ft. structure with office, retail, hotel and parking for 300 vehicles located below grade. The office portion of the structure would include an 11 story tower with 300,000 square feet of technology office. The hotel portion would be 14 stories tall with approximately 222 rooms. The preferred option includes a proposed curb cut from Boren Avenue and vehicular access from the alley.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: April 24, 2012

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The EDG packet includes materials presented at the EDG meeting, and is available online by entering the project number at this website:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp.

or contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Address: Public Resource Center

700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98124

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

Additional information was provided in response to DPD direction to include an option with the hotel use on Stewart St. DPD requested this information as a possible solution to provide a drop off area adjacent to the hotel use, which is a goal of the applicant's. The response asserted that the hotel is better sited on Howell St in response to nearby hotels, shopping, and the Convention Center. A curb cut would require a Type I modification of the Land Use Code requirements, subject to approval by DPD.

The separation between the office portion and the hotel portion would be 20' wide, but the two portions of the building would be connected with a covered structure over the 'porte cochere' vehicular entry. The separation would allow light into the porte cochere, and would allow windows on all sides of the office building.

The street level design intent is to provide a consistent streetscape experience on Boren Ave through the colonnade. The vehicular entry and curb cut could be designed as a public open space, including natural light interior to the site to visually break the office and hotel use, unique paving, and stormwater capture.

The applicant provided graphics demonstrating the proposed departures.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 15 members of the public signed in at this Early Design Review meeting. No comments were offered.

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.

Design concept

- The Board noted that the design needs to include clear separation between towers, with a visual and physical change in the colonnade to express that separation. The Board discussed stopping the colonnade above the proposed porte cochere, or pushing the colonnade back into the porte cochere as two possible solutions. Any proposed design solution should emphasize the separation between the two portions of the building and give a visual indication of the zone of interaction between pedestrians and vehicles. (B-4, C-1, C-6, E-1)
- The design of the colonnade may be a challenge as related to the building corners and the street front facades at Howell St and Stewart St. The design was unclear in showing whether the colonnade might wrap the corners and continue on these streets. The Board clarified that if it stops at the corner, a graceful architectural transition will be required. The colonnade design should relate well to pedestrian experience on each street frontage. (B-2, C-4, C-5)
- The colonnade scale of 25-35' will need careful treatment for human scale. The Board noted the height will help to maximize light and air, but the height will also present a challenge in creating a human scaled space. (B-2, B-4, C-1)
- The two uses (hotel and office) need to be expressed individually in the building skin, landscaping, lighting, etc. (B-4, C-2, C-3)
- The office use and the hotel use should include vertical differences as well as façade modulation. The Board noted that the two portions of the structure are shown at the same height, but a stepped roofline may emphasize the modulation better. The massing should create a transition between the taller structures to the southwest and the lower structures to the north and east. (B-4)
- The overall design concept should express Downtown urban character, in spite of the lower height and wider mass. (B-1)
- The applicant should work to design a building to set a positive context for this area. There are few examples of nearby context that provide design direction for newer development, aside from the Aspira building. (B-1, D-2, D-3, D-4, D-5)
- The design of the rooftop and top of the building in the skyline is important, because it is on the leading edge of taller buildings to the west and southwest. The rooftop will be visible from the taller buildings, and the proposed building will be visible as the edge of this skyline. (A-1, A-2)

Driveway Entry/Curb Cut Design

- If a curb cut is approved by DPD, the design of the curb cut needs careful design attention to enhance pedestrian safety and visual interest. (C-1,E-1)
- The design of the curb cut needs to create a transition between the two portions of the building and tie those together. The design of the curb cut and porte cochere also needs to relate to the colonnade design (see Design concept comments).

The Board identified the following 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-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.**
- A-2 Enhance the Skyline. Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline.**
- 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.**
- 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.**
- 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.**
- 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.**
- C-2 Design Facades of Many Scales. Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and materials compositions that refer to the scale of human activities contained within. Building facades should be composed of elements scaled to promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation.**
- C-3 Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades. Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.**
- C-4 Reinforce Building Entries. To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce the building’s entry.**
- 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.**
- 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.**

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

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:

- 1. Façade Modulation (23.49.058A):** The Code requires structures that are 85’-160’ tall and within 15’ of the street lot line to have unmodulated walls that are no more than 155’ long. The applicant proposes a 163’ long unmodulated wall on Boren St, with a setback of 3’ from the lot line. Instead of providing one upper corner of modulation in the building wall to meet the Code requirement, the applicant proposes to bring the modulation from 34’ to the top of the building, rather than from 85’ to the top of the building. This modulation is proposed in the area beyond the 163’ unmodulated length.

The Board indicated they would be willing to consider this departure, provided that the modulation relates to the overall building massing, is deeper than 2’ or emphasized with a change in materials, assists in creating an ‘office’ identity and a ‘hotel’ identity for the applicable portions of the building, and the length of unmodulated wall is reduced. The Board specified the following:

- The modulation should relate to the design concept (see Design concept comments).

- A façade treatment and articulation expressing the difference between the office and hotel portions (1/3 to 2/3 is a proportional example) could be a successful rationale for modulation.
- The proposed 2' depth of modulation should be increased, or accented by material changes.
- The width of unmodulated section should be narrowed, in order to provide a better design than the code required modulation.
- The Board pointed out the Alternative 2 vignette in the EDG packet as an example of materials used to enhance modulation.

2. Loading Berth Requirements (23.54.035): The Code requires 5 loading berths with minimum lengths of 35' each. The applicant proposes 2 loading berths that measure 35' long, and one loading berth that measures 25' long.

The Board indicated that they need more information describing departure and how it better meets the Design Review Guidelines at the Recommendation 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.