City of Seattle

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

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE
DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

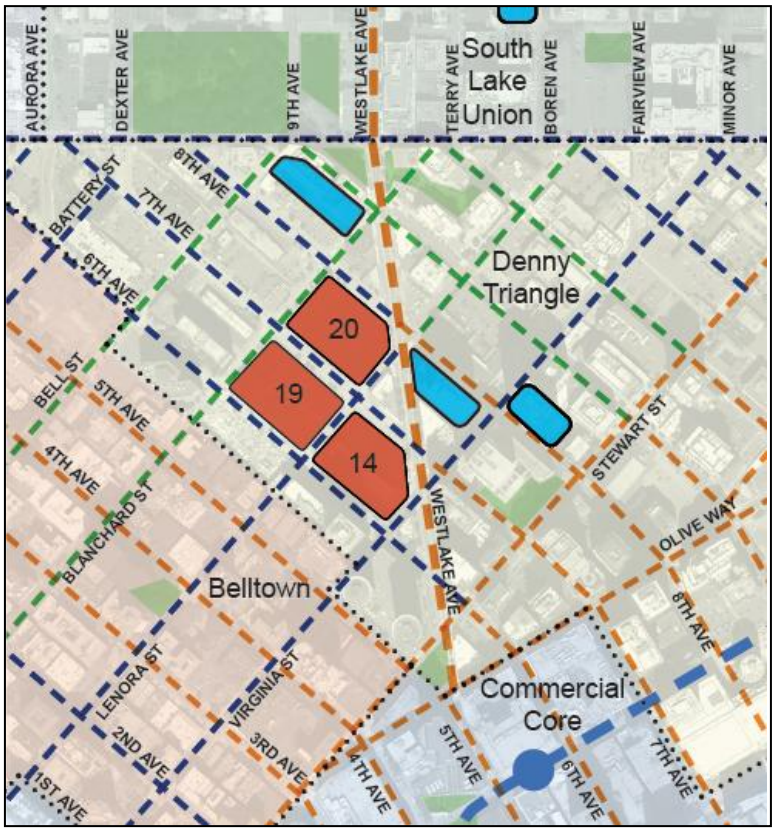
Project Number:	3013151/3013153/3013154
Address:	2021, 2100 and 2101 Seventh Avenue
Applicant:	John Savo, NBBJ for Amazon
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, March 27, 2012
Board Members Present:	Gabe Grant (Chair) Matthew Albores Pragnesh Parikh Brian Scott
Board Members Absent:	Sherri Olson
DPD Staff Present:	Lisa Rutzick

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone:	DOC 2 500/300-500
Nearby Zones:	North: DMC 340/290-400 South: DOC 2 500/300-500 East: DMC 240/290-400 West: DMC 240/290-400
Lot Area:	Block 14 72,634 SF Block 19 77,760 SF Block 20 76,748 SF

While the majority of the ground plane on each the 3 blocks is currently serving as a surface parking lot, there is one existing building on each block that will be demolished. The buildings to be demolished are the four-story Sixth Avenue Inn on Block 14, the King Kat Theater on Block 19 and the low-rise building occupied by Toyota of Seattle on Block 20.

Current Development:



Access: Each block includes an alley and is bound by streets on all four sides.

Surrounding Development: Variety of surface parking lots, office and residential buildings.

Neighborhood Character:	The development site is located within the Denny Triangle Urban Center. The three blocks are contained within a triangle bounded by Westlake Avenue to the east, 6th Avenue to the southwest and Blanchard Street to the northwest. The site has convenient to public transportation including light rail, bus and streetcar, and easily accessed by autos, cyclists and pedestrians. The site is within three city blocks from Westlake Center and the Westlake Station of the downtown tunnel carrying metro bus and light rail traffic. The streetcar line runs along Westlake Avenue which borders two of the three blocks. The streetcar stops near the epicenter of the site at the intersection of Westlake and 7th Avenues. Regular bus service is provided along Virginia and Stewart Streets and 3rd and 5th Avenues. With dedicated bike lanes in both directions, 7th Avenue is a primary bike corridor in and out of downtown Seattle and bike traffic criss-crosses the neighborhood on multiple streets, including Blanchard and Virginia Streets as well as 6th Avenue. The site is also accessible to I-5 via Stewart and Olive Streets and to SR99 via 6th and 7th Avenues. When the new SR-99 project is constructed, northbound traffic on SR99 will be able to exit onto Republican Street. Access to North bound SR-99 will be from Aurora Avenue and South bound via Sixth Avenue. The building typology in this area is varied, with a combination of low to high-rise commercial, office and residential buildings of varying ages, older single family structure, older single story commercial development, and medical and office uses. Architectural character is varied. The applicant provided some examples of nearby context in the EDG packet.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: March 27, 2012

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is to apply for a Master Use Permit with a Planned Community Development (PCD) component to design and construct office buildings on three blocks in the Denny Triangle Urban Village. The development is anticipated to occur in three phases corresponding to each of the three blocks. Phase One will consist of approximately 1,034,257 sq. ft. of office building including retail and up to six levels of underground parking accommodating up to 1,074 automobiles.

Phase One will also include an approximately 40,000 GSF meeting facility, accessory to the office use, that will seat up to 2,000 people. Phases Two and Three will follow with 1,150,070 sq. ft. and 1,135,103 sq. ft. office towers respectively. Phases Two and Three will include accessory retail and up to 6 levels of underground parking in each building with up to 1,150 stalls in Phase Two and 1,135 stalls in Phase Three.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 60 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting and several comment letters were submitted. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Concerned with business practices of Amazon.
- Found it difficult to compare schemes, but encouraged treating each wall as a front and not leave a façade undersigned or as a shear wall.
- Encouraged integration of more community elements, as well as usable, public open space on the rooftops of the lower six-story buildings.
- Pleased to see proposed density and supported the solar access allowed by Option 3. Found it difficult to evaluate the hybrid alternative in terms of shadow impacts.
- Supported the proposal for urban parks. Noted that attention to wind patterns is important.
- Felt a disconnect between the proposed departures and the ground level details shown. Suggested that the next meeting include greater detail. Noted that pipeline projects should be shown in the context analysis. Encouraged consideration of some of the more unusual conditions nearby such as the Braille Library, Cornish, and the West Precinct.
- Supported the hybrid preferred option. Encouraged close examination of the retail spaces and designing for the most successful retail. Suggested that the many wide facades be differentiated and treated with different materials. Encouraged extraordinary, creative design and not a corporate appearance.
- Pleased with the proposed setbacks at street level. Encouraged integration of color and visual interest in the building materials and design – not simply use of grey and black. Suggested that the height of the three towers be differentiated. Would like more information about the Blanchard Green Street design. Supportive of a variety of usable green roofs and terraces. Noted that the design should contemplate future expansion by Amazon to the north and how connections to the north might be made.
- Incorporate public open spaces and landscaping into the project. Include open spaces for dogs. Would like to see street level pedestrian improvements.
- Encouraged the building massing to be situated towards the center of the blocks and not at the edges. Concerned with view blockage, increased traffic and construction noise. [Staff note: these issues are not within the DRB purview.]

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. **Context**. The Board was interested in better understanding the existing and future context around the subject sites.
    a. Include information showing future pipeline projects within the vicinity of the subject sites.
    b. Provide more details of the proposed massing within the existing and future skyline.
    c. Show how the proposed massing is responsive to the existing and future context.

2. **Massing**. The Board agreed that the presentation included a thorough and well-executed tower form and massing study. The Board was supportive of the preferred massing scheme.
    a. Images were shown identifying character structures in the vicinity: how might these character structures inform the design of the proposed buildings?
    b. Express how the proposed design might respond to the neighborhood context, including future pipeline projects.
    c. Massing and scale transitions between each block and within each block are critical considerations as the massing and design are further developed.

3. **Architectural Concept**: The architectural design should strive for innovative, bold and interesting design that will be highly visible on all sides.
    a. The Board noted that the proposed development should not read as a corporate campus, but instead should strive towards creating different tower/base buildings with different characters within an urban context.
    b. The proposed buildings include multiple highly visible facades, with no apparent backside and as such, all facades should be well-designed and considered with this visibility in mind. The differing characters of the abutting neighborhoods and conditions should also inform the design of these facades.

4. **Streetscape & Open Space**. The Board would like to review more information and detail regarding where the buildings meet the street (ground plane up to the first six stories).
    a. The Board expressed concern with the proposed elevated building connectors (walkways/meeting spaces) linking the towers to the lower buildings. Separation of human activity between ground level and above grade levels has the potential to limit or hinder the vitality of the ground level open spaces. The impact of the above-grade bridge elements on the ground level open spaces should be further analyzed for shadow impacts.
    b. The Board agreed that the hybrid scheme appeared to create the strongest site plan for a central open space. However, the Board would like to better understand the ground level experience and solar access on Block 20 with the preferred scheme tower placement. The solar access at ground level from Options 2 and 3 should also be shown to better analyze the impacts. Please clarify whether departures would be needed for these other two schemes. (See departure consideration for the rotated tower).
    c. The Board would like to see greater information and detail regarding the proposed auditorium building (Block 14) is needed. The design of this building

should encourage active facades; blank walls should be avoided. This building should be designed as a focal point for the intersection of the three sites.

d. The Board was supportive of the pocket park concepts and through block open spaces and would like to see greater detail regarding the activation of these open spaces by being thoughtfully located to maximize solar exposure and connectivity, as well as through programmatic efforts including artwork, retail, landscaping, furniture, lighting, signage, etc.
e. Rooftop landscaping and design is critical given the visibility of this top façade from neighboring buildings, as well as the proposed towers.
f. Elements that define the ground level open spaces should be included. The 2200 Westlake project is an example of a successful entry plaza area that includes a variety of hardscaping, landscaping, artwork, retail frontage and spillover while also accommodating a variety of pedestrian circulation routes and modes of transport.
g. A public art plan should be developed for the variety of proposed ground level open spaces.
h. The open space plan and programming for Block 19 should integrate and connect to the open spaces provided on Blocks 14 and 20.
i. The Board would like to see more information addressing a retail strategy and how this approach will inform the location of ground level retail on all three sites.
j. Emphasis on the Westlake corridor is critical as the design develops.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

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

The following guidelines have been identified as priorities *for the Recommendation phase* of the project: C-5, D-4, D-5 and D-6.

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.

A-2 **Enhance the Skyline.** Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline.

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.

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. 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.**

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.**

D. Public Amenities – Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space

D-1 **Provide Inviting & Usable Open Space. 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.**

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.**

D-6 **Design for Personal Safety & Security. Design the building and site to enhance the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.**

E. Vehicular Access & Parking – Minimizing the Adverse Impacts

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

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.**

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. **Upper Level Development (SMC 23.49.058.C):** The Code requires that the building above 240 feet be no more than 145 feet along the general north-south axis to the Avenues. The applicant proposes to rotate the tower on Block 20 to be perpendicular to Westlake Avenue and approximately 220 feet wide along the 7th and 8th Avenues

   The Board indicated an interest in better understanding the impact of solar access to the ground level with the various tower placements on Block 20.

2. **Loading Berth Requirements (SMC 23.54.035):** The Code requires a loading berth size to be 10'x35'. The applicant proposes to provide half of the loading berths at the full size and the other half at a van size (8'-6"x19'0").

   The Board indicated interest in better understanding the actual loading needs of the proposed building tenant, as well as other potential future building users.

3. **General Setbacks (SMC 23.49.056.B2.d):** The Code requires a maximum setback from street lot lines at intersections of 10 feet. The minimum distance the façade must conform to this limit is 20 feet. The applicant proposes the following in order to accommodate smaller, secondary pocket parks on each block:

   Block 14 - At the intersection of 7th Ave and Westlake, setback of 10'-24' for a distance of 50' south of the intersection.
   Block 19 - At the intersection of 8th Ave and Westlake, setback of 10'-24' for a distance of 40' south of the intersection along 8th Avenue.

   Block 20 - At the intersection of Lenora and Westlake, setback of 10'-20' for a distance of 30' south of the intersection along Lenora.

   The Board did not address the proposed departure given that they requested additional study of the ground plane and building massing at the lower levels.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should return to the Board for an additional EDG meeting.