



FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3013479

Address: 800 Columbia Street

Applicant: Jim Westcott

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, August 21, 2013

Board Members Present: Evan Bourquard (substitute)
Dawn Bushnaq
Natalie Gualy
Bo Zhang (substitute)

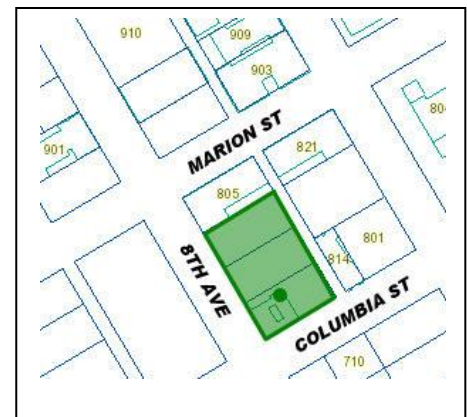
Board Members Absent: Ric Cochrane
Dan Foltz (recused)

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: High Rise (HR)

Zoning Patterns: HR zoning to the east, north and south from the site. Across Eighth Ave. the zoning changes to Neighborhood Commercial Three with a 160 foot height limit (NC3 160). NC3 forms a corridor along Madison St. Boren Ave divides much of the HR zone on First Hill from the NC zoning for the major institutions. West across I-5 zoning transition to Downtown Office Commercial (DOC).



Lot Area: 21,600 square feet. Although much of the site was graded due to the parking lot and the former office building, the site's declension begins on the east at the alley and slopes approximately 18 feet to Eighth Ave.

Current Development: Surface parking and vacant lot.

Access: Alley and Eighth Avenue.

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: The proposal site lies on the northeast corner of Eighth Ave. and Columbia St. Mid-rise apartment buildings occupy the adjacent parcel to the north and on two sites across the alley to the east. Larger residential towers rise across Marian St. (M Street) and Columbia (Skyline). Directly across Eighth Ave lies the Polyclinic parking garage serving its medical office building. Other notable nearby buildings include the Landis at Eighth and Marian and St. James Cathedral and its complex of buildings. While the greater First Hill neighborhood is home to several large major medical institutions, the Eighth Ave. corridor provides an intimate streetscape with mature street trees, small restaurants, a performing arts complex and retail uses. The recently constructed towers fronting Eighth Ave possess by and large sensitivity to the streetscape by forming a two to three story base and offering generous open spaces close to the street. Other land uses in the neighborhood include numerous surface parking lots and mid-rise brick apartment buildings.

ECAs: The site has a mapped steep slope along the alley.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a 300 foot residential tower (with 45' feet of additional mechanical and roof top amenity area) housing 300 dwelling units with four levels of below grade parking.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant submitted three design options. In these schemes the width of the massing along Eighth Ave. corresponded to the proposed proportions and size of the adjacent open space or park; the wider and squatter the building mass, the smaller the park. Conversely, the taller and more slender the mass, the wider the park appears. The applicant did not present studies in the EDG packet for a park placed at mid-block (with its axis on St. James Cathedral) preferring the Eighth and Columbia corner to maximize solar conditions. At the EDG meeting, discussion did light on this issue.

The applicant provided several options illustrating why a ramp from the alley to a below grade parking garage would consume much of the lobby and street frontage as well as the second floor.

The applicant's preferred scheme (one illustrated with much greater articulation than the other two options) lies close to the four story brick apartment building at the corner of Eighth and Marion St. The massing possesses three key visual concepts: interlocking volumes, a series of vertical layers and large scale public gestures at the roof line and the street. The segmented tower comprises a large mass representing most of the total floor plate as it wraps around a taller, slender vertical element on its southern flank. A gasket or vertical recession (potentially housing balconies) divides the two volumes on the Eighth Ave elevation. A fin extending the entire height of the tower further defines the break between the slender southern mass and the larger mass. The image of a recessed vertical column with a fin repeats itself on the south façade dividing the two large volumes once again. The composition forms a strong vertical corner although due to the park's location does not sit at the intersection of the two adjacent streets.

The architect at this point has not explicitly identified exterior materials. Still, the design reveals a series of layers beginning with a horizontally positioned frame hanging over the entrance on Eighth Ave. Behind the frame and rising above it, a building skin defines the larger volume wrapping the differently articulated southern volume and then a layer of glazing defines a volume within that reveals itself at the lobby and in the two vertical recessions. The public gestures, the elements projecting from the larger building mass that appeal to the casual viewer, include the framing device, ostensibly to define a podium, and a cantilevered, chevron shaped roof top canopy. From their appearance, each of these suggests a play of solid and void relationships and attempts to add drama to the pedestrian streetscape and the skyline.

The ground floor includes a lobby, driveway access to the garage and storage all facing Eighth Ave. The other salient feature, a fitness room, at this level occurs below grade inserted into the hill beneath the upper tier of the proposed park. This scenario would generate improvements to the alley in order to provide access to loading and service areas.

The park design represents an important element of the proposal. The applicant explored numerous design concepts including a variety of terraces cascading down the incline along Columbia St. and alternatively a mostly level space surrounded by dramatic walls at the perimeters. The preferred scheme, a more bifurcated approach, establishes a larger level area close to the Eighth Ave grade on the west side framed by a water feature on the south and an allee of trees on the north side. Stairs climb to a smaller and less well defined second level (located above a fitness room) that connect by a secondary set of steps to the Columbia St. sidewalk but not the alley.

By the Recommendation meeting, the applicant had refined the preferred scheme introducing a revised podium, more detailed facades and a plan for the corner park.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 42 members of the public affixed their names to the Recommendation meeting sign-in sheet. Speakers raised the following comments:

Park/Open Space

- The workshops to develop the park plan worked well. The development team listened to the public input.
- Add more planting in the park. The design has too much pavement.
- Ensure adoption of a binding covenant for park maintenance and availability to the public.
- The lower portion of the park has more paving due to the desire to accommodate people using wheelchairs and walkers.

Eighth Avenue

- Sight triangles are problematic on 8th Ave.

Building Design

- The building doesn't look residential.
- What are the glare impacts on the neighbors and the park?
- The monolithic glass front looks as if it would produce abundant amounts of glare.

Other

- Installation of a dog run is a good idea, just not under apartment windows.

DPD received several letters from the community. Issues of concern included maximizing green space along Eighth Ave, traffic and pedestrian safety, wind tunnel effects, the need for a building possessing a residential appearance, and the desire to ensure that the open space is always available to the public.

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. The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

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

A. Site Planning

- 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.**

The applicant returned to the Board with a two-tiered park and garage access from Eighth Ave. Service functions will occur off the alley.

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

At the EDG meeting, the Board advised the applicant to add landscaping between the building and the sidewalk along Eighth Ave. It also asked for a revision of the plinth to respond to the intimate nature of the streetscape. The updated plans complied with this guidance. See Recommendation meeting guidance C-2 and E-2 for the Board's responses.

A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

In order to engage the building residents with the street and park activity, program the lobby to place its most active spaces nearest the right of way and adjoining open space.

A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites. Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

The Board seemed persuaded that the location of the dog run would not interrupt the tranquility of the Clarwood residents.

A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.

A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

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.

The Board endorsed the departure requests to expand the bulk of the structure in the east/west direction with the intent to increase the size of the proposed open space at the street corner.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

- 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.**

Considerable discussion focused on the design of the plinth and the roof top. Although the marquee above the lobby entrance resembles others in the vicinity, the Board directed the applicant to revise the design to wrap the corner to the park and to possess a more residential character. See guidance for C-2 and C-3.

- 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. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.**

At the early design guidance meeting, the Board questioned whether the roof warranted the chevron shaped cantilever mimicking to some extent the roof line of the neighboring Skyline at First Hill. Deliberation at the Recommendation meeting did not bring forward a desire to change the proposed roof shape.

However, the wing shaped entry canopy on Eighth Ave received criticism for its institutional, almost alien, appearance. The Board requested that the canopy engage with the park side by wrapping the corner similar to the images on p. 56 in order to create a more integrated podium.

A building exit stair lies on axis with the park staircase connecting the lower level with the Columbia St. sidewalk presenting an opportunity for an interesting relationship. Consider the enclosed stairs and the exit door, shown on p. 78 of the Recommendation booklet, as a significant element of the south façade and design accordingly. DPD staff will review and approve the changes to the appearance of the staircase and exit door.

In general, the Board approved the overall composition of the mass with its thin vertical shafts of glazing and even narrower fins and gaskets dividing the larger areas of fenestration.

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

Considerable Board discussion focused on the responsiveness of the podium level to the park and the surrounding urban context. The entry canopy, in particular, lacked the human scale of the rest of the plinth. See C-2 guidance for the recommended condition to produce a more residential appearing marquee.

- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials. Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.**

Considerable deliberation focused on excessive glare impacts to the adjacent park. The Board recommended that the applicant prepare a detailed impact analysis by an expert on the south façade's impacts on the park. Based on the report, the planner may further condition the project to mitigate the effects the glazing would produce on the park.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

The materiality of the garage door facing Eighth Ave. will have perforations similar to the addition to the Jewish Family Services building at 1601 16th Ave.

D. Pedestrian Environment

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.

The park design received the Board's endorsement with the caveat that the results of the glare analysis may warrant either changes to the building's south façade or the park.

D-3 Retaining Walls. Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where higher retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscapes.

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.

The departure request for a reduction in the garage door size received a recommendation to approve.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

The Board endorsed the openness of the public/private park as shown preferring no fencing or gates. In the future, if public safety becomes an issue, the owners shall explore all other approaches to ensuring security before introducing barriers. Any solution with a barrier would require that the fence or gate disappear from sight when the park is available to the public.

E. Landscaping

- E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites. Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.**

By the Recommendation meeting, the proposed design accommodated a greater setback at the street and a swath of landscaping between the sidewalk and the structure. This met the intent of the earlier guidance.

- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site. Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.**

See guidance for E-1. A larger setback from Eighth Ave, revision to the vertical fin and plantings between the sidewalk and the structure allows for a greater visual connection between the park and the entry.

- E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions. The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.**

Recommendations: The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the August 21, 2013 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings available at the August 21, 2013 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and the requested development standard departures from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below). The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

- 1) Program or place the most active portions of the lobby nearest the right of way and adjoining open space in order to support an active street front and park. (A-4)
- 2) Redesign the entry canopy to wrap around the corner (see images on p. 56 of the Recommendation booklet) and to appear less institutional looking in order to create a more humanely scaled podium. (C-2,C-3)
- 3) Design the exit stair and door that lies on axis with the park stair case connecting the lower level with the park's upper level to be well designed and a meaningful part of the south elevation. (C-2)
- 4) Prepare a detailed glare analysis by an expert illuminating the glazing of the south façade's impact on the park. Based on the report, the planner may further condition the project to mitigate the effects the glazing would produce on the park (C-4,D-1)

- 5) If public safety in the park becomes an issue in the future, the owners shall explore all other approaches to ensuring security before introducing physical barriers. Any solution requiring a barrier would require that the fence or gate disappear from sight when the park is open to the public. (D-7)

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) are 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).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMENDATION
1. Highrise Setbacks SMC 23.45.518	At lot lines abutting neither a street nor an alley, portions of the structure above 45' shall be set back a minimum of 20'.	Portions above 45' on the north elevation would have a 15' setback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for a 5' larger open space for the park as there is a 15' setback below 45' which is greater than the 5' minimum, 7' average. 	Recommended Approval.
2. Highrise Setbacks SMC 23.45.518	At lot lines abutting a street, portions of the structure above 45' shall be set back a minimum of 10'.	On the west elevation, the setback would have a zero setback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The zero setback on the west allows for a narrower building on the north/south axis, creating a larger open space at-grade. 	Recommended Approval
3. Highrise Setbacks SMC 23.45.518	At lot lines abutting the street, portions below 45' shall have a 7' average setback.	At lot lines abutting the street portions below 45' and above 18' would have a zero setback. Ground floor level would have a 10' average setback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with the portion of the façade above 45'. Creates a visual relationship to neighbor (Clarwood Apartments) and gives relief along 8th Ave. 	Recommended Approval
4. Highrise Setbacks SMC 23.45.518	At lot lines abutting the alley, the structure above 45' shall have a 10' minimum setback.	At the lot line abutting the alley, most portions of the structure would have a 3' setback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A greater length in the east/west depth allows for a reduction in the north/south width of the structure creating a larger open space to the south. 	Recommended Approval.
5. Screening of Parking SMC 23.45.536D.3.a	Garage doors may be no greater than 75' sq. ft. in area.	Proposed 189 sq. ft. area for garage door.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for the required two-way traffic into the garage. 	Recommended Approval.