



City of Seattle

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

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE
OF
THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
April 16, 2013**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3013951

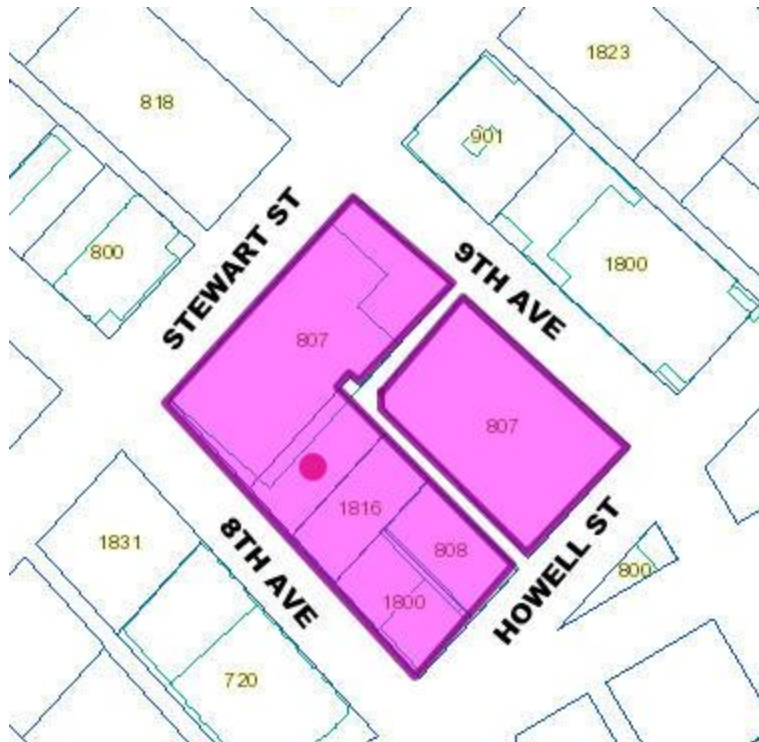
Address: 807 Stewart Street

Applicant: Dave Schneider, LMN Architects, for R.C. Hedreen Co.

Board Members Present: Gabe Grant (Chair)
Pragnesh Parikh
Gundula Proksch
Murphy McCullough

Board members absent : Mathew Albores

Land Use Planner present: Michael Dorcy



BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The full block development site is bounded by 9th Avenue on the east, by 8th Avenue on the west, by Stewart Street on the north and Howell Street on the south. It is trapezoidal in shape, comprising close to 98,000 square feet in area, with approximately 354 feet along 8th Avenue, its broadest front. The site is zoned Downtown Office Core 2 with a 500-foot height limit (DOC 2 500/300-500).

There are currently three structures located on the site, including a 3-story masonry building that formerly functioned as the Greyhound Bus Terminal.

The proposed development is for a 43-story hotel building, with approximately 1,550 guest rooms located above ground floor retail/restaurant space. The hotel would rest upon a podium occupied by approximately 150,000 square feet of meeting rooms and ballroom space. Atop the podium and at the opposite side of the podium from the hotel would be an apartment building containing approximately 150 affordable residential units. Six levels of underground parking would accommodate approximately 700 automobiles. Twelve truck-loading bays would also be accommodated below grade. As proposed in the preferred scheme, the common parking garage would take access from an interior drive connecting 9th and 8th Avenues. Trucks would utilize a separate entry/exit off 8th Avenue. Project work for the proposal would include landscape and pedestrian improvements along all four encompassing streets, with significant

“Green Street” improvements proposed for 9th Avenue. Alternatives “B” and “C” would require a vacation of the existing dog-legged alley running between Howell Street and 9th Avenue, alternative “A” would not.

ARCHITECTS’ PRESENTATION

After Board introductions, Shauna Decker, Design and Development Director for R.C. Hedreen Co., made a few brief comments regarding the history and scope of the proposal. She noted that assemblage of the entire block had taken nearly twenty years, that the number of Hotel rooms and size of meeting spaces would attract national and international meetings that hitherto had not been possible to hold in Seattle. An important part of the project, she noted, was the provision for 150 affordable residential units on the site which would require a 50 year commitment on the part of the developer.

Three alternate massing models for the site were then presented by the design team from LMN Architects. The first, “Alternative A,” showed a full-height hotel build-out of the southernmost portion of the site, with convention and support functions beneath it and spread between the alley and 8th Avenue. The affordable housing component was set above a retail base located between the alley and 9th Avenue.

The second scheme (“Alternative B”) placed the hotel tower along Stewart Street and the much shorter housing massing along Howell Street. Among the scheme’s drawbacks was the amount of shade the hotel tower located at the edge of Stewart Street cast on structures north of the site.

A third scheme (“Alternative C”, identified by the design team as the “preferred” option, provided a lifted podium that enabled a largely transparent and permeable base with the hotel tower along Howell street and the housing placed above the podium along Stewart Street. Housing at that juncture was described as connecting more directly with the Denny Triangle neighborhood, while the hotel tower location was said primarily to cast its shadow on its own site, thus minimizing shading to its surrounding neighborhood. A crucial part of the design was a broad drive-through connecting 8th and 9th Avenues and providing access to parking and drop-off functions away from the surrounding streets.

The preferred third option may be the most intriguing architecturally, especially as the raised podium allows for great transparency through the lower floors of the entire structure and avoids back-of-house functionalities from dictating both at-grade and visible-from-grade blank walls as is the case with many buildings that house hotel functions. As noted in several comments from the Board members, the preferred configuration would appear to offer greater opportunities to integrate the internal spaces of a complex building while at the same time relating with sensitivity to the existing urban context adjacent to the four street fronts..

After asking a number of clarifying questions following the architect’s presentation, the Board elicited comments from members of the public attending the meeting. Thirty-five members of

the public (of perhaps 60 attending) signed in requesting to become parties of record for the project). Twenty seven individuals addressed verbal comments to the Board.

Public Comments:

Comments solicited from the public included the following:

- Concern with traffic impacts and safety because of existing street complexities, added volumes (especially at pedestrian pathways and crossings);
- Wanted more information on housing described as “affordable”;
- Concern about the 1000 employees who would be working at the hotel, their safety and comfort levels: how would they access the building? Where would they travel to and from the buses? How safe and well-lit would their pathways be?
- Wind studies needed; What would be the effect of a new tower and tower down-drafts?
- Question about commensurate public benefit feature associated with the alley vacation (a Design Commission issue, rather than a Design Review Board consideration);
- Would the affordable housing be truly affordable? A small residential lobby might seem even smaller in contrast to the elaborate hotel lobby; the residential entry should be moved to Stewart Street; there should be a separate, secure access to Stewart Street;
- Where will the residents’ bicycle parking be located/ will there be vehicle parking provided for residents?
- Where will the entry for workers be located? Will it be secure, well-lighted?
- What will be the public benefit (provided for the alley vacation)? Will the public benefit feature be a gathering space accessible to the whole public?
- Will project-related traffic on 8th Avenue affect pedestrian and bicyclist pathways?
- Is the placement of the tower in Alternative C the best placement?(the treatment in scheme B, with the placement of the tower on Stewart, it was stated, was a “straw man presentation”); would like to see more massing alternatives presented;
- Regarding the through-the-block connection: Why would you want to take people out of the public domain and into a private service area? Why would you take people off the street?
- For workers and residents, where is the childcare? Where are the schools?
- More base-line information needed: Where are the transportation links? How are bicyclists and pedestrians protected?
- Proposal is a unique opportunity and needed addition to the cityscape;
- What will be the effects on existing views for residents in adjacent buildings?
- Take the time to get it right! Shadows need real analysis; the throughway is not compatible with the Green Street on 9th; two-way internal traffic will be too confusing;
- Will the housing proffered accommodate families? Shouldn’t three bedroom units be a consideration?
- Where will employees park?
- This is a beautiful addition to downtown and a much needed addition to hotel capacity in Seattle;
- Shadow impacts of such a large and tall structure will severely impact neighbors;

Board's Deliberations:

The Board began its deliberations with the Chairperson citing several issues that had arisen out of the array of public comments and in need of the Board's attention. The listing included: 1) the two-directional through-the-block driveway; 2) what the presenters had referred to as the "porosity" of the base of the building; 3) the location and appointments of the residential entry; 4) the location and treatment of the hotel employees' entryway; 5) access to the underground parking; and, 6) the location of the entry to the truck loading bays. To the list were added others from other Board members, namely: 7.) the nature, the programming (and proper nomenclature) of the so-called "pocket park; 8.) shadow impacts; 9.) a congeries of elements relating to the design and integrated functioning of the affordable housing component of the project; 10.) the integration of the tower and podium elements; 11.) general safety and security and pedestrian and cyclist comfort concerns.

One Board member suggested that a *porte cochere* done properly might be a superior alternative to the through-block drive that was being proposed, while another Board member pointed out the value of placing everything inside. This was a move that allowed the building to interact more favorably with the streets on all sides. The real question for the Board was how well it was done. It was pointed out that there appeared to be three components of the drive-through space: 1.) drop-off space, 2.) parking access, and 3.) a pedestrian pass-through enhanced by retail and other enticements. If the parking were removed and taken to some other point or points along the street fronts, it might relieve the conflict and pressure points perceived within. It was agreed that the throughway needed more study, including in particular an investigation of the need for providing two-way traffic, and the functionalities dictating the diagonal geometry of the path. The space called for "day light" conditions; but it was not clear how you provide that within what is basically a tunnel.

Another topic of some discussion was the affordable housing component of the project and the need to ensure that the housing wouldn't get lost within the grander hotel-driven scheme of things. Particular questions were voiced regarding the entry to the residential space, amenities for the residents, including, among others, bike storage. Safety and security issues were related both to the residential users and employees. Questions needed to be answered with more information regarding employee entrances and pathways, as had been voiced in the public comment period.

DESIGN DEPARTURES

During their presentation the applicants had identified three departures from development standards they were seeking. Each had to do with façade modulation (SMC 23.49.058.B.1) and would affect the building's appearance on Stewart Street, Howell Street and on 8th Avenue. The Board indicated that they had no major concerns with the requests but would need to have more information presented at what was becoming clearer would be a second Early Design Guidance meeting. A clearer response to the departures request would be deferred until then.

The Board's discussion identified a couple of related issues that need to be satisfactorily addressed by the development team as the project proceeds along this early conceptual phase:

- Demonstrate and compare the solar impacts of schemes B and C;

- Begin to show how the ground plane works, both along the streets and within the internal passageway.

As part of their presentation the applicants identified those guidelines from the *Design Guidelines for Downtown Development* relevant to the design of their project: A-1, A-2, B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4, C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, C-5, D-1, D-2, D-3, D-4, D-5, D-6, E-1, E-2, and E-3.

During the course of the Board's deliberations, the Board indicated that the above same guidelines (without B-1, D-1, D-3 and D-4) were "most pertinent to this project and site" in their opinion and should be regarded of highest priority for a successful design.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, hearing public comment, and addressing their major concerns regarding the proposal, the Design Review Board members provided the siting and design guidance described below and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's *Design Review Guidelines for Downtown Development* they believe to be of highest priority for this project.

A. Site Planning

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-2 Create a Transition in Bulk and 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-3 Reinforce the Positive Urban Form and Architectural Attributes of the Immediate Area

Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.

B-4 Design a Well-Proportioned and 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 material compositions that refer to the scale of human activities occurring within them. 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.

D. Public Amenities: Enhancing the Streetscape and Open Space

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-5 Provide Adequate Lighting

To promote a sense of security for people downtown during nighttime hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building façade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandizing display windows, and on signage

D-6 Design for Personal Safety and 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 and Parking

E-1 Minimize Curbcut Impacts

Minimize adverse impacts of curbcuts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

E-2 Integrate Parking Facilities

Minimize the visual impact of parking by integrating parking facilities with surrounding development. Incorporate architectural treatments or suitable landscaping to provide for the safety and comfort of people using the facility as well as those walking by.

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 where possible. Screen from view those elements which for programmatic reasons cannot be located away from the street front.

Staff Comments:

It is the expectation of the Design Review Board that the applicant will return for a second Early Design Guidance meeting, at which time fuller information will be provided and more complete details related to issues and concerns noted above will be presented. It is also anticipated that at that meeting fuller and more specific guidance will be provided by the Board under each of the Design Guidelines which are listed above and which are indicative of the Board's expectations for a successful proposal.