



# City of Seattle

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

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE  
OF THE  
DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
June 18, 2013**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Project Number: 3013951

Address: 807 Stewart Street

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

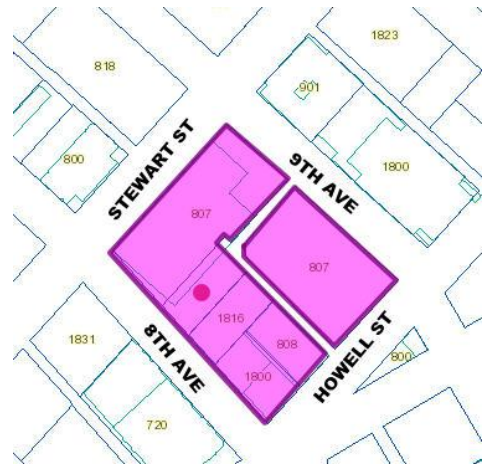
Board Members Present: Gabe Grant (Chair)  
Mathew Albores  
Gundula Proksch  
Murphy McCullough

Board members absent : Pragnesh Parikh

Land Use Planner present: Michael Dorcy

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The full block development site is bounded by 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the east, by 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 1,620 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 160 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 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues. Trucks would utilize a separate entry/exit off 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Project work for the proposal would include landscape and pedestrian improvements along all four encompassing streets, with significant "Green Street" improvements proposed for 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

### **First Early Design Guidance Meeting: April 16, 2013**

At the conclusion of the first Early Design Guidance meeting the Board had recommended that the project be returned for a second early design guidance meeting. At the second meeting the Board asked to see a more thorough analysis of the functionality of the through-block driveway as well as refinements in its alignment and details of the vehicular and pedestrian interfaces along its length. In addition, the Board wished to see a further discussion of the appropriateness of a two-way directionality for the vehicular traffic through the drive. Another area for a more detailed discussion requested by the Board was the affordable housing component of the proposal, specifically including the location and details regarding the residential entries, storage and amenity spaces.

Other areas indicated for additional detail and information were the following:

- Shadow impacts;
- General Pedestrian safety and security concerns;
- Location and treatment of employee entries;
- Access to the underground parking;
- Details of the operation of truck loading and unloading;
- Details of the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue Green Street park space;
- Further information regarding how the building met the street on all four sides.

### **Second EDG meeting, June 18, 2013**

#### **ARCHITECTS' PRESENTATION**

After Board introductions, the design team from LMN architects briefly touched upon the development objectives, identified as: 1. Efficient program and operation; 2. Providing a genuine physical contribution to the neighborhood; 3. Making a contribution to the broader urban fabric and form. It was noted that the program elements of the earlier presentation remained intact, with some slight changes in numbers (the number of proposed hotel rooms was put at 1,620, and the residential units put at 160). Further graphic definition was given to the proposed "Green Street parcel park."

"Site functionality" was given a good deal of attention in the presentation, with comparisons made to other Seattle hotels. The proposal, it was noted, succeeded in relegating the drop-off functions to the through-block connector, relieving that impact from any of the surrounding street fronts; truck service was taken entirely below grade, accessed by a single curb cut; the back-of-house functions had been removed entirely from the street levels, opening the entire block to "porosity" and transparency and uniquely intensifying the interaction of the building and pedestrians on four fronts. A special emphasis was imparted to the programming flexibility that would result from the design of the through-block connector. Finally, another unique element of the design was the provision of affordable housing on site which would require a 50 year commitment on the part of the developer.

After asking a number of clarifying questions following the architect's presentation, the Board elicited comments from members of the public attending the meeting. Fifty-eight members of the public affixed their names to the provided sign-in sheets. Approximately 25 of the attendees elected to make comments regarding the proposal.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Comments solicited from the public included the following:

- The number of pedestrians who will be affected by traffic during a large convention is truly significant; buses turning into the site will have a profound impact on pedestrian safety.
- The housing component has not really been addressed in any detail at all.
- The location of staff entry is problematic; the entry appears to be located at the point furthest away from actual transportation connections; workers safety and security has not been adequately addressed in the design.
- More information is needed about housing described as "affordable"-- size of units, access details.
- There is transitional housing in the neighborhood. Will these people be able to enjoy the proposed amenities of the Green Street pocket park? or will the park space be merely an extension of the abutting retail spaces?
- There could be 5,000 people on this site at one time, but plans don't show an appreciation of impacts at that scale of use.
- Housing appears as an afterthought, without any real details to comment on.
- Drive through does not suggest a safe environment at this point.
- What kind of retail is being proposed? Neighborhood needs groceries, not Gucci.

- Affordable housing literally over-shadowed by the hotel.
- The parcel park should provide seating and should be available to hotel employees; it should not just serve adjacent restaurants and retail spaces.
- Consider noise impacts from the hotel on housing; housing needs more than single laundry room; garden as amenity for residents should be in a sunny spot; there should be units designed for families.
- It is a great move to be providing on-site affordable housing and this should be well done and set an example for other projects in Seattle; consider out-performing the performance requirements for the housing.

## **BOARD'S DELIBERATIONS**

The Board began its deliberations with the Chairperson noting two basic areas that stood in need of further discussion and resolution: the through-block connection and the residential component of the project.

### *THROUGH-BLOCK CONNECTOR.*

Regarding the through-block connection, the Board seemed to be convinced of the concept and its basic configuration. They favored the way this design move eliminated disruptive loading and unloading and the need for back-of-house functions that set their backs to the street. There were still details that needed to be worked out; the orientation of the design still seemed to be more about cars and buses and traffic than about pedestrians. Although there was some positive acknowledgement of efforts to make the drive-through malleable and differentially programmable, there was among some of the Board members less than an enthusiastic response to the great effort being made to ensure that the programming of the space could be infinitely flexible. But when all was said and done, the through-block drive enabled retail to wrap the block, eliminated dead zones along the street frontages, and provided a unique opportunity enlivening the streets.

As one Board member observed, allowing the through-block connector to function ideally in the service of the hotel was the keystone for allowing these other things to happen and there might be limits to how flexible and multi-servicing it could be. Everyone would be served best by having the space work best for the needs of the hotel.

Generally, everyone was convinced that a two-directional through-block connection was appropriate to serve the functionary needs, but there still remain challenges to make it into a safe and inviting pedestrian space.

## *AFFORDABLE-HOUSING.*

The Board members were agreed that the housing component of the proposal had not been presented in any great detail and that there remained basic questions than had not been answered or clarified to date. Although the location and massing of the residential portion appeared compatible with the overall hotel proposal, questions regarding access, lobby space, amenity components, range of unit sizes, internal connections and connections to the larger whole stood in need of clarification. One of the Board members suggested that, should the Board agree to recommend that the proposal proceed to MUP intake and the recommendation stage of Design Review, the entire first half of a subsequent double meeting should be dedicated to the housing component, with the second half given to the hotel. It is with that understanding that the members of the Board proceeded to recommend that the project proceed to MUP application.

## *OTHER ISSUES.*

*Staff entry: The Board noted that the design of the building avoided front and back sides and although a concern expressed in the public comments there did not appear to be anything particularly dangerous or disproportionate from transportation availability in the proposed location of the staff entry.*

*Parcel Park: The park will succeed if it is clearly public and not merely a series of enhanced sidewalk spaces serving as restaurant amenities.*

*Human Scale: Along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue there appears to be a rather large façade lacking human scale elements. Such elements as overhead weather protection will have to be worked out with a clear eye to balancing between landscape and building, of balancing a “grand” feeling with human comfort.*

*Retail Program: With the grand gesture made toward porosity and transparency all around the building, attention now must be paid to the finer grain, to making the retail spaces work, each in their own spaces.*

*Public Benefits: The Board and the public need to be clear about the amenities being offered. What public amenities relate to the alley vacation and which other amenities relate to Code requirements for height, etc? That expectation should be addressed at the Recommendation Meeting.*

## **DESIGN DEPARTURES**

During their earlier 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 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. At that time the Board indicated that they had no major concerns with the requests. The Board did not directly address the departures requested at the second early design guidance meeting, but will require a clear statement of such requests and an explanation of how such requests better meet the intentions of the design guidelines at the time of the forthcoming Recommendation Meeting.

## **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, at the time of the first early design guidance meeting, 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 believed to be of highest priority for this project. No additional guidelines were cited nor was specific guidance added to the guidelines, other than that which is contained in the notes above.

### **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 way 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 and Department that the applicant will proceed to MUP intake and return for a Design Review Recommendation Meeting , at which time fuller information will be provided and more complete details related to issues and concerns noted above will be presented. The Recommendation Meeting will be scheduled for a double time slot, with the first half of the meeting devoted to presentation, comments and deliberation of recommendations on the housing component of the proposal.

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