



# City of Seattle

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



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST (QUEEN ANNE/ MAGNOLIA) DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3014207

Address: 234 9th Ave N

Applicant: Kirsten Murray of Olson Kundig Architects for Point 32 and R2H2 LLC

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, June 26, 2013

Board Members Present: Mindy Black (Chair)  
Magdalena Hogness  
Katie Idziorek  
Jill Kurfirst  
Boyd Pickrell  
Janet Stephenson

DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM-160/85-240

Nearby Zones: North: SM-160/85-240  
South: SM-160/85-240  
East: SM-160/85-240  
West: SM-160/85-240

Lot Area: 21,600 square feet



Current Development: Three one-story early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial structures and surface parking at the alley.

Access: Existing parking is located adjacent to the alley, with all vehicular access from the alley.

Newer 6 story office, institutional, and residential buildings are located nearby, predominantly to the north and west. Additional proposed developments in these areas are going through design review and permitting. Older buildings include 1-2 story early 20th century and mid-century commercial buildings, and early 20th century residential buildings. A few surface parking lots are located nearby.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The site is located adjacent to a one-story early 20th century commercial building, with a surface parking lot further to the south. Early and mid-20th century commercial structures are located across the street to the west. An early 20th century 2 story commercial structure is located to the north, with a multi-story newer biotech building located to the northeast. Across the alley is the 14-year old Sellen Construction building.

This site is located near the southwest edge of the larger South Lake Union neighborhood, and is referred to as the Denny Park area. The Denny Park area of South Lake Union provides a diverse mix of buildings and uses.

Denny Park is located one block to the south. Westlake Ave N is located one block to the east, with the Streetcar and transit service. Dexter Ave N. is located two blocks to the west and includes a high level of cyclist, vehicle and transit traffic connecting downtown with areas north of the Ship Canal. A few blocks further to the north, the busy arterials of Mercer and Broad Streets provide a clear break with the rest of the South Lake Union neighborhood.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a 12 story structure containing 14,000 sq.ft. of residential space and 130,000 sq. ft. of commercial space (hotel or office use). Parking for 130 vehicles would be provided below grade and accessed from the alley.

### EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: June 26, 2013

The packet includes materials presented at the 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](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

The packet is also available to view in the 3014207 file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**Mailing Public Resource Center**  
**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**Email:** [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

The applicant noted that the proposed building program has not yet been determined, and could be either office or hotel, combined with residential and retail. A hotel use would likely result in a shorter building, since there is less need for taller ceiling heights for natural interior day lighting.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- The preferred Option 3 is very interesting and provides a pleasant contrast with the newer rectilinear buildings in the area.
- Appreciation for the proposed massing and the goal to preserve light for properties to the north.
- The Christian Science Reading Room program and renovations were designed to maximize natural daylight from the south, and the proposed massing maintains this opportunity.

## **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. **Massing Options (A-1, A-2, B-1, C-1, C-2, C-3, D-1)** The Board noted that Option 3 is the best response to context and site considerations.
  - a. The Board expressed appreciation for the interesting massing that offers slightly off-set symmetry from 9<sup>th</sup> Ave N.
  - b. The strong podium design relates well to the adjacent context, but should also be designed to maximize the sidewalk width and create human scale at the street level.
  - c. The Board supported the design intent to design the massing to maximize day light to the north.
2. **Design Concept and Response to Context (A-1, A-2, C-1, C-2, C-3, E-2).** The Board supported the proposed design concept. The facades should be designed in response to existing and future visibility from adjacent street frontages.

- a. The strong podium design relates well to the adjacent context, but should also be designed to maximize the sidewalk width and create human scale at the street level.
  - b. The Board is looking forward to seeing how the proposed design will be adaptable to provide future usability of the building and respond to the sustainability goals.
  - c. All four facades should be carefully designed, given the visibility from nearby street frontages and the likelihood that this may be the only tower on this block.
  - d. The view of the east façade from Westlake will be important, since the parcels to the east are likely to remain lower height. The alley elevation should be treated as a third street frontage, since it's very visible from Westlake Ave N. The location and treatment of elevator and stair towers will be important on this elevation.
- 3. Alley (A-3, A-8, D-1, D-6, D-8).** The site size and pedestrian entrance at the alley will offer design challenges for the alley elevation.
- a. The parking access should be located to minimize impacts to pedestrians at the street frontage and any proposed alley pedestrian entrance.
  - b. The pedestrian entrance at the alley should be designed to be visible from Westlake Ave N. and the mid-block crossing on the east side of the alley.
- 4. Street Frontage and Response to Street Context (A-2, A-4, C-1, C-2, C-3, D-1, D-10, D-11, E-1, E-2).** The street level design should respond to the adjacent street conditions, such as nearby proposed development and bicycle routes.
- a. Retail uses on the northwest corner should be designed to respond to the proposed open plaza to the northwest.
  - b. Use building modulation and articulation to define individual retail spaces, similar to the scale of nearby retail and restaurant spaces.
  - c. 9<sup>th</sup> Ave N is a bike route. The proposed location for loading and hotel entry drop-off areas should be designed in response to this condition.
  - d. The landscaping should be designed in response to any street concept plans (green streets, etc.) as well as recently permitted development along 9<sup>th</sup> Ave N, between Mercer Street and Denny Way.

## DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

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

- 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.**

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- **Encourage provision of “outlooks and overlooks” for the public to view the lake and cityscapes. Examples include provision of public plazas and/or other public open spaces**

and changing the form or facade setbacks of the building to enhance opportunities for views.

- Minimize shadow impacts to Cascade Park.
- New development is encouraged to take advantage of site configuration to accomplish sustainability goals. The Board is generally willing to recommend departures from development standards if they are needed to achieve sustainable design. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design\*(LEED) manual which provides additional information. Examples include:
  - Solar orientation
  - Storm water run-off, detention and filtration systems
  - Sustainable landscaping
  - Versatile building design for entire building life cycle

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

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

The vision for street level uses in South Lake Union is a completed network of sidewalks that successfully accommodate pedestrians. Streetscape compatibility is a high priority of the neighborhood with redevelopment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming and open to the general public.

- Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities, such as: tree grates; benches; lighting.
- Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Where appropriate, consider a reduction in the required amount of commercial and retail space at the ground level, such as in transition zones between commercial and residential areas. Place retail in areas that are conducive to the use and will be successful.
- Where appropriate, configure retail space so that it can spill-out onto the sidewalk (retaining six feet for pedestrian movement, where the sidewalk is sufficiently wide).

**A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street.** Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

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

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.
- Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.

- Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.
- Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.
- Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.
- Create businesses and community activity clusters through co-location of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.
- Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.

**A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access.** Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties, and pedestrian safety.

**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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through building placement, scale and details with specific attention to regional transportation corridors such as Mercer, Aurora, Fairview and Westlake. These locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements.
- Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.
- Relate proportions of buildings to the width and scale of the street.
- Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that relate to the existing structures or existing pattern of development in the vicinity.
- Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as: landscaping; trellis; complementary materials; detailing; accent trim.

**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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Support the existing fine-grained character of the neighborhood with a mix of building styles.
- Re-use and preserve important buildings and landmarks when possible.
- Expose historic signs and vintage advertising on buildings where possible.
- Respond to the history and character in the adjacent vicinity in terms of patterns, style, and scale. Encourage historic character to be revealed and reclaimed, for example through use of community artifacts, and historic materials, forms and textures.
- Respond to the working class, maritime, commercial and industrial character of the Waterfront and Westlake areas. Examples of elements to consider include: window detail patterns; open bay doors; sloped roofs.
- Respond to the unique, grass roots, sustainable character of the Cascade neighborhood. Examples of elements to consider include: community artwork; edible gardens; water filtration systems that serve as pedestrian amenities; gutters that support greenery.

**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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

Design the “fifth elevation” — the roofscape — in addition to the streetscape. As this area topographically is a valley, the roofs may be viewed from locations outside the neighborhood such as the freeway and Space Needle. Therefore, views from outside the area as well as from within the neighborhood should be considered, and roof-top elements should be organized to minimize view impacts from the freeway and elevated areas.

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

**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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm, i.e. the transition zone between private property and the public right of way. The Board is generally willing to consider a departure in open space requirements if the project proponent provides an acceptable plan for features such as: curb bulbs adjacent to active retail

spaces where they are not interfering with primary corridors that are designated for high levels of traffic flow; pedestrian-oriented street lighting; street furniture.

- D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas.** Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.
- D-8 Treatment of Alleys.** The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.
- D-10 Commercial Lighting.** Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.
- D-11 Commercial Transparency.** Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.
- 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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Support the creation of a hierarchy of passive and active open space within South Lake Union. This may include pooling open space requirements on-site to create larger spaces.
- Encourage landscaping that meets LEED criteria. This is a priority in the Cascade neighborhood.
- Where appropriate, install indigenous trees and plants to improve aesthetics, capture water and create habitat.
- Retain existing, non-intrusive mature trees or replace with large caliper trees.
- Water features are encouraged including natural marsh-like installations.
- Reference the City of Seattle Right Tree Book and the City Light Streetscape Light Standards Manual for appropriate landscaping and lighting options for the area.

- 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.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- **Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a building and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the previous uses of the area. Neighborhood themes may include service industries such as laundries, auto row, floral businesses, photography district, arts district, maritime, etc.**

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURE**

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure 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. The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departure was requested:

- 1. Reduce Loading Berth Size (SMC 23.54.035.A):** The Code requires 35' long loading berths for the size and use proposed with this development. The applicant proposes that 1 of the 2 proposed loading berths be 25' long. Both loading berths are proposed at the alley, adjacent to the garage entry.

The Board expressed concern that the proposed departure could result in additional on-street hotel loading impacts, with potential impacts to the bicycle route on 9<sup>th</sup> Ave N. If the hotel program is proposed, the applicant will need to demonstrate that the proposed departure better meets the intent of the Design Review Guidelines. Part of the rationale for this departure should include information demonstrating that the proposed loading is similar to comparable sized hotels and with successful loading areas.

## **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.**