



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3014451

Address: 1301 Western Avenue

Applicant: Martha Barkman

Date of Meeting: December 3, 2013

Board Members Present: Mathew Albores
Gabe Grant
Murphy McCullough

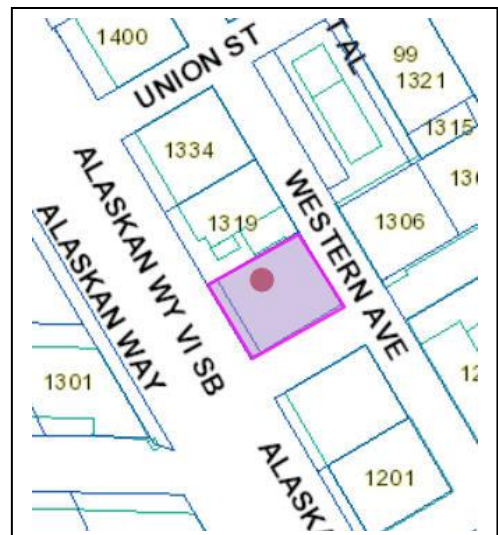
Board Members Absent: Pragnesh Parikh
Gundula Proksch

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Downtown Mixed Commercial with a 160' height limit (DMC-160). A portion of the site's southwest corner lies within the Urban Harborfront shoreline environment. The site possesses a view corridor setback along University Ave.

Zoning Pattern: DMC-160 extends from Union St. on the north to Columbia St. on the south. To the west across Alaskan Way, the zoning shifts to Downtown Harbor One with a 45' height limit (DH1/45). On both sides of the 1st Ave corridor, the zoning is DMC with allowable height limits that range between 240 and 400' feet depending upon the use.



Lot Area: 17,245 square feet. The site has about a four to nine foot rise from Alaskan Way to Western Ave.

Current Development: Surface parking lot.

Access: Western Avenue, University Street and Alaskan Way

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: Near the foot of the Harbor Steps, the site sits between the Harbor Steps complex and the Alaskan Way viaduct on the west. Once the Highway 99 viaduct demolition occurs, the site will overlook the new Alaskan Way corridor and promenade. The Seattle Steam plant and a public storage facility lie to the north. Six and seven-story office buildings are located across University St. The site lies at the transition between the downtown office core and the harbor front with its eclectic mix of recreational and tourism oriented uses.

ECAs: The area has an environmental critical area designation of a Liquefaction prone area.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a 16-story mixed use structure with 165 residential units and 4,000 square feet of commercial space at grade. Parking for 140 vehicles would be located above and below grade.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented three massing scenarios. Common to the alternatives is a podium with a tower set back forty feet from University Ave to respect the view corridor established above sixty feet. In each scheme parking access occurs on Western Ave near the north property line to avoid a curb cut on the future redevelopment of Alaskan Way. The proposed building program illustrates a residential lobby at the corner of University St. and Western Ave., retail uses at the corner of University St. and Alaska Way to extend along Alaskan.

Comprised of a six-story podium with a tower rising from its northern half, option # 1 forms a tripartite façade on the northern elevation with a significant central vertical niche. On the south elevation a smaller vertical reveal establishes an asymmetrical façade at the nine-story tower. Option #2 doubles the vertical niches or light wells at the north wall. The elevation forms an ABABA rhythm facing the steam plant. In this option a narrow vertical reveal visually separates the tower from the lower podium offering the impression of two volumes. A larger reveal extends up the south elevation, perhaps, expressing some change in the residential floor plan. The more detailed third option sculpts the north elevation to ensure that most of the tower

steps back from the steam plant. A combination of slight setbacks and reveals in the massing produces the resemblance of three vertical volumes on the Alaskan Way elevation. A shed roof capping the central vertical mass further emphasizes the three volumes. The same motif repeats itself on the Western side without the sloping roof. Facing University St., the six story podium projects forward of the tower. Similar to the other schemes, a shallow vertical reveal on the tower forms an asymmetrical wall. The proportions of the slender reveals derive from the steam plant's smokestacks.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Eleven members of the public affixed their names to the Early Design Review meeting sign-in sheet. Speakers raised the following issues.

- Evaluate how parking access on Western Ave will function. The street is already congested.
- If built, the structure will set a precedent for future waterfront development. Take the time to review it carefully.
- Use solar heating.

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 Downtown Design Guidelines of highest priority for this project.

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

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.**

Use the solar array to create an expressive roof top. The architect should recognize that tenants in buildings to the east will view the roof. Design the top as a significant building feature.

B. Architectural Expression

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.

Recognize the property’s prominent location as a well traveled gateway between the downtown core and the waterfront. In the other direction, it represents a link in the Pike Place Market and Pioneer Square corridor.

B-2 Create a Transition in Bulk & 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.

The size and compositional intention of the six-story volume relate to many of the surrounding historical structures. The relationship of the proposed tower to the smaller volume, however, is less successful. The base of the tower needs to appear firmly rooted in its context.

B-3 Reinforce the Positive Urban Form & 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.

Both programmatically and spatially, the podium’s relationship with the massing on Western and Alaskan streets conveys confusion and a lack of resolution. The retail use, based on the schematic elevation, would have two very distinct storefronts---one belonging to the lower volume on the south and one belonging to the tower on the north ---for a relatively small space. The predominant pattern of horizontal datum lines in the immediate vicinity offers compelling organizational cues. Rather than planting a tower with a modest reveal to rise from the Alaskan Way grade, consider the tower and lower mass as a series of interlocking volumes that mirror the collage like quality of the surrounding buildings. In short, the building’s massing and materials ought to reflect closely the building program.

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.

The schematic of a tripartite facade on Alaskan Way failed to convince the Board of any inherent logic. The Board also questioned the appropriateness of so much glazing. The lower volume fronting University St., with its contemporary updating of traditional loft or warehouse structures, met with enthusiasm. The glass tower, divided vertically by a thin reveal, left a diminished base lacking a strong precedence in the vicinity for its excessiveness of glazing. The Board encourages the formation of a richer more textured base that expresses the retail program facing Alaskan Way and recognizes the series of dominant horizontal datum lines in the district.

The extensive amount of glazing risks the appearance of an office building rather than a residential tower. Consider interlocking the volumes with one another as suggested by the parti studies (the transformations from hand gestures) on p. 23 of the EDG booklet. The design evolution of these concepts ought to produce something more compelling. Neighborhood imagery, so chockfull of design cue, should capably influence the composition of the elevations and the choice of materials. The substantial pier and spandrel frames, the steam plant's pleasing cacophony of exposed pipes and pure geometric volumes, the wood structures on the piers and even the playfulness of the Ferris wheel represent starting points for design exploration.

C. The Streetscape

- 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.**

The generous amount of space devoted to the residential lobby and lounge disappointed the Board members. Due to the extra sidewalk width along University, ample opportunity exists for increased retail along with a sidewalk café or other means to create a strong connection between retail uses and this important pedestrian corridor along University St./Harbor Steps. Board members preferred corner retail at Western Ave and University St. rather than the lobby.

- 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.**

See guidance under B-4.

- C-3 Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades. Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.**

The presence of a blank wall at the Alaskan Way sidewalk level would diminish the pedestrian experience along what will be a grand boulevard and promenade. Even with

the parking ramp at ground level, the design of the street level façade could accommodate an aperture into the building or some other point of visual interest.

C-4 Reinforce Building Entries. To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce the building’s entry.

Too much emphasis, the Board observed, was placed on a residential entry / lobby at the University and Western Ave corner. A retail presence at this corner will create a stronger connection to the pedestrian realm by enhancing the activity between the office core and the waterfront.

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.

The Board prefers continuous overhead weather protection along the three rights of way.

D. Public Amenities

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.

The landscaping and the design of the base at the University St. elevation should provide a seamless transition along the grand procession from Third Ave to the waterfront. The right programming, the openness between the interior and exterior along University and the quality of the landscaping will ensure this connection.

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.

The roof top of the podium level will be viewed from structures above the site. Create a quality design for the green roof.

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.

Along University St. the building and landscape design should reinforce the connection with the Harbor Steps.

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.

The Board will review signage concepts at the Recommendation meeting.

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.

Provide a lighting plan at the Recommendation meeting. Renderings of the building at night will assist in the evaluation.

- 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

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

The Board agreed with the placement of the curb cut on Western Ave.

- 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.**

The second and third floor corners of the building at Western and Alaskan need a more active use than bike storage. Consider double height spaces at the corners for the retail and lobby.

- 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.**

Based on the preliminary floor plan, the service areas appear well integrate into the parking level and have minimal presence on the exterior.

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) Above Grade Parking. SMC 23.49.019B.2. On lots of 30,000 square feet or less, one story of parking is permitted above the first story of a structure for each story of parking provided below grade up to four stories maximum; parking above the third story shall be separated from the street by another use for 30 percent of each street frontage of a structure which shall be located at the corners.

The applicant proposes, due to the high water table on the site, one level of below grade parking and two levels of above grade parking. The Board indicated its willingness to review this request.

2) Green Street Designation on University Street. SMC 23.49.058. When a lot in a DMC zone is located on a designated green street, a continuous upper-level setback of fifteen feet shall be provided on the street frontage abutting the green street at a height of 45 feet.

The property has a double upper level setback requirement based on the view corridor on University St. and the green street. The applicant proposes to setback the structure's upper level to align with existing developments along University St., according to the view corridor regulations. DPD staff has indicated that the designation of a green street at this location was an error.

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.

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