



FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3014451

Address: 1301 Western Avenue

Applicant: Michael Willis

Date of Meeting: August 19, 2014

Board Members Present: Murphy McCullough (Chair)
Mathew Albores
Alan McWain

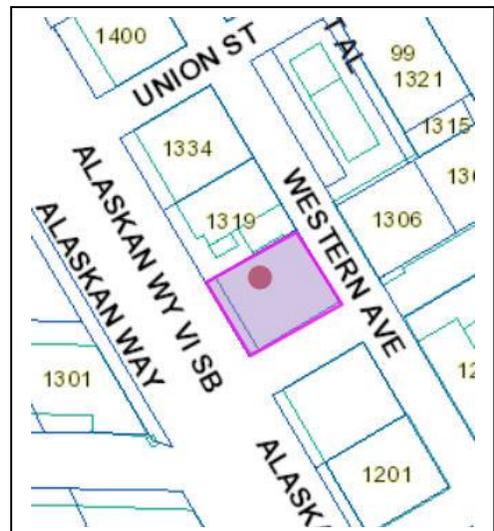
Board Members Absent: Anjali Grant
Gundula Proksch

DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers

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 2,700 square feet of commercial space at grade. Parking for 102 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.

The applicant substantially refined option # 3 by the Recommendation meeting: the masonry base forms a "L" shape on the Alaskan Way elevation with six floors wrapping around the corner from University St. and then dropping then dropping to roughly three floors. The west façade tower is no longer staggered and the sloped roof once extending beyond the major vertical plane has been significantly pulled back from the façade due to the requirements of the Shoreline code.

At the second and Final Recommendation Meeting, the applicant refined the preferred option based on Board direction at the previous meeting. Revisions targeted the masonry base on the west façade, the materiality of the canopies, and the composition and spandrels of the curtain walls.

PUBLIC COMMENT

One member of the public affixed his name to the Initial Recommendation meeting sign-in sheet. The speaker, an expert in commercial leasing in Seattle, spoke about the difficulty of leasing retail space along Western Ave. He advocated for the presence of the exercise room and the residential lobby at the corner until the commercial leasing market improves.

There were no public comments at the Final Recommendation meeting.

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.

Meeting # 1: The applicant's revisions to the roof top due to the Seattle Shoreline code met with Board approval.

Meeting # 2: No changes to the roof top presented.

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.

Meeting # 1: The brick masonry base with its allusions to nearby turn of the 20th century warehouses received considerable praise, in particular, its detailing and the cleverness in which the two levels of parking disappear behind the loft-like facades. See further Board recommendations for guideline B-4.

Meeting # 2: The Board supported the brick base and the minor refinements presented.

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.

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.

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.

Meeting # 1: The Board recommended a few refinements to the six-story masonry base along Alaskan Way. The masonry portion of the three upper levels should extend northward to the vertical edge of the tower in order to eliminate the gap between the edge and the masonry. Continue the storefront masonry detailing with its wide brick spandrel capping the three lower levels and large storefront windows to include the northern most bays along Alaskan Way.

Conveying its deep reservations in respect to the glass tower, the Board noted the tower's overweening or excessive resemblance to an office building. The predominance of glazing and glass spandrel, the pervasive blue tint, the lack of balconies or noticeable modulation to provide depth and the curtain wall's overall two-dimensionality failing to provide texture all emphasize this visual connotation as an office tower. Using the imagery of rising steam or vapor as well as the Steam Plant's chimneys to inform the design of the building skin generally produced busy elevations. The north and south elevations, in particular, possess awkward proportions emphasized by the composition. On the east and west elevations, the Board recommended that the brick reveals should be narrowed and the masonry replaced with the same metal louvers elsewhere on the facades.

The Board also requested more accurate drawings of the facades with the distinctions in color between the spandrels and the windows more honestly rendered. Produce images of the building during daylight and darkness for the next Recommendation meeting.

Meeting # 2: The Board applauded the refinements made where the base and middle tower meet on the east and west facades, and the clarifications to the vertical slots in the middle tower (shown on revised elevations on pages 31, 33, 35 and 37 in the Recommendation #2 booklet). The Board supported the more prevalent transparent vision glass, the less cobalt blue glass tint, and the 'shadow box' spandrel panels proposed. The Board also supported the more orderly arrangement of white accent panels, and less prominent louver bands in the tower. The Board supported the two-part approach on the wide south elevation, recognizing the accents on the east portion are more rational, and the west portion a bit more random, but the accents should stay subtle as shown and not become more random or prominent.

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.**

Meeting # 1: Noting public comment and the applicant's reluctance to place commercial use at the corner of University St. and Western Ave., the Board generally accepted the idea of the extension of the residential lobby to the corner but recommends a double height space at the corner. The transparent glazing at the second level will anchor the corner and, when lit in the evening, act as an attractive lantern to individuals approaching from the east and south.

See discussion of the canopies in guidance C-5.

Meeting # 2: The Board strongly endorsed the option with a full two-story volume at the southeast corner, and agreed the interior lighting fixture should be selected to provide

generous night glow and visual interest to pedestrians, similar to the one shown on Recommendation booklet page 15.

- 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.**

Meeting # 1: See guidance under B-4.

Meeting # 2: The Board supported the revised façade compositions presented.

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

Meeting # 1: The architect’s revisions to the street level Alaskan Way façade alleviated prior concern about blank walls along this important stretch of the future waterfront esplanade.

Meeting # 2: The Board supported the revised façade compositions presented, reinforcing the importance of the deeply recessed storefronts, careful brick detailing and projecting brick trim courses (as shown on booklet pages 15 and 23).

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

Meeting # 1: In response to earlier guidance, the architect shifted the residential entry toward the mid-point on University St away from the Western Ave corner. With the Board recommending that all of the canopies have glazing (see guidance for C-5), the entry lacks a distinguishing feature seen from afar due to the recessed doorway. The Board noted that signage and the possibility of a raised canopy could signal the entry if needed.

Meeting #2: The Board supported the revised canopies shown on page 23 of the Recommendation #2 booklet, with clear glass in all locations except for the wood soffit at the residential lobby bay.

- 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.**

Meeting # 1: The two contrasting materials comprising the canopies and their placement provoked considerable discussion among the Board members. The Board recommended eliminating the opaque material in favor of the transparent glazing providing greater homogeneity along the building fronts. The canopies should constitute a nearly continuous covering over the three sidewalks with the possible exception of the corners.

Meeting #2: The Board supported the essentially continuous metal and glass canopies as shown on page 23, including the discrete frame elements expressed at each bay. Also see departure #2.

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.

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.

Meeting # 1: Continue to refine the streetscape along Western Ave to match the quality of the landscaping in the other rights of way. The uninterrupted portions of the Western sidewalk should be at least eight feet wide. Incorporate a seat wall or bench in the planters to enhance the public realm.

Meeting # 2: The Board supported the refined landscape plan presented on page 7, including the four added street trees on Western Avenue, the three added benches, and the planters and paving design shown.

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.

Meeting # 1: Prior guidance conveyed the desire that along University St. the building and landscape design should reinforce the connection with the Harbor Steps. The Board did not provide additional comment at the Initial Recommendation meeting.

Meeting # 2: The Board was satisfied with the revised building and landscape design.

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.

Meeting # 1: The Board will review signage concepts at the Final Recommendation meeting.

Meeting #2: The Board supported the understated signage shown on page 82, and cut out letters shown for commercial tenants shown on page 78, plus the important address numbers at the residential lobby as shown on page 23.

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.

Meeting # 1: The Board recommends the installation of only down lighting for the sconces along the three elevations.

Meeting # 2: The Board supported the proposed wall sconces, revised to provide 80% downlight and 20% uplight.

E. Vehicular Access & Parking
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E-1 Minimize Curb Cut Impacts. Minimize adverse impacts of curb cuts 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.

Meeting # 1: At the EDG meeting, the Board conveyed its desire to see a more active use at the second floor corners and suggested, as one solution, doubling the height of the corner spaces at the first floor. The Board members reiterated their expectation and recommended that the University and Western corner have a double height space with transparent glazing. The corner at University and Alaskan Way could either have a double height space with transparent glazing or metal louvers to match the other storefronts along University St. and Alaskan Way.

Meeting # 2: As described under C-1, the Board endorsed the two –story volume at the corner of Western and University, to disguise the parking and attract pedestrians to and from the nearby Harbor Steps.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation summarized below was based on the plans and models submitted at the August 19th, 2014 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 19th, 2014 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the three 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 recommended NO CONDITIONS for the project

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. Green St. designation SMC 23.49.058	A continuous upper-level setback of 15' shall be provided on a green street at a height of 45'.	One setback at 75 ft in compliance with view corridor regulations. The green street setback would create a double tiered base.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single setback better conforms to the building patterns in the neighborhood. • Consistent with legislation now at City Council. 	Unanimously recommend. (B-1, B-3, B-4)
2. Overhead Weather Protection. 23.49.018	Continuous protection shall be required for new development along the entire street frontage.	Provide continuous canopies except for portions at two north corners, and about 4 ft wide portions at south corners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Canopies reinforce the brick mass corners. 	Unanimously recommend. (B-1, B-4)