



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

Project Number: 3014639

Address: 325 9th Avenue North

Applicant: Peter Krech, Graphite Design Group, for Vulcan

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Board Members Present: Mindy Black (Acting Chair)
Magda Hogness
Jill Kurfirst

Board Members Absent: David Delfs
Jacob Connell
Lipika Mukerji

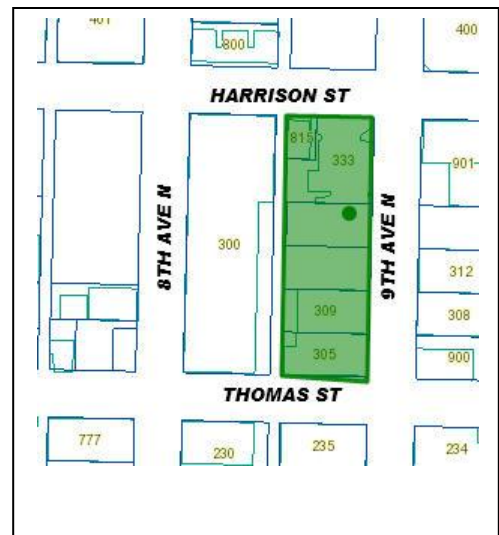
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed – 85' (SM-85)

Nearby Zones: (North) SM-85
(South) SM-85
(East) SM-85
(West) SM-85

Lot Area: 43,097 sf, sloping rectangle



Current Development: 2 existing 1-story corner office buildings flank a mid-block surface parking lot. A small 3-story commercial building occupies the northwest corner of the parcel.

Access: The half-block fronts on 3 streets, which all provide pedestrian access. The through-block alley on the west side provides vehicular and service access.

Surrounding Development: Surrounding blocks exhibit a range of parking lots, commercial uses and building scales, typically 1-3 stories. A newer 6 story residential structure (the Veer Lofts) is across Harrison Street to the north.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: The neighborhood is transitioning from older commercial/warehouse functions to mixed use. The Westlake Avenue streetcar and commercial corridor is 1 block east, and newer commercial, residential and office buildings are rapidly rising on all 4 sides of this block.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a 12 story, 289,900 sq. ft. office building with 4,000 sq. ft of retail at ground level, and a ground level plaza at the south end. Parking for 423 vehicles will be located below grade. All existing structures to be demolished. Project requires text amendment to the Seattle Mixed Use Zone, to correspond with the current DRAFT of the South Lake Union City Council Rezone.

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DESIGN PROPOSAL

The EDG Design Proposal booklet 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 or by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Address: Public Resource Center
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 20 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Noted that Harrison Street is evolving into a commercial, pedestrian and bike corridor and should provide pedestrian amenity and landscape treatment.
- Supported the angle in the tower facades, and suggested the north end be more tapered.
- Objected to the shadow impacts on the Veer Lofts residential building from the proposed 120 ft office tower mass located close to Harrison, and requested the tower be shifted further south (mentioned multiple times). [Applicant stated the proposed separation of Option 3-refined, is 71 ft, plus the existing Veer stepback = about 10 ft].
- Suggested the office tower shift south in deference to the visual privacy and spacing to an existing residential building (Veer Lofts), rather than preserve spacing to a potential tower on the south end of the adjacent half-block [the tower location rationale as explained by applicant].
- Suggested the proposed office tenant, south amenity deck be reduced and encourage tenants to use and activate the proposed plaza at street level.
- Encouraged the vehicle access off the alley to flow in both directions and distribute traffic to both Harrison and Thomas Streets.
- Concerned with light pollution into surrounding residential from the office building at night.

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 (the Board) members provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the following **Citywide Design Guidelines & South Lake Union (SLU) Neighborhood specific guidelines** (as applicable, in *italics*) of highest priority for this project. Board comments are in **bold**.

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

A. Site Planning

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).*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board strongly endorsed the proposed Option 3 ground floor plan with its active uses along all 3 streets, corner entries and parking/service/loading all located mid block on the alley. The Board supported the 2 retail pavilions at the 9th Avenue corners, with each recessed to facilitate pedestrian movement to the proposed plaza and connector street of Harrison (see Departures). The Board also supported the 5 ft setback shown off Harrison, and encouraged a rich landscape buffer at the curb, and permeable commercial frontage at the building wall.

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.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the importance of transparency along all 3 ground level facades, even for those uses which are not retail. The “office café and conference” use should place café seating and active functions on the perimeter, and kitchens or conference rooms (which often seek privacy or black-out) more inboard. Although not optimum, perimeter corridors with glass ‘storefronts’ are preferable to dark or fully draped conference rooms.

- A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites.** Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the proposed tower massing and location at length, and ultimately agreed the north face of the tower should shift approximately 30 ft south of the north property line, to afford more space from the residential building to the north (proposed about 70 ft, increasing to about 85 ft), and to create a more dramatic offset from the 45 ft base along Harrison. This will also reduce shadow impacts on the residential building, north sidewalks, and the potential plaza at the northeast corner of Harrison and 9th.

- A-10 Corner Lots.** Building on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board endorsed: the proposed Option 3 locations of retail which reinforce the corners; the glass pavilion character of the south retail, its activation of the south plaza and its recessed café zone along 9th; and the secondary lobby entrance from the northeast corner. The Board suggested the northeast retail corner glass be recessed from 9th and from Harrison slightly more than shown on booklet pg A-28 (also see Departures).

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

- 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.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the strong base and tower expression, with the approximately 45 ft top of the base element holding close to the property line, even if the transparent glass recesses below. The layered base shown (booklet pg A24 and A-35) provides folded planes that relate to the tower.

The Board strongly agreed the tall and 200 ft+ long tower facades need the proposed folds and tapering to diminish the shadow and bulk impacts, and suggested the east façade incorporate at least one more fold and/or recess to better meet the intent of maximum Façade Length (see Departures). Additional tapering of the tower’s north end is welcome, to reduce bulk and shadow impacts, even with the tower shift described in A-5 above.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

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.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the 45 ft base relationship to street scale and context, and the use of south facing terraces as amenity space; the landscape design of this terrace and all lower roofs should be designed as a sustainable “5th elevation”, visible from the tower and surrounding buildings.

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

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the design development should add scale and pedestrian interest at all ground level, street facing facades, using materials, mullion details, canopies, glass variations, and other techniques suggested in the sections on pg A-29/30, and similar to the precedent images on pg A-17/18.

The Board strongly endorsed the “cribbing” façade concept, which adds texture and pedestrian scale to the street, and historical reference. This site-specific precedent could more strongly inform many aspects of the lower facades, including a very rugged base texture, the cantilevered canopies, and the plaza landscape design.

D. Pedestrian Environment

- 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.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the deeply recessed office lobby, which should incorporate transparent sight lines, clear signage and other wayfinding cues, to make this primary building entry attractive and convenient.

The Board strongly supported the concept and size of the proposed Option 3 open space at grade at the south end of the site, as it provides a valuable semi-public place, with good sun exposure and reinforces the proposed Green Street along Thomas.

Regarding the landscape concept presented for this space on pg A-36, the Board supported the basic hardscape/planting proportions, and the mix of fixed and movable seating. The Board had serious reservations about the 'wall' of enclosure the proposed bamboo creates to the south sidewalk, and recommended limiting the dense bamboo to the alley and small groves of experience (that might surround the southwest stair), but increase the gaps and visibility along the south sidewalk edge, perhaps changing species. Also consider adding more walkways between the corner and alley, even if involving steps. The Board applauded how the corner retail opened to the south and activated this space, and suggested the adjacent café/conference uses could do similar on the west edge. The west part of this plaza should not become privatized.

- D-7 Personal Safety and Security.** Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- *Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18-hour public activity. Methods to consider are: enhanced pedestrian and street lighting; well-designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street; police horse tie-up locations for routine patrols and larger event assistance.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that their guidance on the open space edges would improve pedestrian permeability, visibility and safety.

- D-8 Treatment of Alleys.** The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the proposed alley parking entrance is close to the Harrison sidewalk, and agreed the parking portal should be set as far south as possible. Also, the adjacent setback design should guide pedestrians to ensure safe sight lines and visibility.

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the office floor plates should include motion sensors, lighting by zones, and/or timers on the lighting, to conserve energy and limit excessive light pollution into surrounding properties, especially residential units to the north.

E. Landscaping

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.*

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, in addition to the recommendations in D-1 above, the Board suggested more site/neighborhood specific themes - similar to the 'cribbing' explanation - be explored and integrated into the open space and/or architectural design, eg custom seating, paving treatments, recycled materials, public art, etc, to make this project fit more specifically into this distinct cultural setting.

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 from current code requirements were requested:

- 1. Street Level Development Standards (23.48.014):** In brief, the Code requires a maximum setback of 12 ft from street property lines, and such setbacks shall not be within 20 ft of any street corner. The applicant proposes to setback the entire south end of the building 40-50 ft from the property line, in order to create the semi-public open space discussed in D-1 above.

The Board indicated receptivity to this departure, pending the resolution of the identified issues in D-1 above, and the creation of a superior open space of public benefit.

The applicant also proposes a small portion of the northeast retail corner exceed the 12 ft, and that corner also does not meet the 20 ft minimum from any corner.

The Board indicated receptivity to both aspects of this departure, in concert with their recommendation on A-10 above to increase the corner setback at this strategic location.

NOTE: The following Departure anticipates a new development standard currently found in the DRAFT South Lake Union Council Rezone:

- 2. Façade Modulation (23.48.014.D):** In brief, the DRAFT Code requires any non-residential use above 85 ft and within 15 ft of a street lot line, to display the following maximum façade lengths: 45 – 125 ft height = 150 ft maximum length; over 125 ft height = 120ft maximum length. The applicant proposes a folded façade approximately 240 ft long x 160 tall, with a sliver portion in the 15 ft setback about 7 ft (at deepest) x 195 ft long; the departure is about 45 ft width for the first 9 floors or 125 ft, and about 75 ft for the top 3 floors above 125ft. (see pg A-27)

The Board indicated non-support for the departure as shown, but receptivity if additional folds or recesses are added, in concert with their recommendations on B-1 above.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board thanked the applicants for a clear and comprehensive presentation, and unanimously recommended the project should move forwards to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.