



City of Seattle

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



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3014653

Address: 400 9th Avenue

Applicant: Jodi Patterson-O'Hare, for City Investors, II

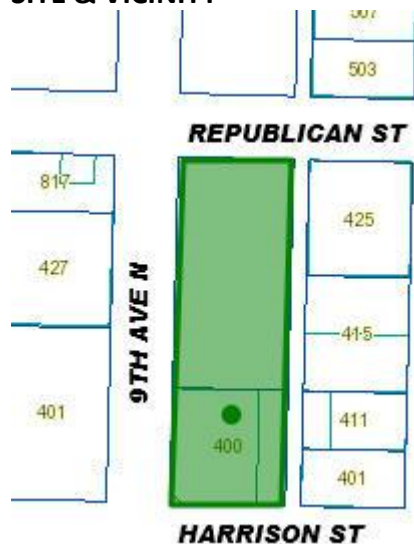
Date of EDG Meeting: Wednesday, March 13, 2013

Board Members Present: David Delfs (Chair)
Mindy Black
Jill Kurfirst

Board Members Absent: Jacob Connell
Lipika Mukerji
Magdalena Hogness

DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY



Site Zone: SM-85'

(The design presented is based upon an anticipated re-zone to SM 160/85-240)

Lot Area: The half-block site is located within the South Lake Union Urban Center, is rectangular in shape , slopes downwards from the southwest corner to the northeast corner approximately 8 feet, and totals 43,153 square feet in size.

Current Development: The south end of the site is currently occupied by a small, one-story commercial building with the bulk of the site utilized as a surface parking lot.

Access: Proposed access is off the north/south alley that extends between Harrison Street and Republican Street.

Surrounding Development: Much of the existing development along this portion of 9th Avenue N. consists of older, single-story retail commercial buildings. Veer Lofts, a newer residential building with ground floor retail is located directly to the west across 9th Avenue N. The entire block north and west of the site across Republican Street and 9th Avenue N. is occupied by recently constructed University of Washington Medicine laboratory and office buildings. Two 6-story office buildings have been proposed for the half block across Republican Street and north of the site. A 12-story mixed-use office structure is proposed for the entire half-block along 9th Avenue N. south and west of the site.

ECAs: There are no identified environmentally critical areas on or abutting the site.

Neighborhood Character: The site and area are part of the South Lake Union Urban Village which has seen, and continues to see, intensive new development, with many multi-story office and lab buildings and some multi-story residential buildings. The older face of the neighborhood is characterized by single story commercial buildings with light manufacturing and retail/ office uses. The area is also characterized by a number of large surface parking lots. 9th Avenue N. divides the “Waterfront” subarea of South Lake Union which occupies the center of the district from the “Aurora Corridor” to the west, said to be the “most undefined” area of the overall neighborhood and the one with the most eclectic variety of existing buildings.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a twelve-story mixed use building containing 312,000 square feet of office space above 6,000 square feet of retail, with four floors of underground parking for approximately 420 cars.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: March 13, 2013

DESIGN PRESENTATION

After a few comments from Hamilton Hazelhurst of Vulcan, the developer of the project, Kay Compton and Ross Leventhal from the NBBJ Architect firm and Todd Bronk, landscape architect with the Berger Partnership Made the presentation of the applicant's program and proposal to the Board and members of the public who had assembled for the meeting. Two exploratory massing schemes were at first briefly presented, each one holding the corners of the site. Scheme 1 pushed the bulk of the building's mass north on the site at 12 stories. A central core set well back from 9th Avenue N. provided the main entry to the office portion of the development and connected two larger, distinct building elements. A three story podium, occupying the south 1/5th of the site faced onto Harrison Street, extended to the alley and wrapped around the larger 12 story element for a distance along 9th Avenue. The higher portions of the building were said to be shifted north on the site to maximize the daylight exposure for Veer Lofts across 9th Avenue to the west.

Scheme 2 presented a 12-story façade the entire length of the alley and overlapped a podium that extended most of the way to 9th Avenue N. while facing onto Harrison Street. The building configuration was indented along the alley and provided with a central light well.

The third and preferred alternative was described as a "slipped bar scheme," with the office portion of the building in three distinct masses with the podium building on the south interlocked with tower portion along the alley but essentially standing as a pavilion, separated at ground level by a mid-block alley-pedestrian connection and open to a courtyard or plaza on the west side. The courtyard would provide the main entry to the office tower, which would face due south, as well as to the retail space in the "pavilion" portion of the structure. Parking access would be from the alley off of Republican Street. The plaza area, or a portion of it, would have a translucent canopy at the 35-foot height level. A curb-less portion of a protective curb bulb bringing plants and other landscape elements to the bike lane at the street would allow unfettered access to the plaza area. The lobby area and adjacent office space would be designed flexibly in order to allow for later use as retail space if desired. See the DPD Design Review website for a copy of the packet presented

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Overview/default.asp

Two departures from development standards were identified by the applicant. One was a request to allow an additional 69 feet of the façade along 9th Avenue N. to be more than 12 feet from the property line. The proposed Code revisions for the SM zone would permit only 30% (or 96 feet) to be set back more than 12 feet. (Proposed new zoning, 23.48.014, Street Level Development Standards). The other departure (more than likely four departures) would be from stipulations in proposed 23.48.013 D.1, Façade Modulation. Between 45' and 125' high, the maximum façade length located within 15' of the street property line is requested to be 159'-6" (rather than 150'), and the setback portion between façade lengths is requested to be 26' (rather than 40'). Likewise, between 125' and 160' high, a request to extend the maximum façade length allowed to 159'-6" (120') and for the setback façade length to be reduced to 26' (from 40').

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 14 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- A resident of the Veer Lofts, identifying himself as an architect, liked the slipped bar scheme which bestowed a certain elegance to the preferred scheme but thought that the 9th Avenue N. would not suffer from being shortened a bit.
- Stated that the project should provide any outdoor spaces required by code and address the hydrological demands and the security demands of the site; security lighting should be provided along the alley but carefully so as not to be disruptive to neighboring residences.
- A resident of Veer Lofts applauded the cut-through at the corner plaza and to the through-to-the-alley passageway; noted that the skin of the building was very important, especially since some of the newer structures in SLU were less than delightful; would like to see something delightful here;
- A plea on behalf of bicyclists and pedestrians for even greater effort; easy access to the plaza as a stopping and resting place important ;
- Broader community should have access to the roof gardens and vantage points within and atop the structure; think of these as public amenities;
- “Be bolder about the amount of public space”;
- Hold onto the cross-alley connection;
- As property owner to south across Harrison Street, applauded transition provided by pavilion retail space and plaza are at south edge of the office tower.

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 guidance and major directions for successful future design development.

- Provide greater modulation at street level along 9th Avenue N., greater transparency and provide for additional (if future) knockouts/ entries along that face of the building;
- Provide a more discernible sense of rhythm along the ground floor at (th Avenue N., providing for better pedestrian experience of the building;
- Provide a sense of safety and refuge for the pedestrian (and bicyclists) at the corner of 9th Avenue N. and Republican Street, a busy street, bound to get busier

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

A. Site Planning

- 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.

The response of the open space at the southwest corner and scheme for providing for a through-to-the-alley connection and future through-block connections were welcomed by the Board.

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

It was thought by the Board members that the landscaping responses, interlacing the east and the west sides of 9th Avenue N. were on the right track as was the choice to provide a large open space at the corner of Harrison Street and 9th Avenue N.. It was acknowledged that Republican Street was a busy, car-dominated arterial, destined to become even busier. The Board was concerned that the corner of 9th Avenue N. and Republican Street allow ample room for pedestrians and not become overly pinched.

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

The Board thought the open space at the southwest corner of the site was a fine move and generous in response to the presence of the Veer Lofts across 9th Avenue N.

- 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.

The massing responses to the Veer Lofts and to the Tesla building across the alley were positive moves on the part of the design team.

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

This was seen as one of the primary challenges for the project, providing amenity spaces that addressed programmatic needs for building entries while also providing comfort and security for the neighbors. It was important to provide clear spatial signs that the southeast corner space was intended for public use as would be the alley connector. The Board cautioned that the structure required by the covering or canopy over a portion of the amenity space not become so massive as to discourage passage or dalliance.

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.

The Board agreed that the best strategy was shifting the bulk of the building to the north on the site while stepping the major mass of the building back from Harrison Street as well as setting the west façade back from 9th Avenue N. as proposed. The Board expressed a willingness to recommend approval of the departures requested from modulation restrictions along the 9th Avenue façade provided the seam between the tower and base was maintained and that the design team return with a more fully developed and convincing presentation of the podium level along 9th Avenue N., one that addressed concerns expressed about the impressions given of an unfriendly planer wall, lacking in variation, flexibility for future moves and for providing positive interactions with the pedestrian realm along the 9th Avenue sidewalk..

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board acknowledged that the preferred design embodied a desirable sense of deference both to the Veer Lofts and block of lower structures across Harrison Street to the south.

- 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.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting the Board discussed the need to create a unified building that provided a synthesis between the podium, pavilion and office tower and thought the model in particular indicated a clear indication of moving in the direction of this desired synthesis.

- 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 noted that the questions of scale and human interaction were matters of special concern along that portion of the structure along 9th Avenue N. north of the plaza area.

- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials. Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.**

The Board indicated that the examples of “stitchery” of cladding materials shown both in the packet and the presentation provided the right direction for design development and provided strong suggestions crucial to a successful engaging design of the base of the structure along 9th Avenue N.

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.**

As noted in earlier discussions, the Board indicated particular concerns regarding the comfort and security of pathways leading to and from the alley and the openness and invitational quality of the amenity space at the southwest corner of the site.

- D-2 Blank Walls. Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.**

In choosing this Guideline as one of highest priority, the Board expressed concern for the appearance of the 9th Avenue N. and Republican Street facades, noting that even a transparent glass wall, unless assisted and abetted by other design elements at a human scale, especially including those that impart an engaging rhythm, can actually be devoid of pedestrian comfort and interest.

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

There were no particular concerns expressed by members of the public or the Board regarding personal safety or security issues other than those ordinarily connected to the adequacy of nighttime lighting, etc.

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

This should be considered, somewhat obliquely, in light of the proposal to create a connection to the alley at mid block and to create a special environment within and along the alley at that point.

- 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.**

The lighting should be designed to enhance the ground plane and to provide a glow rather than a glare for neighbors to the project . The Board expects the design team to come back with a lighting strategy that provides for that goal.

- 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.**

The Board awaits a fuller explanation and demonstration of the strategy , particularly as it applies to the covered space of the through-to-the-alley connection.

E. Landscaping

- 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.**

The Board expects the design team to proceed along the direction of the plans shown, with fuller details as the building’s design matures.

- 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.**

The Board awaits further details of the landscaping at plaza and terrace levels of the structure and would like the design team to address the possibility of allowing some public access to an upper terrace level as well as to spaces already indicated.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board’s recommendation on the requested departures will be based upon the Board’s evaluation of departures’ potential to help the project better meet the Board’s guidance and these design guideline priorities and their contributions to achieve a better overall design than

could be achieved without the departures. Members of the Board indicated their willingness to look favorably on the requested departures because of the gestures already undertaken to ensure a quality design. A final recommendation on the requested departures, however, will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

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