



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

Project Number: 3014750

Address: 201 Westlake Avenue N.

Applicant: Steve Jones, Ankrom Moisan Architects, for McFarlane Partners

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, March 20, 2013

Board Members Present: Mindy Black Chair)
Magdalena Hogness
Jill Kurfirst
Lipika Mukerji

Board Member Absent: Jacob Connell
David Delfs

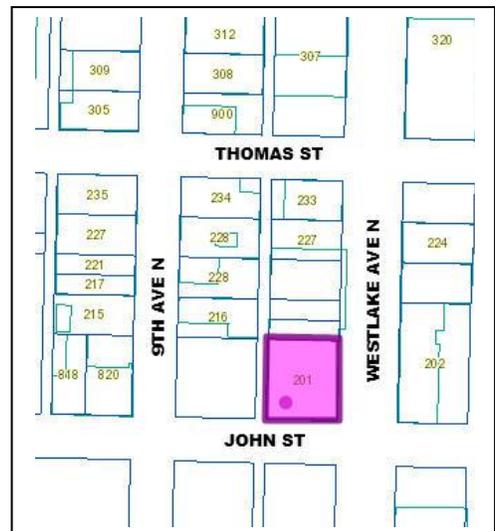
DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM-85'

Nearby Zones: (North) SM-85'
(South) SM-125'
(East) SM-85'
(West) SM-85'

Lot Area: The site is rectangular in shape ,
relatively flat and totals 12,960 square
feet in size.



Current Development: The site is currently occupied by a one-story commercial building that is due for demolition. There are no trees on site, but there are five existing mature street trees on John Street and Westlake Avenue N.

Access: There is an alley directly west of the site proposed as access to the site.

Surrounding Development: Directly to the north of the site is an older, existing single-story brick building that is functionally attached to a newer, medium height office building. Directly across John Street to the south is a playfield, and Denny Park, Seattle's first and oldest park, lies directly southwest of the site. Denny Avenue, separating South Lake Union from the Downtown area, lies one block to the south. The Westlake neighborhood, within the larger South Lake Union area, is characterized by a mixture of older commercial buildings open parking lots and newer development. A surface parking lot lies to the west just across the north/south-running alley.

ECAs: There are no identified environmentally critical areas on or abutting the site. The site is generally level along Westlake Avenue N., but rises approximately 4 feet from its southwest to its northeast corner.

Neighborhood Character: The site lies along the central spine of South Lake Union just to the north of the gateway intersection of Denny Way and Westlake Avenue. An older pattern of development, intermittently in place, is that of low scale commercial buildings and surface parking lots. Newer mixed-use buildings, with commercial/retail space at grade and office above are gradually overlaying the older pattern throughout much of the vicinity. A series of improvements along Westlake Avenue N., a Class 1 Pedestrian Street, including a trolley and dedicated bicycle pathways as well as emphases on making the area between Denny Way and the lake more pedestrian friendly have enhanced the livability of the area and its standing not only as a place to work but a place to reside as well. The area has a "Walkscore" of 97, a "Transitscore" of 100, and a "Bikescore" of 86."

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a seven-story residential building containing approximately 80 residential units, 3,400 square feet of retail space at grade and parking for approximately 48 vehicles.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: March 20, 2013

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Steve Jones of Ankrom Moisan Architects introduced the project on behalf of the design team to the Board and members of the public attending the meeting. After explaining opportunities offered and constraints of the site and the general objectives of the intended program, he identified individual design guidelines which the design team thought of special importance for the proposal: A-1, A-2, B-1, C-1, D-1, and E-1.

Three different massing schemes were then presented by the applicant team. The first was described as a design that “maximizes the site’s development potential and one that would create a strong corner presence at the intersection of Westlake Avenue N. and John Street.

A second scheme provided a notch midway along the north façade and an even greater notch out of the upper floors at the southwest corner of the proposed structure. The latter move allowed for a large, shared outdoor amenity area on the third level with a strong visual connection from there to Denny Park. As with the first scheme, this scheme was thought to negatively impact the solar access to the neighboring building to the north.

The third scheme presented a strong corner element at the street intersection, set the upper levels back along both John Street and Westlake Avenue N., and provided for setback along John Street between the alley and the strong corner element while establishing a “residential scale” along that street front. A shared outdoor amenity space facing to the west and onto the alley would be accessed at the third level in a sizeable notch at the northwest corner of the proposed structure.

The applicant noted that the preferred scheme would not require the granting of any departures from the Land Use Code.

PUBLIC COMMENT

After asking some clarifying questions of the applicant, the Board elicited comments from members of the public. Only one had signed in to become a party of record. He represented the interests of the office building to the north of the site and noted that the preferred scheme would be the kindest to them in terms of light/shadows and requested that something interesting be done with the north façade since that would be the blank wall, or nearly blank wall that would be facing them.

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 Citywide Design Guidelines 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 corner of the building at Westlake and John needs to be prominent and the treatment of that corner as a gateway, as shown in the preferred scheme, was championed and encouraged. The board further encouraged the “greening” or other striking treatment of the north façade in keeping with the public comment in that regard.

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

The project appears to respect the relationship with the two street fronts well and the Board encouraged development of the two facades along these street keeping with the differing tonalities (John Street being the quieter) of the two streets.

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

Location of the residential entrance on John Street was discussed as being more in keeping with the differentiation of the two streets. Its exact location and treatment would be of special importance to the success of the project.

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

The applicants had not chosen this to be a priority, but the board would like to make sure that there was a thoughtful division of street level uses and spaces to differentiate the two streets.

- 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.**

In choosing this to be of high priority in guiding the design, the Board had briefly discussed the opportunity to provide something truly creative on the north façade that would respond to the concerns expressed by the neighbor who attended the meeting.

- A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to minimize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.**

The treatment of the private ledge open spaces above John Street was important to convey the relationship to Denny Park. The treatment and appointments of the common amenity space at the northwest corner, how it related functionally to the whole building, was vital for its success and the Board would be waiting to see how the details of these areas were worked out in the design since they would be key elements for the refinement of the proposal.

- 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.**

The Board felt that the applicants were on the right path concerning the tower element gateway presence at the corner. At the ground level, activating the actual corner with a retail use was more important than thinking of that as a residential entry spot. This would mean carefully addressing questions regarding “wrapping” the corner and activating the corner with appropriate interior uses and division of commercial spaces in order to encourage human activities and provide a better transition between the building and the street.

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 was agreed that the best scheme was that of the preferred design, but members would be expecting some creative thinking regarding the exact relationships worked out between the north face in terms of treatment—modulation, fenestration, blank walls, wall materials, etc.

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 noted that there might be a lack of any “well-defined and desirable character” strictly speaking, especially since it was a neighborhood in transition, nevertheless there was a richly various context and ample opportunities for a tip of the hat here or there and there might even be some elements from newer structures which might be taken into consideration in the design.

- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency. Building design elements, details and massings should create a well proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept.**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting the Board encouraged a variety of unit types that could be integrated into the building they were proposing.

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.**

This was one of the applicant’s priority guidelines and Board members commented that while the applicants were proposing the main residential entry on Westlake Avenue N., they would like to see a more thorough investigation into the location and distribution of retail spaces and an examination of locating the residential entry on John Street, the more obvious residential street.

- 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.**

The Board considered this to be particularly applicable to the design of the north-facing façade.

- 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.**

This was directed by the Board to the “storefronts” proposed, their locations relative to the division of commercial space and to the preferred residential entry location.

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.**

There appears to be plenty of opportunities for landscaping not only at the street level but as part of the amenity spaces above ground. The applicant is encouraged to work with SDOT regarding the health of the existing street trees and to make a determination of the distinctive characters of landscaping to be provided on Westlake Avenue N. and on John Street.

- E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions. The landscape design should take advantage of special onsite conditions, such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.**

This guideline was chosen by the Board to be of highest priority since they believed the presence of the adjacent street trees and their integration within an overall landscape design posed special challenges for landscaping design both off and on site.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, no departures were requested.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended that the project should move forward to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.

At the next meeting the Board would expect to see much more fully developed and detailed renderings especially of the street-level pedestrian experience of the east and south facades.