



City of Seattle

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



INITIAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3015022 (Major Revision to 3013154)

Address: 2101 Seventh Avenue

Applicant: John Savo, NBBJ for Amazon

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, May 21, 2013

Board Members Present: Gabe Grant (Chair)
Matthew Albores
Murphy McCullough
Gundula Proksch

Board Members Absent: Pragnesh Parikh

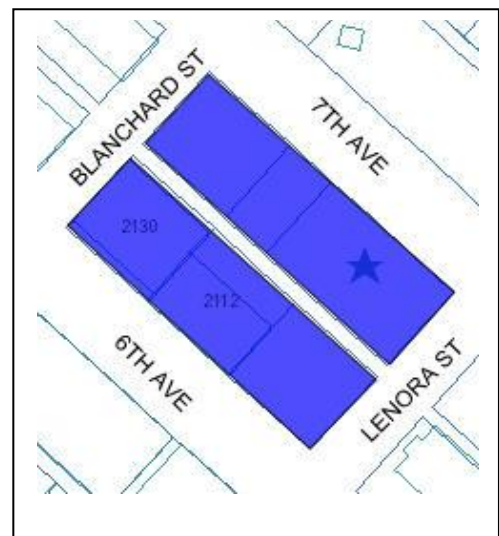
DPD Staff Present: Lisa Rutzick

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DOC 2 500/300-500

Nearby Zones: North: DMC 340/290-400
South: DOC 2 500/300-500
East: DMC 240/290-400
West: DMC 240/290-400

Lot Area: Block 19 77,760 SF



Current Development: Vacant lot serving as the construction staging area for Block 14.

Access: The block is bound by streets on all four sides. An alley vacation was approved under the previous permit.

Surrounding Development: Variety of surface parking lots, office and residential buildings.

Neighborhood Character: The development site is located within the Denny Triangle Urban Center. The site has convenient to public transportation including light rail, bus and streetcar, and easily accessed by autos, cyclists and pedestrians. The site is within three city blocks from Westlake Center and the Westlake Station of the downtown tunnel carrying metro bus and light rail traffic. The streetcar line runs along Westlake Avenue which borders two of the three blocks. The streetcar stops near the epicenter of the site at the intersection of Westlake and 7th Avenues. Regular bus service is provided along Virginia and Stewart Streets and 3rd and 5th Avenues. With dedicated bike lanes in both directions, 7th Avenue is a primary bike corridor in and out of downtown Seattle and bike traffic criss-crosses the neighborhood on multiple streets, including Blanchard and Virginia Streets as well as 6th Avenue. The site is also accessible to I-5 via Stewart and Olive Streets and to SR99 via 6th and 7th Avenues. When the new SR-99 project is constructed, northbound traffic on SR99 will be able to exit onto Republican Street. Access to North bound SR-99 will be from Aurora Avenue and South bound via Sixth Avenue.

The building typology in this area is varied, with a combination of low to high-rise commercial, office and residential buildings of varying ages, older single story commercial development, and medical and office uses. Architectural character is varied.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Revision to previously approved MUP #3013154 consisting of a change in design of the east structure. Revised project description: Land Use Application to allow a 5-story building ranging in height from 80 ft. to 95 ft. containing office and ground level retail. Minor revisions to site, parking and 38 story building also proposed. A total of 1,123,052 sq. ft. of administrative office is proposed on the block. Environmental Review, Planned Community Development and Early Design Guidance were conducted under 3013154.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: May 21, 2013

The Initial Recommendation packet 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 contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

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

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

The proposed re-design of the lower office building includes three asymmetrical glass spheres of that are interconnected and contain planted atrium and office work spaces. Three retail spaces are proposed at the 6th Avenue frontage, the 7th Avenue frontage and midway along Lenora Street. The revised design allows more solar access to the midblock open space and necessitated a redesign of the open space to accommodate the new building footprint. The same programmatic functions, including the dog park, the accessible route of travel through the block, and the field area will continue in approximately the same square footages. The covered walkway linking the lower office building to the office tower has been widened to allow more covered area and tables with seating.



PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments, issues and concerns were raised at the Initial Recommendation meeting:

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Building Base & Building Form:

- a. The Board agreed that the innovative building design should extend to the pedestrian level. The pedestrian level should be as interesting and alluring as the building above the first floor. (C-1, C-2)
- b. The Board learned that the garage elevators have been relocated from the lower building to the main office tower. Employees will still need to transfer elevators and circulate along the midblock open space, but they will no longer cross the width of the open space. The Board felt this was a significant design move in the previous scheme because it necessitated human activation of the open space. The Board agreed that the new program of the re-designed lower building on this block to become a central meeting work and area for all Amazon employees working throughout the Denny Triangle and South Lake Union area, serves the same function of activating the open space. (C-1)
- c. The Board would like to see more information for this building in context and how the design responds to with the neighboring blocks and buildings. (B-1)
- d. The Board noted that the revised retail space at the base of the office tower appeared a bit odd, and further exploration of creating viable retail space and dimensions is needed. (C-1)
- e. The Board encouraged pushing a unique design forward and stretching the boundaries of architectural innovation.

2. Lenora Street Pedestrian Experience:

- a. The Board expressed concern that the Lenora Street experience lacked attention and interest at the pedestrian level. Care has been taken to activate the 6th and 7th Avenue facing portions of the building, as well as the midblock open space. Similar consideration should be provided on the Lenora facing elevation, which is arguably the most public facing side of the building. (C-1, C-2)
- b. The Board was also concerned with the loss of the overhead weather protection along Lenora Street – a feature which encourages pedestrian circulation along the building edges. This loss, combined with the lack of clarity of the ground level design, should be addressed in the next design iteration. (C-1, C-5)
- c. The Board strongly encouraged a ground level design that includes greater porosity of the building at the sidewalk to encourage interaction between the pedestrian realm and the building interior. (C-1, C-2)
- d. The Board was unclear about how the building forms actually meet the ground plane and the resulting pedestrian experience. The Board recommended providing detailed information on this aspect of the project at the next meeting. (C-1, C-2)

- e. The Board suggested that the green zone surrounding the building should be interrupted in key locations with hardscape design providing pedestrian areas close to the building, particularly at the retail areas. (C-1, C-4, D-3)
- f. The Board suggested exploration of a midblock crossing through the building to connect Lenora directly to the park open space located between the office buildings. (C-1, D-1)

3. Development of the Ground Level Open Space:

- a. The Board was very pleased with the direction of the open space revisions. (C-1, D-1)
- b. The Board stressed that the park should be emphasized as the heart of the block and the proposed building be treated as a special object within the park. (C-1, D-1)
- c. The Board encouraged the integration of seat walls around the perimeter of the flat open space field area to create a functional use in the transitional area from steps to the field. (C-1, D-1)
- d. The Board was pleased with the increased visual and physical access to the open space from the site corners, which have opened up as a result of the rounded building forms. (C-1, D-1)

4. Ground Level Retail:

- a. The Board noted that the alluring building form will beckon visitors to the site. The retail spaces should engage with the whole building concept. Creating connections between the retail uses and the building’s green interior is important. (C-1)

5. Next Meeting:

- a. The Board would like to see details and dimensions of the retail spaces. This includes the revised retail space in the office tower facing 7th Avenue.
- b. Elevations of approximately the first six floors of all of the building should be prepared for the Board.
- c. Study of a potential mid-block crossing from Lenora Street.
- d. Graphics demonstrating the proposed design in context with nearby blocks and buildings.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The Board identified the following Citywide Design Guidelines of highest priority for this project.

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.

B. Architectural Expression – Relating to the Neighborhood Context

- 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.
- 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.

C. The Streetscape – Creating the Pedestrian Environment

- 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.
- 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.
- C-3 **Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades.** Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.
- C-4 **Reinforce Building Entries.** To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce the building’s entry.
- 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.

D. Public Amenities – Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 – Minimizing the Adverse Impacts

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

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 Initial Recommendation meeting for the Major Revision, the following departures were requested:

1. **Upper Level Development (SMC 23.49.056.B2):** The Code requires that the maximum length of a façade without modulation located within 15 feet of a property line is 80 feet

long for the portion of a façade above 500 feet. On Block 19, the applicant proposes the façade length to be 90 feet long and un-modulated above an elevation of 500 feet.

Under the previous MUP, the Board voted unanimously in support for the proposed departure allowing the form and massing of the tower to establish a strong design concept that will contribute to the continuity of development among the three blocks. The Board continued to support the rationale outlined above. (A-1, A-2, B-4)

- 2. Upper Level Facade Setback Limits (SMC 23.49.058.F):** The Code requires continuous upper level setbacks of 15 feet along designated Green Streets at a height of 45 feet. On Block 19, the departure request would be to allow an architectural element that is approx. 18 inches thick to project into the upper level setback at an elevation of 45 feet. The element is five feet deep and will be set back 10 feet from the street property line.

Under the previous MUP, the Board voted unanimously in favor of the departure request finding that the projecting architectural element will allow a major architectural feature of the façade to continue uninterrupted along the entire length of the Blanchard Street elevation, creating a strong and desirable design element. **This departure is no longer needed under the current revised design.**

- 3. Loading Berth Requirements (SMC 23.54.035.C2):** The Code requires a loading berth size to be 10'x35'. The applicant proposes to provide half of the loading berths at the full size and the other half at a van size (8'-6"x19'0"). The proposed design requests the following departures:

Block 19: two 10'x35' loading berths, two 10'x25' loading berths, six van sized spaces 8'6"x19' (five below grade and one at grade)

Under the previous MUP, the Board voted unanimously in favor of the departure request based on information provided documenting the projected delivery types and sizes of the tenant as able to be well accommodated with the proposed loading berth sizes. Additionally, information was provided examining the loading berth usage at other comparable office buildings and concluded that the proposed loading berth provisions would accommodate potential future building users. The Board continued to support the rationale outlined above. (C-1, C-3)

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the Initial Recommendation meeting, the Board recommended moving to a Second Recommendation meeting.