



# City of Seattle

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



## FINAL 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, October 22, 2013

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

Board Members Absent: Pragnesh Parikh

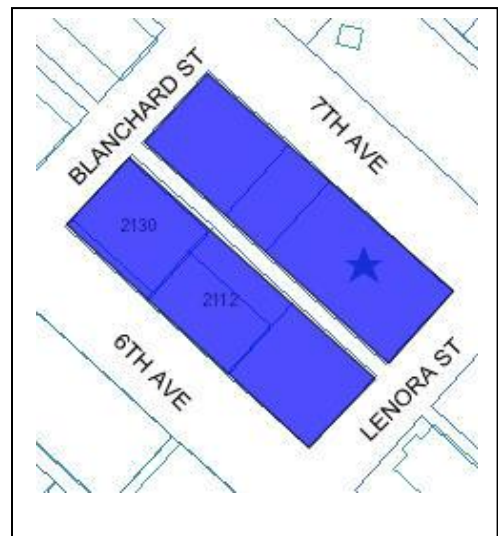
DPD Staff Present: Lisa Rutzick

### 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, which is under construction across Lenora Street.

**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 are 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](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](mailto: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 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue frontage, the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **SECOND RECOMMENDATION MEETING: AUGUST 20, 2013**

The Second 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](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).  
or contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

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Seattle, WA 98124

**Email:** [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)



While the forms remain spherical, the glass skin pattern has developed to follow a repeating Catalan Sphere shape that is made up of irregular flat glass fragments. This shape is replicated within the inner self-supporting building structure consisting of structural steel modules. The retail spaces have been consolidated towards the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue frontages. The open space includes similar functions and programming, but the design has been revised to better define these areas. 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 and completely redesigned to reflect the design of the spheres and appear as more of an extension of that architecture.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following comments, issues and concerns were raised at the Second Recommendation meeting:

- The design is remarkable and will become a destination.
- The design and presentation were very well done. Including overhead canopies on Lenora does not make sense given the building architecture. Intrigued with the tree inspired canopy structure connecting the two buildings. Agrees that finding the right retailers for these retail locations will be a challenge. Supportive of the departure requests. Pleased with the design trajectory of the project.

## **PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Building Base & Building Form:**

- a. The Board agreed that the evolved form of the spheres included a very interesting and innovative structural system. The Board noted that the juxtaposition of the transparent, flat glass panel glazing system of the skin with the interior freestanding structural system. (B-4, C-2)

- b. The Board encouraged exploration of the structural members using varying depths to further express the organic design concept. (B-4, C-2)
- c. The Board encouraged the building to be as energy efficient as possible in an effort to support and enhance the bold innovative architecture.

## **2. Lenora Street Pedestrian Experience:**

- a. The Board agreed that continuous overhead protection along Lenora would detract from the architecture of the spheres. (C-5)
- b. The Board felt, however, that overhead protection should be provided at the entry points or at the seating areas along Lenora. The Board also encouraged enhancing the overhead protection across Lenora on Block 14. (C-5)
- c. The Board was pleased with the seating opportunities provided along Lenora to provide pocket spaces for moments of pause and further developing the concept of the *object within a park* with the landscaping and seating wrapping around to the Lenora side of the block. (A-1, B-1)

## **3. Development of the Ground Level Open Space:**

- a. The Board noted that the canopy structure connecting the spheres to the tower may be too thin in comparison with the structural members of the spheres. The Board encouraged the canopy fabrication system to be expressed as a continuation of the sphere's internal structures. (C-1, D-1, D-2)
- b. The Board agreed that the design of the canopy and connecting element is elegant in the manner that it fans out over the plaza space and edges of the dog park to provide a combination of overhead protection and visual interest, while extending the architectural concept. (C-1, D-1, D-2)
- c. The Board encouraged the vegetated buffer surrounding the perimeter of the building be less homogeneously dimensioned and instead be varied to create more organic shaped planting beds, as well as to respond to specific ground level conditions, such as entry pathways. The Board suggested inclusion of specific locations where pedestrians can come right to the building façade on hardscape, to encourage public interaction with the development. (C-1, D-1, D-2)
- d. The Board would like to see detailed sections of the Lenora experience at the next meeting (similar to page 20 of the booklet) showing sidewalk, landscaped and hardscaped area, and building section. (C-1, D-1, D-2)

## **4. Ground Level Retail:**

- a. The Board emphasized that the retail entries should be treated with the same rigor and experiential details that are present throughout the development. The retail entries are the most apparent opportunities for public engagement to occur. (C-1, C-3, C-4, D-3)
- b. The Board would like to review detailed elevations associated with the actual entry points. (C-1, C-4, D-3)
- c. The Board encouraged an observable gap between the retail ceiling and the building skin as shown on page 20 of the presentation booklet to allow visibility at the retail entry points to the unique qualities of the structure and space. (C-1, C-4, D-3)

- d. The Board clearly stated that the retail spaces should be well-considered to accommodate functional and successful retail activity. Part of this consideration demands that the pinch points within the retail configuration need to be resolved. (C-1, C-4, D-3)

**5. Access :**

- a. The Board was very supportive of moving the driveway away from Lenora to another location. The Board understanding that this is part of an on-going discussion with SDOT. (E-1, E-3)
- b. The Board will continue to be interested in how pedestrian safety and ground level engagement and visual interest will be addressed in the revised driveway location. (E-1, E-3, D-6)

**6. Exterior Treatment of Tower:**

- a. The Board agreed that proposed colors provided a dynamic and fresh palette, as well as combination of patterns and textures. (A-2, B-4, C-2)
- b. The Board would like to see additional detail at the next meeting, including elevations of the previously approved design in contrast with the current proposal. (A-2, B-4, C-2)

**FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: OCTOBER 22, 2013**

The Final 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](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

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The building technology has continued to be refined using a combination of rolled steel tube, flat steel plates and cast steel to make up the filigree pattern within the glass shrouded spheres. The landscape plan has been further developed to include furniture that echoes the fractal geometry pattern of the spheres, colored concrete pathways to the entrances and pockets of native plant materials that correspond to the interior planting materials. The main entry to the tower has been shifted towards inward and the retail space at the tower corner increased. The overhead canopy that connects the spheres to the tower has been re-shaped to respond to the new entry location. The mid-block plaza has been opened up with additional stairs, seating and a more direct ADA circulation route through the block.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following comments, issues and concerns were raised at the Final Recommendation meeting:

- Pleased with the design refinements and agree with the proposed access changes, retail configuration and public spaces.

## PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Building Base & Building Form:

- a. The majority of the Board agreed that the building design has evolved to be unique, innovative and attractive and the refinements have been very well executed. (B-4)
- b. The Board was pleased with the combination of steel structural members using varying depths to further express the organic design concept. (B-4, C-2)

### 2. Lenora Street Pedestrian Experience:

- a. The Board agreed that continuous overhead protection along Lenora would detract from the architecture of the spheres. (C-5)
- b. The Board agreed that the deep recessed entry points to the retail spaces in the spheres provide some overhead protection at the block corners. The Board also noted that the deep overhead protection across Lenora on Block 14 would be an option for pedestrians during inclement weather. (C-5)
- c. The Board continued to be pleased with the seating opportunities provided along Lenora to provide pocket spaces for moments of pause and further developing the concept of the *object within a park* using landscaping and seating that wrap around to the Lenora side of the block. (A-1, B-1)

### 3. Development of the Ground Level Open Space:

- a. The Board agreed that the design of the canopy structure and connecting element is elegant in the manner that it fans out over the plaza space and edges of the dog park to provide a combination of overhead protection and visual interest, while extending the architectural concept. The Board continued to support this design as it has evolved into a slightly different configuration to meet the tower building entrance. See Presentation Booklet Pages 10 and 11. (C-1, D-1, D-2)
- b. The Board was pleased with the more organically shaped buffer surrounding the perimeter of the building, which provides variation in the planting beds, and responds to specific ground level conditions, such as entry pathways. (D-2, D-3)
- c. The Board acknowledged that the paved locations where pedestrians can come right to the building façade on hardscape is limited by the overhead clearance of the spherical shape. Pedestrian access to the façade would encourage public interaction with the development, but the Board agreed that even this level of proximity is an important aspect of the building and site design. (C-1, D-1, D-2)

### 4. Ground Level Retail:

- a. The Board was supportive of the detail provided for the retail entries to provide the experiential details that are present throughout the development. The retail entries are the most apparent opportunities for public engagement to occur. (C-1, C-3, C-4, D-3)
- b. The Board appreciated the recessed retail entryways where pedestrian would have the opportunity to pass through a glassy, transparent portion of the building with views to interstitial landscaping and the building structure. See Presentation Booklet Pages 7, 12, 14, and 16. (C-1, C-4, D-3)

- c. The Board continued to strongly support the observable gap between the retail ceiling and the building skin as shown on page 20 of the presentation booklet, to allow visibility at the retail entry points to the unique qualities of the structure and space. See Presentation Booklet Pages 12 and 14. (C-1, C-4, D-3)
- d. The Board was convinced that the location and configuration of retail spaces are well-considered to accommodate functional and successful retail activity. (C-1, C-4, D-3)

**5. Access :**

- a. The Board was very supportive of moving the driveway away from Lenora to Blanchard. (E-1, E-3)
- b. The Board was satisfied that pedestrian safety and ground level engagement and visual interest was addressed in the re-design of this streetscape due to the revised driveway location in the following ways (E-1, E-3, D-6):
  - A cycle track has been included along Blanchard Street, along with a lush landscape buffer enhancing the Blanchard Green Street. The Board was somewhat concerned with the combined curb cut at the corner (of 6<sup>th</sup> and Blanchard) that both pedestrians and cyclists will utilize and encouraged a design that will allow this shared use to occur safely.
  - Three pockets of midblock seating have been included, as well as street light fixtures that will continue the design established at the neighboring VIA6 development to the west.
  - The overhead canopy wraps the retail corners on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> onto Blanchard.
  - The ground level façade has been redesigned to pull down the colored glass and the white horizontal frit lines used in the tower above. This composition is overlaid with the vertical fins of the podium levels, which have one color painted on one side of the fin and another on the opposite side to create a sense of movement and interest that varies based on the viewpoint.
  - The loading area is now separated by a 5’ deep hallway which will be painted a series of bright colors to provide visual interest as one moves along the street front.

**6. Exterior Treatment of Tower:**

- a. The Board agreed that the proposed colors, the combination of patterns, and the variety of textures provided a dynamic and fresh palette. (A-2, B-4, C-2)

**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**

At the time of the Final Recommendation meeting for the Major Revision, the following departures were requested. The Board’s recommendation was based upon the departures’ potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departures.

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 Width Limits (SMC 23.49.058.C):** The Code requires a 145-foot long maximum façade width for any portion of a building above 240 feet. The proposed tower design has been modified and proposes an additional ten feet of building width between 334 feet in height (floor 18) and 444 feet in height (floor 25).

This is a new departure proposed as part of the re-design effort. The Board voted unanimously in support of this departure as it results in better tower massing and proportions. (B-4)

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 two of the loading berths at the full size, two at reduced length and the remaining loading berths at a van size (8'-6"x19'0"). The proposed loading berths include the following dimensions:
  - Two loading berths measuring 10'x35',
  - Two loading berths measuring 10'x25', and
  - Six van sized spaces measuring 8'6"x19' (five located 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 approval of the proposed design without any recommended conditions.**