



City of Seattle

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



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3015251

Address: 600 Wall Street (at 6th and Denny Way)

Applicant: Denis Henmi, of Kwan Henmi Architecture, for Laconia LLC

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, November 05, 2013

Board Members Present: Gabe Grant (Chair)
Kathryn Armstrong (substitute)
Murphy McCullough
Gundula Proksch

Board Members Absent: Mathew Albores
Pragnesh Parikh

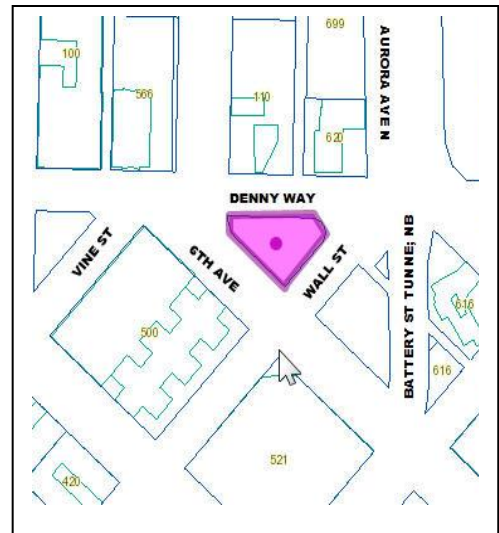
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMC 240/290-400

Nearby Zones: (North) SM-85
(South) DMC 240/290-400
(East) DMC 240/290-400
(West) DMR/R-125/65

Lot Area: 10,655 sf triangle; flat



Current Development: Surface parking lot

Access: Triangular lot fronting north onto Denny Way, southwest onto 6th Avenue, and southeast onto Wall Street. No alley on site; SDOT has prohibited vehicular access off Denny. Pedestrian access from all three sides.

Surrounding Development: The site is bordered by an 18 story residential tower across 6th Avenue to the southwest, a 3 story office/educational use is one block to the south, and a newer 8 story hotel across Denny Way to the north. The adjacent site to the southeast and others beyond are surface parking lots, but these are under development, including the twin 41 story Insignia condo towers under construction one block south.

ECAs: None

Neighborhood Character: This strategic, highly visible site is surrounded by the dynamic, mixed use districts of Belltown, Uptown and South Lake Union, serving residents, workers, and tourists. The Seattle Center and iconic Space Needle are about a quarter mile northwest of the site. All three adjacent streets are classified Class 2 Pedestrian Streets and Principal arterials; Denny Way is especially busy with vehicles. The vicinity contains a mix of commercial and residential structures of various styles and eras, but they generate a consistently pedestrian friendly public realm, especially to the south and west.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is proposing a 400 ft, 39 story residential tower of approximately 310 units in the top 33 levels, including amenity space and a large ground floor lobby, and approximately 1,800 sf of ground level retail. Five levels of automated parking above the ground floor and 5 below grade (total about 284 spaces) are proposed, with 2 access ramps; one down from 6th and one up from the P1 level to Wall St.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: November 5, 2013
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DESIGN PRESENTATION

The EDG packet includes materials presented at the EDG 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

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following comments, issues and concerns were raised at the Early Design Review meeting:

- Cautioned the above grade parking has translucent glass screening and lighting that could distract drivers or be too garish; (applicants clarified it will be subtle lighting changes to mimic the coming-and-going of residents in typical units).
- Stated the existing Denny sidewalk is too narrow, and encouraged more walkable surface width, especially if adjacent uses are commercial and could spill out onto the sidewalk.
- Suggested the 400 ft height is too tall for the context.
- Encouraged the addition of balconies and other scale and relief on the facades, which currently look too 'office-like' and should appear more residential.

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 (the Board) provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the following Downtown Design Guidelines of **highest priority for this project**.

The Priority Downtown guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text of all guidelines please visit the [Design Review website](#).

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how this strategic site, while small and constrained, offers exceptional visibility and prominence in the city, and thus deserves a persuasive design concept that responds to that unusual site and its context. The Board requested more understanding of how the context and street level patterns inform the lower levels and tower massing, beyond a pure extrusion. The acute corners will be very prominent at proximate and distant viewpoints, so they require special analysis, and may be different expressions based on the specific

conditions of this 'pivot' between grids. Also see comments under B-2 about the podium scale.

- A-2 **Enhance the Skyline.** Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the building, especially the top, would be visible from many locations and distances, including the sizable traffic flowing east and west on Denny Way, north-south on Aurora, and the Mercer Street off-ramp. To fully test the tower top and profile on the skyline, future meetings should include multiple perspective simulations from key locations.

B. Architectural Expression

Relating to the Neighborhood Context

- B-2 **Create a Transition in Bulk & Scale.** Compose the massing of the building to create a transition to the height, bulk, and scale of development in neighboring or nearby less intensive zones.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board commented that the immediate context is diverse, but exhibits an important 'urban' podium datum of 5-7 stories, which is currently not expressed in the proposal. This height also corresponds with the proposed parking/studios above grade, which should be expressed more authentically, especially the two-story studios at the corners. To confirm the relationship of uses to facades, future meetings should include large scale cross sections of the first 7 floors at several locations, including the streetscape to curb, and corresponding façade treatments side-by-side with the scale sections.

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the parking program and functions of the lower section of the tower at length. While supportive of the efficiencies of the proposed robotic parking, the Board agreed any above grade parking is undesirable, since it replaces truly active facades and human uses. To fully

understand the constraints, the Board requested the following explanations at future meetings:

- sections to better understand why the proposed system is not used deeper than B6 on the south and east robotic banks, opposite the tunnel constraint (to reduce/eliminate the amount of parking above-grade);
- description of why the storage lockers and mechanical rooms on levels 2-6 cannot be replaced with more activating studios;
- diagrams of ramps and precise car movements on B1; and
- convenient provision of bikes and car-share (on B-1 or 1) to reduce/minimize the high parking ratio in this dense urban location.

The Board also discussed the facades of the parking/studio floors at length, and was concerned they display a confusing design logic. The Board agreed the 2 story studios add an important double scale, and should be expressed as 2 stories, while the parking portions between (if retained) should not be disguised like glass residential units. The large framing elements above these floors create scale, but they should not simply emerge from the ground, and maybe they should be different on 1 or 2 sides of the triangle. There was particular concern about the 160 ft width and absence of deep modulation along the Denny wall (see departure #1 comments).

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the corner bulb-outs and expanded streetscape proposed, but was concerned the ground level uses and design treatment do not support the positive streetscape created by these dimensions, in particular at the enlarged northeast and southwest bulb-outs. The two commercial spaces appear shallow and hardly viable, and the Board requested more commercial uses along the Wall Street frontage. The Board requested the walkable sidewalk on Denny Way be widened, and/or the storefront be set back more.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the entire podium and ground floor facades require a design concept independent of the extruded tower above, incorporating maximized active uses at grade and the special opportunity of a triangular site seen fully from all sides (eg not boxed into a typical block).

- C-3 Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades.** Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the small parking portals and their basic two locations, and agreed transparent glass showing the operating car lifts would provide positive activation at the street and podium levels. The Board was concerned about the large square footage of residential ‘support spaces’ at grade, beyond a typical lobby and internal mailroom, and requested an explanation why the support spaces could not be located above the compressed and valuable street level.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the expanded sidewalks and bulb-outs, and requested more detailed information on the plant species, pavers, furnishings, lighting and other landscape details at future meetings.

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the bulb-outs, working in conjunction with the adjacent building edges and commercial uses, are the prime opportunity for public place-making on this site, and to repair an existing dead zone with no pedestrian amenity. This distinctive triangular site at the grid-shift, provides cues for a memorable site-specific landscape design of these bulb –outs, expressing the transition between neighborhoods.

E. Vehicular Access & Parking

Minimizing the Adverse Impacts

- E-2 Integrate Parking Facilities.** Minimize the visual impact of parking by integrating parking facilities with surrounding development. Incorporate architectural treatments or suitable landscaping to provide for the safety and comfort of people using the facility as well as those walking by.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board understood the parking portal locations are possibly optimum, but requested detailed and dimensioned sections to better understand the curving position and height of the ramps to level B1. If possible, the ramps should be re-positioned to increase the size, depth and viability of all commercial spaces.

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board was very concerned that services such as transformer, storage, fire pump and similar are not activating to the street front, and requested explanations why these cannot be located on another level, so the ground floor active use can be maximized.

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 were requested:

- 1. Façade Modulation (SMC 23.45.058.B.2):** In brief, the Code requires the maximum length of any façade 86-160 ft tall to be 155 ft, from 161- 240 ft tall to be 125 ft, and from 241-500 ft tall to be 100 ft. The applicant proposes the façade along Denny to be 162 ft from grade to

400 ft; and the façade along 6th Avenue to be 117 ft from grade to 400 ft. The proposed façade along Wall Street is compliant with this code section.

The Board indicated no support for these departures at this time, considering how the design concept and massing requires further study, and the need for a persuasive design-based rationale for this departure. The 162 ft length along Denny was particularly concerning, because there was no deep modulation of any type in that wall; however the Board agreed holding the corners might be warranted, if significant modulation (approaching the 15 ft code-required depth) in the middle is proposed.

- 2. Alternative Use for Above Grade Parking (SMC 23.49.01.2):** In brief, the Code requires parking above the third story of a structure to be separated from the street by another use for a minimum of 30% of each street frontage. The applicant proposes art studios and the parking lifts from level 2-4, which total about 33% on the 6th Ave frontage; 38% of the Wall street frontage; and unknown on the Denny Way frontage.

The Board indicated preliminary support for counting the robotic elevator glass portions in the calculations, and for including alternative uses at level 2, but could not support this departure at this time considering the need for further study of the podium facades in the context of a more developed whole building concept. See comments under A-1, B-2, B-4.

- 3. Maximum Floors of Above Grade Parking (SMC 23.49.019.2.A.1):** The Code requires the maximum number of above grade parking stories to be four. The applicant proposes 5 levels of robotic parking, arguing they are lower floor to floor heights that almost equate (approximately 3 ft taller) to 4 conventional stories.

The Board indicated no support for this departure at this time, considering the entire podium composition and above-grade parking distribution is under study. See comments under Departure 2 above, and A-1, B-2, B-4.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should return to the Board for a Second EDG meeting, responding to the specific concerns, requests and studies described above.