



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number: 3015918

Address: 701 5th Ave. N

Applicant: Jens Muller, Hewitt Architects

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, February 25, 2015

Board Members Present: Boyd Pickerell (Chair)  
Janet Stephenson  
Jill Kurfirst (Substitute)

Board Members Absent: Mindy Black  
Christine Harrington  
Katie Idziorek

DPD Staff Present: Katy Haima

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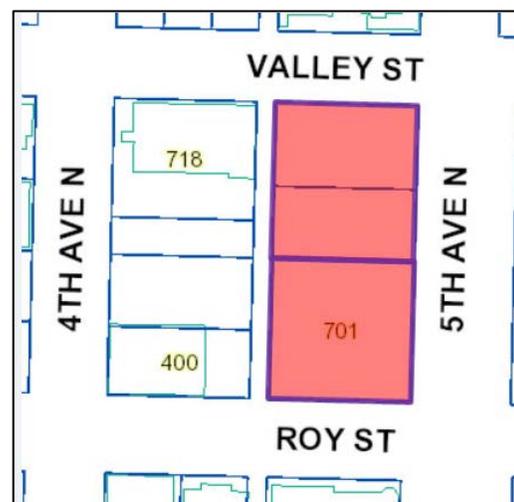
### SITE & VICINITY

**Site Zone:** NC3-40

**Nearby Zones:** (North) NC2-40  
(South) NC3-40  
(East) NC3-40  
(West) NC3-40; LR3-RC

**Lot Area:** 30,000

**Environmentally Critical Areas:** Steep Slope



**Current Development:** The south half of the site is a single-story commercial building; the north half of the site is a surface parking lot.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:** The site across the alley, on the south west portion of the block is going through Early Design Guidance under project #3018206 for a five-story mixed-use building with residential units and retail along Roy Street. A four-story apartment building, built in 1957, occupies the northwest portion of the block.

Across Roy Street to the south is a 4 story residential building built in 1999 and a small two-story structure with a restaurant at ground level. The Lumen, a full-block mixed-use building with retail at ground level, is to the southeast of the site. The full block to the east of the site, across 5th Ave. N, is a four-story hotel built in 1996. To the north of the site is a four-story condominium, built in 1999.

To the west along Roy are smaller scale restaurants, a hotel and apartment structures. Newer residential developments have small ground floor commercial uses.

The site is two blocks north of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Seattle Center. The Mercer Corridor Project just to the east connects the area to South Lake Union and I-5. Roy Street is a principal arterial and important east-west connection, and 5th Ave. N connects to the Seattle Center and downtown to the south.

Roy and Mercer are large scale commercial corridors; the site is located at the transition from this large scale to the finer-grained residential neighborhood to the north of Roy. This area, the Uptown Park Character Area, is characterized by multi-family residential buildings with a high concentration of 1920s and 1930s brick apartment structures.

The immediate area is served by bus routes on Roy Street, 5th Ave. N, and Mercer Street. Vehicle and pedestrian traffic volumes are influenced by events at the Seattle Center.

**Access:** Existing vehicular access is via a curb cut mid-block on 5th Ave. N and a curb cut on Valley Street. The project is adjacent to an alley that runs south from Valley Street; the alley stops before reaching Roy Street due to steep topography and a retaining wall. The alley is at a higher grade than the rest of the site, separated by a retaining wall.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is for a 5-story mixed-use building containing 6 live-work units at grade, 104 apartments, and parking for 80-90 vehicles below grade. The existing residential structure would be demolished.

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3015918) 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).

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**Mailing Public Resource Center**

**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

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

## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The applicant provided context for the project, noting that the site is on a prominent corner. The applicant proposed treating the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Roy Street as a pedestrian gateway to the neighborhood, with the intent to create more street-level activity. In addition, the applicant mentioned contextual influences, including the design of the nearby Lumen, and the adjacency of the urban residential character to the north of the site.

The applicant showed three massing options at the EDG Meeting. All three schemes used variations of a C-shaped building around a private courtyard located on the west side of the site, adjacent to the alley. A retaining wall along the west side of the courtyard is proposed to make the grade change up to the alley. Access to the below grade parking is proposed off the south end of the alley, near Roy Street.

All three schemes propose massing and a commercial space that establishes a strong presence at the corner of Roy Street and 5th Ave. N. The applicant proposes that the space will function as a flexible private/public space, with potential opportunities for gathering space, retail, or other commercial uses. This space is intended to serve as an architectural focal point as well as an activity-generator to enliven the corner.

A ten-foot setback at level four is incorporated into all three options to provide upper level balconies for residential units.

The design alternatives utilize a purposeful change in scale and texture on the north side of the building to respond to the transition to the smaller-scale residential character of the neighborhood to the north. Individual unit entries are set back from the sidewalk and buffered by landscaping.

The code compliant scheme relies on an orthogonal floorplan, placing the main residential entry centered on Roy Street between commercial spaces. At the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N and Roy Street,

the first floor is set back to create an outdoor room under the overhang of the upper floors. Live-work units are proposed along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N, and residential units are located along Valley Street. All units are set back from the sidewalk, separated by a landscape buffer. In this scheme, the applicant proposes a break in the massing along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N to delineate the residential units along Valley Street.

Concept 2 proposes the main residential located along 5th Ave. N., angled towards the corner. The flex space at the corner is pulled back at the first two levels, opening to an exterior space. Live-work units are proposed along Roy Street and 5th Ave. N., set back from the sidewalk with a landscaped buffer. This layout creates an angled courtyard. Above the two-story live-work units, a bar of angular modulated residential units reference the nearby Lumen; these units are angled to direct views away from the hotel, and become terraced balconies for the units above. In this scheme, the character of the residential units along 5th Ave. N. extends to the corner of 5th Ave. N. and Valley St. The north end of the structure utilizes a step back at level 2, and another at level 4 to transition to human scale at the street level and reflect the desired park-like character.

Concept 3, the applicant's preferred alternative, features a main residential entry and lobby centered along 5th Ave. N that provides transparency from the street into the centralized courtyard. The facade along Roy Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N exhibits a more commercial character, marked by a modular bar of residential units above the live-work spaces at street level. The residential character of the north portion of the building is demarcated by a deep inset and exterior stairs, breaking the massing along the 5th Ave. N façade. Live-work units are proposed along Roy St.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following comments were offered at the first EDG meeting:

- Several members of the public were in support of more commercial/retail use, as opposed to live-work units along all street fronts. The public noted that the neighborhood is in transition and that more commercial spaces are needed, especially along Roy Street, to provide opportunities for more businesses and street activity.
- Concerned over the possibility of the bus stop along 5<sup>th</sup> moving during construction, and suggested that special consideration be taken in regards to its placement.
- Cautioned against live-work units, noting that there are already many "dead spots" along Roy, which creates a lack of continuous street front and does not encourage pedestrian movement along Roy Street. Suggested rethinking the connection of the live-work units to the street, and removing the landscaping buffer from the sidewalk to encourage true commercial uses.
- Supported arranging uses and designing the corner element to encourage street-level activity.
- Suggested the provision of more parking, including public parking for non-locals who visit.

## **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.

### **FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE February 25, 2015**

- 1. Massing and Design Concept:** The Board generally supported the variations on the C-shaped massing concept as an appropriate response to site characteristics and urban context, and encouraged the applicant to further explore how the programming of the building can be expressed in the massing. (CS1-C, CS2-A, CS2-III, DC2-A, DC2-E)
  - a. The Board noted that Option 1 and Option 3 were more difficult to read programmatically, and that Option 2 was more successful due to the change in character of massing and modulation on Roy Street, 5th Ave. N, and Valley Street. (CS2-A, CS3-A, DC2-A, DC2-E)
  - b. The Board supported the courtyard layout and massing of the preferred option overall, but noted that the strong linearity of the third story modulated “bar” did not respond well to the lack of activity across 5th Ave. N. The Board saw the modulation presented in Option 2 as a more sensitive response to this condition, and recommended incorporating the movement and interest created to establish a stronger street presence. (CS2-A, CS3-A, DC2-A)
  - c. The “stepping down” of the units on Valley Street was supported by the Board as a strong expression of the townhomes that relates to the distinct character and texture of nearby residential uses. (CS2-I, CS2-II, CS2-IV, DC2-A, DC2-D, DC2-E)
  - d. The Board discussed the success of the demarcation of the massing of the townhouses at the north end with the inset along 5th Ave. N; however, there was concern over the east façade of the north massing creating a blank façade. The merits of continuing the design language over the entire length of 5<sup>th</sup> Street, as presented in Option 2, was also discussed. While no consensus was reached, the Board expects the massing and design response to programming to be intentional, and to make a strong statement with each distinct portion of the building. (CS2-I, CS2-II, DC2-B, DC2-D, DC2-E)
- 2. Main Entry:** The Board supported the proposed location of the entry on the preferred alternative; however, they expressed that they would be open to other locations of the entry as a result of the revised massing. The prominence, legibility, and visibility should be critical design considerations. The entry should make a strong gesture to the public realm. (CS2-C, CS2-I, PL1-B, PL2-B, PL2-I, PL2-II)
- 3. Street-Level Uses and Streetscape Design:** The Board recognized and agreed that the design and programming of street-level uses needs to respond to the varied urban context of each street. In general, the Board noted that it is important that the project provide continuity in both texture and street-level use to the west along Roy Street and north along 5th Ave. N. (CS2-B, CS2-I)
  - a. *Corner at 5<sup>th</sup> and Roy.* The Board was generally supportive of the proposed commercial flex space at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Roy Street, provided it is designed and

programmed to encourage continuous activity, and that the spaces to the west along Roy Street are designed to successfully support commercial/retail functions. The flex space should express an outward-looking character and create a strong connection with the adjacent lobby to engage the corner. The Board recommended wrapping glazing around the corner to demarcate the special use at the prominent corner and establish a strong street presence. (CS2-A, CS2-C, PL3-C)

- b. *Roy Street.* The Board expressed a desire for continuity of commercial uses and character along Roy Street. The proposed live-work units are set back and do not appear to make a strong connection to the street. Discussion over the grade change along Roy Street and potential stepping up of commercial spaces prompted the Board to encourage a strong connection of the commercial uses through design elements. (CS2-I, PL2-B, PL2-I, PL2-II, PL3-C)
- c. *5th Ave. N.* The Board noted that 5th Ave. N does not have the same urban commercial character as Roy Street, and the street-level design and programming should respond appropriately to this context and change in texture. The proposed design was ambiguous about the intended street-level character along 5th Ave. N, as the commercial live-work units are set back from the street and appear somewhat residential. The Board was concerned that they would not function as commercial spaces. While the Board did not reach consensus as to what the preferred use along this street would be, they would like to see the uncertain character of the spaces resolved through a clear expression of the program, and for the façade to be more engaging, porous, and enlivened. (CS2-I, PL2-B, PL2-I, PL2-II, PL3-C, DC2-E)
- d. *Valley Street.* The Board supported the setback individual townhouse unit entries and generous landscape buffers. (CS2-II)
- e. *Bus Stop.* The Board requested an exploration of options to integrate the bus stop into the building structure and/or program, and suggested considering a connection to the main entry or using the east facing “blank façade” of the townhouses. (PL1-B, PL4-C)

## DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

### CONTEXT & SITE

**CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.**

#### CS1-C Topography

**CS1-C-1. Land Form:** Use natural topography and desirable landforms to inform project design.

**CS1-C-2. Elevation Changes:** Use the existing site topography when locating structures and open spaces on the site.

**CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.**

**CS2-A Location in the City and Neighborhood**

**CS2-A-1. Sense of Place:** Emphasize attributes that give a distinctive sense of place. Design the building and open spaces to enhance areas where a strong identity already exists, and create a sense of place where the physical context is less established.

**CS2-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces**

**CS2-B-2. Connection to the Street:** Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and public realm.

**CS2-C Relationship to the Block**

**CS2-C-1. Corner Sites:** Corner sites can serve as gateways or focal points; both require careful detailing at the first three floors due to their high visibility from two or more streets and long distances.

***Uptown Supplemental Guidance:***

**CS2-I Responding to Site Characteristics**

**CS2-I-i. Pedestrian Character:** Throughout Uptown new developments should, to the extent possible, be sited to further contribute to the neighborhood's pedestrian character.

**CS2-II Streetscape Compatibility**

**CS2-II-ii. Uptown Park:** Within the Uptown Park character area, streetscape improvements should include where feasible a consistent park-like landscaped strip in the planting strip, as consistent with the historic pattern in the area. New developments may elect to take inspiration from the Uptown Park District Landscaped Streets Element as endorsed by the Uptown Alliance, for the format of the streetscape. However, adherence to the landscaped streets element is voluntary.

**CS2-III Corner Lots**

**CS2-III-i. Addressing the Corner:** Generally, buildings within Uptown should meet the corner and not be set back. Building designs and treatments as well as any open space areas should address the corner and promote activity. Corner entrances are strongly encouraged, where feasible.

**CS2-IV Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility**

**CS2-IV-i. Reducing Visual Bulk:** Throughout Uptown, a departure would be supported for 3' of additional height for projects that step back the top floor of the structure a minimum of 6' from the street. This has the effect of reducing the impact of the structure height on the sidewalk below as well as reducing the length of shadows over the street. Where the Code regulates podium height, the additional 3' applies to the podium.

**CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.**

**CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes**

**CS3-A-4. Evolving Neighborhoods:** In neighborhoods where architectural character is evolving or otherwise in transition, explore ways for new development to establish a positive and desirable context for others to build upon in the future.

## PUBLIC LIFE

### **PL1 Connectivity: Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.**

#### **PL1-B Walkways and Connections**

**PL1-B-3. Pedestrian Amenities:** Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian oriented open spaces to enliven the area and attract interest and interaction with the site and building should be considered.

#### **PL1-C Outdoor Uses and Activities**

**PL1-C-1. Selecting Activity Areas:** Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.

### ***Uptown Supplemental Guidance:***

#### **PL1-II Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites**

**PL1-II-i. Uptown Park Area:** Within the Uptown Park character area, streetscape improvements should include a consistent landscaped planting strip between the sidewalk and the street as consistent with the historic pattern in the area. New developments may take guidance from the Uptown Park District Landscaped Streets Element as endorsed by the Uptown Alliance, for the format of streetscape improvements.

### **PL2 Walkability: Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.**

#### **PL2-B Safety and Security**

**PL2-B-3. Street-Level Transparency:** Ensure transparency of street-level uses (for uses such as nonresidential uses or residential lobbies), where appropriate, by keeping views open into spaces behind walls or plantings, at corners, or along narrow passageways.

#### **PL2-C Weather Protection**

**PL2-C-1. Locations and Coverage:** Overhead weather protection is encouraged and should be located at or near uses that generate pedestrian activity such as entries, retail uses, and transit stops.

### ***Uptown Supplemental Guidance:***

#### **PL2-I Entrances Visible from the Street**

**PL2-I-i. Prominent Entrances:** Throughout Uptown, major entrances to developments should be prominent. The use of distinctive designs with historical references is strongly encouraged. Design, detailing, materials and landscaping may all be employed to this end. Building addresses and names (if applicable) should be located at entrances, tastefully crafted.

**PL2-I-ii. Street Life:** Streets throughout Uptown should be sociable places that offer a sense of security, and residential building projects should make a positive contribution to life on the street.

**PL2-II Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances**

**PL2-II-i. Pedestrian-Friendly Entrances:** Throughout Uptown entries should be designed to be pedestrian friendly (via position, scale, architectural detailing, and materials) and should be clearly discernible to the pedestrian.

**PL2-II-ii. Defensible Space:** Individual or unit entrances in buildings that are accessed from the sidewalk or other public spaces should consider appropriate designs for defensible space as well as safety features (e.g., decorative fencing and gating). Landscaping should be consistent with these features.

**PL2-II-iii. Pedestrian Experience:** Throughout Uptown special attention to the pedestrian experience and street right-of-way should be given along pedestrian corridors as identified on the map (pg. v).

**PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.**

**PL3-C Retail Edges**

**PL3-C-1. Porous Edge:** Engage passersby with opportunities to interact visually with the building interior using glazing and transparency. Create multiple entries where possible and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.

***Uptown Supplemental Guidance:***

**PL3-II Transition Between Residence and Street**

**PL3-II-i. Front Setbacks:** Where feasible, new development in the Uptown Park character area should consider landscaping any setback from the sidewalk. Landscaping within a setback should provide a transition from public to private space and define a boundary between these. The use of raised planters within the setback should be encouraged in some locations where this would reduce impacts to landscaping from foot traffic and sidewalk litter.

**PL4 Active Transportation: Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.**

**PL4-B Planning Ahead for Bicyclists**

**PL4-B-3. Bike Connections:** Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project.

**PL4-C Planning Ahead For Transit**

**PL4-C-1. Influence on Project Design:** Identify how a transit stop (planned or built) adjacent to or near the site may influence project design, provide opportunities for placemaking.

**DC2 Architectural Concept: Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.**

**DC2-A Massing**

**DC2-A-1. Site Characteristics and Uses:** Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space.

**DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass:** Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects.

**DC2-B Architectural and Facade Composition**

**DC2-B-2. Blank Walls:** Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians.

**DC2-D Scale and Texture**

**DC2-D-1. Human Scale:** Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept

**DC2-D-2. Texture:** Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or “texture,” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

**DC2-E Form and Function**

**DC2-E-1. Legibility and Flexibility:** Strive for a balance between building use legibility and flexibility. Design buildings such that their primary functions and uses can be readily determined from the exterior, making the building easy to access and understand. At the same time, design flexibility into the building so that it may remain useful over time even as specific programmatic needs evolve.

**DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.**

***Uptown Supplemental Guidance:***

**DC4-III Commercial Signage**

**DC4-III-i. Preferred Signage:** Throughout Uptown tasteful signs designed for pedestrians (as opposed to passing vehicles) are preferred. Backlit signs, animated reader boards and similar signs are discouraged. Blade signs, wall-mounted signs, signs below awnings, and similar signs are preferred.

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The Board’s recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based on the departure’s potential to help the project better meet these design guidelines priorities and achieve a better

overall project design than could be achieved without the departures. The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the **FIRST** Early Design Guidance the following departures were requested:

1. **Additional Height (SMC 23.41.012B.16.d):** The Code allows building height departures within the Uptown Urban Center of an additional 3 feet if the top floor of the structure is set back at least 6 feet from all lot lines abutting streets. The applicant proposes an additional 3 feet of height.

The Board indicated preliminary support for the departure, as Option 2 and Option 3 are set back 6 feet at the upper level, reducing the impact of the structure height on the streetscape below. (CS2-IV, CS2-I)

2. **Street-Level Standards (SMC 23.47A.004G.2):** The Code requires that in pedestrian-designated zones, live-work units shall not occupy more than 20 percent of the street-level street-facing façade along designated principal pedestrian streets listed in subsection 23.47A.005.D; Roy Street is listed in this subsection. The applicant proposes approximately 65 percent of the street-level façade along Roy Street to be live-work units.

The Board was not supportive of the departure, given their guidance for the continuity of commercial character and encouraging an engaging edge along Roy Street that supports the flex space at the corner. (CS2-I, PL2-B, PL2-I, PL3-C)

3. **Street-Level Standards (SMC 23.47A.005C.1g):** The Code requires that in all neighborhood commercial zones, residential uses may occupy no more than 20 percent of the street-level street-facing façade in areas shown on Maps 1 through 60 when facing an arterial street. In Option 2, the applicant proposes residential use for 32 percent of the street-level façade along Roy Street. In Option 3, the applicant proposes residential use for 60 percent of the street-level façade along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.

The Board was in partial support of the departure for more than 20% residential uses on Roy Street, given their guidance for the continuity of commercial character. However, if the proposed lobby and corner flex space are designed to create a transparent, engaged, and porous facade that activates the corner, the Board was inclined to grant the departure. (CS2-I, CS2-II, CS2-III, CS2-B, CS2-C, PL1-B, PL2-B, PL2-II, PL3-C)

The Board was concerned that denying the departure may result in more live-work units along 5th Ave. N. The Board demonstrated partial support of the departure for greater than 20 percent residential use along 5th Ave. N, citing the guidance given on resolving the uncertain character of the space. The Board expressed some curiosity of changing the units

along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N to townhouses (which would also require the departure), or if the spaces clearly read as residential uses. (CS2-I, CS2-II, PL2-I, PL2-II, DC2-E)

4. **Driveway Slope (SMC 23.54.030.D.3):** The Code requires that no portion of a driveway shall exceed a slope of 15%. The applicant proposes a driveway that slopes at a maximum of 20%.

The Board indicated preliminary support for the departure, as the additional increase in slope would allow the driveway to be located farther away from the sidewalk and right of way. (CS2-I)

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.