



FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3016464

Address: 2208 8th Avenue

Applicant: Michael Medina of Graphite Design Group, for Clise Properties

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, November 04, 2014

Board Members Present: Murphy McCullough (Chair)
Anjali Grant
Alan McWain
Gundula Proksch
Dan Foltz (substitute)

Board Members Absent: Mathew Albores

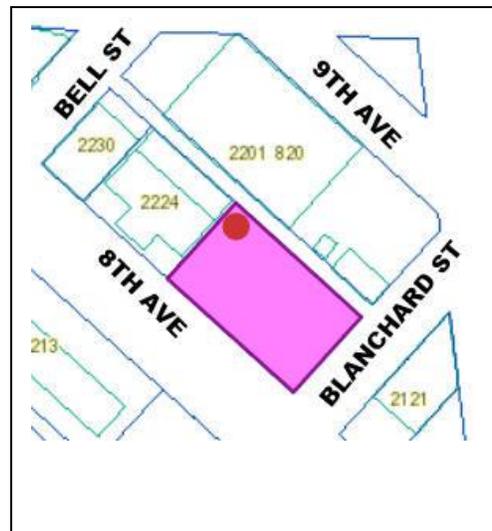
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, M. Arch, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMC 240/290-400
Downtown Mixed Commercial
Height 240- 400 ft depending on use

Nearby Zones: (North) DMC 240/290-400
(South) DMC 240/290-400
(East) DMC 240/290-400
(West) DMC 340/240-400

Lot Area: 19,426 sq ft, rectangular



Current Development: The site is currently a surface parking lot; it slopes about 8 ft from a high point at the mid-block on 8th Avenue, to the low point at the corner of the alley on Blanchard Street.

Access: Pedestrian access from the two adjacent streets of Blanchard and 8th Avenue. The adjacent through-block alley to the east provides vehicular access to the site, and the existing mixed use building on the adjacent half block. Blanchard Street adjacent to the south is a designated Green Street.

Surrounding Development: The mixed use block of 2201 9th Avenue (offices)/ 820 Blanchard (Enso condominiums) is to the east across the alley. A 7 story hotel and one-story commercial building occupy the adjacent lots to the north. A three-story residence and parking lots are across 8th Avenue to the west. A one story commercial structure is across Blanchard Street to the south.

ECAs: No mapped Environmentally Critical Areas.

Neighborhood Character: The surrounding neighborhood is rapidly transforming from parking lots and mixed commercial buildings of various scales, to a high density, mixed use district adjacent to the downtown core, including several residential towers and the 3 million sf Amazon campus nearby to the south. The streetcar on Westlake connects this district to South Lake Union and downtown.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is a 38 story, 400 ft tall building with 435 residential units, with resident amenity decks and 7,676 sf of ground level commercial use. No parking is required, but all proposed parking (389 spaces) would be provided in a 7 level below-grade garage. Services, parking and loading access are shown in the code compliant location off the alley.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: February 18, 2014

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:

During public comment, speakers raised the following comments, issues and concerns:

- Concerned about loss of light and air to residential units across the alley (fully understands private views are not protected), especially at the lower levels on the alley and at the tower 'pinch point' where an existing unit is about 25 ft from proposed tower; requested the proposed tower (any shape) shift west or reduce in size to provide more spacing.
- Concerned about loss of sunlight to the existing plants and usability of the sole Enso amenity deck, located on level six mid-block on the alley; requested more detailed sun/shadow studies and possibly adjusted podium heights to afford sunlight to that shared amenity.
- Stated that loading and parking access off the alley will compound an already congested alley, with time delays and heavy truck loading into the adjacent 2201 office loading docks; and therefore suggested access off 8th Avenue [Staff Note: alley access is code required].
- Stated the alley is already congested, that the new residential vehicles will compound that and requested the proposed parking quantity be reduced [Staff Note: there is no code minimum or maximum parking requirement].
- Supported the shape, character and orientation of the preferred elliptical tower, because it is distinctive from the numerous rectilinear buildings in the vicinity.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: November 4, 2014

DESIGN PRESENTATION

The RECOMMENDATION booklet 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.

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PUBLIC COMMENT:

During public comment, speakers raised the following comments, issues and concerns:

- Concerned about impacts to light and air for residential units across the alley (fully understands private views are not protected), especially at the lower levels on the alley and at the tower 'pinch point' where an existing unit is about 25 ft from proposed tower.
- Supports the elliptical form as preferred to a square box, but concerned the materials are largely gray, and encouraged more blue or other colors.

- Does not support the proposed privacy glass along the alley, as the permanent louvers would be too reflective and not adjustable.
- Concerned about loss of sunlight to the existing plants and usability of the Enso amenity deck, located on level six mid-block on the alley.
- Concerned about safety and pedestrian sight lines at the alley and Blanchard sidewalk.
- Supported retention of mature street trees, and maximizing sidewalk widths for pedestrians.
- Supported the elliptical tower and gently curved podium facades.

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](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/howeare/designreview/designguidelines/default.htm), and: <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/howeare/designreview/designguidelines/default.htm>

All page references below are to the Recommendation booklet dated November 04, 2014.

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 applauded the complete context analysis and how it informed the massing options, and the Board endorsed the preferred elliptical tower as an appropriate response to the pivotal location in a building context largely rectilinear. The tower also creates a pleasing ensemble with the adjacent 2201/Enso building when viewed from the Denny/Westlake gateway. The physical model was an excellent tool to further Board understanding and support.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board reiterated support for the context response and elliptical tower form, and added that the gentle curves of the podium were a suitable transition to grade, along with their comments about the residential lobby and podium corner under B-4 and C-2.

- 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 supported the preliminary rooftop design shown on pages A-23/24, including the layered and tapered screens, shared amenity decks, and concealed mechanical. These elements result in a better form than a pure extrusion, and provide residential scale and a distinctive gracious transition to the sky, and might include vegetation and a restrained, sophisticated lighting treatment that utilizes the tall screens.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board focused on the tower top, and agreed the spirals of the mechanical screen should not merge with the glass tower cladding, as shown on page 59. The Board supported the two sloping spirals of the mechanical screens, and agreed they should all recess back from the tower parapet. The Board agreed the spire should be connected to the building, and not become taller or more free-standing. The top should be revised accordingly and per the condition on the last page. The Board supported the muted rooftop lighting option, and the vertical edge/spire should be subtly lit, and not be a bright, radiating light source.

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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board applauded the applicants for being unusually sensitive to the adjacent residential tower, and for the light and air benefits the elliptical tower affords them. The Board did not suggest further rotating, shifting or reductions in the tower plan, but did advise the fenestration, glass and material composition on the facades facing the neighbors be carefully considered for privacy and measured winter light reflectivity.

The Board did request the east and north portions of the podium be carefully studied and adjusted to allow reasonable sun access to the adjacent amenity deck. In service to this, the Board requested large scale sections through both podiums, and more zoom-in sun/shadow studies of this area, including a full range of times and dates. The Board agreed that while it is unfortunate the Enso amenity deck was located in a low, mid-block location, it cannot completely dictate the forms adjacent.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board applauded the careful sectional privacy studies, the stepping podium walls along the alley, and the reduced window

areas shown along the alley frontages (pg 61). To respect the adjacent uses, these features should be maintained., but the Board did not support the use of the proposed privacy glass, with its permanently fixed and reflective louvers. Interior adjustable blinds and/or drapes should be sufficient to manage privacy at these locations.

- B-3 Reinforce the Positive Urban Form & Architectural Attributes of the Immediate Area .** Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board endorsed the ground floor plan shown and how it supports the pedestrian life and streetscape of the vicinity. The podium form and massing is addressed under B-4 below, and other refinements to the ground floor are noted under guidelines C-1 and D-6.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board endorsed the ground floor plan, podium massing and streetscape refinements as presented, with comments found under other guidelines.

- 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 supported the stepped podium, the residential lobby location and the slot interlocking it with the tower above. However, the highly visible podium form defining the corner commercial and the two floors above deserves more study. The Board endorsed the recessed corner and visible amenity decks above, but the repeated ellipse shapes and abrupt edge to the alley need further refinement. The lobby frontage should have a distinct form or recess at the ground level, not blurred with a commercial storefront as shown.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board endorsed the basic podium forms and heights, and did not support any variations in the profile or heights shown. The Board appreciated the perspectives and studies provided, and agreed there were a few too many individual gestures that detracted from the design clarity. While maintaining the gentle curves of the south podium, and the deeply recessed ground floor at the corner, the Board recommended elimination of the southwest triangular ‘prow’ element, as a condition on the last page.

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 tall, highly transparent commercial façades shown along 8th and Blanchard. To improve pedestrian engagement and flexibility for tenants over the long term life of the building, the Board advised more commercial doors be added along the Blanchard frontage.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board understood the plan and slope constraints along Blanchard and thus supported the stepped planters and glass into the lower bicycle storage as shown on pg 62, animating the sidewalk. If future revisions take place, the Board supported the introduction of a door and interior stairs along Blanchard near the southeast recess (even if modifying the bike storage ceiling slightly but retaining all glass), leading up to the southwest corner commercial level.

The Board supported the recessed corner patio, walls, planters and landscape design as shown on pg 38. To support the primary retail orientation to 8th avenue, the Board requested additional wide doors be added near the southwest corner of the south retail, and also be ensured in the middle of the north retail storefront (pg 35). See conditions on last page.

- C-2 Design Facades of Many Scales.** Design and architectural features, fenestration patterns, and material 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 discussed how several precedent images were promising and implied a sophisticated, staggered or woven cladding system. The Board encouraged exploration of a composition and materiality that richly integrates balconies, does not look like an office, and perhaps reflects the spiraling, layered parti (rather than the typical horizontal datums). The tower and podium compositions should represent a transition from skyline scale to street/pedestrian scales, and not assume an identical language throughout.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board agreed the tower displayed a sophisticated materiality and composition, with the recessed balconies playing a key

role. The podium forms employed distinct materials and patterns, but the Board agreed a greater presence of the tower materials and form should reach grade at the residential lobby entrance, and that entrance deserves more linear frontage at the street. See the conditions on the last page for more description.

- C-6 Develop the Alley Façade.** To increase pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest, develop portions of the alley façade in response to the unique conditions of the site or project.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the alley facades of the podium (largely made up of small studios) should be carefully designed with sensitivity to the specific windows and living spaces of the adjacent Enso units, and they should include offsets, angles, and other devices to limit eye-to-eye privacy issues across the alley.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board supported the stepped profile along the alley, but did not support the use of the proposed privacy glass, with its permanently fixed and reflective louvers. Interior adjustable blinds and/or drapes should be sufficient to manage privacy at these locations.

D. Public Amenities

Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space

- 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.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed the proposed landscape treatment on the two streets (pg A-35) appears promising, but will likely get revised as more refinement of the podium and ground floor proceeds per guidelines B-4 and C-2. The Board applauded the depth and height of commercial spaces shown, and how the corner commercial spills out onto a widened sidewalk with café seating and excellent south sun access.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board supported the 8th Avenue streetscape and landscape design shown on pg 35-42, especially the corner treatment and relocated signal cabinet. If future curb adjustments or other changes occur along Blanchard, the Board fully supported that any extra dimension be given to increasing the width of the sidewalk paving, larger than its currently proposed 6-8 ft.

D-6 Design for Personal Safety and Security. Design the building and site to enhance the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the proposed corner at the alley appears to be opaque and flush to both property lines, and thus restricts visibility between vehicles and pedestrians. To improve sightlines and safety at this busy corner, shift the stair and any shafts inboard, and/or make the corner transparent glass which improves safety, and affords more visibility into the adjacent retail from Blanchard and Westlake Avenue.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board supported the transparent building corner at the alley and Blanchard Street, as shown on pg 27 and 62.

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 supported the offset of the proposed parking ramp as far as possible from the existing one across the alley, to reduce vehicle conflicts. They also advised no audible alarms or excess noise generators or fans be located along the alley, adjacent to the existing residential podium.

At the Final Recommendation Meeting, the Board supported the ramps and service bay locations shown on pg 49, with the parking ramps well-offset from the ones opposite. The Board also supported the alley elevation and materials shown on pg 61, and advised the use of honed CMU.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on any 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 Final Recommendation meeting, the following departures were requested:

- 1. Required 15ft Depth of Residential Amenity Areas (SMC 23.48.020.C.3):** The Code requires a minimum depth of 15 ft for all residential amenity areas that can be counted toward the required amount. Due to the curving forms, the applicant proposes varying depths greater and less than 15 ft at three locations: level 6, level 7, and roof. The majority of areas in all three locations is 15 ft or greater.

The Board agreed the areas with increased depth beyond 15 ft (52% at level 6; 88% at level 7; 71% at the roof) offset the portions less than 15 ft, and the areas less than 15 ft continued the curving forms and thus promoted guidelines B-4 and D-1.

The Board unanimously recommended that DPD grant this departure.

- 2. Upper Level Setbacks (Blanchard Street podium) (SMC 23.49.058.F.2):** The Code requires a continuous 15 ft setback above 45 ft on the entire frontage of the Blanchard Green Street. The applicant proposes a podium height that exceeds 45 ft on the east portion of the Green Street; a triangular portion 79 ft long and tapering from 45 to 50 ft-7" at the tallest point along Blanchard.

The Board agreed the continuous and level podium cap, rather than a stepped form, is in scale with the context and the slightly taller portion on the north side of the street has no impact on Green Street light and air. The podium design is about 40 ft at the signature corner and creates a more cohesive overall design. (A-1, B-1, B-4)

The Board unanimously recommended that DPD grant this departure.

- 3. Maximum Tower Width (SMC 23.49.058.D.2.a):** The Code requires a maximum tower width above 85 ft of 120 ft, measured parallel to the avenue property line, no matter the building shape. The applicant proposes an elliptical tower shape, which measures 149 ft wide at its maximum curved ends.

The Board agreed the elliptical shape creates a better context response and reduces shadow impacts, plus the proposed elliptical tower footprint area is equal or less than a code-compliant rectilinear version. The tower shape is an overall better design and supports guidelines A-1, A-2, B-1, B-3 and B-4.

The Board unanimously recommended that DPD grant this departure.

- 4. Façade Setback Limits (SMC 23.49.056.B.2.d):** The Code requires the maximum ground level façade setback at intersections to be 10 ft from the street property lines, and this must be met for the first 20 ft along each street property line. The applicant proposes the recessed and curved corner retail setback in a manner that results in a 25 sq ft portion that is greater than the 10 ft requirement.

The Board agreed the widened patio and pedestrian interaction at this valuable southwest corner is enhanced by the curved shape and slightly larger setback, and promotes guidelines B-3, C-1 and D-3.

The Board unanimously recommended that DPD grant this departure.

BOARD RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

The recommendation summarized below was based on the design review booklet dated November 04, 2014, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the November 04, 2014 Design Recommendation meeting (unless a condition below, the design should not change, especially aspects explicitly noted in the above narrative, which the applicant should carefully read through).

After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, the five Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and departures, with the following conditions (Guidelines referenced): These conditions should be resolved prior to MUP issuance.

- 1) **Increase Tower Presence to Grade and Enhance the Residential Lobby:** Increase the width of the tower portion and materiality that reaches grade along 8th Avenue, and carry this up through levels 2-4 to create a stronger sense of the lobby entrance. (C-4)
- 2) **Podium Refinement:** Eliminate the triangular 'prow' element at the southwest podium corner, but retain the gently curving podium facades, which should display a material, color and or patterning distinct from the tower facades nearby. (B-4, C-2)
- 3) **Retail Doors:** Add another wide door opening to the southwest corner of the corner retail to further activate the adjacent patio, and ensure a wide double door set is located in the middle of the north retail façade, to activate that portion of sidewalk. (C-1)
- 4) **Tower Top & Spire:** Offset the spiral mechanical screen from the tower façade below on the Blanchard Street side, so the tower parapet and materials are not merged or confused with the screen (the tower parapet and railing are continuous around the perimeter, even if including offsets or notches). Also, tie the proposed spire into the screen and/or railing, without increasing its height, mass or visual presence. (A-2)
- 5) **Lighting of Fin, Spire & Mechanical Screen:** Ensure the edge lighting feature of the fin/spire is subtle and dimmable, and the mechanical screen is muted as shown on pg 71, upper right, and contains no up-lighting or excess light pollution. (A-2)