



FIRST RECOMMENDATION OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3016544 & 3016871

Address: 1287 Westlake Avenue N. & 1414 Dexter Avenue N.

Applicant: Jodi Paterson-O'Hare, for Holland Partner Group

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, September 10, 2014

Board Members Present: Katherine Idiorek, Chair
Christine Harrington
Boyd Pickrell
Janet Stephenson

Board Members Absent: Mindy Black

DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM 85/65-125

Nearby Zones: (North) C2-65
(South) SM 85/65-125 [Click here to enter text.](#)
(East) C2-40
(West) SM 85

Lot Area: 67,230 (both sites)

Current Development:

The existing west site includes surface parking on a structure that is level with Dexter Avenue N. and elevated above the slope at the east property line. The east site includes a 2-story commercial building (West Marine) and surface parking.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

Dexter Avenue N. at this location has been developed with several newer residential and office buildings, although some older 1-2 story residential and commercial buildings remain in the mix. The street hosts a bike corridor and recent improvements have included a dedicated bicycle lane with bus stops located on “islands” between the bike lane and vehicular lanes of travel.

The west side of Westlake Avenue N., east of the east site, has seen a recent spate of development, much of it still in the early development phase, although several small commercial structures, formerly serving marine uses, remain. Much of the existing development along the eastern side of the street is dedicated to water dependent commercial uses. The high volume of traffic on the street and lack of any significant retail uses has traditionally limited pedestrian traffic on the street.

Access:

Due to the steep terrain, Galer Street dead-ends where the two development sites meet, but there is a pedestrian overpass across Westlake Avenue N. just to the north of the east site, which connects to a hillclimb, then another pedestrian overpass across Aurora Avenue N. with a hillclimb up Queen Anne hill. Existing vehicular access to the two sites is from curbcuts on Dexter Avenue N. and Westlake Avenue N. The proposed development will take vehicular access from Galer Street, connecting to Westlake Avenue N.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

The west site is mapped with Steep Slope ECAs. The east site is marked by a Liquefaction-prone ECA along its east margin and the Shoreline environment intrudes into a portion of the east site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is to construct two 6-story structures with 161 residential units in the west building, 158 units in the east building, and parking for 292 cars below grade in the east building. The existing structure and surface parking areas would be demolished.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3016544 & 3016871) at this website:

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

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The preferred options for the two buildings, approved by the Board to proceed to design development in accord with the guidance of the Board and the design guidelines cited as being of highest applicability to the project, show the two sites functioning as one cohesive development with connected access to parking, entries and residential amenities. In the description of the design team, the two buildings have been designed as a “lakeside residence,” employing a “bold architecture” and taking inspiration from the nautical motifs abundant on Lake Union. Along Westlake Avenue N. the massing of the building is broken at the center to allow for courtyard planted on native soil, since there would be no garage structure to be accommodated below. At the street edge of the courtyard there would be a pavilion, largely composed of glass, which serve as a focal point of the residential entry.

PUBLIC COMMENT

One member of the public commented on the phenomenon of Dexter Avenue N. becoming more and more a canyon.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Presentation Materials

While appreciative of the value of the sketched renderings to provide the character of the proposed structures, the Board was not comfortable with the heavy reliance on the sketches to impart hard information which the Board needed to evaluate aspects of the proposal. Further, there were instances where the more technical drawings revealed discrepancies in intentions. The designed had advanced significantly and in the right direction, but the packets lacked clear information needed to understand a complex set of buildings on a complex development site. More information was needed, for instance, to clearly understand how recesses and projections,

for instance with the balconies, worked together. The blue areas in the pencil sketches captured the character of the frame elements, but the Board would like more information regarding the materials, the detailing of joints, and the precise coloring to be assured that the intent of the projections was achievable. In general, the secondary frame elements made a greater impression in the renderings and appeared larger than in the more technical elevation views.

The design of the solarium was unclear. The positive impression conveyed of this feature in the sketch of the Dexter Avenue N. on page 22 was reduced to something less than tantalizing in the more technical rendering of the same façade on page 44. The Board would like to know more about the relationship of the solarium to the entry. A transition in plane, materials, detailing would help to differentiate the solarium as an element of the façade. Investigate the possibilities of the design of the solarium actually contributing to a reduction in the appearance of the bulk of the building along Dexter Avenue N.

Street Level Development

Show more detailed, pedestrian-scale views at the next presentation in order to better illustrate the pedestrian experience. Show more details of landscape treatments and how the landscaping works in harmony with the buildings.

There was concern that the pavilion on Westlake would not be activated nor activate the street. Nor would it provide the optimal transparency into the courtyard. The way the residential entry worked in conjunction with the pavilion and courtyard needed further clarity.

The retail expression at Westlake was not legible as retail. The relationship to the sidewalk level needs to be better understood as does the relationship to the landscaping. Along Dexter Avenue N. the grade differential between the unit terraces and the adjacent sidewalk needed greater clarity and illustration.

There was concern expressed that the depth of the planters along Galer Street might not support the levels of vegetation shown in the renderings. The appearance of the concrete surrounding of the parking entry on Galer Street was quite massive and in need of detailing to attempt to reduce it. The lighting fixture at the garage entry was too utilitarian; it needed work. More specific responses to the strategies discussed at the EDG meeting for addressing the improvements to Galer Street were called for.

Landscape and Signage

The landscaping proposed for the courtyard on Westlake Avenue N. failed to convey the on-grade, native soil condition there. Why raised walls and planters that one might expect in a garage roof condition? More visual information (including sections) are needed to convey a sense of the Galer Street improvements. Along Dexter Avenue N., illustrate to grade transitions and intended landscaping. Show how the treatment of the residential patios might be converted to a retail alignment in the future.

Concern was expressed that the signage proposed for labelling and identifying the development was not germane to the place and might be better connected to the industrial maritime theme in this lakefront context.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the ~~Choose an item.~~ ~~Choose an item.~~ the following departures were requested:

1. **Setbacks from street lot lines (SMC 23.48.014.3.B):** The Code allows a structure to be set back up to 12 feet from the street lot line, except on Class 1 Pedestrian Streets. The applicant proposes a 20-foot setback along the Dexter Avenue N. property line and a 95-foot setback for the courtyard on Westlake Avenue N.

The Board indicated a favorable response to the request since the setback departures for each building allowed for breakdown of the structure's mass.

2. **Structural Building Overhangs (SMC 23.53.035.B.11):** The Code limits bay windows and balconies to a maximum width of 15 feet. Both projects propose balconies which at the corners would extend to 17 feet in width.

The Board indicated their support of the requests, but stipulated that the balconies should be designed to appear as they do in the sketch renderings rather than in the supplementary photos provided.

3. **Sight Triangle (SMC 23.54.030.G.1):** For two way driveways less than 22 feet in width, a site triangle on both sides of driveway are to be kept clear of obstructions for a distance of 10 feet. Since Galer is a dead-end street, visibility provided by the sight triangle is not required for vehicles existing the garage.

The Board supported the departure, as it would reduce the visual appearance of the garage. In doing so, the Board encouraged the applicant to provide an interesting treatment around the garage entry.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the FIRST RECOMMENDATION meeting, the Board recommended the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided.

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