



## FINAL 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, November 12, 2014

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

Board Members Recused: 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  
(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 250 cars below grade in the east building. The existing structure and surface parking areas would be demolished.

**FIRST RECOMMENDATION September 10, 2014**

The packet included 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](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 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) is 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 **FIRST** Recommendation meeting 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 exiting 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.

## **FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING, NOVEMBER 12, 2014**

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

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## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

As had been presented at the earlier recommendation meeting on September 10, 2012, the proposal was for two sites functioning as one cohesive development with connected access to parking. The two buildings were largely as presented at the earlier recommendation meeting, but with additional detail and with renderings that conveyed a greater sense of detail. Along Westlake Avenue N. the massing of the east building is broken at the center to allow for a pavilion and a courtyard planted on native soil. On Dexter Avenue N. the building is set back from the north, south and western property lines. The north and south setbacks provide for some small views of Lake Union and its opposite shoreline. The main building entry is set within a midblock recession. Aligned vertically with the building's principal entry is an upper floor solarium that houses the building's clubroom. Ground floor units along Dexter Avenue N. enjoy

individual terraces, separated from the sidewalk by retaining walls and planters, the terraces sit either above or below the sidewalk as dictated by the sloping topography of the street. All parking, located in the west building, is accessed from a single entry/exit located at the open portion of Galer Street, connecting to Westlake Avenue N.

## **BOARD DELIBERATIONS**

The Board commended the design team for providing a packet that was comprehensive and consistent in its portrayal of the proposal and quite legible in its renderings. Responding to earlier concerns the Board had relayed to the team, the signage was tastefully done and appropriately scaled and the lighting scheme was thoughtfully designed. Among issues raised by the Board were the following:

- The cable railings on the balconies were insufficient to convey the strong impression of horizontality that the Board had asked for and a change in materials was needed;
- The differentiation between the blue and the white fiber cement panels needed further contrast which should be conveyed by requiring a differentiation in paint sheen as well as color;
- The Board members were not thoroughly enamored of the landscaping plant pallet and believed the variety of planting materials, in particular along the sidewalk edges, planters and planting strips needed expanding and greater complexity;
- The Board was apprehensive about the viability and vigor of the plantings along the base of the buildings where they met the Galer right-of-way;
- The residential entry on Westlake did not read as a residential entry and needed to convey a greater sense of transition and arrival and to be better integrated with other features of the ground level façade;
- The Board felt their earlier guidance regarding the residential entry on Dexter had not been sufficiently addressed and there was need for a larger exterior covered area adjacent the entry, an area that would include the proposed bench for seating;
- There was some apprehension on the Board's part that other elements they considered essential to a successful design, and proposed by the design team, might get lost in the translation process to actualization in the execution of the proposed structures. In order to curtail slippage, the Board offered additional conditions of approval of the design and requested departures.

## **DEPARTURES**

A departure was proposed from **SMC 23.54.030.G** which would require a sight triangle at the parking entry on Galer Street. The applicant would like to omit the triangle at the west side of the parking garage since Galer Street was not a through street and there would be no pedestrian of vehicle traffic coming from the west on the south side of the street and the parking entry minimized and less formidable, as optimized in the guidelines, provided for a better overall design.

A second departure, that from **SMC 23.48.014.A.2** was requested. This would allow a portion of the street-facing façade along Westlake to be approximately 13 feet in height, rather than the minimum of 15 feet in height. This would better meet the design guidelines, in particular DC2-D1 which would incorporate architectural features of a human scale into building facades and entries.

The Board unanimously voted their recommendation of approval of both the design and the departures, as conditioned below:

## **Conditions of Approval**

### Landscape Design

1. The Board requested a greater variety of plant species at all street frontages, including variations in plant height in the planter elements and employment of layering strategies within the planting strips at both Dexter Avenue N. and Westlake Avenue N. that show a consistent palette of plantings but allows for a scheme that makes room for variety. The volume of plantings shall match that shown in the Design Review packet prepared for the Final Recommendation meeting.
2. The planters along Galer Street shall be designed to provide 16 inches of soil measured horizontally and perpendicular from the face of the building.
3. Tree plantings shall provide the larger caliper of trees as shown in the packet prepared for the Final Recommendation meeting on November 12, 2014.
4. The retaining wall to be provided along the sidewalk on Dexter Avenue N. shall not exceed at any point 24 inches above the sidewalk and should step more frequently if necessary so as not to exceed this maximum height. An integrated cable railing system shall be allowed in conjunction with the retaining wall.
5. The fence at the southeast corner on Westlake Avenue N. shall be moved to the western edge of the rain water planter and shall match the height and materials used on other street-level guardrails.

### Architectural

6. All the balcony railings shall consist of metal bars or slats (and not cables) to convey a distinctively horizontal appearance.
7. The design of the pavilion shall remain consistent with the design shown in the Design Review packet for the Final Recommendation meeting.
8. The entrance on Westlake Avenue N. shall incorporate at least a 6-foot by 8-foot covered exterior area on the property to serve as a transition between public and private realms and to enhance a sense of entry into the private realm. This covered outdoor area shall relate to the adjacent water feature and gasket provided between the pavilion and main building.
9. The covered exterior area in front of the Dexter Avenue N. entrance shall project at least 5 feet from the face of the building and the bench seating provided there should be within the covered area.

10. The secondary frame elements shown in the Design Review packet prepared for the Final Recommendation meeting shall remain as shown in the packet.
11. The plane change between the major blue and the white elements shall be 18 inches and as shown in the packet prepared for the Design Review Final Recommendation meeting.
12. The scale and indicated materials for all signage shall remain as shown in the packet prepared for the Final Recommendation meeting. The wayfaring sign shall remain and installed as shown in the packet prepared for the Final Recommendation meeting.

### Colors

13. Window colors shall remain as shown in the packets prepared for the Final Recommendation meeting, with white frames in areas of white siding and dark frames in areas of blue siding.
14. A noticeable and consistent variation in paint sheen shall be employed to differentiate between the white and blue painted fiber cement surfaces.
15. The areas of gray siding shall be lapped, as indicated in the presentation and in the packets prepared for the Design Review Final Recommendation meeting.

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