



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3016574

Address: 1812 Boren Ave

Applicant: Corinne Kerr of ZGF Architects for Touchstone Corporation

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, April 01, 2014

Board Members Present: Gabe Grant (Chair)  
Matthew Albores  
Gundula Proksch

Board Members Absent: Murphy McCullough  
Pragnesh Parikh

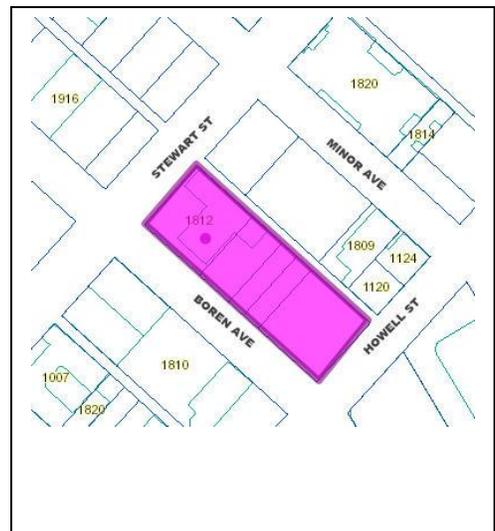
DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMC 240/290-400

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

Lot Area: 42,363 square feet



**Current Development:** The existing site includes a surface parking lot and a one-story commercial structure (built 1975).

**Access:** Existing vehicular access is via curb cuts at the street frontages and from the alley.

The surrounding development includes a site under construction to the west, across Boren Ave (160' tall office and hotel development – "Hill 7," also by Touchstone Corporation), a 1-story car rental and surface parking to the north, a site proposed for construction across the alley to the east (400' tall residential tower), early 1-2 story 20th-century commercial structures across the alley to the southeast, and a 2-story research facility across the street to the south.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Context:** The Denny Triangle area is transitioning from low rise type commercial and residential buildings to residential towers, office development, and hotel uses. Newer development is contemporary in design, with simple forms, large areas of glazing, and permanent materials such as precast concrete. Older development is a mix of building types, ranging from early 20th century masonry and wood frame construction to 1970's auto-oriented 1 story buildings with large surface parking lots.

Boren Avenue is a busy vehicle arterial between South Lake Union and Capitol Hill. Stewart Street is a street heavily used by pedestrians, transit, and cars to access the Downtown core. Howell St includes moderate levels of vehicular traffic. The area is served by frequent bus transit, as well as bus and light rail transit in the Convention Center station a few blocks to the southeast.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is for a 36 story, 372 unit residential tower adjacent to an 11 story, 300,000 square foot office building with 5,000 square feet of retail at grade. Parking for 600 vehicles will be located below grade and accessed from the alley. The existing building would be demolished.

<b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: April 1, 2014</b>
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## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

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](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](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

The applicant provided additional graphics at the EDG meeting, including conceptual design studies of the street level and the tower.

The applicant noted that the design intent of the pedestrian arcade on the street frontages (“colonnade”) is to provide a wider pedestrian experience than the narrow sidewalks adjacent to the busy arterials, complement the colonnade across the street (16-story hotel and office development under construction), and relate the pedestrian realm to the scale of the overall development.

The first massing option of two towers would maximize development potential on the site, but would create a “canyon” experience between the towers. The second option placed the tower on the north end of the site, with a lower office building extending from the tower to the south. The applicant noted that the second option, with a tower on the north end of the block, results in crowding by the proposed tower across the alley. This option would also require a very narrow or L-shaped tower on the proposed site, in response to tower spacing Code requirements. The lower office portion of the building reduces façade height at the street, but allows for little differentiation between the office and residential portions of the building.

The third option included the tower on the south side of the site, with the office portion of the building on the north end of the site, at a similar height to the proposed development across Boren Ave.

The tower would be inset at the level of the upper office floors, providing modulation between the upper and lower portions of the building. The lower levels of the tower would be occupied by loft style units with a taller floor to floor height than the office building.

The preferred architectural concept is that of “patterned forms” to allow visual interest, vertical expression, and the ability to use material and articulation to visually tie the office and tower forms together. The overall intent is to provide a distinctive design that is respectful of nearby context.

The intent of the consistent horizontal line of articulation at the residential tower (approximately level 10) is to provide residential outdoor space that corresponds to the roof of the office portion of the building. This allows the residential open space to ‘borrow the view’ over the office building and possibly share outdoor space with the office building.

The pedestrian colonnade would be adjacent to a glazed wall. Conference rooms were shown as forms set within the glazed wall in the northern half of the Boren Ave street frontage, with office lobby and circulation beyond the wall. A large conference room, residential leasing office, and residential lobby occupy the southern half of the street frontage on Boren Ave. The Howell Street frontage is composed of residential lobby and mail room area.

The applicant noted that the street level conference rooms are proposed in response to the technology companies' demand for meeting spaces. The applicant explained that the conference rooms at Boren Ave could also function for 'pop up' retail uses that can be changed over a short period of time. The applicant explained that while there isn't the market for retail in this area, it's possible that any of the street level spaces could function for future retail.

The only retail use is proposed at the northwest corner. A bike storage area is located at the Stewart Street frontage near the alley.

The landscape plan concept is based on providing a cohesive streetscape with nearby development, including the site under construction across Boren Ave. Larger street trees are proposed at Stewart St and Howell St. Large angled landscape buffers are proposed between the curb and the colonnade on Boren Ave, with standard width and shape landscape strips on Stewart and Howell Streets.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comments were offered at the EDG meeting.

## **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.

- 1. Massing Options.** The Board discussed the various massing options, with a focus on the merits of the Two Towers (Option 1) vs. the Integrated Towers (Option 3). The Board supported the preferred Massing Option 3 (Integrated Towers). (A-1, B-3)
  - a. Massing Option 3 allows for a wider floor plate in the tower, and therefore allows for the wider arcade. (A-1, D-1, D-2)
  - b. Massing Option 3's lower office building response to the project across Boren (Hill 7). (A-1, B-3)
  - c. Massing Option 3 includes the horizontal modulation near the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, corresponding to the roofline of the office portion of the building. This massing offers an opportunity to successfully use articulation and materials to create a refined transition between the office and residential portions of the structure. (B-4)
  - d. Massing Option 3 responds to the context of the urban fabric, which includes continuous street wall development with limited towers per block. (A-1, B-1)
  - e. The arcade design of the colonnade offers an opportunity to improve the pedestrian experience at the street level with larger paved surfaces, separation from vehicular traffic, and visually interesting materials. Similar direction was provided on the Hill 7 proposal, across Boren Ave. (B-3)

2. **Design Concept.** The Board supported the preliminary design concept using materials, modulation, and articulation to differentiate the office and residential portions of the building, but create an overall cohesive design. (A-1, B-4)
  - a. The proposed design should respond to the design of the Hill 7 development across the street. Through design review, that development successfully used materials, modulation, and articulation to emphasize the two different building programs on site, but visually tied together the overall design concept. (A-1, B-1, C-2)
    - The Board supported the preliminary design studies that indicate the design moving in this direction.
    - The Board supported the proposed facade articulation and texture shown in the Patterned Forms concept.
  - b. The proposal should also respond to the design context of the Kinect tower proposed across the alley to the east. The alley façade of the proposed development will face the Kinect tower. The alley façade should be designed to be consistent with the other building facades. The Board supported the design direction shown in the concept sketches. (A-1, B-1, C-3, C-6)
  - c. The Board supported the initial design direction for the top of the tower and creating visual interest in the skyline. The proposed development will be on the visible edge of the Denny Triangle towers and will be highly visible in the skyline. (A-2)
  - d. The Board supported designing the upper levels of the buildings to provide flexibility for a variety of future uses. (A-1)
  
3. **Ground Plane.** The ground plane and colonnade should be designed to activate the street frontage. The street level of the building should be designed to flexibly function as future retail spaces. (A-1, C-1, C-2, C-3, C-5, D-1, D-2, D-3, D-5)
  - a. The street level uses should be designed to provide active facades (not potentially drawn blinds at the street frontage that may result from conference rooms). (C-1, C-1)
    - The Board noted that pedestrian arcades can enhance street level activity when there is an active use at the building edge, adjacent to the pedestrian realm. Conference rooms won't likely provide the necessary activation at the edge of the colonnade.
  - b. The proposed uses adjacent to the colonnade should be designed to accommodate future retail use. Spaces that aren't easily converted to retail uses should be located away from the street frontage (such as storage areas and mail rooms). (B-3, C-1, D-1)
    - The Board noted that while there may not appear to be a current market for retail, the proposed development and nearby construction will bring many more residents and workers in the immediate vicinity in the very near future, which will provide a market for street level retail.
  - c. The pedestrian environment should include wider areas of hardscaped surfaces to allow for pedestrian activity, rather than the wider landscaped buffers shown in the landscape concept sketches. (D-1, D-2)
  - d. Lighting should enhance the pedestrian experience in the colonnade. (D-5)

The Board identified the following Downtown Design Guidelines of highest priority for this project. The Downtown guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

- 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.
- A-2 **Enhance the Skyline**. Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- C-3 **Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades**. Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.
- C-5 **Encourage Overhead Weather Protection**. Encourage project applicants to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major pedestrian routes.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- D-5 **Provide Adequate Lighting.** To promote a sense of security for people downtown during nighttime hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building facade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.

## 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 23.49.058A):** The Code requires structures that are 85’-160’ tall and within 15’ of the street lot line to have unmodulated walls that are no more than 155’ long for the upper two floors of the office structure. The applicant proposes an unmodulated wall on Boren St that is 170’ long. 2’ deep modulation would be provided for areas of the street facing facades, with 10-15’ deep modulation between the podium and tower levels.

The Board indicated they would be willing to consider this departure, provided that the design includes significant modulation, articulation, and use of materials to enhance the design concept. The Board specified that the proposed sketches indicate approximately 2-foot deep modulation, which is the minimum needed to reduce scale and achieve the proposed design concept. (B-3, B-4, C-2)

2. **Overhead Weather Protection (SMC 23.49.018):** The Code requires overhead weather protection to be located between 10’ to 15’ above sidewalk level. The applicant proposes overhead weather protection at a height of 25’ above the sidewalk. The weather protection would be provided through a ‘colonnade’ that measures 15’ deep and should provide adequate pedestrian protection from weather.

The Board indicated they would be willing to consider this departure, provided that the applicant demonstrates how the proposed design better meets the intent of the Design Review Guidelines. (C-5)

- 3. Loading Berth Requirements (23.54.035):** The Code requires 4 loading berths with minimum lengths of 35' each. The applicant proposes 2 loading berths that measure 35' long, and 2 that measure 25' long.

The Board indicated they would be willing to consider this departure, provided that the loading is designed to avoid conflicts with the permitted project across the alley. (C-6)

#### **BOARD DIRECTION**

**At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forwards to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.**