



FINAL RECOMMENDATION 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, September 02, 2014

Board Members Present: Anjali Grant (Chair)
Alan McWain
Wolf Saar (Substitute)

Board Members Absent: Matthew Albores
Murphy McCullough (recused)
Gundula Proksch

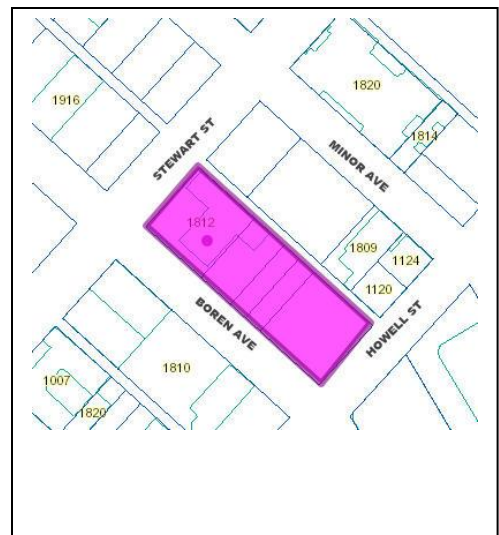
DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser

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, 368 unit residential tower adjacent to an 11 story, 308,000 square foot office building with 5,000 square feet of retail at grade. Parking for 532 vehicles will be located below grade and accessed from the alley. The existing building would be demolished.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: April 1, 2014

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.

or contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Address: Public Resource Center
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000

Seattle, WA 98124

Email: 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.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: September 2, 2014
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DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

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

or contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

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At the Final Recommendation meeting, the applicant described the design intent to complement the Hill 7 office and hotel project across Boren Ave to the west, with highly permeable street frontage and street level spaces that can flexibly function for retail or other uses (the "pop-up" forms in the Boren Ave street frontage, and the larger "flex room" street level space on Boren Ave). The applicant described the flex room intent as a "living room for the office building" where employee groups can gather for functions, or the space could work for one or multiple retail tenants. The residential lobby is designed to host gatherings for the residents of the tower, with the intent of activating the street frontage.

The intent of the colonnade is to provide a human scale street frontage, with a large area of overhead weather protection and pedestrian scaled façade materials. Street level façade materials include storefront glazing, exposed concrete columns, iron spot brick at the residential

entry, reclaimed wood and darker metal siding at the pop-ups, and colored fabric on the interior wall of the pop-up (mounted to be visible to the street frontage). The lighting plan would be used to create continuity between the building lobby and the outdoor colonnade space, with large sculptural light fixtures on the soffit of the colonnade and lobby ceiling.

The Boren Ave streetscape was shown with wider sidewalks than at EDG, with paving patterns that continue inside the building lobby. Approximately 1' tall Corten steel planter walls would provide a more gradual grade transition from the curb to the walkway grade. Rounded forms would provide pedestrian seating opportunities at the street level. A 9th floor roof deck would be physically separated from an adjacent residential amenity area, but designed to provide visual interest to the upper levels of the residential tower. A roof deck on the residential tower would provide additional outdoor amenity space for residents, with glass guard rails to provide wind protection.

The upper building was shown with modulation and the intent to provide a cohesive design expression on all four sides of the building. Mullion extensions and operable windows would be used to enhance the areas of modulation on the office portion of the building. The residential tower would include a sleeker glazed appearance, with metal panels breaking the glazing into distinct modules and operable windows expressing the residential scale. The metal reveals, mullions, operable windows, and louvers are proposed in tones of silver.

Two options were shown for the floor to floor height in the residential tower. The reduced 9'6" floor to floor height would allow for three more levels of residential in the lower portion of the building. The applicant requested that the Board approve both options. The applicant noted that the area in question is butt glazed, which offers a sleek exterior appearance and additional floors would be less noticeable. The development team has not yet decided which option meets the program's needs, but would make the decision before the MUP is approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments at the Final Recommendation meeting included the following:

- The rooftop of the 11-story office building will also be a 5th façade, and should be designed in response to the visibility of this facade from nearby and proposed towers. This area should include a green roof, or design the mechanical systems to be screened from above as well as the sides.

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.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE (APRIL 1, 2014)

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 10th 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)
 - o The Board supported the preliminary design studies that indicate the design moving in this direction.
 - o 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)
 - o 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)
 - o 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)

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS (SEPTEMBER 2, 2014)

1. **Ground Plane.** The Board supported the intended flexibility of the street level building areas, but remained concerned that the pop-ups and flex room would be used as meeting spaces with closed blinds at the street frontage.
 - a. The Board therefore recommended a condition that the development team should demonstrate how the pop-up street level spaces and the larger street level flex space at Boren Ave would be curated and managed to maximize human activity at the street frontage, if retail is not yet feasible at the site. (C-1, C-3)
 - b. The Board noted that the intent to visually connect the lobby and colonnade using the lighting plan is an important strategy during the day and in the evening. The Board therefore recommended a condition that the lighting plan should indicate how the lobby lighting and colonnade soffit lighting will be programmed to fulfill the design intent of visual connection between the lobby and colonnade, at night as well as during the day. (D-5, C-1)
 - c. The Board strongly supported the highly transparent and well-lit bicycle storage room at the Stewart Street frontage, as a means of providing human activity at the street frontage. (C-1)
 - d. The Board supported the street level landscape plan. (D-2)
2. **Rooftops.** The Board supported the 9th floor roof deck as a 5th elevation, and noted that the roof of the 11-story building will be highly visible from the residential tower and nearby proposed and existing towers.
 - a. The Board therefore recommended a condition that the roof of the 11-story office portion of the building be designed as a visual composition, similar to the Hill 7 development under construction to the west. (B-3, B-4, C-2)

- b. The Board discussed the design of the “Shelter” structure on the 9th floor deck and noted that it could be more sculptural or robust to better relate to the design concept, but declined to recommend a condition for this item. (B-4, D-3)
3. **Design Concept and Expression.** The Board noted that the facades of the upper levels and street level are well composed, cohesively designed, respond to adjacent datum lines, and provide differentiation between the office and residential uses. (B-1, B-3, B-4, C-2, C-6)
- a. The Board recommended approval of either of the floor to floor heights for the lower levels of the residential tower. (B-4, C-2)
 - b. The Board suggested incorporating darker reveals and mullions than proposed, but declined to recommend a condition for this item. (B-4)
 - c. The Board strongly supported enhancing the striations and subtle banding shown in the Design Recommendation packet images. The Board noted that the spandrel colors and levels of glass reflectivity will need to be chosen carefully in order to execute this design intent, but declined to recommend a condition for this item. (B-4)

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 was based upon the departures’ potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departures.

1. **Façade Modulation (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 198’4” long. 2’ deep modulation would be provided for areas of the street facing facades. The colonnade provides modulation at the street level, but the Code requires modulation at the upper elevations.

This departure would provide an overall design that would better meet the intent of Design Review Guidelines A-1, B-4, and C-2 by providing a pedestrian scale at the street level with the colonnade, by providing at least 2' deep modulation at the upper levels, by designing all four facades of the building to be consistent and cohesive, and by using mullion extensions, reveals, and other design strategies to reduce the scale of the upper levels of the building.

The Board unanimously recommended that DPD grant the departure.

- 2. Overhead Weather Protection (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 23' above the sidewalk. The weather protection would be provided through a 'colonnade' that measures 15' deep and should provide better pedestrian protection from weather than the Code required height and depth.

This departure would provide an overall design that would better meet the intent of Design Review Guidelines C-5 and D-1 by providing functional overhead weather protection, a colonnade designed with materials and amenities that respond to the pedestrian scale, and activated street frontages.

The Board unanimously recommended that DPD grant the departure, subject to the conditions listed below.

- 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.

This departure would provide an overall design that would better meet the intent of Design Review Guideline C-2 by providing a large protected pedestrian area at the street level in the colonnade, by providing at least 2' deep modulation at the upper levels, by carefully treating all four facades of the building, and by using mullion extensions, reveals, and other design strategies to reduce the scale of the upper levels of the building.

The Board unanimously recommended that DPD grant the departure.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation summarized above was based on the design review packet dated September 2, 2014, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the September 2, 2014 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, the three Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design with the following conditions:

Conditions:

1. Demonstrate how the pop-up street level spaces and the larger street level flex space at Boren Ave would be curated and managed to maximize human activity at the street frontage, if retail is not yet feasible at the site. (C-1, C-3)
2. The lighting plan should indicate how the lobby lighting and colonnade soffit lighting will be programmed to fulfill the design intent of visual connection between the lobby and colonnade, at night as well as during the day. (D-5, C-1)
3. Design the roof of the 11-story office portion of the building as a visual composition, similar to the Hill 7 development under construction to the west. (B-3, B-4, C-2)