



City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE
OF THE
DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
April 22, 2014**

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Project Number: 3016917
Address: 808 Howell Street
Applicant: Dave Schneider, LMN Architects, for R.C. Hedreen Co.
Board Members Present: Mathew Albores
Anjali Grant
Murphy McCullough (Chair)
Alan McWain
Gundula Proksch
Land Use Planner present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Zone: DOC 2 500/300-500



BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The three-quarter block development site is bounded by 9th Avenue on the east, by 8th Avenue on the west, by Stewart Street on the north and Howell Street on the south. The development site is L-shaped, with approximately 354 feet along 8th Avenue, its broadest front. The site and vicinity to the north, south and west are zoned Downtown Office Core 2 with a 500-foot height limit (DOC 2 500/300-500). Across 9th Avenue and to the east the zoning is DMC 340/290-400

There are currently three structures located on the site, including a 3-story masonry building that formerly functioned as the Greyhound Bus Terminal.

Project Description

The proposed development is for a 500-foot tower hotel building, with approximately 1,270 guest rooms located above ground floor retail/restaurant space. The hotel would rest upon a five-story podium occupied by approximately 85,000 square feet of meeting rooms and ballroom space. Five levels of proposed underground parking would accommodate approximately 450 automobiles. Six truck-loading bays would also be accommodated at grade off the alley. As proposed in the preferred scheme, the common parking garage would take access from an interior drive connecting 8th to the alley. Trucks would utilize the same driveway off 8th Avenue. Project work for the proposal would include landscape and pedestrian improvements along each of the four encompassing streets, with “Green Street” improvements required on the portion of 9th Avenue abutting the proposal.

EDG meeting, April 22, 2014

ARCHITECTS’ PRESENTATION

After Board introductions, the design team from LMN architects briefly touched upon the development objectives, identified as: providing a hotel on site that functions efficiently, with ground level related retail and restaurants that will activate the streetscapes primarily along 8th Avenue and along Stewart Street.

“Site functionality” was given a good deal of attention in the presentation, with comparisons made in the printed materials to other Seattle hotels. Three alternative massing models were

briefly presented to the Board. Alternative “A” placed the hotel tower on Stewart Street with lobbies and pre-function spaces for meeting rooms aligned beneath the tower. A five-story podium extended along 8th Avenue to the intersection with Howell Street, and included ballroom spaces above the primary truck loading dock. Alternative “B” placed the tower along 8th Avenue, with lobby and pre-function spaces extending along the 8th Avenue and Howell Street edges of the structure, enabling the loading dock to be located at the northeast quadrant of the site. The ballroom spaces were located in the podium above the loading bays and extended along Stewart Street. Alternative “C,” the alternative preferred by the applicants, located the hotel tower at the southernmost edge of the site, generally aligning it with the Howell Street and 8th Avenue edges. Lobbies and pre-function spaces would be located beneath the tower. The hotel lobby would align with a *porte cochere* just off the southern portion of the alley. The truck loading would be relegated to the portion of the podium running between Stewart Street and the northern leg of the alley. It would be pulled to the alley so as to allow retail spaces surrounding it to face onto 9th Avenue, Stewart Street and 8th Avenue.

The packet, including site analysis and materials presented at the meeting is available online by entering the project number (3016917) at this website:

[http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design Review Program/Project Reviews/Reports/default .asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design%20Review%20Program/Project%20Reviews/Reports/default.asp)

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD.
Address: 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

After asking a number of clarifying questions following the architect’s presentation, the Board elicited comments from members of the public attending the meeting. Approximately 5 of the attendees elected to make comments regarding the proposal.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Comments solicited from the public included the following:

- Place the tower structure close to Stewart Street; it would be closer to office structures and allow more breathing space to the residential towers near Olive and 8th
- Prefer Option “A” over applicant’s preferred Option “C”
- A “giant step backwards,” compared to the earlier proposal (#3013951) for a full-block build-out with an alley vacation
- The biggest flaw with this proposal is that in effect it relies on using the public alley for private purposes
- Proposal is incomplete without providing information regarding development potential of the lot on the corner of 9th and Howell, not included as part of this proposal
- Appears “less thoughtful” than earlier proposal (#3013951), and “less sensitive”

- The big question, given all the functional requirements serving the hotel, how will the alley maintain its status as “public space”?

BOARD’S DELIBERATIONS

The Board began its deliberations with the Chairperson noting some basic areas that stood in need of further discussion and resolution:

- the location of the hotel tower
- the functionality of the alley and the relationship of alley to the proposed *porte cochere*
- the proposed podium, does it do enough to meet the street and activate the sidewalks at each of the three street edges?
- the requested departures: how do they enhance the proposal?

LOCATION of the TOWER

Despite public comment preferring the location of the tower along Stewart Street, the Board members were in agreement that locating the tower to anchor the corner of 8th and Howell as in the applicant’s “Preferred Alternative (“C”), made the most sense, functionally and aesthetically. Extending the tower to the street corner provided a northern edge to the Olive/Howell triangle and was considered a strong urban design move. This also allowed for the shadows cast by the tower to fall across the site and to be partially contained. The location allowed the lobby and lounge areas of the hotel to enliven the sidewalks along Howell and 8th while the retail wrap of the loading bays parallel to Stewart Street allowed for retail on 8th, Stewart and 9th, retail uses oriented in a more pronounced way to the upper Denney Triangle area. The Board acknowledged that the applicants had done a good job of explaining “*why*,” in the preferred scheme, “things were where they were.”

FUNCTIONALITY of the ALLEY

Likewise, the Board was agreed regarding the appropriateness of uses set along the dog-legged alley. Further, in providing a driveway running from 8th Avenue and joining the portion of the alley running from the middle of the block to 9th Avenue, truck maneuvering and loading/unloading was effectively disengaged from *porte cochere* operations located on the portion of the alley perpendicular to it and intersecting with Stewart Street. There would be sufficient length of the area in the alley for taxi and valet drop off, located away from the truck-loading area and pathway.

While accepting the principles of the separate truck-loading and passenger drop-off/pick-up zones, the Board made it clear that they would like to see much more detail about how the *porte cochere*, in particular, would actually work. Additionally, the Board was clear in their

request that questions of functionality should be couched within a wider presentation that addressed the issue of clearly maintaining a sense of public space and even pedestrian public space within the alley. Aspects of sidewalks, staff entries, pedestrian shortcuts, each safe and attractive, need to be addressed. How can the alley function as needed for hotel purposes and vehicular mobility and still maintain itself as a space that transcends that functionality. The answer to that question might well be the measure of the ability of the alley to maintain itself as a public space.

ENGAGING FACADES

Providing for an engaging experience as well as for functionality along the lower levels of the podium was an obvious challenge for the project. Since the upper podium levels along the alleyways would be needed for back-of-house functions, and since these upper facades would be clearly viewed from 9th Avenue and from Stewart Street, their treatment was a vital challenge for achieving an attractive, integrated design. The alley facades should be treated as if they were street-facing facades. Design should address a building with six (or seven) distinct facades. Related to this, the Board would expect at the next meeting to see a clear presentation of what could be built on the lot cornering on the 9th and Howell intersection.

The Board clearly was not impressed with what they was referred to as the “saddle bag” sitting at the lower portion of the north-west facing (Stewart Street) façade of the hotel tower. There was a strong call from the Board that this protuberance, fitted to accommodate rooms and elevators terminating at a lower level of the tower, needed to be more finely integrated with the tower. This might well mean some integration into a tower conceived more sculpturally, one less fiercely rectilinear.

OTHER ISSUES

The street-level façade on 8th Avenue, it was mentioned, should be made inviting; the area described as “lounge” should become a “nice moment” at the corner and northward along the block of 8th Avenue, especially since it will need to contrast with the large, low-ceilinged maw proposed for abetting large truck turns into the interior of the site. There too, attention must be paid to offering an adequate invitation for pedestrians as well as vehicles to venture in. With the grand gestures made toward porosity and transparency around the whole-block podium of the earlier proposal now gone, even greater attention must be given to the finer grain, to making the retail spaces and areas along the sidewalks zing.

Generally, the Board members were convinced that this proposal was going in the right direction, that the development team was asking the right questions and that it should proceed to further design development, with the assistance of the Board’s guidance, and to Master Use Permit application. There was, nonetheless, a sense of disappointment shared by the Board, especially the three Board members who had recommended approval of DPD Proposal #3013951 for the same site. That feeling was conveyed in the thought that what had earlier been recommended for approval by the Board was a proposal for a *Grand Convention Hotel*,

while the current proposal was for a conventional hotel, albeit aggrandized.. The Board would be delighted to see, when the proposal was returned, a touch of something special, a certain bestowal of elegance or grace, that would embolden the proposed building to be more than just another Seattle hotel.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, hearing public comment, and addressing their major concerns regarding the proposal, the Design Review Board members, at the time of the first early design guidance meeting, provided the siting and design guidance described above and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's *Design Review Guidelines for Downtown Development* they believed to be of highest priority for this project..

A. Site Planning

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. 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.

B-2 Create a Transition in Bulk and Scale

Compose the massing of the building to create a transition to the height, bulk, and scale of development in neighboring or nearby less-intensive zones.

B-3 Reinforce the Positive Urban Form and 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 and 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. 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.

C-2 Design Facades of Many Scales

Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and material compositions that refer to the scale of human activities occurring within them. 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-4 Reinforce Building Entries

To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce the building's entry.

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. Public Amenities: Enhancing the Streetscape and 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.

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 façade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandizing display windows, and on signage

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.

E. Vehicular Access and Parking

E-1 Minimize Curbcut Impacts

Minimize adverse impacts of curbcuts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

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.

E-3 Minimize the Presence of Service Areas

Locate service areas for trash dumpsters, loading docks, mechanical equipment and the like away from the street where possible. Screen from view those elements which for programmatic reasons cannot be located away from the street front.

DEPARTURES

Two departures were requested from modulation requirements. They were both from SMC 23.49.058.B.1, requiring vertical modulation above the 85-foot level, one applicable to the north elevation along Stewart Street (see p.56 of the presentation packet) and the other along 8th Avenue. A third departure was from the tower-width requirement of SMC 23.49.058.C, which would not permit any portion of the building above 240 feet to exceed 145 feet in width. Since two of the three requested departures were involved in the proposed “saddle-bag” feature of the tower, the Board noted that they would be reluctant to grant the departures as stated, unless their concerns about the tower were addressed. But, in fact, they would be willing to entertain a departure for a greater width to the tower if they were favorably persuaded by the sculptural integrity of a redesigned tower element. The Board will require a clear statement of all departure requests and an explanation of how such requests better meet the intentions of the design guidelines at the time of the forthcoming Recommendation Meeting.

STAFF COMMENTS

Regarding the proposed curbcut on 8th Avenue (see E-1, above, and also SMC 23.41.021.B., 23.41.012.B.22, 23.49.019.H.1.c). The Director of DPD, in consultation with the Director of SDOT, may allow an *exception* to the requirement that access only be taken from the alley in Downtown zones. This should be discussed prior to MUP application with the Planner assigned to zoning review of the project. It is the expectation of the Design Review Board and

Department that the applicant will proceed to MUP intake and return for a Design Review Recommendation Meeting, at which time fuller information will be provided the Board and design responses to issues and concerns noted above will be presented in detail.

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