



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3016969

Address: 525 Boren Ave N

Applicant: Wolf Saar of Via Architecture

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, May 07, 2014

Board Members Present: Mindy Black, Chair
Jill Kurfirst
Boyd Pickrell
Janet Stephenson

Board Members Absent: Kate Idziorek (recused)

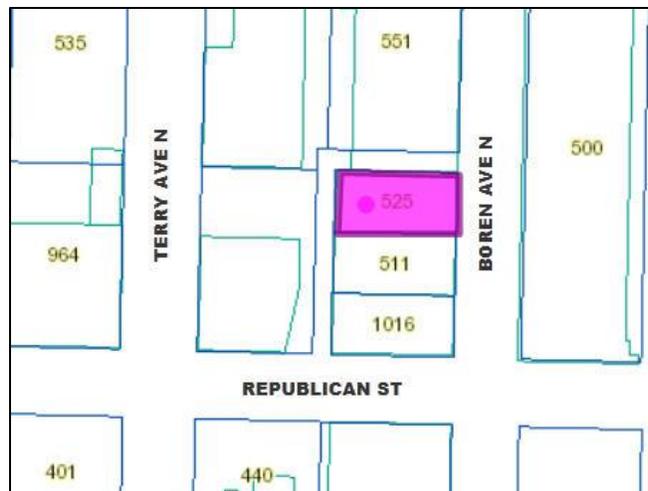
DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM 160/85-240

Nearby Zones: (North) SM 160/85-240
(South) SM 160/85-240
(East) SM 160/85-240
(West) SM 160/85-240

Lot Area: 7,190 square feet



Current Development:

The site includes an existing one-story early 20th century commercial structure.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The immediate context consists of recent office development to the north, west, and east, with several more office and multi-family developments in the permit process or under construction in the nearby blocks.

The area is undergoing rapid reconstruction and many of the nearby structures have been built in the last 10 years, are under construction, or are in the permitting process for new construction. Several historic landmarks are located in the area, and new construction is often integrated with the historic landmark structure. The areas to the north, south, and west are dominated by office uses. One residential project is under construction on the block to the south. The blocks east of Fairview Ave N include several multi-family residential developments and Cascade Park.

Boren Ave N is a relatively quiet street, with the busier arterials and transit routes at Mercer Street to the north and Fairview Ave N to the east. The South Lake Union streetcar is located on Westlake Ave N, two blocks to the west. The Streetcar currently terminates north of this site, but the route will likely be expanded along the east and west sides of Lake Union in the near future.

Access:

The subject property includes vehicular access via a curb cut at Boren Ave N. An alley borders the north and west edges of the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a seven-story residential building containing 48 units and 2700 sq. ft. of retail at ground level. Two parking spaces are proposed. The existing structure would be demolished.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3016969) 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 applicant noted that the development of the office building to the north resulted in an alley vacation and the current L-shaped alley. The intent is to design the proposal to complement the adjacent plaza to the north and treat the north alley as a street frontage. The applicant hopes to work with SDOT to pave the alley in a treatment that complements the plaza.

Boren Ave N is designated as a neighborhood street. The applicant noted that the intent is to provide a 1:1 ratio for bicycle storage spaces to residential units. One of the parking spaces will accommodate a Zipcar, and the developer intends to coordinate with Car 2 Go.

The preferred option includes upper level modulation at the south façade in order to allow glazed southwest and southeast corners. The street level retail was shown along the northeast corner, extending along the alley frontage in order to complement the plaza to the north. The retail would be inset from the residential floors above. The setback is to allow operable storefront windows at the north façade and express the design concept of a box floating above a glassy base.

A fourth massing option showed a building core at the north edge. The applicant explained this isn't the preferred option, since it would result in less glazing at the north edge, and the location of the building core would reduce the retail frontage at the north façade.

The preliminary design sketches and design parti showed the design intent of a textured backdrop to the outdoor room of the north plaza, rather than a dramatic architectural statement. The applicant noted that the intent is for a highly glazed street level retail facade, with a stronger 2-story podium expression on the east façade. The south façade would include a combination of materials to emphasize the modulation. The southwest and southeast corners would be glazed at the upper levels.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was 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.

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- 1. Massing Options.** The Board supported the preferred massing option and response to the site.
 - a. The Board supported the 2-story street wall as a response to the context of the adjacent building to the south. The setback above the second story also emphasizes the proposed residential use and differentiates the building from the surrounding office structures. (CS2.B.2, CS2.II)
 - b. The strong architectural forms and location of the residential entry are well composed. The Board also supported the upper level setbacks from the southwest and southeast corners, to reduce blank wall area and allow corner windows. (CS2.II, PL3.A, DC2.A.1)
 - c. The Board supported the proposed location of the retail at the north and east edges and the location of parking and services at the west alley. (CS2.B.2)

- 2. Design Response to North Alley and Adjacent Plaza.** The Board encouraged the applicant to work with Seattle Department of Transportation to develop the alley surface to connect the proposed north retail space with the plaza to the north. (CS2.B.3, PL1.A.1, PL1.B)
 - a. The Board noted there are several other pedestrian connections in the neighborhood. The proposed design and circulation should respond to the location and design context of these connections. (PL1.B.1)
 - b. The Board encouraged the applicant to engage with SDOT to design the north alley for a pedestrian focus. Potential strategies include making the alley one-way for vehicles, paving treatments for traffic calming, and enhancing paving and landscaping connections with the plaza to the north. The paving and landscaping should emphasize the potential connection with the plaza to the north, specifically the gap in landscaping at the south edge of the plaza. (CS2.B.3, PL1.B.3, DC1.B.1.c, DC4.D.2)
 - c. The north facing retail space should include sufficient area to allow outdoor seating, or should provide retail storefronts that can be collapsed to allow full indoor-outdoor connection when weather permits. (PL2.I.iii, PL3.II.iii)

- 3. Entries.** The entries should be located and designed for safety and resident activity. (PL2.B, PL3.A.2)
 - a. The residential and bicycle entries should be designed with an emphasis on pedestrian and cyclist safety, given the lack of other residents in the area and closed office buildings at night. The Board strongly suggested placing the bicycle entry on the north edge for clear sight lines and more direct access. (PL1.B.2, PL1.B.3, PL4.B)
 - b. The residential and retail frontage on Boren Ave N should include overhead weather protection. The Board noted that the building overhang on the north edge will provide some weather protection and canopies at the north edge don't seem necessary. (PL1.C.1)

- 4. Architectural Concept.** The Board supported the intent for a textured north façade and a response to the contemporary context, as shown in the conceptual design sketches. (CS2.II, CS3.A.2, DC2.A)
- a. The upper facade should include subtle moves to emphasize the texture, such as shadow lines from the horizontal pieces and a change in plane between the gray and brown panels. Careful treatment of the upper levels will be needed to avoid the appearance of a flat façade. Modulation should be incorporated if the subtle design moves don't provide a sufficient reduction in scale. (DC2.A, DC2.B, DC2.D, DC4.A)
 - b. The Board supported the appearance of 'lightness' in the glazed corners, as shown in the conceptual design sketches, and noted that these corners will need to be carefully detailed to achieve the intended appearance. (DC2.B.1)
 - c. The Board supported the varied placement of the brown panels, which provides variation in the façade and helps to distinguish the building from the nearby office typology. (DC2.B.1, DC2.D)
 - d. The north facing blank wall at grade near the northwest corner should be treated for visual interest. The Board supported a strong artistic treatment of this wall or detailed and textured materials. (DC2.B.2, DC3.II, DC4.A)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

CONTEXT & SITE

CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

CS2-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces

CS2-B-2. Connection to the Street: Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and public realm.

CS2-B-3. Character of Open Space: Contribute to the character and proportion of surrounding open spaces.

CS2-II Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility

CS2-II-i. Corridor Experience: Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through building placement, scale and details with specific attention to regional transportation corridors such as Mercer, Aurora, Fairview and Westlake. These locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements.

CS2-II-ii. Upper-level Setbacks: Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.

CS2-II-iii. Width Ratios: Relate proportions of buildings to the width and scale of the street.

CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes

CS3-A-2. Contemporary Design: Explore how contemporary designs can contribute to the development of attractive new forms and architectural styles; as expressed through use of new materials or other means.

PUBLIC LIFE

PL2 Walkability: Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

PL2-B Safety and Security

PL2-B-2. Lighting for Safety: Provide lighting at sufficient lumen intensities and scales, including pathway illumination, pedestrian and entry lighting, and/or security lights.

PL2-B-3. Street-Level Transparency: Ensure transparency of street-level uses (for uses such as nonresidential uses or residential lobbies), where appropriate, by keeping views open into spaces behind walls or plantings, at corners, or along narrow passageways.

PL2-C Weather Protection

PL2-C-1. Locations and Coverage: Overhead weather protection is encouraged and should be located at or near uses that generate pedestrian activity such as entries, retail uses, and transit stops.

PL2-D Wayfinding

PL2-D-1. Design as Wayfinding: Use design features as a means of wayfinding wherever possible.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

PL2-I Streetscape Compatibility

PL2-I-iii. Sidewalk Retail: Where appropriate, configure retail space so that it can spill-out onto the sidewalk (retaining six feet for pedestrian movement, where the sidewalk is sufficiently wide).

PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

PL3-A Entries

PL3-A-2. Common Entries: Multi-story residential buildings need to provide privacy and security for residents but also be welcoming and identifiable to visitors.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

PL3-II Human Activity

PL3-II-iii. Coordinate Retail/Pedestrian Activity: Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.

PL4 Active Transportation: Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.

PL4-B Planning Ahead for Bicyclists

PL4-B-1. Early Planning: Consider existing and future bicycle traffic to and through the site early in the process so that access and connections are integrated into the project along with other modes of travel.

PL4-B-2. Bike Facilities: Facilities such as bike racks and storage, bike share stations, shower facilities and lockers for bicyclists should be located to maximize convenience, security, and safety.

PL4-B-3. Bike Connections: Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project.

DESIGN CONCEPT

DC1 Project Uses and Activities: Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

DC1-B Vehicular Access and Circulation

DC1-B-1. Access Location and Design: Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists wherever possible. Emphasize use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

DC2 Architectural Concept: Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

DC2-A Massing

DC2-A-1. Site Characteristics and Uses: Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space.

DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects.

DC2-B Architectural and Facade Composition

DC2-B-1. Façade Composition: Design all building facades—including alleys and visible roofs— considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned.

DC2-B-2. Blank Walls: Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians.

DC2-D Scale and Texture

DC2-D-1. Human Scale: Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept

DC2-D-2. Texture: Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or “texture,” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

DC3 Open Space Concept: Integrate open space design with the building design so that they complement each other.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

DC3-II Landscaping To Enhance The Building and/or Site

DC3-II-i. Integrated Artwork: Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a building and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the previous uses of the area. Neighborhood themes may include service industries such as laundries, auto row, floral businesses, photography district, arts district, maritime, etc.

DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

DC4-A Exterior Elements and Finishes

DC4-A-1. Exterior Finish Materials: Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

DC4-A-2. Climate Appropriateness: Select durable and attractive materials that will age well in Seattle’s climate, taking special care to detail corners, edges, and transitions.

DC4-D Trees, Landscape, and Hardscape Materials

DC4-D-2. Hardscape Materials: Use exterior courtyards, plazas, and other hard surfaced areas as an opportunity to add color, texture, and/or pattern and enliven public areas through the use of distinctive and durable paving materials. Use permeable materials wherever possible.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

No design review departures were identified at the EDG meeting.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.