



# City of Seattle

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



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3017379

Address: 401 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue N

Applicant: Brian Runberg of Runberg Architecture Group, for Vulcan

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, October 01, 2014

Board Members Present: Mindy Black (Chair)  
Katie Idziorek  
Christine Harrington  
Boyd Pickrell

Board Members Absent: Janet Stephenson

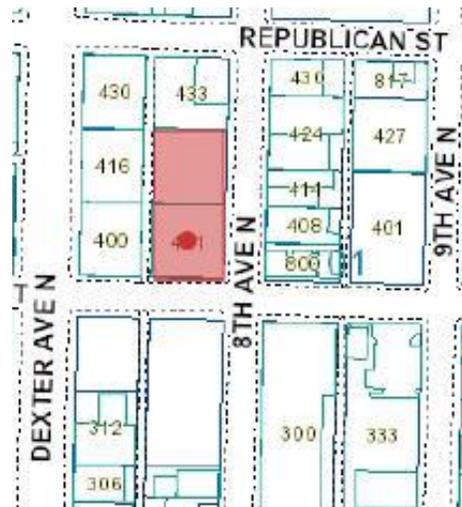
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, MArch, Senior Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM 85-240

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

Lot Area: 28,800 sf; rectangle



**Current Development:**

The rectangular site is currently occupied by a two story commercial structure and surface parking.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

A one story commercial property and surface parking occupies the remainder of the half block north of the site. One and two story commercial buildings currently exist to the east, west and south, but current MUP applications show an 8-story residential project to the east, an 8-story office building south across Harrison Street, and a 12-story office structure across the alley to the west. The neighborhood has a wide mix of residential, office, commercial, research and technology uses.

**Access:**

Vehicular access is from the improved alley adjacent to the west. Pedestrian access is from the two adjacent streets, 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue N to the east, and Harrison Street to the south.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

None

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

A 23-story residential tower and podium of approximately 290 units, with no ground level commercial, and about 225 parking spaces above and below grade, accessed off the north-south alley.

<b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE October 1, 2014</b>
--

**DESIGN PRESENTATION**

The EDG booklet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3017379) 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 booklet 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)

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following comments were provided at the EDG meeting.

- Suggested a woonerf street, plus lush and pedestrianized street edge treatment including a setback along the entire 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue frontage, not just the north half as shown.
- Supported massing Option B which creates more space between the proposed tower and the future office tower west of the alley.
- Supported distinctly different architectural character for the two portions of the podium.
- Proposed a visually interesting design rhythm approximately every 30 feet for the ground floor design.

All page references below are to the EDG #1 Booklet dated October 01, 2014.

## 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 October 1, 2014

#### 1. Massing & Context Response:

- Tower Position and Shadows:** The Board basically endorsed massing option C with the tower on the south of the site, recognizing that shadows from a tower in either position would equally shade the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue 'room' formed by the approved MUP design on the east side of the block. However, there were critical qualifiers to the massing outlined below. ( Guideline CS1-B-2; CS1-I )
- Tower Setbacks:** The Board agreed the tower façade should be well set back from the south property line (more than the 10 ft shown), to reinforce the pattern along Harrison Street where taller masses are typically set back to widen the "Neighborhood Heart" street experience. The ground level (and possibly floor 2) along Harrison should also be set back the approximate 10 ft shown, to provide a generous ground level transition zone. The Board was open to the podium form between possibly being closer to the property line, as long as there is a continuous ground level setback and a legible 'gasket' between the podium and tower. Large scale and dimensioned sections of floors 1-8 on both streets are requested to verify these relationships.(Guidelines CS2-B-2; DC2-C)
- Tower Shaping and Spacing:** The Board strongly supported the northeast corner of the tower coming down to ground to create a 'third corner' along the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue frontage, as shown on the middle drawing of 'next steps' provided. The Board also supported the 'twisted' or rotated tower shown in that drawing, which provides more spacing at the northwest corner, from the proposed office tower to the west. (Guideline DC2-C)

## 2. Ground Floor Uses & Treatment:

- a. **Street Edge along Harrison:** The Board supported the generous (about 10 ft) set back along this “Heart” street, and the residential lobby being basically centered. The Board supported the tall ground level proportion (pg. 47, lower left) along this sunny north side of the street, and a mix of plantings and pedestrian benches to provide amenity ‘rooms’, especially near the lobby. The Board supported the more permeable ‘gallery/lounge’ at the key southeast street corner (see below), and desired a similar use at the southwest corner, which will be highly visible because of the approximate 50 ft setback plaza adjacent. The Board does not support ground floor corners occupied by leasing, which is essentially office and lacks activation of the sidewalk. (Guidelines CS2-B; PL2-I; PL2-II; DC1-A)
- b. **Southwest Corner and Response to Adjacent Plaza:** The Board did not support the narrow sidewalk and the depressed planter moat described for this corner, and encouraged a more creative, flush landscape and pedestrian design that fully responds to the adjacent plaza and pedestrian desire lines across the alley.(Guideline CS2-B; PL2-B-3; DC3-C )
- c. **Southeast Corner:** The Board agreed this important corner deserves more generous paving area at the sidewalk interface, high transparency, and permeable doors into the ‘gallery/lounge’, probably off the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue side. (Guideline PL1-III; PL3-B-4 )
- d. **Townhouse & Stoop Treatment:** The Board supported the townhouse stoops and basic landscape design of the setback described, which echoes the ‘street room’ formed by the project across 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Board agreed the 2-4 ft height and depth variation provides privacy layering, but cautioned that no walls adjacent to the sidewalk or public ‘rooms’ be too tall or blank (also see departure comments). (Guideline PL3-III;PL1-II)
- e. **Bike Access:** Since the alley may be congested at peak hours from the large adjacent office project, the Board advised exploration of a bike access corridor direct from 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and/or Harrison Street, to the bike storage/lockers (the plan on pg 46 appears to show the bike access about mid-block on the alley). (Guideline PL4-B)

## 3. Tower Character & Podium:

- a. **Tower Character & West Corners:** The Board agreed the entire tower will be highly visible in a future context that will be predominantly 8-12 stories tall, so all the elevations require careful composition and material richness to reduce perceived bulk (pg 39, lower left). The southwest corner will be a backdrop to the adjacent setback plaza, and the full height of the southwest corner will be visible to pedestrians and others approaching from the west; the Board will focus on this corner at the next meeting. Also, the northwest corner across from future office tower requires an angled or curved setback and careful interior, window and façade

design for privacy considerations. Sunshades and other sustainability features can assist on this challenging west façade. ( Guideline CS2-B-3; CS2-C-1;DC2-A-2; DC2-B-1)

- b. **Podium Character:** The Board agreed the townhouse portion of the podium should exhibit a distinctly vertical rhythm and distinctive window proportions from the south half of the podium, which anchors the corner and tower. However, the Board supported the notion that both halves of the podium should be related, and can have some material consistency, as long as the strong interruption of the tower reaching grade at the middle of the base is achieved. (Guideline DC2-B; DC2-E)

## DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

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

### CONTEXT & SITE

**CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.**

#### *South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:*

##### **CS1-I Responding To Site Characteristics**

**CS1-I-i. Sustainable Design:** New development is encouraged to take advantage of site configuration to accomplish sustainability goals. The Board is generally willing to recommend departures from development standards if they are needed to achieve sustainable design. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design\* (LEED) manual which provides additional information

**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-1. Site Characteristics:** Allow characteristics of sites to inform the design, especially where the street grid and topography create unusually shaped lots that can add distinction to the building massing.

**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-C Relationship to the Block**

**CS2-C-1. Corner Sites:** Corner sites can serve as gateways or focal points; both require careful detailing at the first three floors due to their high visibility from two or more streets and long distances.

***South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:***

**CS2-I-iv. Heart Locations:** Several areas have been identified as “heart locations.” Heart locations serve as the perceived center of commercial and social activity within the neighborhood. These locations provide anchors for the community as they have identity and give form to the neighborhood. Development at heart locations should enhance their central character through appropriate site planning and architecture. These sites have a high priority for improvements to the public realm. A new building’s primary entry and facade should respond to the heart location. Special street treatments are likely to occur and buildings will need to respond to these centers of commercial and social activity. Amenities to consider are: pedestrian lighting, public art, special paving, landscaping, additional public open space provided by curb bulbs and entry plazas. **[Staff NOTE: Harrison Street is a designated Heart Location]**

**PUBLIC LIFE**

**PL1 Connectivity: Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.**

***South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:***

**PL1-II Landscaping To Reinforce Design Continuity With Adjacent Sites**

**PL1-II-i. Spatial Hierarchy:** Support the creation of a hierarchy of passive and active open space within South Lake Union. This may include pooling open space requirements onsite to create larger spaces.

**PL1-III Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances**

**PL1-III-i. Public Realm Amenity:** New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm, i.e. the transition zone between private property and the public right of way. The Board is generally willing to consider a departure in open space requirements if the project proponent provides an acceptable plan for features such as:

- a. curb bulbs adjacent to active retail spaces where they are not interfering with primary corridors that are designated for high levels of traffic flow;
- b. pedestrian-oriented street lighting;
- c. street furniture.

**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-1. Eyes on the Street:** Create a safe environment by providing lines of sight and encouraging natural surveillance.

**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.

### ***South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:***

#### **PL2-I Streetscape Compatibility**

**PL2-I-i. Street Level Uses:** Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.

**PL2-I-ii. Streetscape Amenities:** Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities

- a. tree grates;
- b. benches;
- c. lighting.

#### **PL2-II Personal Safety and Security**

**PL2-II-i. All-Day Activity:** Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18- hour public activity. Methods to consider are:

- a. enhanced pedestrian and street lighting;
- b. well-designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street.

### **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-1. Design Objectives:** Design primary entries to be obvious, identifiable, and distinctive with clear lines of sight and lobbies visually connected to the street.

**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.

**PL3-A-3. Individual Entries:** Ground-related housing should be scaled and detailed appropriately to provide for a more intimate type of entry.

**PL3-A-4. Ensemble of Elements:** Design the entry as a collection of coordinated elements including the door(s), overhead features, ground surface, landscaping, lighting, and other features.

#### **PL3-B Residential Edges**

**PL3-B-1. Security and Privacy:** Provide security and privacy for residential buildings through the use of a buffer or semi-private space between the development and the street or neighboring buildings.

**PL3-B-2. Ground-level Residential:** Privacy and security issues are particularly important in buildings with ground-level housing, both at entries and where windows are located overlooking the street.

**PL3-B-4. Interaction:** Provide opportunities for interaction among residents and neighbors.

**South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:**

**PL3-II Human Activity**

**PL3-II-i. Public/Private Transition:** Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.

**PL3-II-ii. Active Facades:** Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.

**PL3-II-iv. Activity Clusters:** Create businesses and community activity clusters through colocation of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.

**PL3-III Transition Between Residence and Street**

**PL3-III-i. Residential Entries:** Consider designing the entries of residential buildings to enhance the character of the streetscape through the use of small gardens, stoops and other elements to create a transition between the public and private areas. Consider design options to accommodate various residential uses, i.e., townhouse, live-work, apartment and senior-assisted housing.

**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-A Arrangement of Interior Uses**

**DC1-A-1. Visibility:** Locate uses and services frequently used by the public in visible or prominent areas, such as at entries or along the street front.

**DC1-A-2. Gathering Places:** Maximize the use of any interior or exterior gathering spaces.

**DC1-A-3. Flexibility:** Build in flexibility so the building can adapt over time to evolving needs, such as the ability to change residential space to commercial space as needed.

**DC1-A-4. Views and Connections:** Locate interior uses and activities to take advantage of views and physical connections to exterior spaces and uses.

**South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:**

**DC1-I Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks**

**DC1-I-i. Below-Grade Parking:** Providing parking below grade is preferred.

**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-C Secondary Architectural Features**

**DC2-C-1. Visual Depth and Interest:** Add depth to facades where appropriate by incorporating balconies, canopies, awnings, decks, or other secondary elements into the façade design. Add detailing at the street level in order to create interest for the pedestrian and encourage active street life and window shopping (in retail areas).

**DC2-C-2. Dual Purpose Elements:** Consider architectural features that can be dual purpose— adding depth, texture, and scale as well as serving other project functions.

**DC2-C-3. Fit With Neighboring Buildings:** Use design elements to achieve a successful fit between a building and its neighbors.

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

**DC3-B Open Space Uses and Activities**

**DC3-B-4. Multifamily Open Space:** Design common and private open spaces in multifamily projects for use by all residents to encourage physical activity and social interaction.

**DC3-C Design**

**DC3-C-1. Reinforce Existing Open Space:** Where a strong open space concept exists in the neighborhood, reinforce existing character and patterns of street tree planting, buffers or treatment of topographic changes. Where no strong patterns exist, initiate a strong open space concept that other projects can build upon in the future.

**DC3-C-2. Amenities/Features:** Create attractive outdoor spaces suited to the uses envisioned for the project.

**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-B Signage

**DC4-B-1. Scale and Character:** Add interest to the streetscape with exterior signs and attachments that are appropriate in scale and character to the project and its environs.

**DC4-B-2. Coordination with Project Design:** Develop a signage plan within the context of architectural and open space concepts, and coordinate the details with façade design, lighting, and other project features to complement the project as a whole, in addition to the surrounding context.

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based on the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guidelines priorities and achieve a better overall project 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 the following departures were requested:

1. **Exceed the maximum 12 ft setback (SMC 23.48.014.A.3.b):** The Code allows a maximum of 30% of the ground level setback to be more than 12 ft. The applicant proposes 52% of the 8<sup>th</sup> avenue frontage to be setback 12-20 ft.

The Board indicated receptivity to the additional 22% and the depths shown, but only if that added setback contributed to the public amenity space and experience at the sidewalk realm, not to create larger private patios.

2. **Allow a portion of ground floor uses to be other than residential units or lobby (SMC 23.48.014.B.1.c):** The Code requires only residential units or lobbies along the street setbacks of 8<sup>th</sup> avenue (beyond the 40 ft of a corner, per 23.48.014.B.1.b.1). The applicant proposes about 40 ft of non-compliant fitness use, beyond the 40 ft from the corner line, along 8<sup>th</sup> avenue.

The Board indicated receptivity to this amount of non-residential use, based on the fitness use being active and transparent, depending on the detailed façade design and permeability of uses, shown via large scale elevations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### BOARD DIRECTION

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