



INITIAL EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3017644

Address: 1301 Fifth Avenue

Applicant: Cindy Edens, Wright Runstad and Co.

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, June 17, 2014

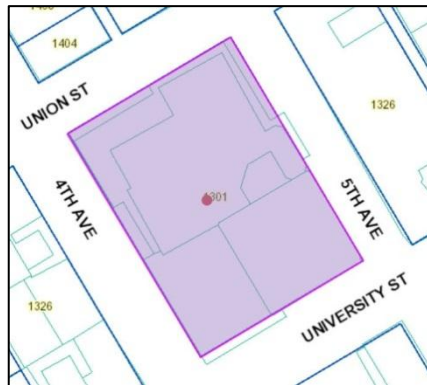
Board Members Present: Mathew Albores
Kathryn Armstrong (substitute)
Anjali Grant
Alan McWain
Gundula Proksch

Board Members Absent: Murphy McCullough (recused)

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Downtown Office Commercial One with Unlimited and 450' heights (DOC1 U/450/U) depending upon use.



Nearby Zones: The DOC1 zone extends southward to Jefferson St., east to I-5 and west to the alley between 1st and 2nd Avenues. North of Union St. the zoning shifts to Downtown Residential Commercial (DRC) with 85 to 150' height limits depending upon use.

Lot Area: The subject totals 83,980 square feet. The Metropolitan Tract upon which the site partially occupies totals 208,574 square feet. The site's 24 foot declension begins at a high point at the corner of 5th Ave and University St to a low point at the opposite corner on 4th Ave and Union St.

Current Development: Development on the block includes the 31-story Rainier Tower (circa 1977) and Rainier Square, a small shopping center with retail uses, restaurants and an atrium.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character: The project site lies within the Metropolitan Tract, an eleven acre area primarily located in a rectangle formed by Seneca St, Third Ave, Union St. and Sixth Ave owned by the University of Washington. Development within the Tract includes the Skinner Building (Fifth Ave Theater), the IBM Building, the Fairmont Olympic Hotel and the Olympic Garage, the Cobb Building, Puget Sound Plaza Building and 1411 Fourth Ave Building. Other significant buildings and uses in the area include the Great Northern Building (housing the Men’s Wearhouse) and Chase Bank to the north of the site; the Hilton Hotel Plymouth Congregational Church to the east; and Benaroya Hall to the west.

Access: Union and University Streets, Fourth and Fifth Avenues. An underground tunnel extends from Rainier Square across Fifth and Sixth Avenues to One Union Square.

Environmentally Critical Areas: The site does not possess a mapped environmental critical area.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant proposes a 54-story structure with first floor retail beneath 750,000 square feet of office use and 222 residential units. The project would have a separate 15-story hotel with 200 rooms along Fourth Ave. Parking for 1,200 vehicles would be provided below grade. The existing Rainier Tower remains.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant provided three design concepts with roughly similar building programs. Alternative #1 illustrates a low retail plinth along the edges of the site not occupied by Rainier Tower. Flanking Union St., a narrow tower rising 680 feet above the base, houses offices in the lower two-thirds of the structure and a hotel in the upper floors. The tower’s narrow sides border 4th and 5th Avenues. A smaller residential tower containing residential units extends along 4th Avenue beginning at the site’s southwest corner. In plan, the two towers form an “L” wrapped around the existing Rainier Tower. The taller of the towers, which exceeds the height of the 31-story Rainier Tower, would have a stepped profile at the upper levels of the north and south elevations.

The second alternative, a considerably less conventional tower, again wraps around two sides of the Rainier Tower leaving one continuous building above a glazed winter garden containing amenity and retail spaces. Each programmatic element has a distinct volumetric treatment within the composition, as if the structure resembled a three dimensional puzzle. The office portion in plan wraps the site in an “L” shape. Its greatest height occupies the 5th Ave and Union St. corner then drops in height as it wraps the 4th Ave and Union corner and extends along 4th. At this same corner, the residential element, which appears embedded into the office tower, forms a volumetric cube that projects out away from the two major office facades. Rising above the residential portion, the hotel caps the 4th and Union corner. The major uses are expressed

individually as separate components by interstitial spaces comprising amenity areas. The lower heights proposed for the west edge of the block preserve Puget Sound views for much of the Rainier Tower.

Similar to the first option, the third scheme has two separate towers of disparate heights. The larger tower reaches 800 feet, second in height to the Columbia Tower. An eleven story base extends from Fourth to Fifth Avenue along Union St. Above the base, the structure tapers or stair steps upward, inversely echoing the curves forming the Rainier Tower podium. At mid-height, the tapering ceases and gives way to a rectangular shaft, square in plan, which ends in a flat roof. This tower contains offices in the lower two-thirds and residences above the office use. A separate structure, a hotel, sits due west of the Rainier Tower and rises no higher than the 11-story opaque plinth of its neighbor. In all of the scenarios a new, below-grade garage burrows beneath a one to story retail plinth. Ingress into the garage occurs from Union St. with egress on University St.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Eleven members of the public affixed their names to the EDG Meeting sign-in sheet. Speakers raised the following issues:

- The taller, thinner tower makes the skyline more balanced.
- The relationship of the towers on the site is commendable.
- This area of downtown needs residential. This is a true mixed-use building.
- The EDG packet possesses very little information about the hotel. Provide more information at the next meeting.
- The sculpted base of the proposal breaks out of the typical downtown box.
- The program ought to provide enough space for a major retailer. It would be shame to lose the potential for this opportunity. The proposal needs flexibility to provide larger retail spaces.

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.

The priority Downtown 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](#).

SITE PLANNING AND MASSING

A1 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 nearby or beyond the immediate context of the building site.

The composition of the three major massing elements (the Rainier Tower and the proposed structures) ought to appear as if communicating with one another. The additions to the block should be designed in a manner that would possess a strong relationship or "attitude" toward the tower's base. Consider a design of the new insertions into the block that would 1) express a clear spatial organization shaped by the base and the two new buildings and 2) provide sightlines to the tower's base from the north on Fifth Ave and from the west along University St. The Board noted the third scheme's reliance upon the horizontal datum line at 139 feet established by the top of the curved base in determining the beginning of the upward curve of the tower and the height of the hotel. The Board questioned the need for strictly adhering to it. The tiers of the proposed residential / office tower could commence just above the retail plinth allowing pedestrians to experience the tower's dramatic shape and opening views to Rainier Tower's curved podium.

A2 Enhance the Skyline: Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline. Respect existing landmarks while responding to the skyline's present and planned profile.

In order to achieve the guidance provided in A1 above, the Board suggested that the applicant consider building higher and consider other departures, similar to the façade modulation (request # 1 in the booklet), which may enable the lower realms of the complex to have a clearer spatial organization.

The upper reaches of the proposed tower have proportions roughly similar to Rainier Tower, square in plan, with a blunt or flat roof. While the architect conveyed the intention of relating the two towers by this similarity of form, the Board members indicated an interest in a more dramatic shape or expression on the skyline. Seattle towers over 40 floors all possess sculpted shafts and/or interestingly shaped tops.

ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION

B1 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.

The desire for a coherent spatial arrangement of the masses at the lower levels or pedestrian realm of the complex corresponds to a second Board interest---that open space, whether private, public or a mix, has an outward presence at or near the streetscape. The applicant

could consider the placement of open space at street level as an entry plaza(s) or above the plinth to exert itself in more compelling ways upon the pedestrian experience than the green swaths illustrated (p. 45) in the EDG booklet. Interstitial or negative space introduced by Rainier Tower's idiosyncratic base ought to be complemented by the massing of the new structures. The insertion of new volumes can serve to expand and shape this space into a definable open area. By giving the podium of the Rainier Tower breathing room, the development can celebrate a significant Seattle structure, supplements its visual dynamism and creates a meaningful space that defines the lower realm where the three major buildings meet.

B3 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.

The concavity of Rainier Tower's base provides the design motif for the proposed tower's form. The architect's inversion of the form, a broad base tapering upward to the shaft, creates a visual reference. At the next meeting, the Board would benefit from a clearer understanding of the compelling reasons for the tiered or stepped building mass. Consider beginning the steps or tiers closer to the pedestrian level. The Board noted that this mid-section of the building has little or no engagement with the form that influenced it.

B4 Design a Well-Proportioned & Unified Building: Compose the massing and organize the 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.

The Board observed that the hotel's massing and placement appears separate or detached from the rest of the complex. Further consideration should occur about 1) its location and its effect on view blockage of the base from the west and 2) the lack of visual synergy with Rainier Tower. The Board raised the prospects of a taller, narrower hotel structure or one embedded in the proposed tower similar in intention to the manner in which the residential volume expresses itself in Alternative # 2 as a singular form but within the larger building mass.

THE STREETScape

C1 Promote Pedestrian Interaction: Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming, and open to the general public.

In following meetings, the architect should provide perspectives of the streetscapes that include the massing of Rainier Tower and the proposed towers. As the design for the commercial plinth evolves more information should inform the reader of the retail components.

C2 Design Facades of Many Scales: Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and material 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.

During the EDG review process, the focus of the applicant's and the Board's effort is the arrangement of the complex's massing components. The evolution of the facades will be informed by both the parti and urban / building attributes to be revealed in later reviews.

C3 Provide Active — Not Blank — Facades: Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.

See the guidance for C2.

C4 Reinforce Building Entries: To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce building entries.

C5 Encourage Overhead Weather Protection: Project applicants are encouraged to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major pedestrian routes.

Continuous canopies are a requirement in the Seattle downtown code. The Board looks forward to the development of this element within the city's urban fabric.

PUBLIC AMENITIES

D1 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.

The Board strongly encourages the addition of open space that helps provide visual definition to the complex at street or plinth levels. See the guidance above for B-1.

D2 Enhance the Building with Landscaping: Enhance the building and site with generous landscaping— which includes special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, and site furniture, as well as living plant material.

The treatment of the sidewalks will be an important future consideration.

D3 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.

Rainier Tower, particularly its base, provides this distinct and memorable “sense of place” described by the guideline. The design of the complex should support and enhance the base as a distinct object by providing good sightlines to it and by allowing the massing of the tower and hotel, particularly at the lower levels, to be informed by the sculptural attributes of the podium. As stated in an earlier guidance by the Board, the three major masses and the retail podium should visually communicate with one another. The negative space or interstitial areas ought to be as definable as the surrounding masses.

D4 Provide Appropriate Signage: Design signage appropriate for the scale and character of the project and immediate neighborhood. All signs should be oriented to pedestrians and/or persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood.

In later stages of the review process, the Board will evaluate the applicant’s signage concept.

D5 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, in landscaped areas, and on signage.

Development and review of a lighting concept plan will occur in later stages of the review process.

D6 Design for Personal Safety & Security: Design the building and site to promote the feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.

VEHICULAR ACCESS AND PARKING

E1 Minimize Curb Cut Impacts: Minimize adverse impacts of curb cuts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

The development proposal, limiting the number of vehicular access points to two, received the Board’s endorsement. Due to the lack of an alley, Union and University streets would serve as ingress and egress respectively. See guidance for E3.

E2 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.

E3 Minimize the Presence of Service Areas: Locate service areas for trash dumpsters, loading docks, mechanical equipment, and the like away from the street front where possible. Screen from view those elements which for programmatic reasons cannot be located away from the street front.

Since service access and loading as well as tenant vehicular access and parking occur in the same area, minimize or eliminate potential conflicts that may arise among users. As the programming of the building evolves provide additional information in the MUP plans.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the Initial Early Design Guidance the applicant requested the following departures:

1. The applicant requests a departure from façade modulation (SMC 23.49.058B) which places a maximum length on a façade without modulation. The maximum façade length varies depending upon the height as it decreases with greater heights.

The applicant seeks to depart from the maximum height at various locations above 85'. The largest departure requests occur above 240' and increase with the height of the building. The range of the departure extends from a minimum of 2'10" at the lower levels to 40' above 500'.

At the initial early design guidance meeting, the Board did not state an inclination toward approval or not. The Board, however, indicated that it supported a taller structure (and departures if necessary) to meet its expectations or guidance for the street and the base of the complex.

2. The applicant requests a departure from loading berth standards (SMC 23.54.035C) to allow smaller spaces.

The applicant provided preliminary dimensions of the loading berths. The Board did not discuss the departure request.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the First Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board recommended the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided.

At the next meeting provide a larger site model, perspectives that include the proposed building massing on the block, and specifically add Rainier Tower in sections and elevations of the proposal. The model and drawings will supplement the EDG booklet.

The packet includes materials presented at the 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.

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

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