



RECOMMENDATION OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3017667 & 3018170

Address: 300 1st Av W & 301 Queen Anne Av N

Applicant: Greystar

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, April 15, 2015

Board Members Present: Katherine Idziorek, Chair
Christine Harrington
Peter Krech
Janet Stephenson

Board Members Recused: Mindy Black

DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC3-65

Nearby Zones: (North) NC3-65
(South) NC3-65
(East) NC3-65
(West) NC3-65

Lot Area: West site: 28,000 SF
East site: 7,200 SF



Current Development:

West site: Small, 3-story commercial building & surface parking lots.

East site: small commercial building.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The two sites lie within an area on the lower portion of Queen Anne hill that is bounded by Seattle Center on the east and Puget Sound on the west. The Belltown neighborhood lies across Denny Way, two blocks to the south. There are a number of surface parking lots dotting the area, but these, once occupied by lowrise buildings, have been yielding to development in

recent years. A number of stately and substantial 3-4-story brick apartment buildings in the area date to the 1920s. Newer multi-family buildings tend to be taller by one or two stories. Some commercial office buildings in the area echo the architectural character of the 1060s and the buildings associated with the Seattle World's Fair. The alley between the two sites is the demarcation line between the Uptown Park Character Area (to the west) and the Uptown Urban Character Area (to the east) as distinguished in the *UPTOWN Neighborhood Design Guidelines* (revised, 2013).

Access:

Current vehicular access to the west site is both from the alley and 1st Av W. Vehicle parking on the east site is located directly off the alley.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

There are no ECAs on either of the two sites.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The development objectives for the site located at 300 1st Avenue W. are to construct a 7-story structure containing 10 live/work units fronting along 1st Av. W. with 133 residential units of mixed sizes above. Parking to be utilized by the two development sites will be located below grade in this building, allowing for 142 parking spaces. 301 Queen Anne Avenue N. will contain 4 live/work units at ground level, two facing onto Queen Anne Avenue N., with another two facing onto W. Thomas Street. Another 35 residential units will be located within the 6-story building.

Early Design Guidance Meeting, September 3, 2014

The packet with materials presented at that meeting is available online by entering the project number (3017667 & 3018170) at this website:

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

The EDG 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

Recommendation Meeting, April 15, 2015

Design Development

The preferred proposal at the Early Design Guidance Meeting on September 3, 2014 was for the development of two buildings, one on either side of the alley that separates Queen Anne Avenue N. from 1st Avenue W. The preferred massing scheme showed the west building in the

form of a “C” open to the alley, but with the added element of a stepping down of the building, responding to the descending grade of the street. From the west, the west building was made to appear as two distinct masses separated by a recessed gasket, located approximately one-third of the distance from the north.

Within this preferred scheme, a smaller, rectangular six-story east building, separated from the larger west building, and setback from its neighbor to the north, wrapped the corner of Queen Anne Avenue N. and W. Thomas Street. The surface of the alley between the two buildings was enhanced with paving to re-enforce the linkage between the interior uses of the related structures.

A large entry porch, located at the corner of 1st Avenue W. and W. Thomas Street, would serve as the main entry to the west building. A secondary entry was located at the gasket separating the upper third of the west building which was given its own massing composition and character. At ground level, the live/work unit at the corner of Queen Anne Avenue N. and W. Thomas Street was designed with a flexibility so as to be utilized as either a live/work space or a true commercial space.

The Recommendation Meeting packet is available online by entering the project number (3017667 & 3018170) at this website:

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PUBLIC COMMENT

- More than one member of the public thought the “porch” design at the corner of W. Thomas and 1st Avenue W. didn’t work well;
- Didn’t care for the “jungle gym” look of the “porch”;
- The “porch” was a “missed opportunity for artwork”;
- The porch was not truly public space—the corner could have been opened up to the public; seemed to hide the entry rather than invite one in.
- Concerns were raised regarding the lack of real mitigation for height, bulk and scale;
- Material changes were “troubling” and insufficient modulation was shown.
- Disappointed with the failure to provide true retail on Queen Anne Avenue N.
- Another noted the difficulty of making retail work at this location.
- Disappointed that the development team failed to present their plans to the Land Use Committee of the Queen Anne community council to solicit further input to the project.
- The proposed landscaping was beautiful and lush.
- The proposed guest suite(s) was an awesome idea.

Board Deliberations

The Massing: At the early Design Guidance meeting the Board had agreed that the step in the west building was a great move and the notch proposed to break up the massing a successful gesture. The Board cautioned that care was needed not to make the building appear to be an office building. Achieving an acceptable pedestrian scale was another challenge.

After some deliberation and exchange of views, the four Board members agreed in support of the massing of the two buildings and the choice of materials as shown in the design team's presentation and packets. The Board supported the exploration of diversifying the palette further, especially along the south section of the west façade. It was generally thought that the west façade could stand to be broken up even further. A greater sense of modulation through shift in materials, and a greater application of balcony and other human scale elements might further assist in breaking down the perceived mass of the building.

The west façade in particular needs to decide whether it is a horizontal or vertical composition.

Relationships to the surrounding streets: At the early design guidance meeting the Board felt that the experience of both buildings conveyed along W. Thomas Street was that of the structures placing their shoulders against the public realm. The Board's guidance was to enhance the pedestrian sidewalk experience and consider street furniture along W. Thomas Street. The relationship of the ground floor units above the sidewalk along Thomas Street seemed particularly awkward.

The Board was pleased with the way the awkwardness of the W. Thomas Street façade of the east building had been addressed. The two units at ground level, mid façade and the main residential entryway went a long way towards re-engaging the street.

Entries: It was unclear from the plans provided in the Early Design Guidance packets how access was afforded to various live/work units. As noted above, the units along Queen Anne Avenue N. clearly needed further consideration of their relationship to the street, which would include accessibility.

The Board was generally pleased with the way the ground floor units along 1st Avenue W. related to one another and addressed the street. The Board indicated they would be in support of setting back the ground floor window wall at the corner of Queen Anne Avenue N. and W. Thomas Street "up to six feet" to increase an outdoor area for the live/work corner unit if that would make it a more viable retail space.

The Board would like to see the fitness room at the southeast corner of the west building more activated and openly linked to the alley and the east building by means of outdoor bike racks, benches, canopies, or other elements celebrating it as an amenity space.

The "porch" was the element which proportionately occupied the greater part of the Board's deliberations. The Board agreed in their appreciation of the porch in concept, but thought that it could do even more to engage the street. It should be made directly approachable from further east up W. Thomas Street. It should have a presence even when not in use. The challenge was to

grant it more connectivity to the street without losing the feeling as a porch to the building. The wall at the entry path into the building needed to incorporate some kind of art work. Finally, "The fire pit must stay!"

The Board supported the concepts for signage presented on revised page 48 of the packet as well as the lighting plan and fixtures portrayed on revised page 49 of the packet.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

Two departure requests were anticipated by the applicants at the EDG meeting. The first was from **SMC 23.47A.008.B.3** which requires that non-residential uses extend an average depth of at least 30 feet and a minimum depth of 15 feet from the street-level, street-facing façade and have a floor-to floor height of at least 13 feet. The applicants are proposing mezzanines within the proposed live/work units which would not provide the required depth, even though the floor-to-floor heights would be increased above the minimum required.

The second departure would take advantage of **Uptown Design Guideline CS2.IV.1** which allows for up to 3 feet of additional structure height for portions of buildings set back at least 6 feet from the street lot line in order to reduce the impact of the structure height on the sidewalk below as well as reduce the length of shadows over the street.

Two additional departure requests were made at the Recommendation Meeting. The Third Departure would be from the transparency development standards of **SMC 23.47A.008.B.2** which would require transparency for 60 percent of the façade along 1st Avenue W. Primarily due to the grade change along the expansive façade, only 51 percent of that façade would be compliant.

A Fourth Departure was from **SMC 23.47A.008.A.3**, which requires street-level, street-facing facades to be located within 10 feet of the street lot line. Three areas of the street level façade are currently recessed further than 10 feet from their respective lot lines. The first is the main entry, located behind and to the north of the porch; the secondary entry at the notch further north of 1st Avenue W. is also setback further than 10 feet to allow access via a stair to the northernmost live/work units. The guest suite entry at the north property line, which will be from an external court and security gate, is also located beyond the allowable setback line.

The Board members were supportive of each of the departure requests, provided that their concerns regarding the west façade of the west building, the fitness room and the porch were subsequently addressed. With those provisos, to be worked out with the Land Use Planner, the Board recommended approval of the requested departures and approval of the design as presented at the April 15, 2015 recommendation meeting.

The recommendations summarized above were based on the design review packet for projects 3017667/3018170 dated Wednesday, April 15, 2015, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the Wednesday, April 15, 2015 Early Design Guidance meeting.