City of Seattle

Department of Construction & Inspections
Nathan Torgelson, Director

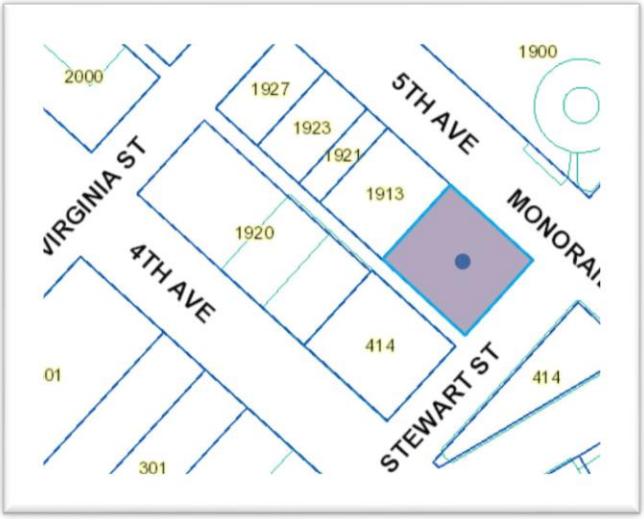
DESIGN REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION OF THE
DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number:	3018037
Address:	1903 5th Avenue
Applicant:	Ted Caloger, MG2 Architects, for Seattle Downtown Hotel and Residences LLC
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, August 16, 2016
Board Members Present:	Murphy McCullough (Chair) Peter Krech Grace Leong
Board Members Absent:	Bradley Calvert JP Emery Anjali Grant
DPD Staff Present:	Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DOC2 500/300-500
Nearby Zones: (North) DOC2 500/300-500



(South) DOC2 500/300-500
(East) DOC2 500/300-500
(West) DOC2 500/300-500
Lot Area: approximately 12,960 SF

Current Development:

The site is currently developed as a commercial, pay–by-the-hour surface parking lot, striped to accommodate 56 vehicles. The lot slopes downwards from the northwest corner to the southeast corner approximately 11 feet.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The site is located at the southeast edge of the Belltown, downtown neighborhood, lying between 5th Avenue and the intervening alley running west of 5th Avenue between Stewart and Virginia Streets. It occupies the corner formed by the intersection of 5th Avenue and Stewart Street. The project site lies across from the twin 400-foot towers of the Westin Hotel which is located on the east side of 5th Avenue. It lies north/northwest of the five-story Times Square Building, a Registered Historic Landmark dating from 1916, and directly across the alley from the three-story Centennial Building (1925). The nearly square lot constitutes the southern terminus of a block occupied by a series of two and three story commercial buildings, aligned along 5th Avenue and facing the support structure of the Seattle Monorail.

In addition, the site lies directly diagonally across 5th Avenue from McGraw Square, a Seattle Landmark, and diagonally across the alley from the Escala condominiums. Westlake Center Tower, Westlake Center Park, and the light-rail underground tunnel and station lie approximately a block south, as does the Mayflower Hotel, one of Seattle's oldest.

Access:

Current access to the parking lot is from both the alley and Fifth Avenue.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicants propose a 500-foot mixed-use building with retail space on the ground floor with separate hotel and residential entries, from 5th Avenue and Stewart Street respectively. The actual hotel lobby will be located on the 50th floor, with hotel amenity spaces on the 49th floor. The hotel rooms will be located on the 33rd through the 43rd floors. The 51st floor will be dedicated to a large restaurant, and there will be a rooftop bar with both indoor and outdoor spaces.

Eight levels of parking are proposed, with half below grade and half above the ground floor at levels 2 through 5. The southeast corner of the parking floors, at levels 2 through 5, will each accommodate three artist studios, substantially glazed and highly visible from the street and monorail levels.

Level 6 is proposed as a double-height space with a mixture of mechanical services, residential services and outdoor residential amenity areas, partially incised and recessed into the core mass of the building. The 7th floor will mark the first of the residential floors within the tower element and will be occupied primarily with indoor residential amenities, including a fitness center and event spaces. Residential floors will occupy the 8th through the 30th levels and also on levels 44 through 48, located above the proposed hotel rooms.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

At the third EDG meeting the Board had made the following observations and had given the following directives. The design team's responses are noted after each of the following Board comments.

- BOARD OBSERVATION: the design of the podium did not provide a sufficient human scale; in particular there were concerns regarding the parking screen height which extended below the 2nd floor and above the 6th floor to provide a railing for the exterior amenity space;

  Board directive: the screen should be reduced in height and its articulation reduced from the large panels shown to relate more comfortably to the pedestrian scale called for by the Board.

  ***Response:* the podiums screen height was reduced by 3'-6" and the width of the panels reduced and increased in number. Tempered glass and handrails replaced the extension of the panels above the 6th floor floor-line.**

- BOARD OBSERVATION: due to the lack of perceived height differentiation in floors between the podium and the tower, a clear separation between podium and tower was not discernible.

  Board directive: increase the height of the 6th floor, creating more of a gasket effect and providing a more defined termination to the podium and delineation of the commencement of the tower.

  ***Response:* the height of the 6th floor was expanded from 10'-6" to 16'.**

- BOARD OBSERVATION: the recess of the mechanical level at the 31st floor detracts from the integration and gracious flow of the tower;

  Board Directive: it should be eliminated.

Response: the recessed facades at the mechanical floor were eliminated.

- BOARD OBSERVATION: there was no clear or compelling logic to the choice in degrees or in the placement of the "undulation of angles" to enliven the otherwise rectilinear planes of the facades;

  Board Directive: provide a more dramatic, rather than subtle, scheme of determining the specific angularity of these faceted facades.

  Response: the angles of the facades were shown as a direct response to views to the nearby towers with each façade angled towards an improved outward view, and balconies were added to the residential floors to further sculpt the tower.

- BOARD OBSERVATION: the upward termination of the tower-top- is awkward and unresolved;

  Board Directive: the top needs to be more thoughtfully and substantially resolved;

  Response: the rectilinear "Core" mass of the building as the unifying element of the building was allowed to emerge and reassert itself at the top.

- BOARD OBSERVATION: the 5th and Stewart corner element looms as it ascends to the top of the tower;

  Board directive: the corner needs to be graciously resolved and absorbed into the form of the tower short of the plane that marks the tower's top.

  Response: the corner element was offset inwards instead of outwards, becoming a part and manifestation of the "Core" mass of the building.

- BOARD OBSERVATION: the north façade is not of a piece with the other three facades of the tower and prevents the 360-degree desired integrity of a unified tower in the downtown Seattle skyline;

  Board Directive: the deft addition of vision glass at the northwest corner and breaking up the contiguous solid cladding, together with other moves to integrate the north façade into a unified tower, were essential to attaining a well-designed and cohesive tower.

  Response: the northwest corner was wrapped in a grid of metal panels until above a line commensurate with the top floor of the neighboring Escala where the grid was composed of spandrel and vision glass.

- BOARD OBSERVATION: the safety of pedestrians moving along the sidewalk on 5th Avenue remains a concern;

  Board Directive: provide a streetscape plan that presents design solutions to pedestrian safety and provides mitigation for the disruption of the parking entry and curb-cut on Fifth Avenue.

  ***Response**: tactile warning strips and pedestrian alert signs would be provided on either side of the garage entry on 5th Avenue, and the overhead garage door would be located well within the building to heighten safety and mitigate for blockage of the pedestrian way.*

The packets which include materials presented both at the Recommendation Meeting of August 16, 2016, and the three Early Design Guidance meetings are available online by entering the project number (3018037) at this website:
http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/aboutus/news/events/DesignReview/SearchPastReviews/default.aspx
The packets are also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Mailing Address: **Public Resource Center**
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines for this project at the First Early Design Guidance meeting are summarized in notes from the first Early Design Guidance meeting. For the full text of the guidelines please visit the Design Review website.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES
No departures from development standards were requested.

PUBLIC COMMENT

As they had at earlier meetings, individuals representing residents of the *Escala, a residential* building located north and west of the proposal site, delivered an organized and collective public

comment, involving several individuals offering an organized and collective comment regarding their concerns regarding the proposal. The presentation was welcomed, as it had been at previous meetings, since it avoided the repetition of identical comments and enabled a succinct and focused presentation of neighbors' concerns.

Several of the public comments, while stressing that significant issues regarding the proposed development remained, acknowledged progress toward resolving some of the perceived problems, and several of the commenters expressed gratitude for the applicant team's willingness to establish dialogue with concerned neighbors. Among the other compliments extended were the following:

- a thank you for reducing the mass on the north side of the tower;
- a thank you for angling windows away from the Escala;
- improvements to the "Gateway Destination" look from McGraw Square.

The major concerns remained those that had been expressed at earlier meetings:

- The building is too big for the site;
- The above-grade parking remains an annoyance;
- The building needs full-sized loading berths; ground floor retail space should be sacrificed in favor of greater loading berth space;
- The alley is functionally inadequate to accommodate the service needs of this building or the service needs of other buildings on the block.

Other public comments expressed at the meeting conveyed the notion that the project as presented had adequately responded to community input, had listened and responded to the Design Review Board's guidance and recommendations from the earlier meetings, and should be moved along to approval. Selected as special assets of the proposal were the following: the "unique" and "valuable" artist lofts which few developers would invest in.

All public comments submitted in writing for this project can be viewed using the following link and entering the project number: http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/edms/
Additionally, written comments submitted to the planner at the Recommendation meeting, for the most part texts of comments delivered orally at the meeting, have been uploaded and are also available on line.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS

Board members noted that the resolution of the tower had generally been done graciously and effectively (although the top was still in need of some further refinement). They complimented

the design team on the clarity of the basic compositional diagram and the explanation of the angles and the faceted metal panel wall system.

Still in need of further refinement and resolution, however, were the following items:

- THE NORTHWEST CORNER: The design team presented a northwest corner of the building that offered considerable opacity of materials up to the height of the top of the Escala, at which point the material pallet became increasingly transparent; this was said to address privacy concerns of neighboring residents. One of the Board members cautioned that the gesture might well be overly obeisant and a "long term mistake," and suggested that the design team revisit and re-evaluate the radical reduction in the amount of transparent glazing along the lower northwest corner of the structure.

- THE ARTIST STUDIOS: The Board was in general agreement that the artist studio concept was a positive element of the proposal, but that the studios did not materially and compositionally announce themselves very well; they did not appear as "special as they ought to be"; their articulation could be considered was that of a "run-of-the mill office building façade"; the studios bordered on "boring," and were in need of additional thought and attention (which might well include operable windows).

- THE PARKING SCREENS: The reduction in the height of the screens was received positively, as was the increase in the number of the panels, resulting in the thinner, taller appearance of the individual screens. The "organic," curvilinear motifs embracing the panels, however, were a matter of concern and some discussion. The question posed was whether the organic curves introduced a whole new vocabulary to the building, one less syncretic than the diagonal tracery earlier espoused for the panels. Willy-nilly the panels suggested a story, and it was important to get the geometric story right.

- THE ROOFTOP: The Board members were agreed that the rooftop needed simplifying; as articulated, it had moved away from the directness of expression of the formal massing analysis and concept diagram presented by the design team. The set of boxes that comprised the "top," while not totally randomly aligned, did suggest an arbitrariness and disjointedness, particularly as individual elements related to the "core" mass and the facades at the perimeter of the tower.

The Board discussed whether to require a return of the project for another Recommendation Meeting, or to allow the concerns stated above to be addressed and resolved, by the applicant team interacting with the Department and the Land Use Planner assigned to the project. Encouraged by the responsiveness of the design team to the Board's directives over the course of three Early Design Guidance meetings, two of the three Board members present voted to recommend approval of the proposal. Their approval was dependent upon the critical issues

noted being addressed by the applicants and undergoing approval by the Land Use Planner and SDCI prior to the publication of a decision and issuance of a Master Use Permit by the Department.

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Addendum to notes from the Downtown Design Review Board Recommendation Meeting for #3018037, conducted on August 16, 2016.

At the meeting the Board members present also stated their apprehensions regarding the adequacy of the otherwise Code- compliant proposed loading berths and the safe and effective functioning of the existing alley, given additional development along its length. Although the Board regarded these matters not within their official purview, they desired that the Land Use Planner should convey their concerns to functionaries within the City who would have the competence and responsibility to address them.