



# City of Seattle

Department of Construction & Inspections

Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN  
REVIEW

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## RECOMMENDATION OF THE SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number: 3019132 & 3020339

Address: 1000 6<sup>st</sup> Avenue S & 1001 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S

Applicant: Urban Visions

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, June 21, 2016

Board Members Present: Carey Dagliano-Holmes  
Sharon Khosla  
Charles Romero  
David Sauvion

Board Member Absent: Julian Weber

DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: IC 85'-160'

Nearby Zones: (North) IDM 150/85-1500  
(South) IC 85-160  
(East) IC 85-160  
(West) IC 85-160

Development Site Area:  
Total: 273,652 SF

### Current Development:

West site: Several small-scale commercial buildings & surface parking lots.  
East site: One group of four small, connected commercial buildings.

### **Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

The two sites lie within the embrace of the I-90 Express lanes which begin at street level where S. Dearborn Street, Seattle Boulevard S. and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South intersect, then rise and head southwest before bending in the sweeping arc of a 90 degree turn to join with I-90, well above both the streets that comprise the grid below and multiple lanes of I-5. Bisecting the two large development sites, and located at grade well below the multi-ribbon and layered array of I-90 on and off ramps, is 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. Airport Way S. lies to the east of the east site, set within a northwest/southeast alignment that imparts a triangular shape to that “half” of the proposal site.

Perhaps a distance of two blocks due west of the development site, the Colossus scale of entertainment structures exerts itself dramatically. Dominated by CenturyLink Field, home field to the Seattle Sounders and the Seattle Seahawks, an exhibition center and Safeco Field, the Major League baseball stadium and home of the Seattle Mariners, this playground and gathering area exudes a scale and character that matches that of the megalithic elevated transportation highway system that surrounds the site and feeds the megalopolis that unfolds to the north of the site.

Northwest of the site and north of the site are located Pioneer Square and the Chinatown/International District Urban Center Villages, generally of a smaller and finer scale of buildings, many of special significance and irreplaceable character.

### **Access:**

Primary vehicular access to both the east and west sites is from 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.

### **Environmentally Critical Areas:**

There are no ECAs on either of the two sites.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The development objectives for the two sites located at 1000 and 1001 6th Avenue S. are to construct over time a campus containing 6 multistory buildings containing over a million square feet of ground-floor retail and above grade office space with parking for up to 1211 vehicles.

The project is being proposed as a “Major Phased Development,” as defined in SMC 23.84A.025, and which meets the criteria of SMC 23.50.015.

## MAJOR PHASED DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT

A Major Phased Development proposal is subject to the provisions of the zone in which it is located, in this case IC-85/160, a nonce designation of these sites and a small surrounding area within the array of zoning types. It must also meet a set of threshold criteria, including meeting a minimum size of five acres in contiguous parcels or containing a right-of-way within. The project must propose a single, functionally integrated campus, containing more than a single building and provide a minimum total gross floor area of more than 200,000 square feet. The first phase of development must consist of at least 100,000 square feet in gross building floor. A Major Phased Development shall not be approved unless it is demonstrated that anticipated environmental impacts are not significant or if significant can be monitored and effectively mitigated through conditions imposed to mitigate impacts over the extended life of the permit. The extended life of the permit to build out the phased development shall not exceed 15 years.

### Early Design Guidance

**An Early Design Guidance meeting was held on August 25, 2015**

**The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3019132 & 3020339) 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 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](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

### BASIC DESIGN ELEMENTS

The proposal is for the eventual development of six buildings, three on the west side of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., two on the east side of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. The third massing scheme presented at the Early Design Guidance meeting, the preferred design of the applicant and the Board, treated the ground plane spaces and upper office towers as separate geometries in separate orientations, creating a variety of floorplate sizes and options, which would allow for offset building cores and connections. Large and inviting open spaces were provided and offered both within the

interstices of the buildings and as roof decks. This option was described as being “easy to phase” and as producing “a Stadium-scale iconic group of buildings.”

The Board was agreed that the design team had thoroughly explored and demonstrated the superiority of their preferred option for minimizing shading of courtyards and open spaces, for optimizing the potential for ground-level activation, and for weaving the elements of office building, street-level uses and open spaces into a campus-like texture. Separate alignments of the bases and the tower masses was a promising move, but some degree of upper building differentiation and modulation, the Board noted, would be needed for a truly successful project.

The Board further noted that design team should explore bestowing a distinctive character to the individual buildings. Careful design of fenestration and use of quality materials in the façade treatments would help to make the massing work. In general the Board agreed that the buildings were appropriately scaled for their location, but there remained many questions of how they would perform at a finer grain.

The Board expressed concern regarding the need for the proposed development to engage the two streets, both 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and Airport Way S. Striking a balance was needed so the project would not turn too much in upon itself and exude a feeling of a closed campus.

The Board felt that the treatment of the northeast building was key to a successful design of the whole. Due to its closeness to the street and unbroken length, as presented it appeared to place its shoulder against the public realm of Airport Way S. It might be preferable to push the entire façade away from Airport Way S. Concern was also expressed that the building should not create the impression of a secondary or “rear” façade directed to Airport Way S., while its major aspect, countenance or expression was directed to the campus and to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.

It was not clear at the early conceptual stage of design development what public interaction with any of the buildings was intended, or whether that question had been asked or answered. Was the main interaction a functional one of entry and access to the office spaces for those who belonged there? Or was more intended? Additional vignettes at the time of the project’s return to the Board, it was noted, would be helpful in clarifying the intended relationships.

Finally, the Board cautioned that the order of development (both temporal and geometric), would be a primary element in the equation for success of the overall project. It would be important to interlock development east and west of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- At the early design guidance meeting concerns were raised regarding the 270-foot in length north building on the east site, set right up to the property line on Airport Way contributing to a canyon or a speedway effect on that street;
- Concerns were also voiced about the shadow effect onto the neighboring building under separate ownership on Airport Way that was to remain and whose site was notched into the larger east site of the proposed development;

- There were concerns expressed regarding impacts the entire campus array of buildings would have on sunlight and the casting of shadows outside the immediate site, as well as concerns regarding the actual availability of views through the site.

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

Requests for a combination of four departure requests were anticipated by the applicants. The first was from **SMC 23.50.055.B.2** which limits the size of any story above 85 feet to 25,000 square feet in area. Connected building A-B would exceed that maximum of 5 floors above 85 feet; and E-F would exceed the maximum on 4 floors above 85 feet. At the EDG meeting The Board acknowledged support of the requested departure. *At the recommendation meeting, the Board members expressed their continued support for recommending the departure, acknowledging that the departure would be in concert with Guidelines PL1A-1 and 2, PL3C-1, and DC3A-1.*

The second departure would be from **SMC 23.50.055.B.1.a & b**, which requires modulation on portions of facades above 65 feet in height if located more than 15 feet from street lot lines; it also requires modulation for facades exceeding lengths in Table A of 23.50.055. At the EDG meeting the Board expressed concern regarding the façade of “building D,” set at the property line with Airport Way S, and the need to break up the perceived bulk of that building. *The Board indicated they were unwilling at this time to express support for this departure since it was related to Building “D,” concerning which they had remaining questions and still lacked information to address those questions. Guidelines CS2-B-2, CS2C-1, PL3-C-1, among others, would be in play as they further weighed the request.*

A third departure was requested from **SMC 23.50.055.A.2** that sets façade setback limits by formula which would create a 600 linear foot façade, set 5 feet back from the lot line. The siting of buildings favored by the Board, one incorporating large plazas and open-spaces, would result in a setback larger than that allowed by Code. The departure was supported by the Board members present. *At the recommendation meeting the Board expressed support for the granting of the departure, agreeing with the rationale expressed on page 69 of the booklet and the re-enforcement of Guidelines CS2A-1, CS3B-1, and PL1C-3. C-3, CS3A-1, and PL1B-1.*

A fourth departure, from **SMC 23.50.039,B.1 & 3**, would require a minimum of 75% of street level of each street-facing façade to be occupied by uses listed in subsection 23.50.039.A, and require that those uses be within 10 feet of the lot line. The design has portions of the street-level facades set more than 10 feet from the street lot line. The Board indicated their support of this departure. *The Board continued the support of the departure at the recommendation meeting, citing CS3A-1 and PL1B-1.*

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

At the first recommendation meeting, and in comments received by the Department, the following concerns had been raised:

- Airport Way S. still felt like the back of the project;
- Shadow studies should be provided for the specific shadow-casting of building D;
- Unanswered question regarding how the flow of pedestrian traffic would relate to developments within the light rail system?
- Concerns regarding the greenspace along the west edge of the west portion of the development;
- There seemed to be lacking any obvious visual or thematic connections to the C/I District this project is adjacent to, which seems a missed opportunity;
- A question of what, if any, connection there would be to the building by the same developer which is to be constructed immediately to the north of the western half of the campus?

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

The Board was generally pleased with the developments proposed on the portion of the development site west of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. The suggestion of multiple office decks in some of the vignettes was welcomed and further encouraged. The balconies or decks were valuable in bringing a human scale and welcomed permeability or “porosity” to the office towers. If strategically located, they could bestow a certain “eyes-on-the sidewalk” quality to the project. Expansion of the actual use of the decks, as a way to create a kind of subtle counterpoint to the prevailing planer quality of the curtainwall skin expression of the towers, was encouraged as was the exploration of endowing them with an element of playfulness.

While the design team appeared to emphasize the location of the site as within a convergence of neighborhoods, members of the Board, taking note of some of the public comments, discussed a greater, if perhaps subtle, integration of some cultural gestures into the building treatments. Located just outside of the conceptual boundaries of the Chinatown/International District, the structures, at least at their bases, might benefit from some small moves that would tie them more formally into that context and announce it in some way.

The Board expressed interest in exploring potential relationships to the new, 10-story office structure being proposed just east of the former INS building and north of the subject development. At the next recommendation meeting the Board would appreciate getting a briefing on that building, with at least conceptual sketches since it was believed that NBBJ were the architects of the other structure as well.

The primary goal of the next meeting, in addition to having more information related to the above questions, however, was to learn something in detail regarding the proposals for development on the east half of the development site and in particular what had been named

“building D.” The Board expressed the opinion that they had very little information to go on regarding the eastern half of the site and in particular “Building D” which they had identified at the EDG meeting as the most troublesome and least understood of the proposed structures:

“The Board felt that the treatment of the northeast building was key to a successful design of the whole. Due to its closeness to the street and unbroken length, it appeared to place its shoulder against the public realm of Airport Way S. It might be preferable to push the entire façade away from Airport Way S. Concern was also expressed that the building should not create the impression of a secondary or “rear” façade directed to Airport Way S., while its major aspect, countenance or expression was directed to the campus and to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.”

At the conclusion of the Recommendation Meeting the Board requested that the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided.

At the next Recommendation Meeting the Board would like to see the following:

- more vignettes that would reveal details and the character of spaces along Airport Way;
- “a closer detailing of the street-level and upper façade options for the NE building (“bldg.D”) on Airport Way S.; these should show in detail how the building connects to the street” (it was noted that this was requested by the Board at the EDG meeting);
- Provide accurate shadow impact studies from the proposed development: on the Airport Way S. right-of-way, Maynard Av S. and S. Plummer Street right-of-ways, the BMW buildings and the structure and surrounding property that is to remain on the west side of Airport Way S;
- show in greater detail how private and “pops” areas of the open spaces are to be distinguished within the development, on both sides of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., a request also from the EDG meeting;
- provide pertinent elements of a traffic study for the development, as requested at the EDG meeting; provide information regarding discussions that have taken place with SDOT? what are SDOT’s longer term plans for 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.? what are their longer term plans for Airport Way S.?);
- provide more information, if possible regarding the phasing or sequencing of the buildings and other improvements and clarify how these might relate to improvements to both 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and Airport Way S.

The recommendations summarized above were based on the design review packet for projects 3019132/3020339 dated Tuesday, April 26, 2016, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the Tuesday, April 26, 2016 Early Design Guidance meeting.

## **SECOND RECOMMENDATION MEETING: June 21, 2016**

### **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The presentation basically retained the architectural massing shown in some detail at the first recommendations meeting. At the podium level, a series of pavilions, recalling the historical context of mostly single-story brick warehouse and light industrial buildings, aligned perpendicularly to the street (6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.) and re-enforcing the city grid, were overlain with thin, elongated, core-free office bars of several stories and interconnected by a series of vertical circulation stacks. Parking would all be located below grade with an abundance of ground-level landscaped open space, above which would arise a “stadium scale iconic group of buildings.” Roof decks would provide views in nearly all directions.

### **PROPOSED PHASED DEVELOPMENT**

The initial, related development phase would be construction of a 10-story building at 831 Airport Way N., just to the west of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. That project lies within the Chinatown/International District, is subject to separate Board review and is not included within the scope of the Major Phased Development.

Phase 1 of the proposed Major Phased Development would be conducted on the portion of the campus located west of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., and would include the construction of Building A/B (including the underground parking garage), the attendant open spaces, and right-of-way improvements along the western edge of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.

Phase 2 would include construction of Building C, just the south of Building A/B (including underground parking), and the remaining open space improvements to the west half campus.

Phase 3 would involve construction of Building D at the northern part of the east half-campus, including underground parking and open space, and the Building D portion of the mid-block connection between buildings D and E. Right-of-way improvements would include partial improvements to sidewalk and planting strip along the east edge of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.

Phase 4 would complete the overall development, with construction of Building E and underground parking, completion of the mid-block connection with Building D, eastside landscape features, and remaining improvements (sidewalk and planting strip) along the east edge of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.

### **DEPARTURE REQUESTS**

The applicants’ four departure requests remain as enumerated at the first recommendation meeting (see page 5 of these notes for details of the departure requests).

## **BOARD'S DELIBERATIONS**

Of the several concerns raised by the Board at the earlier, April 26, 2016, Recommendation Meeting, those relating to the proposed Building "D" and its relationship to Airport Way S. and general disposition of the "east" campus remained the most unresolved. While relationships within the west campus appeared to be well worked out. It did not seem to the Board that the two east buildings reacted well to one another nor to the western campus buildings. Little if any attention had been paid to Airport Way S. The lack of any balconies on the east half of the campus was particularly disappointing. The east façade of Building D, perceptually the longest of any of the facades, did not acknowledge or engage the street it was so close too (Airport Way S.); it still felt like "the back of a building," lacked needed porosity along its east façade, and snubbed structures north and east of it which were not totally without some architectural merit and character. The east side of Building D needed to be broken down perceptually.

The stair towers on the east side appeared particularly monolithic, formidable, and overweening, especially since they had been substantially disengaged from the buildings they served and were located so frontally to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. They needed far greater transparency and translucency than conveyed in their renderings, and their placements and engagements with the buildings they served deserved careful further study.

Regarding the overall campus, the Board noted the following issues in need of further attention:

- the balconies on individual buildings did not give the impression of interacting with one another, nor with the campus as such;
- there needed to be greater mitigation of the overall feeling of an "office park" given off by the entire array of buildings;
- the effect was still too introspective, with few, if any, gestures to a potentially rich broader context; the break with context was palpably harsh;

Additionally, the Board expressed the observation that the pathways through the overall campus did not appear totally resolved, nor were they intuitive. If the pathways were to serve other than workers in the office towers they would need to undergo considerably more thought and planning.

Finally, there was a problem of scale that needed continued attention: the massing of the towers overwhelmed the squat and fragmented podiums, a problem that would become even more acute and exacerbated if additional "HALA height" were to be added to the towers.

## **DEPARTURES**

The Board voted their approval of requested departures 1, 3, and 4 (see pages 70-73 in the June 21, 2016 Design Review Packet for citation, fuller explanation and rationale for each of the departures).

Regarding requested departure #2 (from the development standard SMC 23.50.055.B.1.a+b, the Board voted approval of the departure with the following condition:

The east-facing façade of Building D must receive real articulation, that is, pliant, moveable joints between rigid parts or nodes, creating a systematic whole. Articulation is further defined (see Francis D. K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture*, 1995, p.52) as “as method or manner of jointing that makes the united parts clear, distinct, and precise in relation to each other.” The Board further requested that the design team adopt an “articulation toolkit” in which the jointing within a façade is specific and “is applied to each of the proposed structures without exception.”

In addition to requesting approval of the design departures, the design team requested approval of a set of guiding principles, inclusive for all phases of the entire development. The principles were intended to encapsulate the intentions of the various Design Review Guidelines identified as priority guidelines for the project while adding specificity to the development site and program. These principles were presented as the “S” Design Framework. In recommending approval of the proffered “framework,” the Design Review Board requested an additional Guideline (S-E11, “Street-facing Facades” and conditioned the Guideline along with 7 other of the Guidelines. The approved “S” Design Framework/ Guiding Principles can be found in the applicants’ packet prepared for the June 21, 2016 Recommendation Meeting on page 52. The list of conditioned guidelines follows:

### **S Design Review Recommended Conditions**

#### Conditions

	<i>Guideline</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Condition</i>
1	S-02	Connections	Add “existing” to the guideline. Create better and more visible pedestrian connections through the eastern mid-block connector and across Airport Way. Create a legible path of travel from the connector to the crosswalk on Airport Way. Revisit the relationship of the garage driveway to the mid-block connector to ensure compatibility. Make the connector design more organic, less rigid, more porous, with improved integrated landscape design.
2	S-03	Bldg. D pedestrian zone	Develop the pedestrian zone on Airport Way more fully, to resemble 6 <sup>th</sup> . Ensure that the pedestrian improvements have a more varied relationship with Building D and relate more specifically to the neighborhood to the east.
3	S-M1	Podium & tower massing	Revisit the podium/tower relationship along Airport Way and ensure its meets this guideline.
4	S-M3	Cores	Ensure that the building cores do not adversely impact the open space; explain how they function within the open space. The core towers on the east block are more freestanding than on the west block; do more to integrate the cores with the adjoining office towers, while still allowing

			them to read as a separate vertical element. Preserve the concept of the transparency/translucency of the core towers.
5	S-M7	Retail Pavilions	Retail pavilions on Airport Way need further development. Demonstrate how the retail uses in this location will activate the pavilions.
6	S-E6	Adjacent neighborhoods	Show how the Airport Way side of the project reaches out to the neighborhood and incorporates aspects of neighborhood design. Right now, Airport Way seems to be treated as the back side of the project.
7	S-E10	Operable windows	Consider modest use of some operable windows on building elevations in various locations (where feasible given energy code considerations) to provide additional articulation to the facades, as part of the approach noted in S-E11.
8	S-E11	Street-facing facades	Add a new guideline: “Street-facing facades should incorporate a heightened level of articulation.” For Building D (and to a lesser extent, Building E) provide more articulation on the eastern facades. In particular, the southern balconies on Building D can be used to provide such effect (if wrapped around the corner). Develop an “articulation toolkit” that can be used on any of the buildings in the project. Encourage Buildings D and E to relate to each other in a more tangible manner.

The Board, by a vote of 4-0, conceptually approved the Major Phased Development, the requested departures and proposed S Design Framework, with the specific conditioning noted above.

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