



INITIAL EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3019618

Address: 333 Dexter Ave N

Applicant: Margaret Sprug, The Miller Hull Partnership

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, May 06, 2015

Board Members Present: Mindy Black
Katherine Idziorek
Boyd Pickrell (Chair)

Board Members Absent: Christine Harrington
Janet Stephenson

DPD Staff Present: Beth Hartwick

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM160/85-240

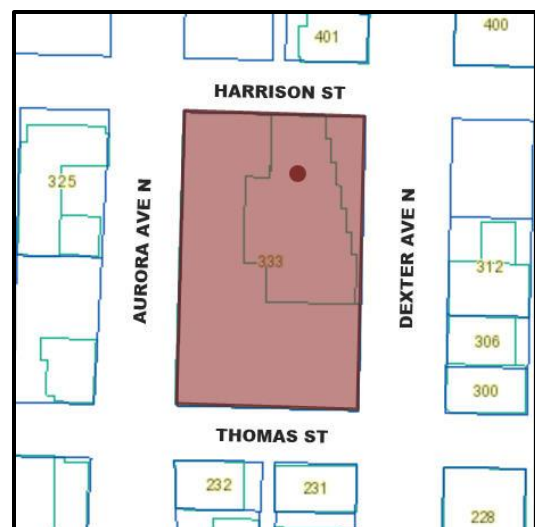
Nearby Zones: (North) SM160/85-240
(South) SM160/85-240
(East) SM85-240
(West) SM-85

Lot Area: 80,586 sq. ft.

Current Development: A four story commercial building constructed in 1947 that housed a television/radio broadcasting company.

Access: The full block site abuts Dexter Ave N, Aurora Ave N (HWY 99), Harrison St. and Thomas St. and has no alley.

Environmentally Critical Areas: None



Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character: The surrounding neighborhood is in transition from mostly one to two-story service oriented commercial buildings to new mid and high rise office and residential developments.

Thomas Street along the south portion of the site is a designated Green Street with a concept plan. Both Dexter Ave N and Aurora Ave N (State Route 99) are major north/south routes for vehicles, transit and on Dexter Ave N for bicycles. They are currently not pedestrian friendly streets. Aurora Ave N acts as a barrier separating this portion of South Lake Union to the Uptown neighborhood to the west with vehicle and pedestrian crossings limited to Denny Ave two long blocks to the south and the Mercer Street underpass two blocks to the north. The new SR 99 tunnel and north portal will change access around the site dramatically. The new signaled intersection at Aurora Ave N and Harrison St will serve as an access point to SR99 in both directions. As Aurora Ave continues south, it is expected to act as a surface arterial street. Both Thomas and Harrison streets will cross Aurora Ave N reconnecting the streets and the neighborhoods. The South Lake Union Street Concept plan designates Dexter Ave N as a major boulevard with cycle tracks and Harrison St as serving vehicle, pedestrian and perhaps transit.

Given the proximity to Aurora Ave N, Denny Way and Mercer St, multiple bus routes and the Dexter cycle tracks, there will be ample access to the site. Denny Park two blocks to the south and Seattle Center three blocks to the west offer nearby public green space.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed development is for approx. 582,000 sq. ft. of office space in two 12-story towers, with approx. 15,000 sq. ft. of retail space and approx. 800 below grade parking spaces.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3019618) 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

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented four massing options.

PUBLIC COMMENT

At the Initial EDG Meeting the following public comments were offered:

- Expressed excitement about the project as it will be good for the community, and likes the proposed changes to Aurora Ave N and the connections into South Lake Union and downtown.
- Encouraged the design team to reference the Thomas St Streetscape Concept Plan and the Uptown Triangle plan.
- Concerned about the how the location of a Metro Transit hub would affect the site and encouraged coordination with Metro.
- Encouraged consideration of the location of an bus stops on the blockface for safety issues.
- Encouraged consideration that Harrison St. has been designated as a transit and freight corridor.
- Encouraged public amenities at all bus stops.
- Not concerned about the number of curb cuts proposed.
- Stated that as Thomas St. will be an east/west bike path, bike racks, a drinking fountain, and a repair stop should be provided.
- Encouraged the applicant to interact with the Lake to Bay planning group.
- Concerned about how the loading docks will work and supported the requested departures for the reduced number of loading berths.
- Encouraged opening up the design toward Aurora as WSDOT may develop the site across Aurora Ave N.
- Encouraged the applicant to provide a design that looks forward and has a strong concept.

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.

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- 1. MASSING: The Board supported the applicants preferred Option D with the two towers on the north and south portions of the site and the east/west through block connection, and encouraged better and increased open space. The Board encouraged the applicant to design a strong architectural statement that included an enhanced public realm and stated they would consider departures to achieve this design objective. (CS3.I.ii, CS3.II.i, DC2.A.2, DC2.D)**
 - a. Keep the massing orientation of Option D as it creates a gateway between South Lake Union and Seattle Center. (CS2.I.iii)
 - b. The Board supported the splay dynamic shown in Option D. (DC2.D)

- c. The Board recommended developing the two different buildings so that each building has a distinct design character. (CS3.II.i)
 - d. The Board supported the podium design of Option D but did express concern about a possible wind tunnel effect due to the narrowness of the west courtyard. (DC2.D.1)
 - e. The Board stated the through block connection looks like a building lobby and is not welcoming to the public and does not appear to meet the intent of the Land Use Code. Work with DPD to better understand the zoning requirements. Study the recent project off Mercer St. at 515 Westlake Ave N. as a good example of a through block connection. (PL1.B.1)
 - f. Consider shifting the service functions into the site and narrowing the through block connection area. (DC1.B.1, DC1.C.2, DC1.C.4)
- 2. OPEN SPACE: The Board was very supportive of having south facing open space along Thomas St. and expressed that south facing open space is 'gold' in Seattle. The Board expressed the design should not miss the opportunity to create a great open space in this location. (CS2.B.3, PL1.A.2, PL1.C.1, PL2.I.ii)**
- a. Activate the south open space with areas for public use instead of bio retention planters as proposed in the Initial EDG packet. (PL1.C.1)
 - b. Provide resting spaces for bikers and pedestrians along Thomas St. (PL1.B.3, PL2.I.ii)
 - c. Place the primary retail entry off the south facing public space. (PL2.I.iii)
 - d. Design the west-facing courtyard so it will not be a wind tunnel. (DC2.D.1)
 - e. Harrison St. is considered both a gateway and pedestrian street. Provide better connection along and to the site from Harrison St. (CS2.I.iii, PL1.B.2)
 - f. Design the access to the site along the grade change on Dexter to be porous with a variety of design elements to encourage activity. Avoid blank walls along the sidewalk. (PL3.C.1)
 - g. If possible avoid having retail space that is accessed above the sidewalk level. (PL3.C.1)
 - h. Consider providing bike storage closer to the bike lanes on Thomas St, without detracting from the southeast corner. (PL4.B)
 - i. The Board stated the through block connection looks like a building lobby and is not welcoming to the public and does not appear to meet the intent of the Land Use Code. Work with DPD to better understand the zoning requirements. Study the recent project off Mercer St. at 515 Westlake Ave N. as a good example of a through block connection. (PL1.B.1)
 - j. Work with community groups invested in the area and neighborhood. (CS2.I.iii, PL1.C.2)
- 3. ACCESS and SERVICE USES: The Board noted that on this full block site without an alley the proposed locations of the service uses and access to parking and loading berths are occupying too much of the street facing facades, as if the internal organs of the development are on the outside. The Board was not supportive of the departure**

request for two additional curb cuts including one to access the loading berths (see departures at the end of the report). (DC1.B.1, DC1.C.2, DC1.C.4, DC2.B.2)

- a. Avoid use of street-level facade area with parking ramps and loading functions. Orient access ramps to access parking into the site, not along the property lines. (DC1.B.1, DC1.C.2, DC1.C.4, DC2.B.2)
- b. Study the design of the Allen Institute at 601 Westlake Ave N, which has a shared loading/ parking entry and consider reversible lanes or other means to function with one curb cut to access parking and loading functions. (DC1.B.1)
- c. Consider shifting the service functions into the site and narrowing the through block connection. (DC1.B.1, DC1.C.2, DC1.C.4)
- d. Consider moving the bike storage closer to the bike lanes on Thomas St, without detracting from the southeast corner. (PL4.B)
- e. Coordinate with Metro to understand where proposed bus stops are planned to be located. (CS2.I.iii, PL1.I.ii, PL4.C.1&2)
- f. Work with community groups invested in the area and neighborhood. (CS2.I.iii, PL1.C.2)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and South Lake Union 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](#).

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.

CS1-B Sunlight and Natural Ventilation

CS1-B-3. Managing Solar Gain: Manage direct sunlight falling on south and west facing facades through shading devices and existing or newly planted trees.

CS1-C Topography

CS1-C-2. Elevation Changes: Use the existing site topography when locating structures and open spaces on the site.

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-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-3. Full Block Sites: Break up long facades of full-block buildings to avoid a monolithic presence. Provide detail and human scale at street-level, and include repeating elements to add variety and rhythm to the façade and overall building design.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

CS2-I Responding to Site Characteristics

CS2-I-iii. Gateways: Reinforce community gateways through the use of architectural elements, streetscape features, landscaping and/or signage. Gateways can be defined through landscaping, artwork, and references to the history of the location that create a sense of place. Gateways are transition locations, places that mark entry or departure points to a neighborhood for automobiles and pedestrians. They are sites that create opportunities for identification, a physical marker for the community to notice they are entering a special place. Methods to establish gateways should consider the site’s characteristics such as topography, views or surrounding building patterns. Elements could include building out to meet the corner where appropriate, or tools such as:

- a. setbacks to allow for pedestrian friendly spaces;
- b. signage;
- c. landscaping;
- d. artwork;
- e. facade treatments.

CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

CS3-I Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility

CS3-I-ii. Reduce Visual Bulk: Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as:

- a. landscaping;
- b. trellis;
- c. complementary materials;
- d. detailing;
- e. accent trim.

CS3-II Architectural Context

CS3-II-i. Mix of Building Style: Support the existing fine-grained character of the neighborhood with a mix of building styles.

PUBLIC LIFE

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

PL1-A Network of Open Spaces

PL1-A-1. Enhancing Open Space: Design the building and open spaces to positively contribute to a broader network of open spaces throughout the neighborhood.

PL1-A-2. Adding to Public Life: Seek opportunities to foster human interaction through an increase in the size and quality of project-related open space available for public life.

PL1-B Walkways and Connections

PL1-B-1. Pedestrian Infrastructure: Connect on-site pedestrian walkways with existing public and private pedestrian infrastructure, thereby supporting pedestrian connections within and outside the project.

PL1-B-2. Pedestrian Volumes: Provide ample space for pedestrian flow and circulation, particularly in areas where there is already heavy pedestrian traffic or where the project is expected to add or attract pedestrians to the area.

PL1-B-3. Pedestrian Amenities: Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian oriented open spaces to enliven the area and attract interest and interaction with the site and building should be considered.

PL1-C Outdoor Uses and Activities

PL1-C-1. Selecting Activity Areas: Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.

PL1-C-2. Informal Community Uses: In addition to places for walking and sitting, consider including space for informal community use such as performances, farmer’s markets, kiosks and community bulletin boards, cafes, or street vending.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

PL1-I Human Activity

PL1-I-ii. Pedestrian Network: Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.

PL2 Walkability: Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

PL2-I Streetscape Compatibility

PL1-I-ii. Streetscape Amenities: Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities

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

PL1-I-iii. Sidewalk Retail: Where appropriate, configure retail space so that it can spill-out onto the sidewalk (retaining six feet for pedestrian movement, where the sidewalk is sufficiently wide).

PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

PL3-C Retail Edges

PL3-C-1. Porous Edge: Engage passersby with opportunities to interact visually with the building interior using glazing and transparency. Create multiple entries where possible and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.

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.

PL4-C Planning Ahead For Transit

PL4-C-1. Influence on Project Design: Identify how a transit stop (planned or built) adjacent to or near the site may influence project design, provide opportunities for placemaking.

PL4-C-2. On-site Transit Stops: If a transit stop is located onsite, design project-related pedestrian improvements and amenities so that they complement any amenities provided for transit riders.

DESIGN CONCEPT

DC1 Project Uses and Activities: Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

DC1-B Vehicular Access and Circulation

DC1-B-1. Access Location and Design: Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists wherever possible. Emphasize use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

DC1-C Parking and Service Uses

DC1-C-2. Visual Impacts: Reduce the visual impacts of parking lots, parking structures, entrances, and related signs and equipment as much as possible.

DC1-C-4. Service Uses: Locate and design service entries, loading docks, and trash receptacles away from pedestrian areas or to a less visible portion of the site to reduce possible impacts of these facilities on building aesthetics and pedestrian circulation.

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-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-B-2. Blank Walls: Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians.

DC2-D Scale and Texture

DC2-D-1. Human Scale: Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept

DC2-D-2. Texture: Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or “texture,” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

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-B Signage

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.

to serve building needs while avoiding off-site night glare and light pollution.

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 **INITIAL** Early Design Guidance the following four departures were requested:

1. **General Facade Requirements (SMC23.48.014.A.1):** The Code requires each new structure facing a street to provide a primary building entrance for pedestrians from the street or a street-oriented courtyard that is no more than 3 feet above or below the sidewalk grade. The applicant proposes the ‘north building’ tenant entry locate off the courtyard facing Dexter Ave N to be approx. 5 to 6 feet above the adjacent sidewalk.

The Board indicated early support for this departure provided the area along the grade change is designed to be porous and engaging.

2. **Loading Berth Requirements (SMC23.54.035.A.1):** The Code requires 6 loading berths for the amount of office space being proposed, the applicant is proposing 5 loading berth spaces instead.

The Board indicated they would support this departure. [Staff note: This code requirement is considered a parking requirement. Thus it is not departable under SMC23.41.012.B.17.]

3. **Loading Berth Requirements (SMC23.54.035.C.2.c):** The Code requires loading berths for medium and low demand uses to have a length of 35', the applicant is proposing 4 loading berth spaces with a 25' length.

The Board indicated they would support this departure. [Staff note: Modification to this code requirement is a Type 1 decision made by the DPD Director not the Design review Board. See SMC23.54.035.C.2.b & c.]

4. **Curb Cuts (SMC23.48.034.E.1):** The Code states permitted access shall be limited to one two-way curb cut. The applicant proposed three curb cuts. Two curb cuts would be 22' feet wide for access to and exiting from vehicle parking. The third curb cut would be 25' wide and be for access to the loading berths.

The Board indicated they would not support a departure for a third curb cut and stated that they would not support a second curb cut being located on Dexter Ave N or Thomas St.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the Initial Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board recommended the project return for a Second EDG Meeting.