



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3019623

Address: 1901 Minor Avenue

Applicant: Case Creal of Gensler, for Crescent Heights

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, June 16, 2015

Board Members Present: Anjali Grant (Acting Chair)
Grace Leong
Alan McWain

Board Members Absent: Murphy McCullough
Gundula Proksch

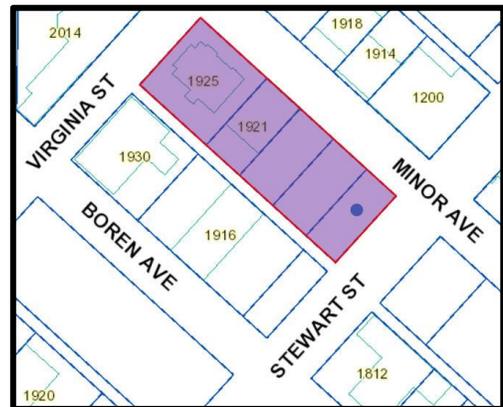
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, M.Arch, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMC 240/290-400

Nearby Zones: (North) DMC 240/290-400
(South) DMC 240/290-400
(East) DMC 240/290-400
(West) DMC 240/290-400

Lot Area: 41,344 sq ft, flat



Current Development:

Surface parking lot on the south portion of the half block, and on the north half: one small, 1-story commercial building, and one 1-story City of Seattle service building, wrapped by surface parking.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The half block to the south across the alley contains two 3 story commercial buildings and surface parking. The surrounding Denny Triangle neighborhood consists of mixed commercial structures and parking lots, rapidly transitioning to tall, dense mixed use structures, consistent with zoning and planning policies.

Access:

Pedestrian access from the three surrounding streets of Minor Avenue, Virginia and Stewart Streets. Vehicle access from the existing through-block alley.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

None

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed development includes two residential towers, for a total of 39 stories and 1004 units, with a podium containing amenity spaces and ground level retail of approximately 14,000 sf, depending on option. Parking for 630 cars is located below grade, with loading and parking access off the alley.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3019623) 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

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Requested clarification how this two tower scheme achieves 1004 units, compared to the very similar scheme by the same applicants for MUP #3019625, which contained 600 units? [The Applicant replied that the additional site area allows for a larger podium containing the additional units].

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 (the Board) provided the following siting and design guidance.

All page references below are to the EDG booklet dated 6/16/2015.

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1. Massing & Program:

- a) **Massing Options:** The Board agreed the preferred Option 3 is the most dynamic and breaks the long, tall podium into better scaled components, with the rotated west tower affording spatial and façade variation to the streets. The Board supported the quantity and distribution of the amenity notches as shown on pg 41 right as the minimum – especially the notch between the podium and west tower mass, with the important qualifiers under 3b. The Board also supported all parking below grade, and maximizing the retail area and depths, as shown for option 3, on page 40, lower left. (A-1, A-2, B-2)
- b) **Podium & Amenities:** The Board supported the Option 3 plans shown on page 40, with the following recommendations: the terrace (and possible pool) at the lower podium level will be deep and dark, so surrounding walls should be light color to maximize daylight, and the adjacent single-loaded corridors possibly widened, opened and/ or shaped to energize this ‘buried space’; notches or amenity penetrations of the long podium sides to the space should be explored; the south tower should integrate corridors from the core to the top of podium terraces, so that towers’ residents can access the amenity deck, and create a circulation loop.

The Board endorsed the concept landscape plan and program mix for the podium top, including the character and planting mix of the 8 precedent images shown on pg 51/52; the variety and richness of these images must inform the specific, subsequent submittal. The Board supported fitness, storage and other lesser and non-occupied spaces to be

located in the lower podium facing the alley, as future development of the adjacent half block will likely fill in the alley facade. (D-1, D-2, D-3)

- c) **Massing Modulation:** The Board strongly supported the full height vertical notch at the north residential lobby, for podium modulation and streetscape relief along a 350 ft frontage; the Board suggested study of that notch being 1 bay wider, and required more street perspectives, elevations and large scale sections to show the scale of that space and maximum light penetration to the internal terrace/pool court. The Board strongly supported the setback retail at the southeast corner, as shown on plans and the sketch on page 44 (about 10 ft. along Minor and behind the columns along Stewart).

The Board encouraged other notching and legible plane changes in the podium, such as shown in the sketch on page 45, but did not agree that the leasing office deserves a 3 story gesture to the street, however the scale of the lobby entry and all the retail does deserve more height and proportion relative to a uniformly tall podium (see comments under 2a & c). Also see materiality comments under 3a. (B-1, B-4, C-2)

2. Ground Level Uses & Street Activation:

- a) **Ground Level Retail:** The Board strongly supported the amount and depth of ground level retail shown on pg 40, and about 18 ft clear height at the storefronts (even if canopies are lower). The Board agreed the retail on all frontages needs more regularly spaced doors, and the storefront setback these require would assist increasing the sidewalk width along Minor as discussed under 2f. (A-1, C-1, C-4)
- b) **Lobby Entrance:** The Board agreed the northeast corner retail should extend to the east side of the lobby notch, and help activate that recess, especially if it is widened (see 1c). Additional seating and landscape amenity, and special signage, lighting, etc would be welcome in this recess, which is the address and welcome for 1000+ residents and visitors. (C-2, C-4, D-2.1)
- c) **Retail Height and Transparency:** The Board agreed the ground floor retail shown on pg 44 may be about 18 ft, but the upper transom portion should be transparent to maximize scale, height and light penetration. The Board agreed the retail height and scale on pg 45 appeared pinched and well below 18 ft, and even if units are on the floor above, the façade should be composed to create a more vertical, 2-story reading. (C-1, C-2)
- d) **Alley:** The Board applauded the intent to upgrade the alley, and supported treatments such as artful garage doors, special lighting and premium wall materials. (C-6, E-2, E-3)
- e) **Canopies:** The Board supported continuous overhead canopies, as indicated on page 44/45, and the light, glass expression shown on pg 44, as most will be on a shady north side. The Board supported stepping canopy heights and small portions of solid canopy at select focal points, to modulate the podium.(C-5)

- f) **Streetscape Design:** The Board supported the 10 ft wide sidewalk along Stewart, and 12+ ft wide sidewalk at the southeast portion of Minor, but agreed the remainder of Minor was too narrow at 6 ft. The Board suggested the 8 ft wide curb-side planter zone be reduced somewhat, and/or the building wall and columns be recessed to achieve an 8 + ft wide sidewalk. Articulated columns might add scale to the podium and pedestrian experience. (C-1, C-2)

3. Tower Form & Architectural Expression:

- a) **Tower Materiality:** The Board supported the deep and shifting cladding language shown on page 41 left as promising for the majority of the towers and base, but only if the large notches are tall, deep and legible per this guidance and the diagram on page 41 right. (B-4, C-2)
- b) **Notches and Columns:** The Board agreed all exterior amenity notches should be 10 ft minimum depth, be cantilevered as shown, and should be double height (including the one at top of podium on the west tower). To create needed modulation and a legible scale of 'notch' on the tall towers, the Board agreed that the 2 story band should wrap all 4 sides and be distinctly expressed as a recessed plane of contrasting materiality. The recess should be deeper than the 8" stated in order to be legible on such large towers; expressing the columns in the bands might be explored as well, but the depth, height and contrast of the banding is the primary objective. (B-4, C-2)
- c) **Notches and Lighting:** The Board agreed the nighttime legibility of the notches and wrapping bands should be reinforced with a robust lighting scheme that ensures all the notch elements 'glow'; this concept lighting and notes should be included in submittals. (B-4, C-2, D-5)
- d) **Rooftop:** The Board supported the amenity design shown on page 52, but required all penthouse forms should be approximately 10 ft setback from all rooftop edges, in order to not confuse the massing. The Board agreed the east tower roof should shift the amenity space to the north and east street sides, to clarify massing and minimize self shading of the amenity spaces . (A-2, D-1)

NOTE: This Board guidance is more detailed about architectural treatment and materials than a typical EDG; that is because the fundamental massing scheme supported by the Board is dependent upon the successful modulation provided by the large, legible and distributed notches/bands. As such, if the design presented at the subsequent Board meeting does not respond to or earnestly reflect this guidance, the Board may have substantially different guidance about these elements at that time.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood 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.

A1.1. Response to Context: Each building site lies within a larger physical context having various and distinct features and characteristics to which the building design should respond. Develop an architectural concept and arrange the building mass in response to one or more of the following, if present:

- a. a change in street grid alignment that yields a site having nonstandard shape;
- b. a site having dramatic topography or contrasting edge conditions;
- c. patterns of urban form, such as nearby buildings that have employed distinctive and effective massing compositions;
- d. access to direct sunlight—seasonally or at particular times of day;
- e. views from the site of noteworthy structures or natural features, (i.e.: the Space Needle, Smith Tower, port facilities, Puget Sound, Mount Rainier, the Olympic Mountains);
- f. views of the site from other parts of the city or region; and
- g. proximity to a regional transportation corridor (the monorail, light rail, freight rail, major arterial, state highway, ferry routes, bicycle trail, etc.).

A1.2. Response to Planning Efforts: Some areas downtown are transitional environments, where existing development patterns are likely to change. In these areas, respond to the urban form goals of current planning efforts, being cognizant that new development will establish the context to which future development will respond.

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.

A2.1. Desired Architectural Treatments: Use one or more of the following architectural treatments to accomplish this goal:

- a. sculpt or profile the facades;
- b. specify and compose a palette of materials with distinctive texture, pattern, or color;
- c. provide or enhance a specific architectural rooftop element.

A2.2. Rooftop Mechanical Equipment: In doing so, enclose and integrate any rooftop mechanical equipment into the design of the building as a whole.

ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION

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.

B4.1. Massing: When composing the massing, consider how the following can contribute to create a building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept:

- a. setbacks, projections, and open space;
- b. relative sizes and shapes of distinct building volumes; and
- c. roof heights and forms.

B4.2. Coherent Interior/Exterior Design: When organizing the interior and exterior spaces and developing the architectural elements, consider how the following can contribute to create a building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept:

- d. facade modulation and articulation;
- e. windows and fenestration patterns;
- f. corner features;
- g. streetscape and open space fixtures;
- h. building and garage entries; and
- i. building base and top.

B4.3. Architectural Details: When designing the architectural details, consider how the following can contribute to create a building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept:

- j. exterior finish materials;
- k. architectural lighting and signage;
- l. grilles, railings, and downspouts;
- m. window and entry trim and moldings;
- n. shadow patterns; and
- o. exterior lighting.

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.

C1.1. Street Level Uses: Provide spaces for street level uses that:

- a. reinforce existing retail concentrations;
- b. vary in size, width, and depth;
- c. enhance main pedestrian links between areas; and
- d. establish new pedestrian activity where appropriate to meet area objectives. Design for uses that are accessible to the general public, open during established shopping hours, generate walk-in pedestrian clientele, and contribute to a high level of pedestrian activity.

C1.2. Retail Orientation: Where appropriate, consider configuring retail space to attract tenants with products or services that will “spill-out” onto the sidewalk (up to six feet where sidewalk is sufficiently wide).

C1.3. Street-Level Articulation for Pedestrian Activity: Consider setting portions of the building back slightly to create spaces conducive to pedestrian-oriented activities such as vending, resting, sitting, or dining. Further articulate the street level facade to provide an engaging pedestrian experience via:

- e. open facades (i.e., arcades and shop fronts);
- f. multiple building entries;
- g. windows that encourage pedestrians to look into the building interior;
- h. merchandising display windows;
- i. street front open space that features art work, street furniture, and landscaping;
- j. exterior finish materials having texture, pattern, lending themselves to high quality detailing.

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.

C2.1. Modulation of Facades: Consider modulating the building facades and reinforcing this modulation with the composition of:

- a. the fenestration pattern;
- b. exterior finish materials;
- c. other architectural elements;
- d. light fixtures and landscaping elements; and
- e. the roofline.

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

C3.1. Desirable Facade Elements: Facades which for unavoidable programmatic reasons may have few entries or windows should receive special design treatment to increase pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest. Enliven these facades by providing:

- a. small retail spaces (as small as 50 square feet) for food bars, newstands, and other specialized retail tenants;
- b. visibility into building interiors;
- c. limited lengths of blank walls;
- d. a landscaped or raised bed planted with vegetation that will grow up a vertical trellis or frame installed to obscure or screen the wall’s blank surface;
- e. high quality public art in the form of a mosaic, mural, decorative masonry pattern, sculpture, relief, etc., installed over a substantial portion of the blank wall surface;
- f. small setbacks, indentations, or other architectural means of breaking up the wall surface;
- g. different textures, colors, or materials that break up the wall’s surface.

- h. special lighting, a canopy, awning, horizontal trellis, or other pedestrian-oriented feature to reduce the expanse of the blank surface and add visual interest;
- i. seating ledges or perches (especially on sunny facades and near bus stops);
- j. merchandising display windows or regularly changing public information display cases.

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.

C5.1. Overhead Weather Protection Design Elements: Overhead weather protection should be designed with consideration given to:

- a. the overall architectural concept of the building
- b. uses occurring within the building (such as entries and retail spaces) or in the adjacent streetscape environment (such as bus stops and intersections);
- c. minimizing gaps in coverage;
- d. a drainage strategy that keeps rain water off the street-level facade and sidewalk;
- e. continuity with weather protection provided on nearby buildings;
- f. relationship to architectural features and elements on adjacent development, especially if abutting a building of historic or noteworthy character;
- g. the scale of the space defined by the height and depth of the weather protection;
- h. use of translucent or transparent covering material to maintain a pleasant sidewalk environment with plenty of natural light; and
- i. when opaque material is used, the illumination of light-colored undersides to increase security after dark.

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.

D1.1. Pedestrian Enhancements: Where a commercial or mixed-use building is set back from the sidewalk, pedestrian enhancements should be considered in the resulting street frontage. Downtown the primary function of any open space between commercial buildings and the sidewalk is to provide access into the building and opportunities for outdoor activities such as vending, resting, sitting, or dining.

- a. All open space elements should enhance a pedestrian oriented, urban environment that has the appearance of stability, quality, and safety.
- b. Preferable open space locations are to the south and west of tower development, or where the siting of the open space would improve solar access to the sidewalk.
- c. Orient public open space to receive the maximum direct sunlight possible, using trees, overhangs, and umbrellas to provide shade in the warmest months. Design such spaces to take advantage of views and solar access when available from the site.

d. The design of planters, landscaping, walls, and other street elements should allow visibility into and out of the open space.

D1.2. Open Space Features: Open spaces can feature art work, street furniture, and landscaping that invite customers or enhance the building’s setting. Examples of desirable features to include are:

- a. visual and pedestrian access (including barrier-free access) into the site from the public sidewalk;
- b. walking surfaces of attractive pavers;
- c. pedestrian-scaled site lighting;
- d. retail spaces designed for uses that will comfortably “spill out” and enliven the open space;
- e. areas for vendors in commercial areas;
- f. landscaping that enhances the space and architecture;
- g. pedestrian-scaled signage that identifies uses and shops; and
- h. site furniture, art work, or amenities such as fountains, seating, and kiosks. residential open space

D1.3. Residential Open Space: Residential buildings should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space. In addition, the following should be considered:

- i. courtyards that organize architectural elements while providing a common garden;
- j. entry enhancements such as landscaping along a common pathway;
- k. decks, balconies and upper level terraces;
- l. play areas for children;
- m. individual gardens; and
- n. location of outdoor spaces to take advantage of sunlight.

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.

D3.1. Public Space Features and Amenities: Incorporate one or more of the following a appropriate:

- a. public art;
- b. street furniture, such as seating, newspaper boxes, and information kiosks;
- c. distinctive landscaping, such as specimen trees and water features;
- d. retail kiosks;
- e. public restroom facilities with directional signs in a location easily accessible to all; and
- f. public seating areas in the form of ledges, broad stairs, planters and the like, especially near public open spaces, bus stops, vending areas, on sunny facades, and other places where people are likely to want to pause or wait.

D3.2. Intersection Focus: Enliven intersections by treating the corner of the building or sidewalk with public art and other elements that promote interaction (entry, tree, seating, etc.) and reinforce the distinctive character of the surrounding area.

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.

D5.1. Lighting Strategies: Consider employing one or more of the following lighting strategies as appropriate.

- a. Illuminate distinctive features of the building, including entries, signage, canopies, and areas of architectural detail and interest.
- b. Install lighting in display windows that spills onto and illuminates the sidewalk.
- c. Orient outside lighting to minimize glare within the public right-of-way.

VEHICULAR ACCESS AND PARKING

None were identified as priority guidelines, but all remain applicable.

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 Early Design Guidance meeting, no departures were requested.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application, with earnest response to the guidance provided. The Board explicitly stated that token revisions could risk the need for multiple subsequent meetings.