



## FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3019673

Address: 1516 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue

Applicant: James Walker of Collins Woerman Architects

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: Downtown Mixed Commercial  
Maximum height 240-400 ft depending on uses

Nearby Zones: (North) DMC 240/290-400  
(South) DMC 240/290-400  
(East) DRC 85-150  
(West) DMC 240/290-400

Lot Area: 19,462 sq ft.  
Slopes about 6 ft down to south



**Current Development:**

The southern portion of the mid-block site is occupied by a 4 story commercial building, which is not a designated city landmark. The north portion has a surface parking lot.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

A 7 story apartment building (not a city landmark) is immediately adjacent to the north, with a recessed window well at the party property line. An 8 level parking structure is immediately adjacent to the south; it is not a designated city landmark. Two city landmarks are located across the alley to the east: the 12-story Olympic office tower and the 8 story Fischer Studio Building, now condominiums. Across 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue there are 2 landmarks on the block corners, framing a recent 440 ft residential tower. The surrounding district is made up of mixed uses and diverse scales, from all eras of Seattle history, with extensive pedestrian activity generated by the nearby transit corridors, Pike/Pine couplet, and the Pike Place Market one block west.

**Access:**

Pedestrian access is from the adjacent sidewalk on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, which is a Class 1 Pedestrian, transit and bike lane street. Vehicular access is from the through block alley adjacent to the east.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

None

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed development is an 11 story, approximately 180 ft tall office building with two stories of retail at the base, and parking for 130 vehicles below grade, accessed off the alley.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the DPD project number 3019673 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)

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Stated the project has several city designated Landmarks in the immediate vicinity, and should respond to the ‘urban form pattern’, character and scale cues from that context, in particular the preponderance of terra cotta facades nearby (cited Downtown Design Guideline B1 & B3). [Staff clarified that the project must undergo an Adjacency Review by City Landmarks staff, which occurs after the Master Use Permit application when architectural treatment, materials, and colors are better resolved]
- Stated the proposal is a welcome addition and will improve the neighborhood.
- Concerned that the massing and bulk of the proposal will not fit in with the scale and character of a block with multiple smaller forms that enable light and air penetrations to the middle of the block (cited guideline A1).
- Recognized the 180 ft proposed height is much lower than code allows, but concerned that the 180 ft long proposed ‘brick’ will block too much light to the residential uses on the east side of the alley, and cast long-duration shadows on those units (cited A1-d).
- Noted the zone across the alley is a less intensive zone designated DRC 85-150, and several existing buildings are less than 150 ft tall, thus Downtown Design Guideline “B2: create a transition in bulk and scale at zone transitions”, is especially applicable.
- Opposed to the outdoor balcony rooms on the alley side of the proposal, as they will impinge on the privacy of living rooms and residential units directly across the alley.
- Noted the 4-7 ft setback along the alley of options 2 and 3, resulting in a 22-25 ft wide alley space, is not sufficient to ensure privacy, light and air to the neighbors.
- Stated the adjacent building at the north property line has a recessed light well, exclusively serving a sizable number of units, and requested the north wall of the proposal be stepped or reduced significantly to afford light into that window well.
- Suggested the massing be revised to place a taller but more slender tower on the south end of the site, with a lower north podium that allows light to penetrate to the alley and the light well cited above; this stepped form would be more compatible with context.
- Noted the proposed south wall against the existing parking garage can be taller with few impacts to that non-residential, ‘non-occupied’ structure.
- Stated the proposal does not display an adequate response to the following massing and bulk related Downtown Design Guidelines: A1-c, B1-d, B2-b, B2-i, B2-m and B2-n.

## **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. (Downtown Design Guideline citations)

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

### **FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE (EDG) June 16, 2015**

## 1. Massing & Form:

- a. **Massing Options & Articulation:** The Board agreed the 3 options shown were only subtle variations on the same thick bar scheme, which showed little regard for the massing context, scale or adjacencies. The Board recognized the proposed height of 180 ft was lower than the 240 ft maximum allowed, but agreed a taller, more sculpted form might be better. The Board required more distinctly different options be explored, that also afford better light penetration to the mid-block, such as a taller but substantially thinner bar, or a much lower podium (5-7 stories) with a 'point tower' on the south.

The shadow and light impacts of each option on the less intense zone to the east should be accurately compared, including how the existing building shades as a base case. The Board agreed the street facing wall should be strong, but it deserves rhythm, articulation and scale that is not ignoring the well-established patterns in the vicinity and across 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The proposed flat and thick bar appears bulky in this context. (B2.1b; B3.2; C2)

- b. **Alley Façade and Adjacencies:** The Board also supported more mass shaping and variation on the alley façade, responding to light and privacy concerns. The Board did not support any balconies on that facade. The Board required detailed plans of the adjacent residential buildings (north and east) showing all windows and bedroom and living room locations; alley elevation overlays showing existing to proposed windows; and large scale sections through the alley and north building, showing existing window sills, resident sightlines, etc, and the proposed structures' solid/glass relationships to the neighboring windows. Although the proposed office-to-residential window adjacency is not fundamentally impossible, careful design of window heights, placement, screening techniques, etc needs to be demonstrated at subsequent meetings. (B1.2)
- c. **Core, North Wall & Roof Elements:** The Board supported in principle the end-loaded cores, and associated solid party walls, but not necessarily full height on the north if the massing and adjacency objectives above are not met. The Board agreed more study of light penetration to the neighboring north window well is required, as well as detailed drawings of the existing apartment layouts for evaluation. Massing options should lower the proposed north wall and/or study light reflectors. The office elevator core might shift to the south wall to prevent overshadowing of the adjacent north light well, and allow more afternoon west light into the mid-block. (DC2-B)

## 2. Ground Level & Streetscape:

- a. **Retail Height & Length:** The Board strongly supported 2 stories of tall and deep retail at this location, as shown on page 36, including almost full length along 2<sup>th</sup> Ave. The Board did not express a preference for the office lobby at the north or south, but did agree the 'retail lobby' must be activated and shallow to not appear empty or dead to

the street. The stair/escalator transition up to the second level should be intuitive and well-activated; an exterior stair activating the street is plausible. (C1;C2; C4)

- b. **Retail Transparency, Occupation & Porosity:** The Board agreed the full length of the ground floor should be highly transparent and integrate multiple door locations besides the 'retail lobby', to activate the very busy street edge and in case multiple tenants occupy the edge over the life of the building. The Board strongly supported the concept of a raised retail street porch at the 2<sup>nd</sup> level, open to those public customers, rather than the privatized office porch at level 3 shown on page 37, which would be less activating in evening hours. The Board agreed such a raised porch could be a defining place-maker for the block and project. (C1; D1; D3)
- c. **Streetscape Design:** The Board supported the largely paved streetscape design shown on page 41 (8 ft clear pedestrian paving), since this busy pedestrian location near Pike Market should not constrict pedestrians. The Board recommended exploring options for a continuous and deeper voluntary setback at the ground level (rather than the minimal door pockets shown on pg 36, which can pose safety concerns) to accommodate street cafes, yet not constrict pedestrians to less than 8 ft. (D1;D2)

### 3. Composition, Materiality & Details:

- a. **Facade Proportions and Composition:** The Board agreed this vicinity and particular block (except for the parking structure) displays a consistent building scale (1/6-1/8 block grain), datums and material harmonies. The massing options and eventual design should incorporate secondary scaling and composition of the form to reflect immediate context, and re-balance the over horizontality of the retail floors shown. The office balconies fronting 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue were supported and could provide recommended scale and street activation. (B1.1; B2.2; C2)
- b. **Alley Facades & Safety:** The Board agreed the design and materials are crucial in this location to ensure safety and activation, but balance privacy and sensitive users nearby. The Board recommended abundant alley lighting but shielded from all adjacent residential windows, and detailed elevations with fixture cut-sheets are required at the next meeting. All alley facing materials should be quality and unified with the rest of the tower, as they will closely visible from adjacent buildings and from adjacent streets through the lower buildings. (C6; D6)

## DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and Downtown Design 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

None identified as priority guidelines, although the massing was a primary topic of Board discussion and is covered under Guidelines B-1, B2 and B3.2.

## ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION

**B1 Respond to the neighborhood context: Develop an architectural concept and compose the major building elements to reinforce desirable urban features existing in the surrounding neighborhood.**

**B1.1. Adjacent Features and Networks:** Each building site lies within an urban neighborhood context having distinct features and characteristics to which the building design should respond. Arrange the building mass in response to one or more of the following, if present:

- a. a surrounding district of distinct and noteworthy character;
- b. an adjacent landmark or noteworthy building;
- c. a major public amenity or institution nearby;
- d. neighboring buildings that have employed distinctive and effective massing compositions;
- e. elements of the pedestrian network nearby, (i.e.: green street, hillclimb, mid-block crossing, through-block passageway); and
- f. direct access to one or more components of the regional transportation system.

**B1.2. Land Uses:** Also, consider the design implications of the predominant land uses in the area surrounding the site.

**B2 Create a Transition in Bulk and Scale: Compose the massing of the building to create a transition to the height, bulk, and scale of development in nearby less-intensive zones.**

**B2.1. Analyzing Height, Bulk, and Scale:** Factors to consider in analyzing potential height, bulk, and scale impacts include:

- a. topographic relationships;
- b. distance from a less intensive zone edge;
- c. differences in development standards between abutting zones (allowable building height, width, lot coverage, etc.);
- d. effect of site size and shape;
- e. height, bulk, and scale relationships resulting from lot orientation (e.g., back lot line to back lot line vs back lot line to side lot line); and
- f. type and amount of separation between lots in the different zones (e.g. , separation by only a property line, by an alley or street, or by other physical features such as grade changes); g. street grid or platting orientations.

**B2.2. Compatibility with Nearby Buildings:** In some cases, careful siting and design treatment may be sufficient to achieve reasonable transition and mitigation of height, bulk, and scale impacts. Some techniques for achieving compatibility are as follows:

- h. use of architectural style, details (such as roof lines, beltcourses, cornices, or fenestration), color, or materials that derive from the less intensive zone.

- i. architectural massing of building components; and
- j. responding to topographic conditions in ways that minimize impacts on neighboring development, such as by stepping a project down the hillside.

**B2.3. Reduction of Bulk:** In some cases, reductions in the actual bulk and scale of the proposed structure may be necessary in order to mitigate adverse impacts and achieve an acceptable level of compatibility. Some techniques which can be used in these cases include:

- k. articulating the building's facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that reflect to existing structures or platting pattern;
- l. increasing building setbacks from the zone edge at ground level;
- m. reducing the bulk of the building's upper floors; and
- n. limiting the length of, or otherwise modifying, facades.

**B3 Reinforce the Positive Urban Form & Architectural Attributes of the Immediate Area.: Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.**

**B3.1. Building Orientation:** In general, orient the building entries and open space toward street intersections and toward street fronts with the highest pedestrian activity. Locate parking and vehicle access away from entries, open space, and street intersections considerations.

**B3.2. Features to Complement:** Reinforce the desirable patterns of massing and facade composition found in the surrounding area. Pay particular attention to designated landmarks and other noteworthy buildings. Consider complementing the existing:

- a. massing and setbacks,
- b. scale and proportions,
- c. expressed structural bays and modulations,
- d. fenestration patterns and detailing,
- e. exterior finish materials and detailing,
- f. architectural styles, and
- g. roof forms.

**B3.3. Pedestrian Amenities at the Ground Level:** Consider setting the building back slightly to create space adjacent to the sidewalk conducive to pedestrian-oriented activities such as vending, sitting, or dining. Reinforce the desirable streetscape elements found on adjacent blocks. Consider complementing existing:

- h. public art installations,
- i. street furniture and signage systems,
- j. lighting and landscaping, and
- k. overhead weather protection.

## 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.

**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.

**C4 Reinforce Building Entries: To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce building entries.**

**C4.1. Entry Treatments:** Reinforce the building’s entry with one or more of the following architectural treatments:

- a. extra-height lobby space;
- b. distinctive doorways;
- c. decorative lighting;
- d. distinctive entry canopy;
- e. projected or recessed entry bay;
- f. building name and address integrated into the facade or sidewalk;
- g. artwork integrated into the facade or sidewalk;
- h. a change in paving material, texture, or color;
- i. distinctive landscaping, including plants, water features and seating
- j. ornamental glazing, railings, and balustrades.

**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.

**D6 Design for Personal Safety & Security: Design the building and site to promote the feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.**

**D6.1. Safety in Design Features:** To help promote safety for the residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors who enter the area:

- a. provide adequate lighting;
- b. retain clear lines of sight into and out of entries and open spaces;
- c. use semi-transparent security screening, rather than opaque walls, where appropriate;
- d. avoid blank and windowless walls that attract graffiti and that do not permit residents or workers to observe the street;
- e. use landscaping that maintains visibility, such as short shrubs and/or trees pruned so that all branches are above head height;
- f. use ornamental grille as fencing or over ground-floor windows in some locations;
- g. avoid architectural features that provide hiding places for criminal activity;
- h. design parking areas to allow natural surveillance by maintaining clear lines of sight for those who park there, for pedestrians passing by, and for occupants of nearby buildings;
- i. install clear directional signage;
- j. encourage “eyes on the street” through the placement of windows, balconies, and street-level uses; and
- k. ensure natural surveillance of children’s play areas.

**VEHICULAR ACCESS AND PARKING**

None identified as priority guidelines, however the Board supported the proposed loading and parking access at the alley, and encouraged the bike room and retail frontage on the alley to

have windows and lighting for active safety along the alley - carefully designed to protect adjacent privacy - as well as quality façade material treatments.

### **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 First Early Design Guidance no departures were requested.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the First Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board unanimously recommended the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided above. While not exclusive, the following are emphasized and required (besides the typical EDG drawing requirements):

- a) 2-3 Different massing options that respond to the distinctive scale and proportions in the immediate context, and also afford reasonable light penetration to the mid block.
- b) Zoom-in shadow studies of the existing structure and the new massing options, focusing on shadow impacts to the south and west walls of the nearby Fischer Studio building, and the adjacent light well to the north.
- c) Detailed plans showing the first 15 ft of the existing residential uses and windows to the north and east, and the corresponding proposed plans adjacent, with any proposed privacy elements.
- d) Detailed large scale sections through the alley and neighboring north light well, showing existing and proposed floor levels, window sills, sightlines, and equinox shadows.
- e) Large scale elevations of the proposed alley windows, clearly and accurately overlaid with the existing windows opposite.
- f) Large scale elevation of the alley showing materials and lighting fixture locations, and proposed fixture cut-sheets.
- g) Large scale detailed elevation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> avenue retail frontage up to floor 4 or 5, showing all doors, mullions, canopies, porches or balconies, materials, and shadows lightly toned (but not street trees).