



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3019885

Address: 403 Dexter Ave N

Applicant: Brian O' Reilly and Matt Roewe of Via Architecture

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, July 01, 2015

Board Members Present: Boyd Pickrell, Chair  
Homero Nishiwaki  
Christine Harrington

Board Members Absent: Katherine Idziorek  
Janet Stephenson

DPD Staff Present: Magda Hogness

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed (SM 160/85-240)

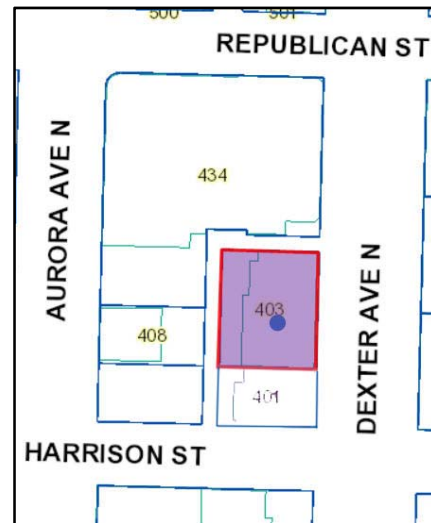
Nearby Zones: Neighborhood Commercial (NC3-85),  
Seattle Mixed (SM 85-240, SM-85)

Lot Area: 11,970 sf

Access: The subject property currently includes  
vehicular access off the alley.

### Current Development:

The site is currently occupied by a one-story masonry building, originally built in 1959 as a warehouse and adapted in 1999 to house an art gallery and offices. Surface parking is located adjacent to the alley.



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

The 11,970 sf site is located within the South Lake Union neighborhood, which includes blocks with a rich variety of uses, institutions, and transportation connectivity. Harrison St is identified as a heart location within the South Lake Union Guidelines. Both Dexter Ave N and Aurora Ave N (State Route 99) are major north/south routes for vehicles. Aurora Ave N currently acts as a barrier separating this portion of South Lake Union to the Uptown neighborhood. The new SR 99 tunnel and north portal will change access around the site dramatically and the new signaled intersection at Aurora Ave N and Harrison St will serve as an access point to SR99 in both directions. Thomas St and Harrison St in the future will cross over Aurora Ave N, reconnecting the streets and the neighborhoods.

The surrounding context is rapidly changing from mostly one to two story service oriented commercial buildings to new mid and high rise office and residential developments. The adjacent context is shaped by an irregular alley; the alley wraps around the west and north edges of the subject property. Current development includes a seven story residential building containing 294 residential units directly north of the site, project number 3016347. Further north, the UW Medicine campus is sited in the block north of Republican St and east of Dexter Avenue N. Directly across Dexter Avenue N, a new 12-story office building with ground level retail is proposed under project number 3016362. The adjacent parcel to the south is occupied by a one story retail structure, originally built in 1948. Across Harrison St to the south, two 12-story buildings are proposed with ground level retail space, under project number 3019618.

The South Lake Union Street Concept plan designates Dexter Ave N as a major boulevard with cycle tracks and Harrison St serving vehicle, pedestrian and perhaps transit modes of travel. Given the proximity to Aurora Ave N, Denny Way and Mercer St, multiple bus routes and the Dexter Ave N cycle tracks, there will be ample access to the site. Denny Park, three blocks to the south, and Seattle Center, three blocks to the west, offer nearby public green space.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is for 24-story structure containing 250 residential units and 2,000 sq. ft. of retail space at ground level. Parking for 85 vehicles to be located below grade. Existing structure to be removed.

<b>EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE July 1, 2015</b>
---

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3019885) at this website:  
<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/news/events/DesignReview/SearchPastReviews/default.aspx>

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE # 3019885**

**Page 2 of 10**

**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)

## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The architect presented four massing options; all propose similar square footage and use: a 24 story residential highrise containing 185-248 residential units with ground floor retail and below grade parking. Although massing concepts were also initially developed for a larger site configuration, the applicant focused the presentation on the smaller site configuration (Site Configuration A). If the corner parcel is acquired, the applicant will return for another EDG meeting.

The project seeks to develop urban multifamily housing within this evolving neighborhood. During the presentation the applicant explained that this project was initially intended to be developed as a seven story midrise residential building. However, proposed amendments to the Code will enable the tower floor plate to be enlarged as a design departure. The majority of the massing options requested this departure. This project is pursuing this departure ahead of the approved legislation, which may be adopted by City Council this summer.

Referred to as the Code Compliant Massing Option, this option shows a tower form, set back around a 65' podium. The architect explained that a disadvantage of this scheme is that the code compliant podium does not tie together the regulating lines of proposed neighboring buildings and produces an abrupt transition to the street. Retail and a residential lobby entry are located off Dexter Ave N. For this and all options, parking and services are proposed from the L-shaped alley.

Massing Option 1 showed a tower form over a three story podium. For this scheme the tower form is pushed to the northwest. Similar to the code compliant version, retail and a residential lobby entry are located off Dexter Ave N.

Massing Option 2 showed the tower over a three story podium aligned along Dexter Ave N. Noting that L shaped alley creates corner-like condition, the architect explained that this scheme expands retail uses to wrap along the alley as well as Dexter Ave N. Programmatically this option proposed a street level setback with proportions similar to pocket parks. Building upon the momentum of retail in nearby pocket parks, the open space is surrounded by retail and a recessed residential lobby entry.

The tower and podium massing is further refined in Option 3. Presented as the preferred option, this scheme is characterized by a three story podium, recessed under the tower massing. This recess responds to the three story datum of the adjacent proposed building to the north and

expands the open space shown in Option 2. Elevated exterior space is also located to the south, atop a one story volume to the south, and on the west side of the tower. The architect also presented façade expression concepts which explored the possible development of the tower to provide a layered effect and emphasize the vertically of the tower.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following comments were offered at the EDG meeting:

- Concerned with the vehicular entry design in that it seems to funnel vehicles in and off Dexter Ave N, which conflicts with the future cycle track.
- Would like to see the vehicular entry oriented and designed so that cars can also enter and exit off Harrison St.

## **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.

### **EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE July 1, 2015**

- 1) **Massing & Context Response:** The Board discussed the merits of the different massing options and related departure request and indicated they were generally supportive of the tower. Acknowledging the significance of the departure request, the Board noted they expect to see a beautiful and exceptionally designed tower. The Board also encouraged the site to expand to include the corner. The Board preferred massing Option Three with the roofline of Option 2, as the form has the best potential to create architectural presence and respond to the streetscape. The Board directed the applicant to proceed with this modified preferred option. (Guidelines CS2-A-2, CS2-B-2, CS2-C-2, CS3-A-2)
  - a. The Board discussed the massing roofline expression of the proposed form and noted that Massing Option 2 shows a step in massing that is visible from a street level perspective. In order to provide massing interest visible to the public, the Board recommended flipping the outdoor amenity space from the west location to the east, similar to what is shown in Massing Option 2. (Guidelines CS2-A-2, CS2-B-2, DC2-A-2, DC2-B-1)
  - b. The Board was unanimously supportive of the podium recessed expression and relationship to the proposed neighboring building datum line. (Guideline CS2-C-2)
  - c. The Board acknowledged this future structure will function as an informal gateway building to the SLU neighborhood and will also be highly visible from outside the SLU neighborhood. Outside views should be considered when further developing the massing. (Guidelines CS2-A-2, DC2-A-2, DC2-B-1)

- 2) **Architectural Expression Concept:** The Board gave direction on the architectural expression concepts.
  - a. Discussing the various expression concepts for the tower, the Board was unanimously concerned with the monolithic expression of the tower. To differentiate the tower massing, the Board unanimously recommended using depth, shadow and texture and indicated the fenestration patterns and slight plane changes would not be adequate. (Guidelines CS2-B-2, CS2-C-2, DC2)
  - b. To differentiate the tower from other nearby tower projects the Board recommended further developing and distinguishing the design. At the next meeting, provide a clear parti and unique design concept that is well resolved. (Guidelines CS2-A-2, CS3-A-2, DC2)
  - c. Acknowledging the project will be built to LEED gold standards, the Board encouraged the design take advantage of sustainable strategies such as managing heat gain with the façade design. (Guidelines CS1-I-i, CS1-B-3)
  
- 3) **Street Level & Entries:** The Board gave direction regarding the street level and entries.
  - a. The Board was concerned with the how the tower massing meets the ground and unanimously recommended a strong conceptual gesture with drama and interest for this area. Explore how the tower structure touches/hits ground, where the tower floats over the plaza and consider pushing the north wall further north. Ground and differentiate the tower from the rest of the massing. (Guidelines DC2-C-1, DC3-A-1)
  - b. The Board was also concerned with the one story massing at the southwest portion of the site, which contains the residential tower entry. Recognizing that the one story eliminates a blank façade condition at this location, the Board supported the overall idea of the garden entry. The Board noted that massing is unique and should be thoughtfully developed, mindful of scale and texture. (Guidelines DC2-C-1, DC2-D-2, DC3-A-1)
  
- 4) **Vehicle Access:** The Board discussed the vehicular entry location and directed the applicant to thoughtfully consider the potential conflict between different travel modes if the majority of vehicles enter and exit off Dexter Ave. In developing the design for the vehicular entry, create clear lines of sight and provide the possibility for vehicles to enter/exit off Harrison St (Guideline DC1-B-1)

## 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](#).

### 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.

***South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:***

**CS1-I Responding To Site Characteristics**

**CS1-I-i. Sustainable Design:** New development is encouraged to take advantage of site configuration to accomplish sustainability goals. The Board is generally willing to recommend departures from development standards if they are needed to achieve sustainable design. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design\* (LEED) manual which provides additional information

**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-A Location in the City and Neighborhood**

**CS2-A-2. Architectural Presence:** Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly.

**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-2. Mid-Block Sites:** Look to the uses and scales of adjacent buildings for clues about how to design a mid-block building. Continue a strong street-edge and respond to datum lines of adjacent buildings at the first three floors.

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

**CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes**

**CS3-A-2. Contemporary Design:** Explore how contemporary designs can contribute to the development of attractive new forms and architectural styles; as expressed through use of new materials or other means.

## 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-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-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.

### ***South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:***

#### **PL1-I Human Activity**

**PL1-I-i. Open Connections:** Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.

**PL1-I-iii. Lighting:** Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.

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

#### **PL2-B Safety and Security**

**PL2-B-3. Street-Level Transparency:** Ensure transparency of street-level uses (for uses such as nonresidential uses or residential lobbies), where appropriate, by keeping views open into spaces behind walls or plantings, at corners, or along narrow passageways.

#### **PL2-C Weather Protection**

**PL2-C-1. Locations and Coverage:** Overhead weather protection is encouraged and should be located at or near uses that generate pedestrian activity such as entries, retail uses, and transit stops.

**PL2-C-2. Design Integration:** Integrate weather protection, gutters and downspouts into the design of the structure as a whole, and ensure that it also relates well to neighboring buildings in design, coverage, or other features.

**PL2-C-3. People-Friendly Spaces:** Create an artful and people-friendly space beneath building.

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

#### **PL3-A Entries**

**PL3-A-1. Design Objectives:** Design primary entries to be obvious, identifiable, and distinctive with clear lines of sight and lobbies visually connected to the street.

**PL3-A-4. Ensemble of Elements:** Design the entry as a collection of coordinated elements including the door(s), overhead features, ground surface, landscaping, lighting, and other features.

### **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.

**PL3-C-2. Visibility:** Maximize visibility into the building interior and merchandise displays. Consider fully operational glazed wall-sized doors that can be completely opened to the street, increased height in lobbies, and/or special lighting for displays.

**PL3-C-3. Ancillary Activities:** Allow space for activities such as sidewalk vending, seating, and restaurant dining to occur. Consider setting structures back from the street or incorporating space in the project design into which retail uses can extend.

### **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-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.

## **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.

### **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-C Secondary Architectural Features**

**DC2-C-1. Visual Depth and Interest:** Add depth to facades where appropriate by incorporating balconies, canopies, awnings, decks, or other secondary elements into the façade design. Add detailing at the street level in order to create interest for the pedestrian and encourage active street life and window shopping (in retail areas).



## **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.

**DC3 Open Space Concept: Integrate open space design with the building design so that they complement each other.**

*South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:*

### **DC3-A Building-Open Space Relationship**

**DC3-A-1. Interior/Exterior Fit:** Develop an open space concept in conjunction with the architectural concept to ensure that interior and exterior spaces relate well to each other and support the functions of the development.

*South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:*

### **DC3-II Landscaping To Enhance The Building and/or Site**

**DC3-II-i. Integrated Artwork:** Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a building and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the previous uses of the area. Neighborhood themes may include service industries such as laundries, auto row, floral businesses, photography district, arts district, maritime, etc.

**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-1. Scale and Character:** Add interest to the streetscape with exterior signs and attachments that are appropriate in scale and character to the project and its environs.

**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.

### **DC4-C Lighting**

**DC4-C-2. Avoiding Glare:** Design project lighting based upon the uses on and off site, taking care to provide illumination 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 Early Design Guidance, the following departures were requested:

1. **Tower Floor Plate Lot Coverage (SMC 23.48.0.13.A):** The Code requires average gross floor area of all stories above the podium height shall not exceed 50 percent of the lot area. The applicant proposes 75% lot coverage for the tower floor plates. This project is pursuing this departure ahead of the approved legislation, which may be adopted by City Council this summer.

The Board indicated preliminary support for the departure provided that the building massing is driven by clear design logic for the whole site with meaningful architectural expression for the tower including depth, shadow and texture. (Guidelines CS2-B-2, CS2-C-2, DC2)

2. **Rooftop Features Upper Level Setback (SMC 23.48.010.H.7):** The Code requires rooftop features are to be located no closer than 10' to the roof edge. The applicant proposes no setback from roof edges for roof amenity features and mechanical screens and preserving a 10' setback from the property line.

The Board indicated preliminary support of the departure provided the design allows for the potential to integrate amenity spaces into the massing, accentuating the slenderness and verticality of the tower form. (Guidelines CS2-A-2, CS2-B-2, DC2-A-2, DC2-B-1)

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.