



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3020512

Address: 609 Fairview Ave N

Applicant: Peter Krech, Architect for Graphite, for Vulcan/City Investors LLC

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, December 02, 2015

Board Members Present: Boyd Pickrell (Chair)
Christine Harrington
Homero Nishiwaka
Janet Stephenson

Absent: Katherine Idziorek

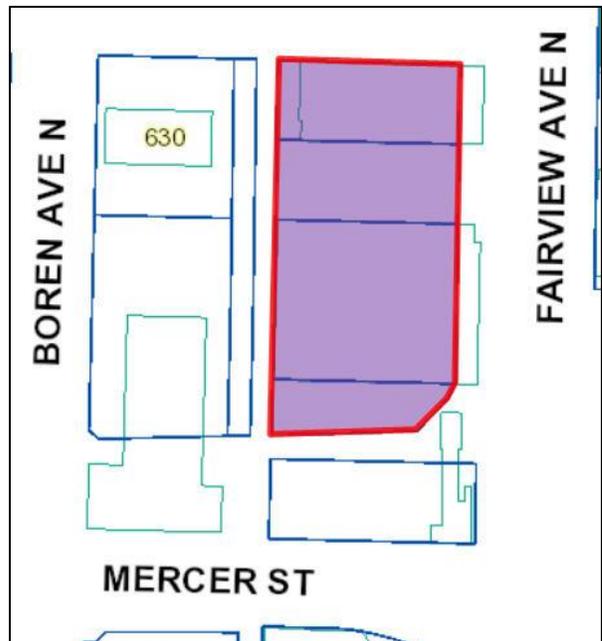
DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser, substituting for Garry Papers

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed (SM 85/65-160)

Nearby Zones: (North) C2-40
(South) SM 160/85-240
(East) SM 125
(West) SM 85/65-160

Lot Area: 37,947 sq.ft. rectangle



Current Development:

The site is vacant and used for construction parking.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The site occupies the east half of a lakefront block in the South Lake Union (SLU) neighborhood, providing a transition to the water from the densifying mixed use neighborhood to the south. The Center for Wooden Boats and Chandlers Cove are across Valley Street to the north, plus the recently completed SLU Park to the northwest. A future office building is proposed on the west half block adjacent. A vacant block is located to the west, but it is slated for a mixed use project with 16 story residential tower (3017398). The blocks to the south along Mercer Street are mostly newer office/commercial structures with a consistent 65 foot high street wall. The neighborhood has a wide mix of residential, office, commercial, research and technology uses.

Access:

Pedestrian access is from the three surrounding streets of Valley, Fairview and Mercer. Vehicular access is from the adjoining public alley to the west.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

The approximate north half of the site is classified Liquefaction Prone ECA.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A half block comprised of a 6-story office building with 187,000 square feet of commercial space and ground level retail space. Approximately 2421 parking spaces are to be located below grade, accessed from the adjacent public alley.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE (EDG) September 16, 2015

An initial EDG meeting was held on this date.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments provided at the meeting.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE (EDG) December 2, 2015

A second EDG was held on this date.

The EDG booklet dated 12/02/15 includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3020512) 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:

Mailing Address: **Public Resource Center**
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019
Email: PRC@seattle.gov

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the applicant noted that the proposed development is related to adjacent development on the other “Lakefront Blocks” to the west. The presentation noted two “heart locations” adjacent to the site, including at the southeast and northeast corners of the site. A third heart location is located to the northwest a few blocks away. The applicant noted that these heart locations are defined in the South Lake Union Design Guidelines as particularly important within the neighborhood. The intent of the proposed design is to respond to these heart locations.

The three massing options were referred to as “piers,” “stack,” and “wake.”

The design intent of the “pier” concept intent was to scallop the massing along Fairview and elevate the structure at the corners, with columns acting as “piers.”

The “stack” concept used framed boxes and stacked volumes to relate to the historic lumber industry in South Lake Union. The applicant noted that this option required upper level setback departures. This concept included a series of 5’ to 10’ deep terraces at the upper levels where the masses shift and are set back from the levels below.

The intent of the “wake” concept was to include facets and voids in the east façade to maximize views to Lake Union. This option also required upper level setback departures. The angles of the façade resulted in upper level terraces that are triangular in shape.

The applicant explained that the overall design intent for any of the options would include using materials and glazing to enhance the expression of directionality, interest, and scale. The Fairview Ave N façade was shown with more opacity at upper level facades in both the stack and wake options. The north and south facades were shown with high levels of transparency.

The conceptual landscape plan was developed with the intent of creating a visual transition from the more urban streetscape south of Mercer St to the more natural environment at the terminus of Lake Union. Extensive raingardens were shown at the edges of the building, with decks and

entry ramps to create visual and physical connections to the sidewalk. The design will also include a blue roof (visible water detention/treatment) as a means of creating a fifth façade and responding to the visibility of the roof from taller nearby buildings.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments provided at the meeting.

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.

Any page number references are to the EDG booklet dated September 16, 2015 and the supplemental information distributed by the applicant at that meeting.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE September 16, 2015

The Board noted that the presenting architect for the applicant sometimes acts as a substitute Board member for the West Board, but the Board members felt they could fairly review the proposal without bias.

- 1. Massing Options and Design Concept.** The Board directed the applicant to move forward with Option 2 (Stack), rather than the preferred Option 3 (Wake). The Board noted specific aspects of Option 2 and Option 3 that should be included as the design is further developed:
 - a. The design should be developed with maximum usable open space, such as shown in Option 2. The triangular terraces in Option 3 include unusable pinch points. (DC3-C.1)
 - b. The design concept should be strongly expressed, as indicated by Option 2. The Board gave guidance to continue developing the following strengths of Option 2: clear legibility of the design concept, strong horizontality at the Fairview Ave N façade, and the use of stacked volumes and voids to reduce the scale. (CS2-A, CS2-C)
 - c. The Board directed the applicant to develop the design consistent with the strong concept, robust use of glass and solid areas, and the smaller modules of glass framed boxes, as shown in the conceptual sketch of the Stack option shown on the Character Images sheet handed out at the EDG meeting. (CS2-A, CS2-C, CS2-I.iii, DC2-I)
 - i. The Board noted that the lower left Stack precedent image on the “Character Images” supplemental sheet handed out at the EDG meeting should be used as the basis for developing the architectural concept.
 - d. Option 2’s design concept is different than much of the recent development in the area, especially facing Mercer Street. The smaller framed volumes shown on the south façade create a positive contrast with the larger scale of many nearby buildings on Mercer St. A variety of architectural concepts is needed in this area, so the Board

- gave guidance to further develop the architectural concept of Option 2. (CS2-A, CS2-C)
- e. The Board observed that the Fairview Ave N facade is very long. The length is made interesting through the stacked volumes and voids in Option 2. The design should be developed with these aspects of Option 2. (CS2-A, CS2-C)
 - f. The Board also gave guidance to design the development to include the following positive aspects of Option 3: the carved-out ground floor, legible lobby location, and maximized views to Lake Union. (CS2-I.iii, DC2-A)
 - g. The Board directed that the design to focus on pedestrian scale signage, rather than vehicular or freeway scale signage. (DC4-B)
 - h. The lighting plan should create pedestrian safety and legibility in a currently dark corridor. (DC4-C)

2. Pedestrian Streetscape and Landscaping.

- a. The Board noted that the site to the west has been approved with a curvilinear large landscaped area at the north façade (Valley St). The Board gave guidance that the proposed landscaping on Valley St. should respond to the landscape plan of the site to the west, across the alley. The Board noted that either curvilinear or straight planted areas could be an acceptable response, as long as there is a clear relationship between the two planted areas across the alley. (DC3-C.1)
 - b. The Board directed the landscaping to be designed to be welcoming and create a softened edge to the pedestrian realm, especially at the southeast corner. The rain gardens should be developed to avoid creating a ‘moat’ of defensible space at the edges of the site. (CS2-B)
 - c. The Board encouraged development of the proposed elevated pedestrian spaces on Valley St, consistent with the design of the sites to the west. (DC3-C.1)
 - d. The Board observed that due to the design of the building to the west, the proposed loading dock near the north edge of the alley may be visible from Valley St. The design should be developed to minimize the visibility of the loading dock, if it will be visible from Valley St. The Board also offered the possibility of treating the loading dock walls with a pattern/color to create visual interest and discovery for pedestrians, if the loading dock walls will be visible. (CS2-B)
- 3. Entries.** The entrances should be visible, legible, and welcoming, especially at southeast corner. The Board gave guidance to develop the street level with the configuration of uses shown in Wake (Option 3) at the southeast corner. The Board noted that this configuration of uses will better activate the southeast corner, compared to this area shown in the Stack option (Option 2). (PL2-I.i, PL3-A, DC2-A)

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

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-C Relationship to the Block

CS2-C-1. Corner Sites: Corner sites can serve as gateways or focal points; both require careful detailing at the first three floors due to their high visibility from two or more streets and long distances.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

CS2-I Responding to Site Characteristics

CS2-I-i. Views: Encourage provision of “outlooks and overlooks” for the public to view the lake and cityscapes. Examples include provision of public plazas and/or other public open spaces and changing the form or facade setbacks of the building to enhance opportunities for views.

CS2-I-ii. Shadows: Minimize shadow impacts to Cascade Park.

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.

CS2-I-iv. Heart Locations: Several areas have been identified as “heart locations.” Heart locations serve as the perceived center of commercial and social activity within the neighborhood. These locations provide anchors for the community as they have identity and give form to the neighborhood. Development at heart locations should enhance

their central character through appropriate site planning and architecture. These sites have a high priority for improvements to the public realm. A new building's primary entry and facade should respond to the heart location. Special street treatments are likely to occur and buildings will need to respond to these centers of commercial and social activity. Amenities to consider are: pedestrian lighting, public art, special paving, landscaping, additional public open space provided by curb bulbs and entry plazas. See full guidelines for Heart Locations

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

PL2-I-i. Street Level Uses: Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.

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-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-2. Common Entries: Multi-story residential buildings need to provide privacy and security for residents but also be welcoming and identifiable to visitors.

PL3-A-3. Individual Entries: Ground-related housing should be scaled and detailed appropriately to provide for a more intimate type of entry.

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.

DESIGN CONCEPT

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-1. Site Characteristics and Uses: Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space.

DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

DC2-I Architectural Concept and Consistency

DC2-I-i. Roofscape Design: Design the “fifth elevation” — the roofscape — in addition to the streetscape. As this area topographically is a valley, the roofs may be viewed from locations outside the neighborhood such as the freeway and Space Needle. Therefore, views from outside the area as well as from within the neighborhood should be considered, and roof-top elements should be organized to minimize view impacts from the freeway and elevated areas.

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

DC3-C Design

DC3-C-1. Reinforce Existing Open Space: Where a strong open space concept exists in the neighborhood, reinforce existing character and patterns of street tree planting, buffers or treatment of topographic changes. Where no strong patterns exist, initiate a strong open space concept that other projects can build upon in the future.

DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

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-1. Functions: Use lighting both to increase site safety in all locations used by pedestrians and to highlight architectural or landscape details and features such as entries, signs, canopies, plantings, and art.

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 a requested departure(s) will be based upon the departure’s potential to help the project **better meet the Design Guideline priorities and achieve a better overall 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, the following departures were identified:

- 1. Upper Level Setbacks (23.48.012.B.1):** The Code requires a minimum 15' setback for portions of a structure more than 45' tall on certain streets. This applies to Valley Street and Fairview Avenue North adjacent to the site. The applicant proposed to reduce the setback to 9' at both Valley St and Fairview Ave N, for portions of Level 3 as described on page A-41 of the EDG packet. This would allow two floors to project into the setback, rather than just one. The ground floor would be set back more than the minimum required.

The Board indicated preliminary support for the departure, provided the design includes usable open space on the upper level terraces, and the design concept is strongly expressed as described in the guidance in this report.

- 2. Street Level Development Standards (23.48.014.F.1):** The Code requires a minimum of 60% of the required open space to have a minimum dimension of 15'. The applicant proposes that 32% of the required open space would have less than a 15' dimension. This departure applies to the Option 3 (Wake) concept, since the angled terraces result in open space areas with less than 15' dimension.

The Board noted that with the development of Option 2 (Stack), this departure may not be necessary. The Board indicated that they would possibly be open to this departure if it is required to create improved views to Lake Union and clearly express the design concept of Option 2.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE (EDG) meeting, the Board recommended the project **move forward to MUP application.**