



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

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Project Number: 3020906

Address: 601 Aurora Avenue N.

Applicant: Sun Choy, for PFHC Investments LLC

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, January 06, 2016

Board Members Present: Boyd Pickrell, Chair  
Christine Harrington  
Katherine Idziorek  
Homero Nishiwaki  
Janet Stephenson

Board Members Absent: none

SDCI Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: C1-65

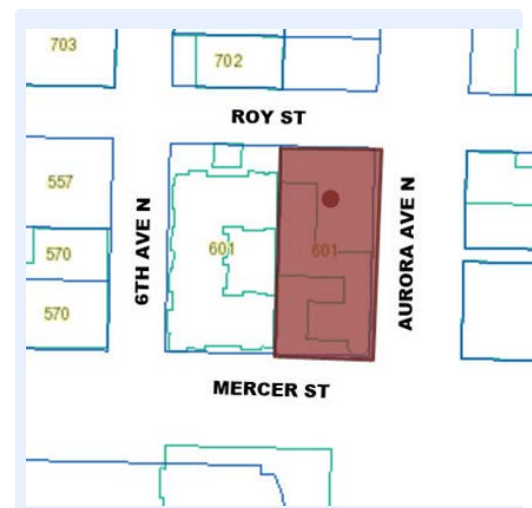
Nearby Zones: (North) C1-65

(South) NC3-85

(East) SM-SLU 160/85-240

(West) NC3-40

Lot Area: 26,787 Square Feet



**Current Development:**

The site is currently zoned C1-65 and occupied with a surface parking lot and one two-story, and one one-story commercial buildings. Slightly more than one half the block, due west of the development site, is zoned NC3-40 and occupied by a four-story hotel (Four Points). An LBA (Lot Boundary Adjustment) has been approved to increase the site area by adding a 3.92 foot strip of land that was part of the hotel site to the west and to create a zero-lot-line condition between the existing and proposed structures that will be owned by the same parties.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

The site is located in the Uptown Urban Center that occupies the south slope of Queen Anne Hill and is one of Seattle's oldest neighborhoods, initially settled by the Denney family in the late 1880's. Uptown is made up of a broad range of housing types and styles, including detached single family homes, apartment buildings from the 20's, 30's, and 40's and a variety of more recent mixed-use developments containing both apartments and condominiums. Adjacent development to the southwest includes a number of large-scale structures, including buildings belonging to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and iconic structures within Seattle Center which was the site of the 1962 World's Fair. To the east and southeast lies the South Lake Union Urban Center which contains substantial and large-scale commercial and mixed-use residential structures.

**Access:**

The surface grade of Mercer Street which borders the development site on the south lies significantly below the surface of the site. Aurora Avenue N. (State Highway 99) would not allow access to the site, so all access is restricted to Roy Street on the north.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

There are no environmentally critical areas on site. The site slopes from a northwest high point to a southeast low point approximately 7 feet.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is to construct a seven- to- eight story mixed-use building that contains a mix of hotel units (targeting 130) and apartment units (targeting 123). The development will be pursuing a Contract Rezone from the existing C1-65 to C1-85.

The design packet includes materials presented at the EDG meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3020906) 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 SDCl:

**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)

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### **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

The applicant's preferred massing model (alternate 3) was described as a reversed "C" scheme, with an open court aligned with that of the adjoining hotel to the west. The eight-story massing was pushed to the north and a reduced height of 7 stories assigned to the Mercer Street half, with the building stepping down with the slope of the site (see pages 34-39 of the packet).

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comments were received at the Early Design Guidance public meeting.

All public comments submitted in writing for this project can be viewed using the following link and entering the project number: <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/edms/>

## **PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the five Design Review Board members attending provided the following siting and design guidance.

### **EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE January 6, 2016**

- For its overall massing, alternative 3 is the Board's preferred alternative as well.
- The Board would like to see a more defined and better articulated design *parti*, i.e., 3-4 basic moves with a better and clearer connection evident between the *parti* and the massing of the structure, one that would inform the massing, especially at the Aurora corners; the Board encouraged the "bookend" scheme along Aurora to receive continuing and greater emphasis.
- The Board encourages further development of the amenity spaces as shown--the "rooftop terrace" directly accessed from the higher residential floor to the north and the level two terrace courtyard—and looks forward to seeing details of a more complete design of the particular amenities proposed.

- The Board was in favor of the flared bays and balconies facing onto Aurora Avenue N. and encouraged strong modulation of the building not only along Aurora but as part of the development of the two street-facing ends as well.
- The design team was encouraged to incorporate further massing changes within the preferred scheme that would highlight the entry and serve to draw pedestrian guests coming down Roy Street and communicate specifically where the entry was located.
- The project was encouraged in obtaining a “no build easement” from the existing hotel so that the top floors of the new structure could have windows along the west façade rather than turning a blank face in that direction.
- The Board asked for fuller details regarding the materiality of the exposed garage wall and plantings intended for it; “make it purty!” was the Board’s guidance.

## 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-1. Sense of Place:** Emphasize attributes that give a distinctive sense of place.

Design the building and open spaces to enhance areas where a strong identity already exists, and create a sense of place where the physical context is less established.

**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-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.

##### **CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale**

**CS2-D-2. Existing Site Features:** Use changes in topography, site shape, and vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent properties.

**CS2-D-3. Zone Transitions:** For projects located at the edge of different zones, provide an appropriate transition or complement to the adjacent zone(s). Projects should create a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zone and the proposed development.

**CS2-D-4. Massing Choices:** Strive for a successful transition between zones where a project abuts a less intense zone.

*The Board liked the stepping of the massing, following the slope down from Roy Street to Mercer Street along Aurora Avenue N. The project was encouraged to incorporate massing changes that would draw a pedestrian down Roy Street from the west and inform the pedestrian where the entry to the building was located. The design team was encouraged by the Board to explore “shouldering away” from Aurora and embracing Roy Street to the west with a change in massing, pushing the massing back, for instance, to better align the entry to the new structure with the adjacent hotel and its mass.*

#### ***Uptown Supplemental Guidance:***

##### **CS2-III Corner Lots**

**CS2-III-i. Addressing the Corner:** Generally, buildings within Uptown should meet the corner and not be set back. Building designs and treatments as well as any open space areas should address the corner and promote activity. Corner entrances are strongly encouraged, where feasible.

*The corner at Aurora Avenue N. and Mercer Street, because of its height and prominence above the Mercer roadway, twenty some feet below Aurora Avenue N., would be especially visible.*

*The corner at Roy Street and Aurora should contemplate a strategy different than that presented. Open space at this northeast corner might not be the most successful approach to enlivening the space and highlighting the entry. Seriously consider, it was stated, an “outie” rather than an innie,” an attractive jewel box of a space, perhaps of double height, where people would be happy to gather, and with high visibility from further west on Roy Street. The companion hotel has a more gracious entry than the one proposed for the new building; the proposal is too compressed and thereby less inviting. The Board suggested looking at the Runberg project, at Harrison Street across from Cascade Park as an alternative example of an expressive entry, more suited to this use and this site than what was proposed.*

#### **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**

#### ***Uptown Supplemental Guidance:***

**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-1. Eyes on the Street:** Create a safe environment by providing lines of sight and encouraging natural surveillance.

**PL2-B-2. Lighting for Safety:** Provide lighting at sufficient lumen intensities and scales, including pathway illumination, pedestrian and entry lighting, and/or security lights.

**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. buildings in design, coverage, or other features.

**PL2-D Wayfinding**

**PL2-D-1. Design as Wayfinding:** Use design features as a means of wayfinding wherever possible.

*Wayfinding assistance of all kinds on Roy Street will be important to the success of the project. Discrete and divergent paths for vehicles and pedestrians will be an important component in making for a secure and pleasant arrival for both drivers and walkers. Consider diversity in both paving and soffit treatments to promote these goals.*

**Uptown Supplemental Guidance:**

**PL2-I Entrances Visible from the Street**

**PL2-I-i. Prominent Entrances:** Throughout Uptown, major entrances to developments should be prominent. The use of distinctive designs with historical references is strongly encouraged. Design, detailing, materials and landscaping may all be employed to this end. Building addresses and names (if applicable) should be located at entrances, tastefully crafted.

**PL2-II Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances**

**PL2-II-ii. Defensible Space:** Individual or unit entrances in buildings that are accessed from the sidewalk or other public spaces should consider appropriate designs for defensible space as well as safety features (e.g., decorative fencing and gating). Landscaping should be consistent with these features.

*The entry should be gracious and it is hard to imagine graciousness anent the garbage collection spot. Effort should be made to consolidate garbage holding and staging with the adjacent hotel, and redesign for more graciousness at the entry.*

**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.

*See the comments above regarding the Roy Street treatment. On Aurora Avenue N. the Board would like to see a strategy for combining both greater transparency and a landscaped edge. The base and top should be clearly differentiated, except for where, in keeping with a strong expression of the parti, the top might be allowed to “bleed down” into the lower massing. The Board expressed appreciation for the way the taller and lighter grasses and plantings created a sense of movement along the Aurora façade.*

*The Mercer Street facade should be set back from the property edge, with a minimum of 3-feet of landscaped buffer, to allow for decks (as shown in Alternative 1) to enliven the façade, and should be well lit to discourage crime. The “cranny” shown next to the exit stair at the ground level of the Mercer facade near where the new structure would meet the existing hotel could be a bothersome area, and it needed a design fix to make it work.*

**PL4 Active Transportation: Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.**

**PL4-A Entry Locations and Relationships**

**PL4-A-1. Serving all Modes of Travel:** Provide safe and convenient access points for all modes of travel.

## DESIGN CONCEPT

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

**DC1-B Vehicular Access and Circulation**

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

**DC1-B-2. Facilities for Alternative Transportation:** Locate facilities for alternative transportation in prominent locations that are convenient and readily accessible to expected users.

**DC1-C Parking and Service Uses**

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

**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.

## **DC2-B Architectural and Facade Composition**

**DC2-B-1. Façade Composition:** Design all building facades—including alleys and visible roofs— considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned.

**DC2-B-2. Blank Walls:** Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians.

## **DC2-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).

## ***Uptown Supplemental Guidance:***

### **DC2-I Architectural Context**

**DC1-I-iii. Uptown Urban Character Area:** Embrace high quality urban infill, and responds to special relationships with nearby civic institutions. The following features are encouraged:

- a. Consistent street wall;
- b. Engaging the sidewalk / storefront transparency;
- c. Building siting that responds to Seattle Center entry points;
- d. Defined cornices;
- e. High quality, durable materials;
- f. Distinct residential and commercial components; and
- g. Throughout Uptown, upper level balconies are discouraged on the street side of residential buildings. Bay windows are a preferred architectural element on the street side. This guideline is intended to avoid open displays of storage, which are sometimes an unintended consequence of street side balconies.

*The Board encouraged the design team to pursue a “very individual, bold and fun design” able to stand on its own and not one driven by branded hotel requirements. Keep pursuing a bold modulation of all the facades and a dynamic massing of the building was the guidance given. Do not allow the end walls to be plain of blank, but explore adding windows, balconies or other treatments to create façade interest. Billboards and signage of any kind should not be considered as a way of dealing with lacunae in the design.*



***Uptown Supplemental Guidance:***

**DC3-I Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or site**

**DC3-I-i. Varied, Integrated Landscaping:** Throughout Uptown, but especially within the Uptown Park character area, landscaping should be substantial and include a variety of textures and colors, to the extent possible. Landscaping should be used to enhance each site, including buildings, setbacks, entrances, open space areas, and to screen parking and other less visually attractive areas. Encourage planted containers at building entries.

**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.

**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.

The following departures were requested:

**SMC 23.47A.008** requires 60% of the street-facing facades between 2 and 8 feet above the sidewalk to be transparent. The applicants are requesting to provide 51% transparency along Aurora Avenue N. and 4% along Mercer Street. Along Aurora, because of the slope to the south, the parking garage podium emerges to a height of nearly 6 feet at the south end of the building. On Mercer Street the location of the hotel units above the garage podium, while providing privacy and safety to the units, negates compliance with the requirement for transparency. A six-foot deep landscaped edge is proposed in front of the units to expand the narrow street edge high above the actual street level.

The Board indicated comfort with the departures requested for each street front, provided the balconies as shown in alternate 1 were added back to the Mercer Street frontage as alternate #3 underwent further development.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended 5-0 that the proposal move on to MUP application. At the recommendation meeting, in addition to seeing a proposal responsive to the Guidelines and guidance stated above, the Board would specifically like to see the following presented:

- Street-level views from several vantage points near and far away, including from Aurora Avenue, down onto Mercer Street, and vignettes to understand the approach to and arrival at the hotel entry, from various locations on Roy Street.
- A study of intended signage for the project.
- Information regarding mechanical equipment (for individual rooms) and venting penetrations of exterior walls.
- A prepared materials board (with samples), as well as a materials page included in the packets prepared for the Recommendation Meeting.