



FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3020932

Address: 210 Wall Street

Applicant: Amkrom Moisan Architects, for Avalon Bay Communities

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, November 03, 2015

Board Members Present: Anjali Grant (Acting Chair)
Grace Leong
Gundula Proksch

Board Members Absent: Murphy McCullough
Alan McWain

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

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMR/R 240/65

Nearby Zones: (North) DMR/R 240/65
(South) DMR/ R 85/65
(East) DMR/R 240/65
(West) DMR/R 240/65

Lot Area: 25,503 sq ft



Current Development:

The entire subject site is vacant. All surrounding sidewalks exist.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

20-24 story residential towers occupy the blocks to the north and west, plus a 7-story office structure to the west. A 2-3 story commercial structure occupies the entire site to the east of the shared alley. 2-6 story structures occupy the blocks to the south and southwest, which is a lower height zone. The site is within the mixed use Belltown Neighborhood of the Downtown Urban Center. Vine Street is a designated Green Street, and streetscape design is coordinated with SDOT and the "Growing Vine Street" group.

Access:

Pedestrian access is from the three surrounding streets, 2nd Avenue, Wall Street and Vine Street. Vehicle and service access is from the existing, improved, through-block alley to the east.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

None

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed development is a 24 story, residential structure of approximately 320 units, with about 10,000 sf of ground level retail. Parking for 260 cars is located below grade; all loading and parking is accessed off the existing alley.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the DPD project number 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 Public Resource Center
Address: 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Stated the existing double row of street trees on 2nd is distinctive to the Belltown character, and they should be retained. (Staff Note: the Board does not have purview over the design of the sidewalks or ROW; it is reviewed by SDOT and associated groups)
- Supported development of this vacant site, to activate the block, and that the building should not be an “un-imaginative glass box”.
- Concerned the loading dock depth is too short and will result in trucks blocking the alley.
- Stated the tall south tower should not overwhelm the existing 6 story structure on the adjacent block to the southwest, which is a lower height zone.
- Concerned the retail depths shown will not accommodate a range of users.
- Encouraged cedar trees and equal canopy area on site if the existing row is replaced.
- Encouraged the design to respect light and views of all neighbors.
- Stated the Code has good reason to step massing and decrease bulk and shadows at upper towers, and did not support increased or averaged tower floor areas.

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 massing, siting and design guidance: (Applicable Design Guidelines)

All page numbers below are to the EDG booklet dated 11/03/2015, posted on the DPD website.

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1. Massing & Building Form:

- a) Applicant Preferred South Tower location:** The Board did not agree that concept #3 was the best massing response to guidelines and context. While a southern tower position is possible, the Board agreed the one presented was too bulky and was not convinced the ‘mid-level’ concept #2 had been explored fully. The Board also agreed the ‘potential departures’ of concept #2 did not show an improved response to design guidelines, and a viable, supportable massing scheme could be developed with possibly supportable departures. The Board recommended more study of concept #2 options such as: 2 distinct residential volumes on the podium; a narrow strip of residential near/along the alley; or a version of concept #1 with a simpler, more elegant stepping and setbacks off the alley. The starting point should not be an assumed tower size (above 125 ft) that exceeds the code 8,000 sf. (B1, B2)
- b) Tower proportions and bulk:** The Board supported the tower and base interlock shown on pg 28/updated, but agreed the tower bulk and squat, boxy proportions shown on concept#3 (which assumes the 23% floor area increase; see departure #1) were concerning in the context, especially across the street from a lower height zone. The

Board recommended the tower for all schemes be reduced in bulk, deeply modulated and shaped to emphasize vertical proportions, and present a less wide and flat tower wall to the south. The deep reveals and ‘slenderizing’ elements shown on the tower on page 32A massing diagrams are promising, but the Board noted the longest walls along 2nd and the alley are not broken up at all by the reveals. (Staff Note: the Board recommended genuine spatial and architectural moves, not simply 2-dimensional devices/strategies) (B4)

- c) **Tower rooftop:** The Board supported a rooftop that breaks down in scale and “enhances the skyline” (Guideline A2) and possibly entails a linear treatment that laps a tower edge, such as depicted on pg 32A, rather than a stepped “pillbox”. The Board agreed this is possible without triggering departures or the coverage departure #3 described on pg 12 below. (A2, B1.III)

2. Amenity Locations & Features:

- a) **Podium and mid-tower Amenities:** The Board recommended multiple amenity locations besides just the podium and rooftop, and more detailed plans will be required at subsequent meetings that show the features and landscape character of outdoor amenity spaces, integrated to the adjacent uses and site. The “podium roof plan” on pg 29 appears to chop up the roof into many small, narrow spaces, some self-shaded, and has no strong design concept. (D1)
- b) **Rooftop Amenities:** The Board required a more detailed plan(s) of the rooftop amenity spaces –interior and exterior- at subsequent meetings. (D1)

3. Ground Floor & Streetscape:

- a) **Storefront variety and articulation:** The Board supported the basic extent and depth of retail shown on pg 29, but agreed the ground floor perimeter needed much more variety, recesses and articulation that evoked the richness and physical porosity shown on the precedent images shown on pg 17. The Board specifically recommended recesses that expanded the sidewalk (not the projections suggested on pg 32A) and place-making recesses at the two street corners (D3.IV), which contribute to the streetscape vitality of Belltown. (B3.3, C1, C2, D1, D3)
- b) **Residential Lobby Location:** The Board recommended the primary residential street entrance be intentionally located and integrated with the modulation and interlock strategies described under 1b above. The Lobby should animate the street, provide an identifiable, legible contrast from the retail storefronts, and not be subordinate to the commercial character of the “leasing” function. (C4)
- c) **Sidewalk and Street Tress:** The Board agreed the existing cedar tress provide a distinct character and should be retained (and may be part of an adopted street art/landscape plan). The storefronts should be modulated to respond to the trees. (D2.I, D3.III)

- d) **Continuous Weather Protection:** The Board strongly supported the stated intent to have continuous glass canopies, as shown on pg 33. These should be consistently shown on all subsequent drawings. (C5)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Downtown and Belltown Neighborhood guidelines identified at the first EDG meeting 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

While the Board had substantial guidance regarding the building massing, they are most appropriately captured under guidelines B1 through B3.

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.

Belltown Supplemental Guidance:

B1.I. Compatible Design: Establish a harmonious transition between newer and older buildings. Compatible design should respect the scale, massing and materials of adjacent buildings and landscape.

B1.II. Historic Style: Complement the architectural character of an adjacent historic building or area; however, imitation of historical styles is discouraged. References to period architecture should be interpreted in a contemporary manner.

B1.III. Visual Interest: Design visually attractive buildings that add richness and variety to Belltown, including creative contemporary architectural solutions.

B1.IV. Reinforce Neighborhood Qualities: Employ design strategies and incorporate architectural elements that reinforce Belltown’s unique qualities. In particular, the neighborhood’s best buildings tend to support an active street life.

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.

Staff NOTE: The Board incorrectly stated the site had no “less intensive zones” nearby, however the zone to the south of Wall Street does have lower height limits for residential uses, so this guideline is now included.

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.

Belltown Supplemental Guidance:

B3.1. Respond to Nearby Design Features: The principal objective of this guideline is to promote scale and character compatibility through reinforcement of the desirable patterns of massing and facade composition found in the surrounding area. Pay particular attention to designated landmarks and other noteworthy buildings.

- a. Respond to the regulating lines and rhythms of adjacent buildings that also support a street-level environment; regulating lines and rhythms include vertical and horizontal patterns as expressed by cornice lines, belt lines, doors, windows, structural bays and modulation.
- b. Use regulating lines to promote contextual harmony, solidify the relationship between new and old buildings, and lead the eye down the street.
- c. Pay attention to excellent fenestration patterns and detailing in the vicinity. The use of recessed windows that create shadow lines, and suggest solidity, is encouraged.

B4 Design a Well-Proportioned & Unified Building: Compose the massing and organize the interior and exterior spaces to create a well-proportioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole.

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE STREETScape

C1 Promote Pedestrian Interaction: Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming, and open to the general public.

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

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

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

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

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

Belltown Supplemental Guidance:

C1.I. Retail Concentration: Reinforce existing retail concentrations;

C1.II. Commercial Space Size: Vary in size, width, and depth of commercial spaces, accommodating for smaller businesses, where feasible;

C1.III. Desired Public Realm Elements: Incorporate the following elements in the adjacent public realm and in open spaces around the building:

- a. unique hardscape treatments
- b. pedestrian-scale sidewalk lighting
- c. accent paving (especially at corners, entries and passageways)
- d. creative landscape treatments (planting, planters, trellises, arbors)
- e. seating, gathering spaces
- f. water features, inclusion of art elements

C1.IV. Building/Site Corners: Building corners are places of convergence. The following considerations help reinforce site and building corners:

- a. provide meaningful setbacks/open space, if feasible

- b. provide seating as gathering spaces
- c. incorporate street/pedestrian amenities in these spaces
- d. make these spaces safe (good visibility)
- e. iconic corner identifiers to create wayfinders that draw people to the site.

C1.V. Pedestrian Attraction: 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. 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).

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.

Belltown Supplemental Guidance:

D1.1. Active Open Space: As a dense, urban neighborhood, Belltown views its streets as its front porches, and its parks and private plazas and spaces as its yards and gardens. The design and location of urban open spaces on a site or adjoining sidewalk is an important determinant in a successful environment, and the type and character of the open space should be influenced by the building's uses.

- a. Mixed-use developments are encouraged to provide usable open space adjacent to retail space, such as an outdoor cafe or restaurant seating, or a plaza with seating.
- b. Locate plazas intended for public use at/or near street grade to promote physical and visual connection to the street; on-site plazas may serve as a well-defined transition from the street. Take views and sun exposure into account as well.
- c. Define and contain outdoor spaces through a combination of building and landscape, and discourage oversized spaces that lack containment.
- d. The space should be well-buffered from moving cars so that users can best enjoy the space.

D3 Provide Elements That Define the Place: Provide special elements on the facades, within public open spaces, or on the sidewalk to create a distinct, attractive, and memorable “sense of place” associated with the building.

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

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

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

Belltown Supplemental Guidance:

D3.I. Art and Heritage: Art and History are vital to reinforcing a sense of place. Consider incorporating the following into the siting and design:

- a. vestiges of Belltown Heritage, such as preserving existing stone sidewalks, curbs
- b. art that relates to the established or emerging theme of that area (e.g., Western, 1st, 2nd, 3rd Avenue street specific character.
- c. install plaques or other features on the building that pay tribute to Belltown history.

D3.II. Green Streets: Green Streets are street rights-of-way that are enhanced for pedestrian circulation and activity with a variety of pedestrian-oriented features, such as sidewalk widening, landscaping, artwork, and traffic calming. Interesting street level uses and pedestrian amenities enliven the Green Street and lend special identity to the surrounding area.

D3.III: Street Furniture/Furnishings along Specific Streets: The function and character of Belltown’s streetscapes are defined street by street. In defining the streetscape for various streets, the hierarchy of streets is determined by street function, adjacent land uses, and the nature of existing streetscape improvements.

- c. 2nd Avenue: New installations on 2nd Avenue should continue the style of “limited edition” street art that currently exists between Cedar Street and Virginia Street.

D3.IV. Street Edge/Furnishings: Concentrate pedestrian improvements at intersections with Green Streets (Bell, Blanchard, Vine, Cedar between 1st and Elliott, Clay, Eagle, and Bay Streets). Pedestrian crossings should be “exaggerated,” that is they should be marked and illuminated in a manner where they will be quickly and clearly seen by motorists.

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 the following departures were requested:

1. **Coverage & Floor Size Limits (SMC 23.49.158.B):** The Code requires each story in structures above 125 ft to have a maximum 8,000 GSF. The applicant proposes 9,827 sf for all floors above 65 ft tall, or about 23% more than Code in the tower zone.

The Board indicated there was no evidence of better meeting the Guidelines with this additional area and bulk, and did not support the design rationale focusing on Vine Street. The Board had recommendations to reduce bulk of even an 8,000 sf tower, and especially pending more studies of other massing options described above.

2. **Corner Setback Requirement (SMC 23.49.164.C.2):** The Code requires that no portion of a structure can be located within 20 ft of the street corner property lines, between 65

and 125 ft height. The applicant proposes a 12 ft voluntary setback of the tower off 2nd Avenue, with 6 story high portion that is about 8 x 20ft in plan that encroaches in the required corner setback.

The Board indicated receptivity to this degree of departure, pending full resolution of the tower placement, modulation and bulk reduction described above.

3. **Rooftop Feature Coverage (SMC 23.49.008.D.2):** The Code allows certain uses to exceed the 240 ft maximum height, as long as they do not exceed 55% of the roof area. The applicant proposes a 75% coverage.

The Board indicated there is no evidence of how this departure better meets the Guidelines, and they did not support the related, 'proportional' increased tower floor plate at this time (see departure #1 above). The Board also did not support the design rationale presented, and requested a Code compliant rooftop be presented with all the design studies recommended under 1b and 1c.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the First Early Design Guidance (EDG) meeting, the Board recommended the project return for another EDG meeting in response to all the guidance provided herein.