



City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3021279

Address: 121 Boren Ave N

Applicant: Matt Roewe, VIA Architects for H5 Capital

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, October 7, 2015

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

Board Members Absent: Katherine Idziorek, recused

DPD Staff Present: Beth Hartwick

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM (Seattle Mixed) 240/125-400

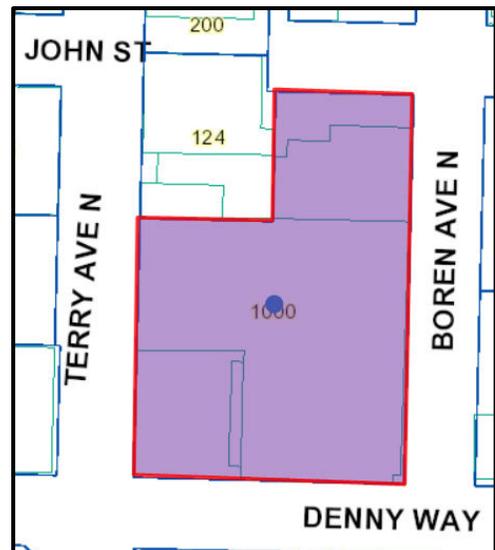
Nearby Zones: (North) SM160/85-240
(South) DMC240/290-400
(East) SM240/125-400, SM160/85-240
(West) SM240/125-400, SM160/85-240

Lot Area: Approx. 75,600 sq. ft.

Access: The site has access from Terry Ave N, Denny Way, Boren Ave N and John St.

Current Development: The site is occupied by two structures; an 8-story office building (a former Seattle Times building) and a small one story commercial building.

Environmentally Critical Areas: None



Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

Across Terry Ave N from the site is a 3-story commercial building and surface parking, which has a proposal (MUP #3018935) for a 40 story residential tower with a 4-story podium building, over retail space. Further north across Terry Ave N is a recently built 7-story apartment complex. South across Denny Way is a structure built in 1928 occupied by Cornish College of the Art. The site to the east which is currently a surface parking is under review (MUP# 3017232) to build two 41-story residential towers. Across John St is an 11-story office structure that was recently completed.

The site to the northwest of the subject site is the only site that shares lot lines. That site occupies the southern 33' of vacated John St between Terry Ave N and existing John St. and is developed with an eight-story commercial building. The site has a proposal for a 39-story residential towers under MUP # 3020563.

The site is located within the South Lake Union Neighborhood Design Guideline area with Terry Ave N identified as a "heart location". As well, Terry Ave N has a Street Concept Plan. Denny Way also has a street concept plan.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for development of two 41 story residential towers. The north tower will have street frontage on Terry Ave N, John St and Boren Ave N and have 420 residential units, 2,000 sq. f.t of retail and 220 parking stalls. The south tower with street frontage on Terry Ave N and Denny Way would have 390 units, 7,500 sq. ft. of retail space and 164 parking stalls.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number 3021279 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

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented three options, which can be seen in the EDG packet.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Members of the public were present at the meeting and offered the following comments.

- Concerned the project is not meeting Land Use code requirements such as open space and a through block connection.

- Concerned all potential departures were not shown.
- Stated the proposal fails to respond to the immediate context.
- Stated the project does not follow the design framework of being a “Heart” location on Terry Ave N and Denny Way.
- Stated three massing options were not being presented.
- Encouraged a street design similar to the newer projects further north on Terry Ave N.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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- 1. Massing and Site Concept:** The Board debated how the proposed design was relating to the existing building on the site to be retained and wanted to understand the function of the former Seattle Times building. They stated the towers alone have merit but within the context of the site there was not a strong cohesive design. The forms of the towers should be informed by what is on the site. The Board gave guidance to design the towers with the elegance of Option 2 and to maintain the 12 degree canted angle and the slant at the top of the tower of Option 3, noting that the 12 degree shift will provide a better relationship with neighboring towers. They expressed that the towers should have fewer massing moves and design gestures. (CS2.D.1 & 5, CS3.A.1, DC2.A.1, DC2.C.1, DC2.I.i)
 - a. The Board would like to better understand the long term plan for the Seattle Times existing building and what is happening in the building and how it relates to the site. (DC2.A.1)
 - b. The Board agreed that the towers should be designed with the elegance of Option 2, with layers, compositional element, the 12 degree shift, using the site to inform the design. (DC2.C.1)
 - c. When this project comes back before the Board, it needs to show the relationship to the proposed development to the west (#3020563). That project will need to consider this development when they return to the Board. (CS2.D.1 & 5)
- 2. North Tower and Podium:** The Board debated the intersection of the base of the north tower and the existing Seattle Times building. There was support for the visual interest that a void between the buildings could provide, and criticism of the ‘daylight grove’ void as being gratuitous and not respecting the existing building. The Board would have more support for the gap between the structures if the space was useable at grade or integrated as part of the entry sequence. (CS3.A.1, DC3.A.1)

The Board commented that too many towers are being designed with the only visual interest being a change or patterning of the color of the exterior sheathing. They gave guidance to add interest to the towers with compositional elements of balconies or

similar elements to provide layers of detail. (DC2.C.1) The Board also provided the following guidance:

- a. Study how the tower meets the ground and relates to the Seattle Time building. (CS3.A.1)
 - b. Further design the two story portion of the building on John St. It should be more substantial with better integration and connection with the tower. The current design lacks any relationship. Use the 4 East Elm project on page 21 of the packet as a guide. (CS2.C.1, DC2.B.1)
 - c. Use the materiality of the existing building as a cue on how to add texture to the design. (CS3.A.1)
 - d. Maintain the slant at the top of the tower. (DC2.I.i)
 - e. Provide compositional elements such as balconies or similar elements to provide a layer of detail. (DC2.C.1)
- 3. North Tower Streetscape: The Board was not supportive of two curb cuts, one on Boren Ave N and one on John St, and directed the applicant to implement a design that will work with only one curb cut at the western portion of John St. See Departure # 5 at the end of the report. (DC1.B.1)**
- a. Work with SDOT on a turn around on John St that will work with one curb cut on the western portion of John St. Also consider how this will be integrated with the proposed development to the west and the proposed 'woonerf' design of John St to the east. Design the John St streetscape to work with the proposed hillclimb feature on the proposed development to the west. (PL1.A.1, PL1.B, DC1.B.1)
 - b. Design the plaza at the corner of John St and Boren Ave N to have more purpose and to capture activity from the retail space at the corner. See Departure # 4 at the end of the report. (CS2.C.1, PL3.C.3)
- 4. South Tower and Podium: The Board noted that the three-story projecting podium mass above Denny Way reads like an add-on and should not read as a separate element from the tower. (CS2.C.1, DC2.B.1)**
- The Board commented that too many towers are being designed with the only interest being a change or patterning of the color of the exterior sheathing. They gave guidance to add interest to the towers with compositional elements of balconies or similar elements to provide layers of detail. (DC2.C.1)**
- a. Maintain the slant at the top of the tower. (DC2.I.i)
 - b. Provide compositional elements such as balconies or similar elements to provide a layer of detail. (DC2.C.1)
- 5. South Tower Streetscape: The Board was supportive of the residential entry on Terry Ave N and a setbacks with public realm space and landscaping along Denny Way. They also approved of the Denny Way entry to commercial space located above grade. (PL3.A.1, PL3.C.1)**
- a. Encouraged working with SDOT to provide increased landscaping along the length of Denny Way at the existing structure. (CS2.I.iv)

- b. The Board supported the design of the ground level(s) that is distinct from the tower as shown on page 38 of the packet. (CS2.C.1)
- c. Maintain the exterior balcony above the parking entry on Terry Ave N, and consider an expansion to take advantage of the southern exposure. (DC3.A.1)
- d. Supported the integration of the Terry Ave N Design Guidelines into the streetscape. Design the streetscape to integrate with the developments across the street and to the north. (CS2.A.1, PL1.B)
- e. Move the proposed seating on Denny Way to Terry Ave N. (DC3.B.1)
- f. Maintain the current curb cut location. (DC1.C.4)
- g. Maintain the retail entry on Denny Way. (PL3.C.1)
- h. If the design is using stainless steel in the ROW, design the inlays to be referential. (CS2.A.1)
- i. Design a curb cut and access to parking that will work with truck radius while turning to enter the structure. (DC1.B.1)
- j. Consider providing art at the loading docks on Terry Ave N of the existing building. (DC3.II.i)

For the Recommendation meeting provide the following:

- Show the relationship to the development to the west (#3020563). That development will also need to consider this project when they return to the Board.
- Develop street level perspectives that show the relationship of this project to all nearby projects in development.
- Explain the long term plan for the Seattle Times existing building and what is happening in the building and how it relates to the site.
- Provide detailed plans at the street levels to show proposed uses.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and South Lake Union 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-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.

CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale

CS2-D-1. Existing Development and Zoning: Review the height, bulk, and scale of neighboring buildings as well as the scale of development anticipated by zoning for the area to determine an appropriate complement and/or transition.

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.

CS2-D-5. Respect for Adjacent Sites: Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy of residents in adjacent buildings.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

CS2-I Responding to Site Characteristics

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.

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

CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes

CS3-A-1. Fitting Old and New Together: Create compatibility between new projects, and existing architectural context, including historic and modern designs, through building articulation, scale and proportion, roof forms, detailing, fenestration, and/or the use of complementary materials.

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-1. Enhancing Open Space: Design the building and open spaces to positively contribute to a broader network of open spaces throughout the neighborhood.

PL1-B Walkways and Connections

PL1-B-1. Pedestrian Infrastructure: Connect on-site pedestrian walkways with existing public and private pedestrian infrastructure, thereby supporting pedestrian connections within and outside the project.

PL1-B-2. Pedestrian Volumes: Provide ample space for pedestrian flow and circulation, particularly in areas where there is already heavy pedestrian traffic or where the project is expected to add or attract pedestrians to the area.

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.

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.

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-1. Early Planning: Consider existing and future bicycle traffic to and through the site early in the process so that access and connections are integrated into the project along with other modes of travel.

PL4-B-2. Bike Facilities: Facilities such as bike racks and storage, bike share stations,

PL4-B-3. Bike Connections: Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project.

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-C Parking and Service Uses

DC1-C-4. Service Uses: Locate and design service entries, loading docks, and trash receptacles away from pedestrian areas or to a less visible portion of the site to reduce possible impacts of these facilities on building aesthetics and pedestrian circulation.

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-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).

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-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.

DC3-B Open Space Uses and Activities

DC3-B-1. Meeting User Needs: Plan the size, uses, activities, and features of each open space to meet the needs of expected users, ensuring each space has a purpose and function.

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-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 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 Meeting five departures were requested.

- 1. Height- Rooftop Features (SMC23.48.010.H.7):** The Code states that rooftop features may cover up to 65% of the roof area provided that no rooftop features may be located closer than 10' to the roof edge. The applicant proposed no setbacks from the roof edges for indoor roof amenity areas and mechanical screens. A 10' setback of the tower massing from the property line will be preserved. The request is for both towers.

The Board members indicated early support for this departure, provided the roof coverage area does exceed the allowed 65% coverage and that the rooftop features are well integrated into the architectural composition. (DC2.B.1)

2. Upper Level Development Standards – Upper-level Setbacks. (SMC23.48.013.B.4.a):

The Code requires a podium height limit of 45'. As measured from Boren Ave N, the applicant proposed a podium height of approx. 50' or the height of the existing building as that structure is within the assigned lot coverage footprint of the northeast tower.

The Board members indicated early support for this departure as potentially providing a better relationship to the neighborhood context. (CS3.A.1)

3. Street Level Development Standards – Façade Requirements. (SMC23.48.014.A.2.b): The Code requires a minimum façade height of 25' for the street-facing facades of new structures on Class 2 pedestrian and Green streets. The applicant is proposing a 17' facade height for a portion along Boren Ave N for the northeast tower.

The Board members indicated early support for this departure as potentially providing a better relationship to the neighborhood context. (CS3.A.1)

4. Street Level Development Standards – Setbacks. (SMC23.48.014.A.3.b): The Code states that the street-facing facades of a structure are permitted to set back from the street lot line up to 12' if certain requirements are met. The applicant is proposing a setback beyond 12' at both streets at the corner of Boren Ave N and John St.

The Board members indicated early support for this departure, depending on how well the project responds to the Board guidance to activate the open space at the corner. (CS2.C.1, PL3.C.3)

5. Curb Cut Quantity (SMC23.48.034.E.1): The Code limits permitted access to a site to one two-way curb cut. The applicant proposed a two way curb cut on Boren Ave N and a curb cut from John St for the northeast tower. (DC1.B.1)

The Board members indicated early support for a departure to allow a second curb cut on the site noting that it is reasonable for each tower to have access to provided parking. The Board gave guidance to have the two way curb cut located from John St. at the northwest corner of the tower. The Board was not supportive of a third curb cut. (DC1)

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

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