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## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number: 3021574

Address: 1015 2<sup>rd</sup> Avenue

Applicant: Brad Hinthorne, Perkins+Will, for Martin Selig Real Estate

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Board Members Present: Anjali Grant , Chair  
Mathew Albores  
Patrick Doherty  
Grace Leong

Board member recused: Murphy McCullough

Board members absent: Alan McWain  
Gundula Proksch

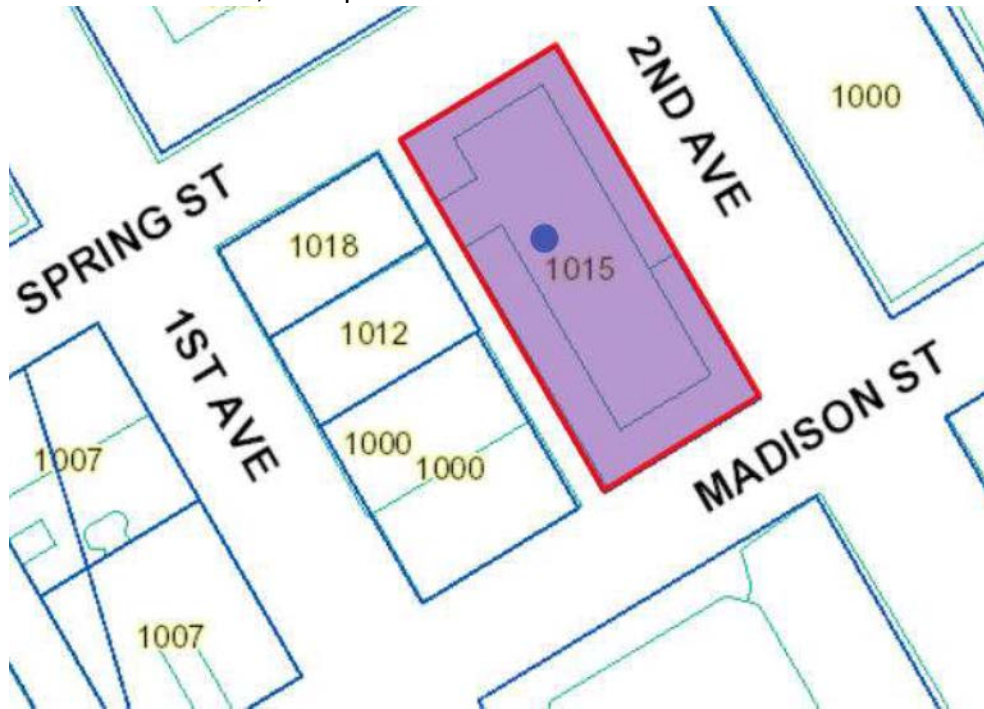
DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DOC 1 U/450/U

Nearby Zones: (North) DOC 1 U/450/U  
(South) DMC 340/290-400  
(East) DOC 1 U/450/U  
(West) DMC 240/290-400

Lot Area: 25,920 sq. ft.



**Current Development:**

The project site is currently developed with the four-story (above 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue) former Federal Reserve Bank, a site listed in the National Register for Historic Places since 2013. Constructed between 1948 and 1950, the FRB was designed by Naramore, Bain, Brady and Johanson, precursors of the present architects, NBBJ. Although nominated and denied landmark status in 2008, the FRB is once again under consideration for designation by the Landmarks Preservation Board for Seattle Landmark status. Review of the proposal by the Washington State Department of Historic Preservation will be undertaken concurrently with Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections review.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

This area of downtown Seattle, the Commercial Core Urban Center Village, has been a mixture of low-rise and medium-rise structures, many constructed during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the addition of several commercial towers in more recent years. Within a five minute walk of the site are located a number of significant designations: the Seattle Art Museum, Benaroya Symphonic Hall, the Seattle Public Library, Seattle City Hall, the Henry M. Jackson Federal Building, and the Colman Dock Ferry Terminal. The majority of the historic and iconic buildings are of masonry construction, some composed of red brick. In recent years the historic fabric of the area has been transformed by the inclusion of towers of significant heights.

**Access:**

Vehicular access to the site is planned from the alley west of the site.

## **Environmentally Critical Areas:**

There are no critical areas on the site.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed development on site involves the adaptive reuse of the Federal Reserve Bank building with a new office/residential tower to be constructed above the historic building. The proposal includes 540,000 square feet of office use contained in 32 levels and 192 residential units on 12 levels. The structure would contain 20,000 square feet of public areas and 250 parking stalls on 5 levels below-grade.

Sloping gradually from north to south, the topography of the site is dominated by the hillside descending westward to Elliott By. The drop in elevation from Second Avenue to First Avenue is approximately 40 feet. Significant constraints are imposed on the site by existing view corridors on both Spring Street and Madison Street. The view corridors would require the north and south facades of any new construction above the 36-foot mark to be set back 30 feet as measured above the sidewalk of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

## **PRESENTATION: EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE December 15, 2015**

Three massing concepts were presented by the applicants. Each was separated above the existing form of the Federal Reserve Bank by a high volume gap of “hyphen” intended as a highly transparent public area and visually preserving the integrity of the historic building. Concept 1 showed a tall rectilinear form mirroring some of the symmetrical arrangement of the FRB and suggesting a “quiet stability.” Concept 2 was a curvilinear tower, described as a “pinwheel arrangement of curved facades. As in the first concept, a tall intervening hyphen space separated the tower from the FRB base. The third (“preferred”) concept also embodied a curved façade which was noted to address a transition in scale to nearby less-intensive zones by decreasing the perceived width of the tower while increasing the width of the narrow alley. Once again the tall “hyphen” was tasked with preserving the integrity of the FRB structure beneath.

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3021574) 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](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Several affiliates and residents of the Madison Tower, a combination residential and hotel structure across the alley from the FRB and located at the corner of First Avenue and Madison Street, voiced concerns regarding: the impacts to safety based on sharing a narrow alley that was incapable of being widened and which provided critical access to the operation of the Madison Tower ; impacts on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue “plaza”; general impacts of such a massive structure, one out of scale with the neighborhood in this location; the development proposed, it was noted, “would consume the whole area.”

The design packet was said to be inadequate insofar as it failed to offer authentic massing alternatives, showed no response or contributions to the existing plaza on Second Avenue , lacked information from the applicant regarding historic status and processes connected to status.

The proposal was thought to be out of step with several ongoing attempts to create an integration and balance between open space and tall towers currently represented in the immediate neighborhood.

## **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:

The Board was generally agreed that the packet was “thin” and that they had not been furnished with sufficient information regarding the historic status of the FRB building, nor with information regarding processes for concurrent review, and that they lacked meaningful information to understand preservation requirements and their precise role in the approval process.

The Board noted that they would have liked a greater amount of distinctiveness shown between the options, especially as the options related to contextual considerations. There were no sharp and clear differentiations between the three presented options, except as they were superficially differently shaped extrusions fitted above the hyphen which was centered above the externally preserved form of the FRB.

The Board stated they would appreciate more information and discussion regarding how the height, proportions, scale of the hyphen element were arrived at.

Further particulars and clarifications were desired by the Board related to the height, materials and vision for the “hyphen.”

It was thought that renderings of the various options within the packet were generally disengaged from the actual context of the existing FRB building. There was, for instance, no real analysis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue “plaza” nor of existing the plaza-building relationships referred to in public comments.

The presentation failed to address the transition in bulk and scale as the proposed structure abuts a less intensive zone.

The request for a departure from development standards to allow the tower to overhang the historical building above its east façade was not believed to show respect for or deference to the historic building. Equally important, none of the proposed towers were thought to adequately reference the existing historical structure. No relationship in proportions were conveyed in any of the schemes; there was no obvious influence in the spacing between bays, etc. The upper masses of the proposed schemes were located close to, but showed no accommodation to, the buildings across the alley.

The curvilinear form of the second and third schemes seemed to the Board to be arbitrary and out of place and showed no deference to the rectilinear form of the FRB structure.

The overall massing of each of the schemes failed to respond to the context, including the existing zoning transition at the midline of the alley.

The Board believed the applicants should show three distinct massing options, each of which would thoroughly explore the relationships between the existing building and the proposed addition, demonstrating, among other things, how the proposed design showed respect for the existing building, how windows and mullions, forms, rhythms and materials had been taken into account, and how reference points and regulating lines from the base building were acknowledged, or purposefully ignored, if that were the case, to achieve a better design.

The applicants should provide more information for the Board regarding landmark issues and procedures. The Board should be provided with precedential studies of towers successfully erected above landmarked structures. The studies should explore and explain what the applicants see as successful applicable tactics.

## **DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES**

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.

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](#).

## SITE PLANNING AND MASSING

**A1 Respond to the Physical Environment: Develop an architectural concept and compose the building's massing in response to geographic conditions and patterns of urban form found nearby or beyond the immediate context of the building site.**

**A1.1. Response to Context:** Each building site lies within a larger physical context having various and distinct features and characteristics to which the building design should respond. Develop an architectural concept and arrange the building mass in response to one or more of the following, if present:

- a. a change in street grid alignment that yields a site having nonstandard shape;
- b. a site having dramatic topography or contrasting edge conditions;
- c. patterns of urban form, such as nearby buildings that have employed distinctive and effective massing compositions;
- d. access to direct sunlight—seasonally or at particular times of day;
- e. views from the site of noteworthy structures or natural features, (i.e.: the Space Needle, Smith Tower, port facilities, Puget Sound, Mount Rainier, the Olympic Mountains);
- f. views of the site from other parts of the city or region; and
- g. proximity to a regional transportation corridor (the monorail, light rail, freight rail, major arterial, state highway, ferry routes, bicycle trail, etc.).

**A2 Enhance the Skyline: Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline. Respect existing landmarks while responding to the skyline's present and planned profile.**

**A2.1. Desired Architectural Treatments:** Use one or more of the following architectural treatments to accomplish this goal:

- a. sculpt or profile the facades;
- b. specify and compose a palette of materials with distinctive texture, pattern, or color;
- c. provide or enhance a specific architectural rooftop element.

## 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, hill-climb, mid-block crossing, through-block passageway); and
- f. direct access to one or more components of the regional transportation system.

**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.**

**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.**

**B3.1. Building Orientation:** In general, orient the building entries and open space toward street intersections and toward street fronts with the highest pedestrian activity. Locate parking and vehicle access away from entries, open space, and street intersections considerations.

**B3.2. Features to Complement:** Reinforce the desirable patterns of massing and facade composition found in the surrounding area. Pay particular attention to designated landmarks and other noteworthy buildings. Consider complementing the existing:

- a. massing and setbacks,
- b. scale and proportions,
- c. expressed structural bays and modulations,
- d. fenestration patterns and detailing,
- e. exterior finish materials and detailing,
- f. architectural styles, and
- g. roof forms.

**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.

**B4.3. 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

**C6 Develop the Alley Façade:** To increase pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest, develop portions of the alley facade in response to the unique conditions of the site or project.

**C6.1. Alley Activation:** Consider enlivening and enhancing the alley entrance by:

- a. extending retail space fenestration into the alley one bay;
- b. providing a niche for recycling and waste receptacles to be shared with nearby, older buildings lacking such facilities; and
- c. adding effective lighting to enhance visibility and safety.

**C6.2. Alley Parking Access:** Enhance the facades and surfaces in and adjacent to the alley to create parking access that is visible, safe, and welcoming for drivers and pedestrians. Consider



- d. locating the alley parking garage entry and/ or exit near the entrance to the alley;
- e. installing highly visible signage indicating parking rates and availability on the building facade adjacent to the alley; and
- f. chamfering the building corners to enhance pedestrian visibility and safety where alley is regularly used by vehicles accessing parking and loading.

Additional guidelines may be cited as the proposal proceeds through Early Design Guidance.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board unanimously recommended the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided.

At the second EDG meeting, the applicant should be prepared to respond to the concerns stated above and should include within the presentation treatment consideration of the following:

- The overall massing strategy should be a response to the specific context which includes a zoning transition across the ally from existing buildings and should demonstrate three distinct options.
- The proposed schemes should give at least a preliminary sense of how certain programing issues will be addressed—entries and exits for parking, ground floor entries and entry sequences, and an explanation of the distribution of uses.
- Clarify any historic controls that would affect the alley façade and rooftop treatments.
- Show actual dimensions of the base building height and the height of the “gasket.”
- Indicate at least preliminary notions regarding the materials intended for the highly visible soffit within the gasket.
- Provide large scale sections that include structures in blocks adjoining the proposed building; provide some preliminary floor plans for the proposed gasket and towers.

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

At the time of the first EDG meeting the design team indicated they would be seeking five (5) departures from development standards. (See the packet, pages 36 and 37.) Refinements to the departure requests should be prepared for the Second EDG meeting. The Board indicated a reluctance to grant, without further convincing and supportive ratiocinations, the requested Departure #5 which would place a considerable portion of the preferred curvilinear tower in the required setback area east of the FRB along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

The Board’s recommendation on any requested departure(s) will be based on the departure’s potential to help the project better meet the design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall project design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board will be

prepared to give further input and guidance regarding requested departures at the next EDG meeting, but actual final recommendations will be reserved until the last Board meeting.