



# City of Seattle

Department of Construction & Inspections

Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN  
REVIEW

## RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3022614

Address: 2121 5th Avenue

Applicant: Charles Wallace, Caron Architecture, for 2121 LLC

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, October 17, 2017

Board Members Present: Anjali Grant (Chair)  
Aaron Argyle  
Belinda Bail  
Bradley Calvert  
Grace Leong

Board Member Absent: J P Emery

SDCI Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMC 240/290-440

Nearby Zones: (North) DMC 240/290-440  
(South) DMC 240/290-440  
(East) DMC 240/290-440  
(West) DMC 240/290-440

Lot Area: 12,972 Sq. ft.



### Current Development:

The site consists of two platted lots on the west side of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, located midblock within the 2100 block, which is bounded on the north by Blanchard Street and the south by Lenora Street. The development site is currently occupied by two two-story office buildings and bounded on the south by The Martin, a 24-story mixed use building of recent construction, located at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Lenora Street. Immediately to the north is a single-story retail building set tight to a 6-story mixed-use building that occupies the corner at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Blanchard

Street. The development site, measuring 120 feet in the north-south direction and 108 feet in the east-west direction, rises approximately 5 ½ feet westward to the alley, and loses about 6 inches in elevation between the northwest and south-west corners at the alley.

### **Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

Four London Plane trees and the Monorail, a historic landmark, front the site on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Although much of the Belltown Neighborhood has seen significant high-rise development, including several thirty and forty story residential buildings which have expedited the transition of Belltown into one of Seattle’s densest neighborhoods, except for the 24-story Martin apartment building directly to the south, this area of Belltown is characterized by more modest recent development and lower building stock. The three block area on either side of this proposed development site, along the east side of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, consists of older buildings of two, three, and four stories. Directly across 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a surface parking lot nestled between a two-story retail building and a three-story motel with surface parking. The tallest existing structures along the eastside of 5th Avenue in the stretch between Bell Street and Virginia Street are two 7-story parking garages.

### **Access:**

Vehicle access to the two existing buildings on the proposal site is from the north-south alley located west of the buildings. The proposed building will also take vehicular access from the alley. A two-foot in width property dedication for alley purposes will be required from the proposed project.

### **Environmentally Critical Areas:**

There are no environmentally critical areas on the proposal site or within the general area. This area of Belltown boasts one of the flattest terrains of all Seattle neighborhoods.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is a mid-block development on the west side of 5th Avenue in the 2100 block, which is bounded on the north by Blanchard Street and the south by Lenora Street. The proposed high-rise building will be built to a height of 160 feet and will contain approximately 248,000 square feet. It will contain 136 residential units and 168 hotel rooms to be located above some 3,900 square feet of retail/commercial and lobby space. Below-grade parking spaces for approximately 120 vehicles will be accessed from the abutting alley.

The design packet includes information presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3022614) 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 SDCI:

**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)

**Staff Note:** An earlier Early Design Guidance meeting was held on March 1, 2016, for a proposal of approximately half this size on the northern half of the current development site. Almost immediately following that meeting, the project applicants announced their acquisition of the additional site and their intention to pursue an expanded development. That development would consist of a building of similar scope and uses but of twice the size. It was determined by SDCI that the new proposal would retain the original project number but, following design development, would be re-noticed and, because of significant changes in bulk and scale, be returned for a *de novo* Early Design Guidance, held on January 3, 2017.

## SECOND EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE January 3, 2017

### PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments offered at this meeting:

There were no design related comments received in writing prior to the meeting:

Additional 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 Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance.

#### 1. The Streetscape

- a. See B-3,C-1, C-2 and D4 as Priority Guidelines.
- b. Reconsider the location and articulation of the restaurant entrance.
- c. Consider in-setting the walls of the proposed restaurant to provide for sidewalk seating; the proposed valet station and complicated structural elements would seem to interfere with any indoor/outdoor restaurant flexibility.
- d. Explore a folding wall at the sidewalk edge for the restaurant.
- e. Provide canopies of staggered heights across the front of the building.
- f. Provide for the next meeting vignettes and sections that illustrate more clearly the functioning of the interior stair located between entries at the middle of the ground-level 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue façade.

- g. Provide east/west sections to help explain ground and lower level relations to sidewalk, streetscape, monorail and , the monorail structure.

## 2. Massing Details

- a. See B-3, B-4, C-2 as Priority Guidelines. The Board preferred the third massing option which set the basically unmodulated south third of the front façade slightly proud of the rest of the building's front which was modulated with inset ribbons of balconies from above the base to the top. The overall effect was to impart a strong vertical cast to the 115 foot wide by 160 foot tall box with two distinct faces.
- b. It was unclear to the Board how the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue façade was intended to interact with the monorail or monorail structure.
- c. Provide east/west sections that show the monorail as a determinative factor for the articulation of the lower floors and setbacks;
- d. At the top of the building, provide greater articulation of the elevator/stair overrun.
- e. Provide more thorough views and explanations of proposed rooftop amenity areas.

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on any 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, the applicants identified the following departure(s) for preferred Option 3:

1. **Parking Stall Sizes (SMT 23.54.30):** The Code requires a minimum of 35% of large parking stalls. The applicant (p.63) proposes 1%.

The Board requested a clarification of both the requirement and especially the design-based rationale for the departure(s) at the next meeting.

## BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the Second Early Design Guidance meeting the four members of the Board present at the meeting recommended (4-0) moving forward to MUP application.

**FINAL RECOMMENDATION October 17, 2017**

## PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments offered at the meeting. Written comments regarding the proposal consist of two letters from the owner of the company that occupies the adjacent

building to the north, expressing concern over construction impacts to the building as well as disturbance to workers and the work environment next door.

All public comments submitted in writing for this project can be viewed using the following link and entering the project number (3022614): <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/edms/>

## **BOARD DELIBERATIONS**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, the Design Review Board members provided the following recommendations, relating back to the major themes identified at the Second EDG meeting.

**1. The Streetscape.** The Board focused on the location and articulation of the restaurant entrance.

- a. The restaurant and hotel lobby are served by a single entry between the two uses, with the restaurant storefront inset 6-feet from the property line and proposed as a folding nanawall-like system, with vision glass, which can be opened, allowing for outdoor, sidewalk seating.
- b. A similar system, at least with a half-folding-wall is proposed for the small retail area at the south portion of the façade. Members of the Board suggested further refining the folding half-wall at the small retail space by possibly moving it into the space enough to provide counter-level use and seating.
- c. Canopies are proposed at staggered heights, drawing attention to the two entrances,
- d. The interior stair at the front wall of the hotel lobby, connecting the first and second levels, had been removed while maintaining the double-height space.

**Massing Details.** The Board discussed how the building responded to the adjacency of the monorail.

- a. The Board thought the massing, with the minimally modulated, solid tower as the south third of the front façade slightly proud of the lighter but larger glass and metal box to the north, was spot on. The proposed structure was noteworthy the way it maintained the historical street rhythm. For a relatively small structure, it conveyed a pronounced verticality. In sum, one Board member described the massing as “gorgeous.”
- c. b. Levels 3 and 4 of the structure, aligned with and parallel to the monorail running space had been set back 3 feet from the rest of the façade above along the north two thirds of the structure. This created a kind of notch which would be illumined with vertical strip lighting intended to mark the path of the train while affording reflectivity and privacy for the adjacent hotel rooms. The feature was well received

by the Board who encouraged that the lighting to be installed not be overly bright and should tend towards subtle, warm tones for dark sky consistency.

- d. At the rooftop, the elevator and stair penthouses had been consolidated and incorporated into a central enclosed residential amenity space with extended trellis, tying the indoor and outdoor spaces together.
- e. The design team was also encouraged to further investigate and modify as need be the adjacencies of windows vis-a-vis not only the Martin but new development proposed across the alley

### 3. MATERIALS

- a. There was some discussion regarding the brick base that forms the two-story frame of the northern glass box that occupies two-thirds of the site. Shown in illustrations as what appeared to be a running bond of standard sized brick, Mutual Materials “Redondo Gray, the design team clarified that it could be a stacked bond of a modern roman brick (4 x 2 x12). The Board’s discussion centered on the color of the brick which one Board member suggested should be darker, in keeping with the stateliness of the rest of the structure.

While the elevation drawings showed something slightly darker, the materials snippets of “Redondo Gray” on pages 36 and 37 conveyed something slightly lighter and with a slight rose hue. The larger material swath on page 39, also labeled “Redondo Gray,” was within a range of beige or tan and distinctively lighter than the brick shown in the elevations.

- b. The Board referred to the change in brick tone to something “punchier.” “Punchier” is hard to positively identify out of a lineup, but among synonyms would be: dynamic, peppy, vigorous, compelling, vivid, vibrant, forceful, impactful. The directive from the Board was to explore something more stately, *punchier*, “darker” than that shown on page 39 of the Recommendation packet. It is to be expected that the exploration of color (and size and bond) be presented to the Planner for final approval, as would be the color of light in the LED tubes to be affixed to the window frames at the third-floor level of the glass box.

### DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

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

The following departures were requested:

1. **Parking Stall Sizes (SMC 23.54.030):** The Code requires a minimum of 35% of parking spaces be striped for large vehicles. The applicant proposes 58% small stalls, 41% medium stalls, and 1% large stalls. The applicant proposes a functionally effective building while organizing

both exterior and interior spaces to achieve a well-proportioned building per Guidelines B4.1 and B4.2.

The Board agreed 5-0 to recommend approval of the departure requested at the Recommendation Meeting.

- 2. Drive Aisle Width (SMC 23.54.030.D.2):** The Code requires a prescribed drive aisle width commensurate with the size of distributed parking spaces and parking angles. All parking is at a 90 degree angle and the required drive aisle width is 24 feet for large vehicles, 22 feet for medium vehicles and 20 feet for small vehicle spaces. The applicants request a 20-foot aisle width throughout the entire parking garage serving stalls of varying sizes (see p.51 of the packet). The applicant proposes a functionally effective building while organizing both exterior and interior spaces to achieve a well proportioned building per Guidelines B4.1 and B4.2.

The Board agreed 5-0 to recommend approval of the departure requested at the Recommendation Meeting.

- 3. Driveway Width (SMC 23.54.030.E (Exhibit C)):** For two-way traffic the Code requires a minimum width of 22 feet. The applicants request a 20-foot driveway width. The applicant proposes a functionally efficient building through the organization of exterior and interior spaces resulting in a well-proportioned building per Guidelines B4.1 and B4.2.

The Board agreed 5-0 to recommend approval of the departure requested at the Recommendation Meeting.

## DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Downtown design guidelines identified as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

### ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION

**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.

**B3.3. Pedestrian Amenities at the Ground Level:** Consider setting the building back slightly to create space adjacent to the sidewalk conducive to pedestrian-oriented activities such as vending, sitting, or dining. Reinforce the desirable streetscape elements found on adjacent blocks. Consider complementing existing:

- h. public art installations,
- i. street furniture and signage systems,
- j. lighting and landscaping, and
- k. overhead weather protection.

***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).

**C2 Design Facades of Many Scales: Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and material compositions that refer to the scale of human activities contained within. Building facades should be composed of elements scaled to promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation.**

**C2.1. Modulation of Facades:** Consider modulating the building facades and reinforcing this modulation with the composition of:

- a. the fenestration pattern;
- b. exterior finish materials;
- c. other architectural elements;
- d. light fixtures and landscaping elements; and
- e. the roofline.

**D4 Provide Appropriate Signage: Design signage appropriate for the scale and character of the project and immediate neighborhood. All signs should be oriented to pedestrians and/or persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood.**

**D4.1. Desired Signage Elements:** Signage should be designed to:

- a. facilitate rapid orientation
- b. add interest to the street level environment
- c. reduce visual clutter
- d. unify the project as a whole
- e. enhance the appearance and safety of the downtown area.

**D4.2. Unified Signage System:** If the project is large, consider designing a comprehensive building and tenant signage system using one of the following or similar methods:

- a. signs clustered on kiosks near other street furniture or within sidewalk zone closest to building face;
- b. signs on blades attached to building facade;
- c. signs hanging underneath overhead weather protection.

**D4.3. Signage Types:** Also consider providing:

- d. building identification signage at two scales: small scale at the sidewalk level for pedestrians, and large scale at the street sign level for drivers;
- e. sculptural features or unique street furniture to complement (or in lieu of) building and tenant signage;
- f. interpretive information about building and construction activities on the fence surrounding the construction site.

**D4.4. Discourage Upper-Level Signage:** Signs on roofs and the upper floors of buildings intended primarily to be seen by motorists and others from a distance are generally discouraged.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendation summarized above was based on the design review packet dated Tuesday, October 17, 2017, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the Tuesday, October 17, 2017 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, the five Design Review Board members recommended (5-0) APPROVAL of the subject design and requested departures with no conditions.