



# City of Seattle

Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections  
Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN  
REVIEW

## RECOMMENDATION OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3024377

Address: 403 Dexter Ave N

Applicant: Brian O' Reilly and Matt Roewe of Via Architecture

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, December 07, 2016

Board Members Present: Boyd Pickrell, Chair  
Homero Nishiwaki  
Peter Krech, substitute  
Janet Stephenson

Board Members Absent: Katherine Idziorek, Recused  
Christine Harrington

SDCI Staff Present: Magda Hogness and Allison Whitworth

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed (SM 160/85-240)

Nearby Zones: Neighborhood Commercial (NC3-85), Seattle Mixed (SM 85-240, SM-85)

Lot Area: 11,970 sf

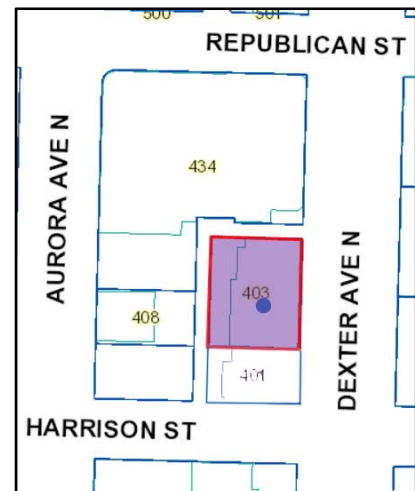
Access: The subject property currently includes vehicular access off the alley.

### Background:

This site was previously reviewed by the Board under project 3019885, originally proposed as a 24 story residential tower.

### Current Development:

The site is currently occupied by a one-story masonry building, originally built in 1959 as a warehouse and adapted in 1999 to house an art gallery and offices. Surface parking is located adjacent to the alley.



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

The 11,970 sf site is located within the South Lake Union neighborhood, which includes blocks with a rich variety of uses, institutions, and transportation connectivity. Harrison St is identified as a 'heart location' within the South Lake Union Guidelines. Both Dexter Ave N and Aurora Ave N (State Route 99) are major north/south routes for vehicles. Aurora Ave N currently acts as a barrier separating this portion of South Lake Union to the Uptown neighborhood. The new SR 99 tunnel and north portal will change access around the site dramatically and the new signaled intersection at Aurora Ave N and Harrison St will serve as an access point to SR99 in both directions. Thomas St and Harrison St in the future will cross over Aurora Ave N, reconnecting the streets and the neighborhoods.

The surrounding context is rapidly changing from mostly one to two story service oriented commercial buildings to new mid and high rise office and residential developments. The adjacent context is shaped by an irregular alley; the alley wraps around the west and north edges of the subject property. Current development includes a seven story residential building containing 294 residential units directly north of the site, project number 3016347. Further north, the UW Medicine campus is sited in the block north of Republican St and east of Dexter Avenue N. Directly across Dexter Avenue N, a new 12-story office building with ground level retail is proposed under project number 3016362. The adjacent parcel to the south is occupied by a one story retail structure, originally built in 1948. Across Harrison St to the south, two 12-story buildings are proposed with ground level retail space, under project number 3019618.

The South Lake Union Street Concept plan designates Dexter Ave N as a major boulevard with cycle tracks and Harrison St serving vehicle, pedestrian and perhaps transit modes of travel. Given the proximity to Aurora Ave N, Denny Way and Mercer St, multiple bus routes and the Dexter Ave N cycle tracks, there will be ample access to the site. Denny Park, three blocks to the south, and Seattle Center, three blocks to the west, offer nearby public green space.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is for an eight story structure containing 94 residential units and 3,000 sq. ft. of retail space and below grade parking for 50 vehicles. The existing one story structure is proposed to be removed.

The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the 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 SDCl:

**Mailing Public Resource Center**  
**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**Email:** [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No comments were offered at the EDG meeting.

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

**PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE June 1, 2016**

- 1) **Massing & Context Response:** The Board discussed the different massing options and agreed massing Option C has the best potential to provide public realm engagement and create architectural presence. The Board directed the applicant to proceed with this preferred option. (CS2-A-2, CS2-B-2, CS2-C-2, CS3-A-2)
  - a. The Board strongly supported the open space location and recognized it as a great benefit to the public realm and good urban design. (CS2-B-2, PL1-A-1)
  - b. The Board acknowledged the adjacent Modera building open space and discussed if setbacks should be explored for the northwest corner. Ultimately, the Board agreed setbacks at this location should not be provided at the cost of reducing the open space along Dexter and stated they would be open to setbacks if the current open space size is not affected. (CS2-B, CS2-D-5)
  
- 2) **Architectural Expression Concept:** The Board supported the legibility of the ground floor plan and the vertical architectural expression and gave the following direction:
  - a. The Board discussed the 5 over 3 type of construction and the intent to create a vertical expression and conceal the structure. Recognizing that a vertical expression for a project of this scale is unique, the Board supported the intent and recommended thoughtfully developing the design, mindful the application of materials. (DC2, DC4-A-1)
  - b. The Board agreed that the one story portion of the street facing façade has the potential to strengthen the vertical expression design concept and indicated initial support for the related departure. (CS2-C-2, DC2)
  - c. The Board encouraged the design take advantage of integral sustainable strategies. (CS1-I-i)
  
- 3) **Streetscape, Open Space & Entries:** The Board supported the arrangement of uses and location of entries and recommended the open space courtyard design relate to and emphasize the verticality of the design concept.
  - a. The Board encouraged developing the concept of the courtyard and noted the potential for a play on a cavern concept. The Board recommended exploring the

placement of site furniture and site walls to reinforce the design concept. (DC2, DC3-A, DC4-D)

- b. The Board supported the proposed pavement treatment and recommended expressing the courtyard space with accent patterns and/or varying paving. (DC4-D-2)
  - c. For the streetscape, the Board agreed the breaks in the planting are discontinuous and recommended softening the building and adding more landscaping along the streets edge. The Board requested adjacent perspective views of the streetscape for the next meeting. (DC3-A, DC4-D)
- 4) **Vehicle Access:** The Board discussed the vehicular entry and agreed the location of the parking access improved since vehicles have the potential to enter/exit off Harrison St. While developing the design, create clear lines of sight and consider the potential conflict between different travel modes. (DC1-B-1)
- 5) **Materials and Fenestration:** The Board appreciated the additional images indicating the material intent and fenestration presented at the meeting.
- a. The Board stressed the importance of being rigorous about materiality in order to successfully convey the design concept and recommended thoughtful application of materials, complimentary to the Modera. (Guidelines DC2-B-1, DC4-A)
  - b. The Board unanimously supported the south façade corner glazing and recognized that the corner glazing and the break in the massing minimizes the blank wall condition along the south façade. (Guidelines DC2-B-1, DC2-B-2)
  - c. Acknowledging the southwest corner will be highly visible, the Board encouraged the applicant to continue to think of it as a visible façade and agreed the same level of care as the other frontages should be considered. (Guidelines CS2-A-2, DC2-B-1, DC2-B-2)

## RECOMMENDATION December 7, 2016

### PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments were offered at the Recommendation meeting. There were no public comments received in writing prior to the meeting.

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

### PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) **Massing & Context:** The Board commended the progression of the project and supported the massing response, expanded courtyard and setback at the northwest corner of the building, which defers to the adjacent Modera building open space. (CS2-B-2, CS2-D-5, PL1-A-1)

- 2) **Architectural Expression Concept, Materials & Fenestration:** The Board supported the evolution of the architectural expression from a double tower concept to a staggered shadow box expression as it accentuated the verticality and symmetry of the design.
  - a. The Board strongly supported the simplicity of the staggered grid cladding and the depth and texture provided by the shadow box framing. The Board viewed this element as integral to the overall façade composition and recommended a condition that the shadow box frame element should remain in the design as presented at the meeting and shown on page 32 of the packet. (DC2-B-1, DC4-A-1)
  - b. Related to the southwest corner, the Board agreed that the fenestration pattern and wrapping of the primary cladding treatment is appropriate for the high visibility of the corner. (CS2-A-S, DC2-B-1, DC2-B-2)
  - c. The Board was supportive of the fenestration pattern and secondary cladding material for the northwest façade in consideration of the adjacent Modera building. (DC2-B-1, CS3-A-2)
  - d. The Board discussed adding windows in the bike room but ultimately agreed concerns of vandalism outweighed the benefits of additional fenestration. (PL4-B-2)
  
- 3) **Streetscape, Open Space, & Entries:** The Board supported the overall streetscape and landscape design approach and gave the following guidance:
  - a. The Board applauded the expression of the Japanese *Engawa* (porch) concept in the courtyard design as a successful transition from public to private space, which benefits the public realm. The Board encouraged emphasis of the transitional wayfinding elements. (PL1-B-3, CS2-B-2, CS2-B-3)
  - b. Related to the residential entry design and wayfinding, the Board identified the need for greater definition to highlight the entry and balance the specimen tree at the opposite end of the courtyard and recommended a condition to make the residential entry more legible and inviting. The Board agreed subtle changes would be acceptable; such as replacing the header with glazing to maintain the visual continuity of the wood plank soffit from the interior to the exterior and/or selecting alternate materials and finishes for the door frame and jamb to contrast with the aluminum storefront and fiber cement panels. (PL3-A-1, PL3-A-4)
  
- 4) **Vehicle Access:** The Board acknowledged and supported the vehicular entry location and design. (Guideline DC1-B-1)

## DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

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

## CONTEXT & SITE

**CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.**

***South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:***

### **CS1-I Responding To Site Characteristics**

**CS1-I-i. Sustainable Design:** New development is encouraged to take advantage of site configuration to accomplish sustainability goals. The Board is generally willing to recommend departures from development standards if they are needed to achieve sustainable design. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design\* (LEED) manual which provides additional information

**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-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-B-3. Character of Open Space:** Contribute to the character and proportion of surrounding open spaces.

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

### **CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes**

**CS3-A-2. Contemporary Design:** Explore how contemporary designs can contribute to the development of attractive new forms and architectural styles; as expressed through use of new materials or other means.

## PUBLIC LIFE

**PL1 Connectivity: Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.**

### **PL1-B Walkways and Connections**

**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.

**PL2 Walkability: Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.**

### **PL2-B Safety and Security**

**PL2-B-3. Street-Level Transparency:** Ensure transparency of street-level uses (for uses such as nonresidential uses or residential lobbies), where appropriate, by keeping views open into spaces behind walls or plantings, at corners, or along narrow passageways.

### **PL2-C Weather Protection**

**PL2-C-1. Locations and Coverage:** Overhead weather protection is encouraged and should be located at or near uses that generate pedestrian activity such as entries, retail uses, and transit stops.

**PL2-C-2. Design Integration:** Integrate weather protection, gutters and downspouts into the design of the structure as a whole, and ensure that it also relates well to neighboring buildings in design, coverage, or other features.

**PL2-C-3. People-Friendly Spaces:** Create an artful and people-friendly space beneath building.

**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-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-2. Bike Facilities:** Facilities such as bike racks and storage, bike share stations, shower facilities and lockers for bicyclists should be located to maximize convenience, security, and safety.

**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.

**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-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-D Scale and Texture**

**DC2-D-1. Human Scale:** Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept

**DC2-D-2. Texture:** Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or “texture,” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

**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-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).

At the time of the Recommendation, the following departures were requested:

1. **Minimum Façade Height (SMC 23.48.040.A.2.b):** The Code requires a minimum façade height for street facing structures of 25’. The applicant proposes that a 5’ portion of the street-facing façade be less than 25’ in height, to match the height of the adjacent one story structure.

The Board unanimously approved the departure, as the resulting design increases the legibility of the vertical architectural expression, allows for additional openings on the southeast corner of the building and is respectful of the scale of the existing building to the south. The resulting design better meets the intent of Design Guidelines CS1-B-2 Daylight and Shading, CS2-C-2 Mid-Block Sites, and DC2 Architectural Concept.



**BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the RECOMMENDATION meeting, the Board recommended approval of the project with conditions.

The recommendation summarized above was based on the design review packet dated Wednesday, December 07, 2016, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the Wednesday, December 07, 2016 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and reviewing the materials, the four Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and departure with the following conditions:

1. The shadow box frame elements shall remain in the design as presented at the Recommendation meeting and shown on page 32 of the packet.
2. Refine the residential entry to be more legible and inviting.