



**RECOMMENDATION OF THE
WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Record Number: 3028452-LU

Address: 223 Taylor Avenue

Applicant: Robert Deane, Encore Architects

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, January 22, 2020

Board Members Present: Stephen Porter (chair)
Patreese Martin
John Morefield
Jen Montessoro
Brian Walters

SDCI Staff Present: Carly Guillory, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed – 85-foot height limit (SM-85)

Nearby Zones: (North) SM-85
(South) SM-85
(East) SM-85
(West) SM-85

Lot Area: 38,880-square feet

Current Development:

The subject site is currently occupied with a two-story office structure and surface parking lot.

**Surrounding Development and
Neighborhood Character:**

Surrounding development consists of a variety of uses such as office, retail, lodging, fast food, museums, and open space. Two blocks west is the entrance to Seattle Center including notable features such as the Space Needle, Pacific Science Center, and Museum of Pop Culture.



Abutting the site to the west, across an alley, is a McDonald's fast food restaurant with surface parking lot. Multifamily structures abut to the west and south, and lodging is located on the east side of Taylor Ave N, and the Seattle City Light high voltage facility is located on the north side of Thomas Street.

Access:

Vehicular access is proposed via the alley into an underground parking garage. The entrance to the garage is at the north end of the site nearest Thomas Street.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

No mapped critical areas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Land Use Application for an 8-story, 216-unit apartment building with office and retail. Parking for 302 vehicles proposed. Existing structure to be demolished and parking lot removed.

The design packet includes information presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the record 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

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE October 17, 2018

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were offered at this meeting.

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. **Option C.** After asking the applicant a few clarifying questions about the office layout and massing response to Thomas Street, the Board began its deliberation and focused on the following three topics: massing and the three options, the ground plane, and architectural concept. In summary, the Board supported the preferred Option C,

recommending the project move forward to MUP submittal with the following guidance and priority design guidelines.

2. **Massing and the Three Options.** The Board opened its deliberation with a conversation about the merits of each Option and its response to the neighborhood context. The Board expressed consensus that each option offered sufficient modulation to break down the perceived scale at the upper levels; however, it was the simplicity of modulation, or the larger moves, of Option C that proved to be the compelling response. The Board felt the larger moves offered a positive response to the context, grounded the building, and provided opportunity for logical material differentiation as the design progresses.
 - a. The Board supported the massing response of Option C; however, expressed concerns regarding the ground plane response. (*CS2-C Relationship to the Block, CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale, DC2-A Massing, DC2-B Architectural and Façade Composition*)

3. **Ground Plane.** The Board discussed the ground plane of Option C, particularly how the building met the sidewalk and public realm. In this context, neighborhood character, porosity and activating the street were three main topics identified as priority. (*CS2-C Relationship to the Block, CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale, PL1-I Streetscape Compatibility, PL2-I Entrances Visible from the Street, PL3-I Human Activity, DC1-A Arrangement of Interior Uses, DC2-A Massing, DC2-B Architectural and Façade Composition*)
 - a. Thomas Street.
 - i. Neighborhood character was well described in the applicant’s packet and presentation, including discussion of how Option C set back at the northeast corner to provide ground level open space in direct response to the Lake to Bay Trail and Thomas Street Concept Plan. The Board agreed these were compelling reasons for providing open space at the north end of the site; however, questioned why the northern most portion of the base mass (see page 32 of the EDG packet) extended to the north property line thereby restricting the open space to the northeast corner exclusively.
 - ii. The Board supported this massing differentiation from the larger volume above, however, the Board agreed further exploration was necessary to ensure a design with a porous character that serves to activate the street and public realm.
 - iii. The Board recommended studying options with a more gracious set back along the north property line, related to the success of the massing differentiation, material application, entry locations, and possibility to provide a highly transparent commercial space.
 - b. John Street.
 - i. The Board described development along John Street and to the south of the site as residential in character, agreeing that the project ought to again engage the street and avoid turning its back on this vibrant

neighborhood context to the south. The Board was concerned that the office use at this corner with the first floor below sidewalk grade, separated from the sidewalk by a landscape strip, and lack of entry points might inhibit the design's ability to achieve these goals of porosity and activation.

- ii. The Board agreed further exploration was necessary to achieve a design with a porous character that serves to activate the street.
 - iii. The Board recommended providing studies including but not limited to: locating entries toward or at the southeast corner, adding additional retail space at or near the southeast corner, materiality, and resolving the disparity of floor plate to sidewalk grade.
 - iv. Use of vision glass in lieu of spandrel and/or breaking the floor plate were suggested.
- c. Taylor Avenue.
- i. The Taylor Avenue facade, like those along Thomas and John Streets, requires porosity to ensure an active street experience for the pedestrian. More specifically, the Board asked, and the applicant confirmed that the ground level façade is in fact a straight linear frontage/facade (see the floor plan on page 34 of the EDG packet) without modulation of any kind as is depicted in the renderings on pages 32-33 of the EDG packet.
 - ii. This condition was not supported by the Board, who recommended the street level street facing façade along Taylor Avenue provide relief and create porosity.

4. **Architectural Concept.** (DC2-B *Architectural and Façade Composition*, DC4-A *Exterior Elements and Finishes*, DC4-B *Signage*, DC4-C *Lighting*)

- a. The Board found the large massing moves of Option C to be the most compelling and recommended development of a material application that reinforces those moves.
 - i. Express the office use differently than the residential use;
 - ii. Explore treating each mass differently (such as with window patterning);
 - iii. Wrap the architectural expression at the first floor from the north and south elevation to the alley; and
 - iv. Include in the Recommendation packet detailed study of the neighborhood architectural context and how it has informed the project design.
- b. The Board acknowledged that the alley would provide access to many back-of-house type functions such as loading, garage access, and trash storage, so they agreed the treatment of this alley façade will be important. To this point, the Board recommended thoughtful use of materials to soften the expression of back of house uses on this façade and mitigate blank walls.

- c. Finally, the Board requested details at the recommendation meeting, describing the materials and elevations, signage plan, and lighting (*DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes*).

RECOMMENDATION January 22, 2020

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following public comments were offered at this meeting:

- Noted the design responded well to comments provided by the Uptown Alliance Committee.
- Described community support for the Lake to Bay plan with a focus on pedestrians, including wider sidewalks and narrower travel lanes.
- Noted that activity along the sidewalk, lighting, and signage are important.
- Noted that Thomas Street is planned to terminate just west of the site.
- Supported the proposed massing, wider sidewalks, treatment of the plaza, lighting, and entrance on John Street.
- Encouraged bold lighting along Taylor Ave N.
- Encouraged the developer to connect with the local arts community.
- Noted the north and south ends of the building will result in energy/activity and questioned whether the middle (along Taylor Ave N) was too bland.

One purpose of the design review process is for the Board and City to receive comments from the public that help to identify feedback and concerns about the site and design concept, identify applicable Seattle Design Guidelines and Neighborhood Design Guidelines of highest priority to the site and explore conceptual design, siting alternatives and eventual architectural design. Concerns with off-street parking, traffic and construction impacts are reviewed as part of the environmental review conducted by SDCl and are not part of this review. Concerns with building height calculations and bicycle storage standards are addressed under the City's zoning code and are not part of this review.

All public comments submitted in writing for this project can be viewed using the following link and entering the record 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 recommendations.

1. **Response to EDG Guidance.** The Board appreciated the overall response to the EDG guidance, describing the evolution as positive, successful and resolved with a high level of contextual awareness and an overwhelming improvement to the design of the south end.

2. Ground Plane.

- a. South End (at John Street): The Board supported the reorganized ground floor program, with retail at John Street, entrances at grade, and a public plaza adjacent the sidewalk. The Board agreed this design would serve to activate the street and was an appropriate response to the context.
- b. North End (at Thomas Street): The design of the north end maintained the street-level plaza shown at EDG and was further developed with greater ground level setbacks along Thomas Street, a high level of transparency at the ground floor, and the addition of retail entries. The Board supported this response, agreeing again the design would serve to activate the street and was an appropriate response to the context.
- c. Central Mass (along Taylor Avenue North): Agreeing each end (north and south) would provide for an active streetscape, concern regarding the pedestrian experience at the center of the building along Taylor Avenue North was expressed.
 - i. Some Board members suggested greater porosity via the introduction of building entrances, while others acknowledged the constraints of the site due to topography and felt the proposed transparency provided a successful response. Overall, the Board agreed the façade as proposed could stand on its own and did not recommend a condition to add entrances. (CS2-B *Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces*)
 - ii. Lighting was suggested as a method for drawing pedestrians from one active end to the other. No specific condition was recommended (DC4-C *Lighting*).

3. **Residential Entry.** The primary residential entry faces north and is accessible via the plaza at the north end of the site and is emphasized with a sign element, composite wood siding, and an awning (see page 42 of the Recommendation packet). The Board suggested that there be an allusion of this primary entrance for a pedestrian when heading north on Taylor Avenue North. No specific condition was recommended. (PL2-I *Entrances Visible from the Street*)

4. Architectural Concept.

- a. North End. The ground level façade fronting Thomas Street was proposed as a highly transparent, curved façade set back from the north property line. Above that, at floors two and three, the building extends octagonally out to the north property line, while the remaining floors above setback again. Overall, the Board supported these moves. The projection was described as supporting the pedestrian scale at the sidewalk and would provide overhead weather protection. The transparent curved ground floor was described as its own element and reminiscent of the lower level observation deck of the Space Needle.
- b. Façade Details. Some of the proposed materials included brick, concrete, metal trim, composite wood siding, and fiber cement panel siding. In response to Board questions, the applicant clarified that the floor lines within the two end dark masses are detailed with metal trim that projects approximately two-inches while the central white mass contains material projects closer to four-inches. The overall

architectural concept and material application was supported, and the Board agreed that the success of the façade composition relied on the depth of the reveals. To that point, the Board recommended a condition that the depth of the façade be maintained as presented. The windows within the central white mass and floor line reveals within the two end dark masses were specifically noted as important. (DC2-B *Architectural and Facade Composition, DC4-A Exterior Elements and Finishes*)

5. **Signage.** The Board described the conceptual signage plan as evolved and thoughtful, and supported the proposed signage locations shown in the Recommendation packet. It was noted that the signage ought to maintain liveliness and variety. No condition was recommended. (DC4-B *Signage*)
6. **Bicyclists.** Planning ahead for bicyclists was identified as important and while the Board acknowledged the short-term bicycle parking in the plaza, it was noted that distinct strategies for entering and existing the building for residential and office users should be identified. No condition was recommended. (PL4-B *Planning Ahead for Bicyclists*)

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board’s recommendation on requested departures 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 departures. The Board’s recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Recommendation meeting, no departures were requested.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines recognized by the Board as Priority Guidelines are identified above. All guidelines remain applicable and are summarized below. 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-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.

CS2-C Relationship to the Block

CS2-C-3. Full Block Sites: Break up long facades of full-block buildings to avoid a monolithic presence. Provide detail and human scale at street-level, and include repeating elements to add variety and rhythm to the façade and overall building design.

CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale

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.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

CS2-II Streetscape Compatibility

CS2-II-iii. Uptown Urban Area: In the Uptown Urban and Heart of Uptown character areas, encourage streetscapes that respond to unique conditions created by Seattle Center. Encourage wide sidewalks to accommodate high pedestrian volumes during event times, and create safe, well-marked crossings at entrances to the Center. Streetscape furniture and landscaping should be sited and designed to accommodate the flow of event crowds. Buildings on and adjacent to the Seattle Center campus should be sited to create relationships and connections between the Center and surrounding Uptown neighborhoods.

PUBLIC LIFE

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

PL1-I Streetscape Compatibility

PL1-I-i. Streetscape Continuity: Site outdoor spaces in accordance with the location and scale of adjacent streets, buildings, and uses. For example, an on-site plaza should not unduly interrupt the retail continuity of a street.

PL1-I-ii. Plaza Location: Locate plazas intended for public use at or near grade to promote both a physical and visual connection to the street. Special paving materials, landscaping, and other elements can be used to provide a clear definition between the public and private realms.

PL1-I-iii. Open Space Scale/Definition: Define outdoor spaces through a combination of building and landscaping and discourage oversized spaces that lack containment.

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

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

PL2-I Entrances Visible from the Street

PL2-I-i. Prominent Entrances: Throughout Uptown, major entrances to developments should be prominent. The use of distinctive designs with historical references is strongly encouraged. Design, detailing, materials and landscaping may all be employed to this end. Building addresses and names (if applicable) should be located at entrances, tastefully crafted.

PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

PL3-I Human Activity

PL3-I-iii. Outdoor Dining: Throughout Uptown encourage outdoor dining.

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, shower facilities and lockers for bicyclists should be located to maximize convenience, security, and safety.

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-A Arrangement of Interior Uses

DC1-A-1. Visibility: Locate uses and services frequently used by the public in visible or prominent areas, such as at entries or along the street front.

DC1-A-2. Gathering Places: Maximize the use of any interior or exterior gathering spaces.

DC1-A-3. Flexibility: Build in flexibility so the building can adapt over time to evolving needs, such as the ability to change residential space to commercial space as needed.

DC1-A-4. Views and Connections: Locate interior uses and activities to take advantage of views and physical connections to exterior spaces and uses.

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-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects.

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.

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-A-2. Climate Appropriateness: Select durable and attractive materials that will age well in Seattle’s climate, taking special care to detail corners, edges, and transitions.

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.

DC4-D Trees, Landscape, and Hardscape Materials

DC4-D-1. Choice of Plant Materials: Reinforce the overall architectural and open space design concepts through the selection of landscape materials.

DC4-D-2. Hardscape Materials: Use exterior courtyards, plazas, and other hard surfaced areas as an opportunity to add color, texture, and/or pattern and enliven public areas through the use of distinctive and durable paving materials. Use permeable materials wherever possible.

DC4-D-3. Long Range Planning: Select plants that upon maturity will be of appropriate size, scale, and shape to contribute to the site as intended.

DC4-D-4. Place Making: Create a landscape design that helps define spaces with significant elements such as trees.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the Recommendation meeting, the Board unanimously recommended approval of the project with one condition.

The recommendation summarized above was based on the design review packet dated Wednesday, January 22, 2020, and the materials shown and verbally described by the applicant at the Wednesday, January 22, 2020 Design Recommendation meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design

priorities and reviewing the materials, the four Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design with the following condition:

1. The depth of the façade shall be maintained as presented. The windows within the central white mass and floor line reveals within the two end dark masses were specifically noted as important. (DC2-B *Architectural and Facade Composition*, DC4-A *Exterior Elements and Finishes*)