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## FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Record Number: 3030904-EG

Address: 815 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Applicant: John Leuck, MG2

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, July 25, 2018

Board Members Present: Curtis Bigelow (Substitute Chair)  
Melissa Alexander  
Betsy Anderson  
AJ Taaca  
Alastair Townsend

Board Members Absent: Andrew Haas

SDCI Staff Present: Lindsay King

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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Highrise (HR)

Nearby Zones: (North) HR  
(South) HR  
(East) HR  
(West) HR

Lot Area: Approximately 10,800 sq. ft.

**Current Development:**

The lot proposed for development includes one parcel containing an existing surface parking lot.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

The subject site is located east side of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Marion Street and Columbia Street. The subject lot and surrounding lots are zoned Highrise (HR). The subject site is bound by 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue along the east property line, an alley along the west property line, and adjacent residential developments along the shared north and south property line. Across the alley a new mixed-use development is proposed at 800 Columbia Street. St. James Cathedral, a City of Seattle Landmark Structure, is located directly across 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue from the subject site. 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, a minor arterial street with transit service, parallels I-5 and Boren Avenue, connecting the Hospital uses to the north with Yesler Terrace to the south. The immediate context includes a variety of commercial and residential uses. The site contains approximately 26 feet of grade change from the west corner, the low point of the site, to the east corner, the high point of the site.

**Access:**

The site has vehicular access from 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the alley to the west.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

The site contains a Steep Slope Environmentally Critical Area.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Design Review Early Design Guidance application for a 28-story, 276-unit apartment building with general retail sales and service. Parking for 102 vehicles proposed.

The design packet includes information 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)

**FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE July 25, 2018**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following public comments were offered at this meeting:

- Would like to have the residential lobby located at the street and a setback for commercial uses to allow outdoor seating.
- Felt bus stop should remain independent and not be incorporated into the building design.
- Noted that the tower should complement the First Hill skyline with a visually interesting roofline.
- Felt the design should avoid pastiche and provide a respectful relationship to the historic Saint James Cathedral. Noted the podium should be a similar geometry to the nearby buildings and incorporate the use of warm-toned brick. The tower should be transparent and reflective.
- Would like to see the retail space located south of the residential entry.
- Preferred option 3 tower massing as it is more visually interesting.
- Expressed concern regarding the applicant's presentation. Do not want to see a bland building comprised on concrete. Noted the neighborhood is beautiful and felt the building should complement the existing character.
- Felt the tower should have windows on all four sides.

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 citywide 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 SDCI 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 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. Architectural Concept and Massing.** The Board expressed concern regarding the subtle variation between the massing options and the lack of a clear architectural concept. The Board felt the Early Design Guidance packet lacked a meaningful analysis demonstrating how building will fit within the existing and proposed First Hill neighborhood context. Ultimately the Board directed that additional massing options should be provided at a second Early Design Guidance Meeting.
  - a) The Board agreed the proposed massing options were too conservative for the evolving First Hill neighborhood context. The Board challenged the design team to demonstrate more creativity and artistry in the building design (CS3-A, DC2).
  - b) The Board noted that a simple, bold massing could be successful if executed with fine detailing and high-quality materials (CS3-A, DC2, DC4-A).
  - c) The Board agreed that the building will need to function at two scales- the pedestrian level and within the Seattle skyline. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Early Design Guidance Meeting, the design

team should demonstrate how the building will fit be perceived at both scales (CS3-A, PL3, DC2, DC4-A).

- d) The Board expressed confusion regarding the applicant's presentation and conceptual presentation of how exterior materials could be used in the proposed design concept. The Board supported the precedent images provided on page 63 of the EDG packet. Specifically, the Board noted the use of natural materials- masonry, stone, metal, timber louvers framed by steel, lateral brick, and the large awning. The Board noted that all precedent images are contextual to First Hill with a fine degree of detailing (DC2, DC4-A).
- e) The Board expressed support for future tower setback departure requests on all sides, provided the request supports a sculptural building form with a cohesive architectural concept (CS3-A, DC2).
- f) At the 2nd Early Design Guidance Meeting the Board requested:
  - I. A minimum of two sculptural massing alternatives demonstrating a clear architectural concept articulated though the base, middle and top (CS3-A, DC2).
  - II. Visual representations demonstrating how the fenestration, material application, and detailing will further articulate the architectural concept at the pedestrian scale and within the Seattle skyline (CS3-A, PL3, DC2, DC4-A).

**2. Podium.** The Board was split on whether a setback should be provided at ground level and/or in the podium. The Board noted that the existing setback condition on the west side of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue is not consistent with the Code requirements for future development. This project has the potential to set a precedent for the future pedestrian experience along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Board also noted that a cantilevered podium could feel looming over any ground level setbacks provided. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Early Design Guidance Meeting the Board requested further study demonstrating:

- a) How the podium reinforces the architectural concept and provides a successful transition between pedestrian level and the tower above (CS2-C2, CS3-A, DC2),
- b) How ground level setbacks, the upper level massing, and façade articulation have been informed by the existing condition, but also set a positive precedent for the pedestrian experience along the street (CS2-C2, CS3-A, DC2),
- c) How the podium datum relates to the adjacent structures (CS2-C2, CS3-A, DC2),
- d) How the façade articulation references adjacent structures (CS2-C2, CS3-A, DC2), and
- e) How the podium character will complement the Saint James Cathedral (CS2-C2, CS3-A, DC2).

**3. Street Level Uses.** The Board noted that the street level uses needed further resolution.

- a) The Board agreed that the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue street level frontage should maximize retail uses, minimize the residential lobby, and the package rooms should be relocated to the interior of the structure (PL3).
- b) The Board encouraged the design team to work with SDOT to incorporate bus stop into the building design (PL4-C).
- c) The Board urged the team to provide terraced retaining walls on the sides of the building rather than one large wall at the alley (DC4-D).
- d) At the second Early Design guidance meeting the Board requested:

- I. Clarity on how vehicle circulation would occur without use of the alley (DC1-C),
- II. The location for residential loading (DC1-C), and
- III. An adequately sized trash room for the number of residential units provided (DC1-C).

**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 the applicant stated that Massing Option 1 was the preferred alternative. No departures were requested for the preferred alternative.

As noted in the provided guidance, the Board expressed support for future tower setback departure requests on all sides, provided, the request supports a sculptural building form with a cohesive architectural concept.

**DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES**

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified 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-C Relationship to the Block**

**CS2-C-2. Mid-Block Sites:** Look to the uses and scales of adjacent buildings for clues about how to design a mid-block building. Continue a strong street-edge and respond to datum lines of adjacent buildings at the first three floors.

**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.

**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.

**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**

**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-C Planning Ahead For Transit**

**PL4-C-1. Influence on Project Design:** Identify how a transit stop (planned or built) adjacent to or near the site may influence project design, provide opportunities for placemaking.

**PL4-C-2. On-site Transit Stops:** If a transit stop is located onsite, design project-related pedestrian improvements and amenities so that they complement any amenities provided for transit riders.

## DESIGN CONCEPT

### **DC1 Project Uses and Activities: Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.**

#### **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-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.

**DC2-B-2. Blank Walls:** Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians.

#### **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).

**DC2-C-2. Dual Purpose Elements:** Consider architectural features that can be dual purpose—adding depth, texture, and scale as well as serving other project functions.

**DC2-C-3. Fit With Neighboring Buildings:** Use design elements to achieve a successful fit between a building and its neighbors.

#### **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-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 FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended the project return for another meeting in response to the guidance provided.