



INITIAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE WEST (QUEEN ANNE/ MAGNOLIA) DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3014045

Address: 777 Thomas Street

Applicant: Dave Heater, Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects for 8th & Thomas LLC

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, May 01, 2013

Board Members Present: Mindy Black (Chair)
Magdalena Hogness
Katherine Izdiorek
Jill Kurfirst
Janet Stephenson

Board Members Absent: Boyd Pickrell (recused)

DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM-85

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

Lot Area: 28,800 square feet



Current Development: Two-story commercial structures and surface parking. The structure on the north end of the site was recently designated a historic landmark by the Landmarks Preservation Board.

Access: Vehicular access is via the alley and curb cuts on Thomas St and 8th Ave N.

Surrounding Development: An early 20th century church is located immediately south of this site, and a mid-century building with another religious institution use is located across the street to the east. A newer six-story mixed-use residential and retail structure and a surface parking lot are located directly across the street to the east.

One-story and two-story commercial structures from early to mid-20th century are located to the west across the alley and to the north across the street. A proposed newer development (Compass Housing) is located southwest across the alley from this site.

This site is located near the southwest edge of the larger South Lake Union neighborhood, and is referred to as the Denny Park area. The Denny Park area of South Lake Union provides a diverse mix of buildings and uses.

Neighborhood Character: Denny Park anchors the quiet non-arterial 8th Avenue at the south end of this block, with a playground area and off leash dog area. Dexter Ave N. is a busy arterial located one block to the west with a high level of cyclist, vehicle and transit traffic connecting downtown with areas north of the Ship Canal. A few blocks further to the north, the busy arterials of Mercer and Broad Streets provide a clear break with the rest of the South Lake Union neighborhood.

The Denny Park area consists of mostly older 1-2 story commercial uses with some newer mixed-use and multi-family structures. The epicenter of the neighborhood is the heavily wooded Denny Park, Seattle's oldest public park and the site of the Seattle Parks Department offices.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a 7-story structure with 173 residential units, 5,321 square feet of commercial space, and below grade parking for 143 vehicles accessed from the alley. The preferred option includes residential units at the 8th Ave N street frontage, with ground level commercial use at the intersection of 8th Ave N and Thomas Street, a residential lobby at the northwest corner, and a courtyard facing the alley. One of the existing structures would be demolished. The historic landmark building would be retained and incorporated into the proposed development.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: October 24, 2012

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/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp.

The packet is also available to view in the 3014045 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

The proposal is related to a previous project and EDG meeting for a development at this site (3013251). Since that meeting the site has become larger and the proposed development is also larger. This proposal is technically a first EDG meeting under the new project number (3014045). The applicant explained how this proposal was developed in response to the Board's guidance from the 3013251 EDG meeting.

The proposal includes two level residential units at grade on 8th Ave, with a stepped floor plate to bring the units near the changing sidewalk grade. The first floor residential units would be set 6' back from the property line to provide a landscaped buffer and stoop for the residential entries. One or two steps would separate the sidewalk from the stoops. Planters and screens would be used to create privacy for the units between the sidewalk and the units, as well as between the units. Blinds on the first floor residential units would allow residents to close off the view of the lower window areas for residents' privacy.

The site is immediately north of a religious institution building. The applicant noted that the lower area of the north façade of this building includes some windows and doors, but they serve unoccupied spaces such as corridors and stairwells. The upper portion of the north façade includes a colored stained glass round window that provides some light into the interior sanctuary. The south façade of the proposed development would be treated with glass and light colors to reflect light into this upper level north-facing stained glass window.

The proposal would be set back 7' from the alley at the southwest corner of the site, to give more privacy to the residential development that is proposed diagonally across the alley.

The applicant showed a rendering of a conceptual building design at the EDG meeting.

The applicant clarified that no loading is proposed on the site, but it's anticipated that the on-street parking on 8th Ave would be used for residents moving in and out, likely with a metered

on-street loading space. Trash and recycling would be brought up by the building management through the garage to the alley.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- DPD Staff Geoff Wentlandt noted that the proposal relates to the proposed legislative South Lake Union rezone and street plans for this area. The City's proposed long range plan for this area includes the following, as related to the proposal:
 - 8th Ave N is intended as a residential enclave, with more focus on pedestrian amenities and reduced car traffic.
 - Residential stoops and porches are encouraged on 8th Ave N.
 - Thomas St will be a green street. The applicant's proposed north setback responds well to the future green street requirements.
 - On 8th Ave N, the applicant should consider moving the curb further into the street to provide more pedestrian area and narrow the driving area for traffic calming. This could allow for more space between the sidewalk and residential entries for landscaped buffers.
 - 10' separation between the sidewalk and residential entry will likely be required in the new zoning.

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| INITIAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: May 1, 2013 |
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The applicant described the historic landmark on site and the changes to the proposed development since the EDG meeting as a result of the landmark designation. The roof and floor of the historic landmark will be removed, along with a portion of the west façade and the south façade. The south façade would be rebuilt with the historic brick to enhance the original architectural character of the landmark.

In response to Board questions, the applicant clarified that the frame of the vertical bays would be a fiber cement product. The applicant noted that the fiber cement infill panels would be varied shades and may be painted or integral color.

A gate would separate the sidewalk from the south facing residential units on 8th Ave N. The ground level units on the south façade would have individual patio areas between the building and the south property line. The patios would be accessed from the individual units, rather than the drawings that appear to show a common walkway on the south side of the property.

The rooftop terraces above the landmarked structure would be divided with plantings to delineate the private patios assigned to units. The northwest corner of the landmark building roof would include a common amenity area with tables and chairs.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- The future designation of Thomas Street as a green street is an important aspect of the neighborhood planning effort.
 - Preservation of the historic façade is a nice addition to the future Green Street, but also offers challenges for viable commercial tenants canopies, signage, transparency, access, etc.
 - Any future retail on Thomas Street should include overhead weather protection and signage that enhances the proposed design (such as blade signs).

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.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE (OCTOBER 24, 2012):

1. **8th Ave N: (A-2, A-3, A-6, C-4, D-1, D-12, E-2)** The first floor residential units and street frontage should be designed in the context of the long range vision of 8th Ave N as a quieter residential street with higher levels of pedestrian traffic.
 - a. The Board encouraged the applicant to discuss options with Seattle Department of Transportation to move the curb line further out to the street and provide the planting buffer in the public right of way.
 - i. The setback between the individual residential entries and sidewalk should include a 6'-8' flat usable area, in addition to the 'buffer' (stairs and landscaping).
 - ii. Moving the planting buffer into the sidewalk area would allow more soil depth for better plant health and larger plants.
 - b. The stoops should include usable areas for outdoor seating.

- c. The Board noted that the 4' patio depth appears to be too small to provide usable areas so close to the sidewalk.
- d. Screens and other materials at grade should be graffiti resistant and highly durable.
- e. The primary residential entry should be designed to serve two purposes:
 - i. This bay should be used to visually knit the northern portion of the building with the southern portion of the building.
 - ii. The primary residential entry should be designed to signify the 'public' entry to the building, in contrast to the individual residential entries on 8th Ave N. Landscaping, paving textures, and other methods can be used at the ground level to help distinguish the primary residential entry from the private residential entries.

2. Thomas St: (A-2, A-4, A-10, C-2, C-4, E-2)

- a. The change to the north façade and the modification to the program (compared with 3013251) are positive revisions.
- b. If SDOT allows the curb to be moved out into the street, then the sidewalk and paved areas should be designed to allow more of a gathering area at the corner.
- c. The hand rail between the sidewalk and the amenity area walkway should be designed to provide a better visual transition between these areas, and should relate to the overall building design.

3. Alley: (D-6, D-8)

- a. The trash and recycling strategy should include a landing adjacent to the alley to stage dumpsters on collection days and allow clear travel paths through the alley.
- b. The Board noted that the increasing density of the area translates to a need for better design of alley circulation.

4. South façade: (A-3, A-6, C-2, D-7)

- a. The Board appreciated the goal to use light colors and reflective materials to reflect light back into the church sanctuary.
- b. The Board would like to see more information about the design of the south-facing residential units. These units should be designed to provide inviting entries and also provide security for residents.

5. Massing: (A-2, C-2)

- a. The Board supported the preferred alternative massing.
- b. The Board encouraged the applicant to further develop the design concept of smooth texture siding and contrasting, high quality materials.

At the Recommendation meeting, the applicant should provide graphics and text to demonstrate the response to the Early Design Guidance. The Board specifically requested the following additional information at the Recommendation meeting:

1. The dimensions of buffers, patios areas, screening panels, etc. for the first floor residential units at 8th Ave N.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS (MAY 1, 2013):

1. 8th Ave N:

- a. The Board appreciated the orientation of the street level entries and felt that the design of the front patios would serve to enhance the entries and usability of the patios. (A-2, A-3, D-12)
- b. The Board recommended that the planters separating the residential entries and the sidewalk should relate to a human scale and provide a visual transition to the entries. The planters as shown are too tall and should be revised to meet this recommendation. (A-2, A-3, D-12, E-2)
 - i. The Board suggested that the planter walls be replaced with lower planters and taller landscaping to soften and screen the patios.
 - ii. If the height of the planters is intended to architecturally reference the art deco historic landmark, then the Board recommended that the design of the planters should be revised to reduce the height and reference the architectural character with a different strategy.
- c. The Board would like to see details of landscaping at the base of the dark masonry piers. The landscaping should serve to soften the material and enhance the residential entries. Possible landscape opportunities include espalier, climbing vines, or other narrow plant materials. (A-2, A-6, D-12)
- d. The landscape plan should enhance both sides of the sidewalk (adjacent to the building and in the planter strip adjacent to the curb). (E-2)
- e. The Board reiterated guidance from EDG regarding the curb bulbs: the applicant should discuss options with Seattle Department of Transportation to move the curb line further out to the street and provide the planting buffer in the public right of way. (A-2, D-1, E-2)
 - i. The setback between the individual residential entries and sidewalk should include a 6'-8' flat usable area, in addition to the 'buffer' (stairs and landscaping).
 - ii. Moving the planting buffer into the sidewalk area would allow more soil depth for better plant health and larger plants.
 - iii. The Board noted that the landscape plans and proposed Street Improvement Plans (SIP) are consistent with the proposed South Lake Union neighborhood plan street concept plans for the area.

2. Primary Residential Building Entry:

- a. The Board recommended that the ROW should include items to delineate the entry location, such as benches or landscaping. (A-3, D-12, E-2)
- b. The Board noted that the area adjacent to the south facing wall of the historic landmark should be designed to enhance the recessed entry with items such as lighting, landscaping, and benches. (A-3, D-12, E-2). Possible treatments include:
 - i. Narrow plantings such as espaliers,
 - ii. An interesting design for the overhead blade sign shown in the Initial Recommendation packet on page 27,
 - iii. Extending the canopy out to the street edge,
 - iv. Trees flanking the entry,

- v. Interesting lighting strategies,
- vi. Opportunities for seating, and
- vii. Hardscape or rock areas for pet owners near the curb edge.

3. Thomas St: The previous design had a difficult approach to the grade changes, and the proposed new design incorporating the landmark offers a better response to the grade changes. (A-2, A-4, A-10, C-2, C-4, E-2)

4. Alley:

- a. The Board was concerned with the safety issues presented by the recessed garage entry. The Board recommended bringing the garage door entry closer to the alley property line to assist with safety and security. The Board noted that locating the garage door entry should line up with the wall of the building above. (D-7, D-8)
- b. The Board appreciated the solution for solid waste staging on collection days, but expressed concern that the size of the staging area may not be sufficient. The applicant should demonstrate how the staging area will sufficiently accommodate the collection schedule and amount of solid waste on collection days. (D-6)

5. South façade:

- a. The Board noted that the design of individual terraces, setback, and reflective surfaces is a positive response to the EDG regarding the response to the adjacent church and sanctuary window. The reflective surfaces and setback from the south facade will help to provide light to the adjacent sanctuary window. (C-2)
- b. The lighting plan will be important to enhance safety and security in the recessed area between the wall and the church. (D-7, D-12)
- c. The landscape plan should be designed to enhance the individual patio areas, rather than linear landscaping that appears to delineate a walkway. (A-6, C-2, D-7, E-2)

6. Massing:

- a. The massing response to the landmarks building is a positive response to the EDG and Design Review Guidelines. (A-2, C-2)
- b. The Board noted the parti diagram is very helpful in demonstrating how the proposed new construction scale relates to the historic landmark scale and context. (C-2)
- c. The idea of modifying the tone of the fiber cement panels is an important aspect of the proposed design, and the color should be integral. The color in painted panels won't be as durable, and repainting will likely result in one consistent color. (C-2)
- d. The mortar in the brick should be used to enhance the brick appearance, such as using a dark mortar color as shown on page 29 of the packet. (C-2)
- e. The Board noted that the windows could either be black or another color that enhances the proposed design. (C-2)

7. Response to the historic landmark:

- a. Uplighting and/or downlighting of the historic structure would be helpful, but the Board noted this would be in the purview of either SDOT or the Landmarks Preservation Board since the lighting would be located either on the landmark or in the public right of way. (C-2, D-10)
- b. The Board noted that the historic garage door design included multi-paned horizontal lights that previously referenced the windows of the landmark. The Board would like to see a similar glazed overhead rollup door, to add to transparency and porosity at the street level to enhance the commercial street frontage. This relates to the proposed departures. (C-2, D-11)
- c. Operable rollup doors, lighting, and any other strategies that can help to enhance the commercial viability on Thomas St would be strongly supported by the Board. This relates to the proposed departures. (D-10, D-11)

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The Board identified the following Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

The vision for street level uses in South Lake Union is a completed network of sidewalks that successfully accommodate pedestrians. Streetscape compatibility is a high priority of the neighborhood with redevelopment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming and open to the general public.

- **Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities, such as: tree grates; benches; lighting.**
- **Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.**
- **Where appropriate, consider a reduction in the required amount of commercial and retail space at the ground level, such as in transition zones between commercial and residential areas. Place retail in areas that are conducive to the use and will be successful.**
- **Where appropriate, configure retail space so that it can spill-out onto the sidewalk (retaining six feet for pedestrian movement, where the sidewalk is sufficiently wide).**

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.
- Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.
- Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.
- Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.
- Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.
- Create businesses and community activity clusters through co-location of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.
- Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.

A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

Consider designing the entries of residential buildings to enhance the character of the streetscape through the use of small gardens, stoops and other elements to create a transition between the public and private areas. Consider design options to accommodate various residential uses, i.e., townhouse, live-work, apartment and senior-assisted housing.

A-10 Corner Lots. Building on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency. Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

Design the “fifth elevation” — the roofscape — in addition to the streetscape. As this area topographically is a valley, the roofs may be viewed from locations outside the neighborhood such as the freeway and Space Needle. Therefore, views from outside the area as well as from within the neighborhood should be considered, and roof-top elements should be organized to minimize view impacts from the freeway and elevated areas.

C-4 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.

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm, i.e. the transition zone between private property and the public right of way. The Board is generally willing to consider a departure in open space requirements if the project proponent provides an acceptable plan for features such as: curb bulbs adjacent to active retail spaces where they are not interfering with primary corridors that are designated for high levels of traffic flow; pedestrian-oriented street lighting; street furniture.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas. Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18-hour public activity. Methods to consider are: enhanced pedestrian and street lighting; well- designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street; police horse tie-up locations for routine patrols and larger event assistance.

D-8 Treatment of Alleys. The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.

D-10 Commercial Lighting. Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.

- D-11 Commercial Transparency.** Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.
- D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions.** For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.
- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site.** Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.
- SLU-specific supplemental guidance:
- Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a building and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the previous uses of the area. Neighborhood themes may include service industries such as laundries, auto row, floral businesses, photography district, arts district, maritime, etc.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURE

The Board's recommendation on the requested departures will be based upon the departures' potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall 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 Initial Recommendation meeting, the following departures were requested:

- 1. Minimum Façade Height (SMC 23.48.014):** The Code requires minimum façade heights of 25' on all Class 2 Pedestrian Streets. Thomas Street is a Class 2 Pedestrian street, but the requested departure is for a 19' high façade for the existing historic landmark.

The Board indicated that they would continue to entertain this departure at the next Recommendation meeting, depending on the response to the guidance. (A-2, C-2, D-10, D-11)

- 2. Transparency (SMC 23.48.018):** The Code requires minimum 60% of the width of the street level façade to be transparent on all Class 2 Pedestrian Streets. Thomas Street is a Class 2 Pedestrian street, but the requested departure is for 30% transparency for the existing historic landmark façade.

The Board indicated that they would continue to entertain this departure at the next Recommendation meeting, depending on the response to the guidance, especially the response to the potential transparent rollup doors on the landmark and lighting to enhance the appearance of the historic landmark. (A-2, C-2, D-10, D-11)

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the Initial Recommendation meeting, the Board recommended the project should return for an additional Recommendation meeting.