



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3022086

Address: 630 Boren Avenue N

Applicant: Graphite Design Group, for Vulcan

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, December 02, 2015

Board Members Present: Boyd Pickrell (Chair)  
Christine Harrington  
Katie Idziorek  
Homero Nishiwaki

Board Members Absent: Janet Stephenson (recused from this project)

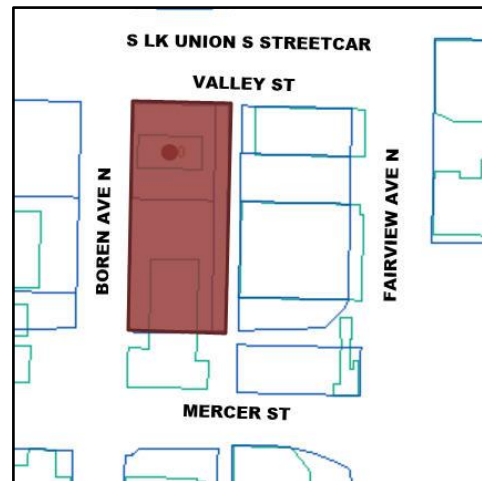
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, RA, MArch, Senior Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM 85/65-160  
Seattle Mixed; office uses, 85 ft maximum height;  
residential uses, 160 ft maximum height

Nearby Zones: (North) C2 40  
(South) SM 160/85-240  
(East) SM 85/65-160  
(West) SM 85/65-160

Lot Area: 34,289 sq ft



**Current Development:**

The site has one small, 1-story storage structure; the remainder is vacant, used for parking.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

This site is the west half block of the eastern block of three undeveloped lakefront blocks in the South Lake Union (SLU) neighborhood, which provide a gateway and transition to the water from the densifying mixed use neighborhood to the south. The SLU Park is across Valley Street to the northwest, and a surface parking lot to the north. The vacant full block to the west is slated for a mixed use project with 16 story residential tower (MUP #3017398). The vacant half block to the east facing Fairview Avenue N has a current EDG for a 6 story office building (#3020512).

The blocks to the south along Mercer Street are newer office/commercial structures with a consistent 65 ft high street wall. The neighborhood has a wide mix of residential, office, commercial, research and technology uses. The SLU streetcar runs along the north edge of the block, with a stop located directly northwest of the site.

**Access:**

The site has a platted but un-improved alley along the east edge; vehicular and service access will be from the alley. Pedestrian access is from the three surrounding streets of Mercer and Valley Streets, and Boren Avenue N.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

The approximate north half of the site is classified Liquefaction Prone ECA.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed development includes a 6 story office podium of approximately 146,000 sq ft, with a 7 story residential cube of about 77 units and 94,000 sq ft above the northwest corner. Also included is about 2,500 sf of retail at grade, and 214 parking spaces below grade.

**FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE (EDG) December 2, 2015**

The EDG booklet 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 booklet is also available to view in the 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](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Concerned the street level pedestrian experience along Valley Street appeared monotonous and corporate, and suggested an arcade or meandering places.
- Stated the retail spaces were all similar and small, so not compatible for a major commercial destination or draw, which this isolated location might need.
- Stated the entire east block was expressed as one uniform architecture, and including the blocks to the west, created a 3-block campus, rather than 4-6 distinct buildings.
- Supported the integration of maritime, industrial and/or northwest materials, themes and forms, in the landscape and the architecture; the boardwalk is the only one shown.
- Criticized the three residential towers (on the three waterfront blocks) for being too similar in appearance and form.
- Supported the variety of architecture and landscape from the three firms involved.
- Supported the ‘sugar-cube’ concept (pg 26) for breaking up long street facades into quarter block forms, with different podium heights and fenestration patterns.
- Suggested more break-up of the Mercer Street podium wall, since the existing south side of Mercer is already monotonous in form.
- Stated all three residential towers have the same ‘pagoda’ roof top, and they should be simpler and different from each other, and any other existing SLU tower tops.

## **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 (The Board) provided the following siting and design guidance. [Design Guideline citations]

All page references below are to the EDG#1 booklet dated 12/02/2015.

### **FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE December 2, 2015**

#### **1. Three - Block Concept & Massing:**

- a. **Distinctive and Strong Concept:** The Board agreed this east block should exhibit a distinct, strong design concept in the 3-block waterfront district. The Board concurred the “linear tubes” concept should be employed for just block 25, and a 3 block ‘campus appearance’ should be avoided. The Board supported massing option #3,

especially the stepped massing along the Mercer Street frontages (pg 40/42, lower), but with qualifications under 3a and 4a below. [CS2-A; CS2-I; CS3-B]

- b. **Ensemble of Distinctive Half-block Forms:** The Board agreed the subject block should read as 2-3 different forms, related by the expression of the “tubes” but different materiality between the east and west half blocks, and a clearly separate expression of the residential box. [CS2-A; CS2-C-3]
- c. **Residential Tower Differentiation:** The Board agreed the two residential towers on the Valley frontage of Blocks 25 and 37 frame the central Block 31, and their towers can be similar in form but different in architectural character, as suggested on pg 46. [CS2-I]

## 2. Ground Floor & Landscape:

- a. **Valley Street:** The Board supported the boardwalk concept for a generous and flexible mixing space at a slight elevation (1-2 ft) above the adjacent sidewalk, but agreed the adjacent storefronts should have more depth, layering and pedestrian scale, similar to the image on pg 57/lower right. The Board supported a usable transition zone between the two levels, with seating and few/no guardrails, and integrated ADA ramps. These important street level transitions should be shown in detailed plans, large-scale sections, elevations and perspectives at subsequent meetings. The linear transition to the boardwalk on the east half block should be ‘smoothed out’ (pg 41), and the storefront character and quality materials of Valley should wrap the alley corners, rather than an abrupt transition. [PL1; PL3-II]
- b. **Boren Avenue:** The Board supported the setbacks and stepped platforms along this ‘quieter’ street, shown on pg 41 & 55. The Board agreed the currently designated “lease spaces” should have reasonably frequent porosity and be designed for future conversion to true, public access retail. [PL3-II]
- c. **Mercer Avenue:** The Board supported the additional street trees shown on pg 55, and the dense landscape buffer along Mercer, and the recessed ground plane with planted setbacks, but the textured hardscape at the Mercer and Boren corner is important to activate the entry doors at the corner. [PL3-A; PL3-C]

## 3. Response to Through Block Connection:

- a. **Mid-block Lobby Composition:** The Board supported the continuation of the mid-block connection across Boren leading to the office lobby, and agreed the composition of the podium should be an intentional response to that east-west visual axis. The Board did not support forcing that entrance/ through-block connection to be 100% public, or to shift the office elevators shown, but did agree the landscape design should visibly re-direct and accommodate pedestrians crossing Boren and then flowing north/south on Boren. [PL1-B]

#### 4. Podium Massing & Modulation:

- a. **Massing & Transparency:** The Board supported option #3 in general, but expressed concern about the length and amount of unmodulated and blank podium wall shown facing Boren on pg 40/lower (also see comments under departure #1). The Board also commented the Mercer and Boren ground level street corner appears to be solid on pg 40, and that crucial street corner should be more transparent, instead possibly placing more mass at the mid-block alley. To confirm possible impacts in the lake view corridor, the Board requested accurate perspective views from the south side of Mercer – and further south - showing both sides of Boren between Mercer and Valley. [CS2; DC2-A]

#### 5. Residential Form & Character:

- a. **Character & Relationship to Podium:** The Board supported the residential form being related to the tower on the west Block 37, but different in architectural character, as suggested on pg 46. The Board supported the tower form carrying down to grade along Boren and at the northwest corner, as shown on pg 40; this should be accomplished even if intermediate floors are actually office uses. [ CS2; DC2-B-1]

#### 6. Preliminary Materiality:

- a. The Board commented that the preliminary materials shown on page 46/47 may be appropriate for the residential tower. The approach should extend well-beyond 2-dimensional ‘patterns’ & staggers, to include measurable, substantive depth, shadows, projections, human scale and visual interest. The Board agreed the office portions of the podium should strongly express the “linear tubes” concept, but that even the street-exposed side walls of tubes should display modulation, texture and selective fenestration. [DC2-C-1; DC2-D]

### DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and South Lake Union 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](#).

<b>CONTEXT &amp; SITE</b>
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**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-A Location in the City and Neighborhood**

**CS2-A-1. Sense of Place:** Emphasize attributes that give a distinctive sense of place. Design the building and open spaces to enhance areas where a strong identity already exists, and create a sense of place where the physical context is less established.

**CS2-A-2. Architectural Presence:** Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly.

**CS2-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces**

**CS2-B-1. Site Characteristics:** Allow characteristics of sites to inform the design, especially where the street grid and topography create unusually shaped lots that can add distinction to the building massing.

**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.

**South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:**

**CS2-I Responding to Site Characteristics**

**CS2-I-i. Views:** Encourage provision of “outlooks and overlooks” for the public to view the lake and cityscapes. Examples include provision of public plazas and/or other public open spaces and changing the form or facade setbacks of the building to enhance opportunities for views.

**CS2-I-iv. Heart Locations:** Several areas have been identified as “heart locations.” Heart locations serve as the perceived center of commercial and social activity within the neighborhood. These locations provide anchors for the community as they have identity and give form to the neighborhood. Development at heart locations should enhance their central character through appropriate site planning and architecture. These sites have a high priority for improvements to the public realm. A new building’s primary entry and facade should respond to the heart location. Special street treatments are likely to occur and buildings will need to respond to these centers of commercial and social activity. Amenities to consider are: pedestrian lighting, public art, special paving, landscaping, additional public open space provided by curb bulbs and entry plazas. See full guidelines for Heart Locations

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

**CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes**

**CS3-A-4. Evolving Neighborhoods:** In neighborhoods where architectural character is evolving or otherwise in transition, explore ways for new development to establish a positive and desirable context for others to build upon in the future.

**CS3-B Local History and Culture**

**CS3-B-1. Placemaking:** Explore the history of the site and neighborhood as a potential placemaking opportunity. Look for historical and cultural significance, using neighborhood groups and archives as resources.

## PUBLIC LIFE

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

#### **PL1-A Network of Open Spaces**

**PL1-A-1. Enhancing Open Space:** Design the building and open spaces to positively contribute to a broader network of open spaces throughout the neighborhood.

**PL1-A-2. Adding to Public Life:** Seek opportunities to foster human interaction through an increase in the size and quality of project-related open space available for public life.

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

**PL1-B-1. Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Connect on-site pedestrian walkways with existing public and private pedestrian infrastructure, thereby supporting pedestrian connections within and outside the project.

**PL1-B-2. Pedestrian Volumes:** Provide ample space for pedestrian flow and circulation, particularly in areas where there is already heavy pedestrian traffic or where the project is expected to add or attract pedestrians to the area.

**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.

#### **PL1-C Outdoor Uses and Activities**

**PL1-C-1. Selecting Activity Areas:** Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.

**PL1-C-2. Informal Community Uses:** In addition to places for walking and sitting, consider including space for informal community use such as performances, farmer's markets, kiosks and community bulletin boards, cafes, or street vending.

**PL1-C-3. Year-Round Activity:** Where possible, include features in open spaces for activities beyond daylight hours and throughout the seasons of the year, especially in neighborhood centers where active open space will contribute vibrancy, economic health, and public safety.

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

#### **PL2-A Accessibility**

**PL2-A-1. Access for All:** Provide access for people of all abilities in a manner that is fully integrated into the project design. Design entries and other primary access points such that all visitors can be greeted and welcomed through the front door.

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

#### **PL2-I Streetscape Compatibility**

**PL2-I-i. Street Level Uses:** 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.

**PL1-I-ii. Streetscape Amenities:** Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities

- a. tree grates;
- b. benches;
- c. lighting.

**PL1-I-iii. Sidewalk Retail:** 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).

## **PL2-II Personal Safety and Security**

**PL2-II-i. All-Day Activity:** Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18- hour public activity. Methods to consider are:

- a. enhanced pedestrian and street lighting;
- b. well-designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street.

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

### **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.

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

#### **PL3-II Human Activity**

**PL3-II-i. Public/Private Transition:** Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.

**PL3-II-ii. Active Facades:** Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.

**PL3-II-iii. Coordinate Retail/Pedestrian Activity:** Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.

**PL3-II-iv. Activity Clusters:** Create businesses and community activity clusters through colocation of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.

#### **PL3-III Transition Between Residence and Street**



**PL3-III-i. Residential Entries:** 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.

**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.

## **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-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.

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

## **DC2-I Architectural Concept and Consistency**

**DC2-I-i. Roofscape Design:** 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.

**DC3 Open Space Concept: Integrate open space design with the building design so that they complement each other.**

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

## **DC3-II Landscaping To Enhance The Building and/or Site**

**DC3-II-i. Integrated Artwork:** 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.

## **DC3-III Landscape Design To Address Special Site Conditions**

**DC3-III-i. View Orientation:** Landscaping should be designed to take advantage of views to waterfront and downtown Seattle.

**DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.**

## **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-D Trees, Landscape, and Hardscape Materials**

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

#### **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 the following departures were requested:

1. **Upper Level Setback (SMC 23.48.012.B.1):** The Code requires portions of any structure above 45 ft to be set back 15 ft minimum from the lot lines along Boren Avenue and Valley Street. The applicant complies along Valley Street, but proposes a 10ft encroachment into setback along the south 99 ft of Boren from 45 to 71 ft height, and a 3ft encroachment along a 68 ft portion of Boren, at level 6.

The Board indicated receptivity to the 3 ft degree of encroachment, but had reservations about any larger one, including the 10 ft proposed over 2 floors, because it may intrude into the lake view corridor. Additional perspective studies are needed to verify if the view corridor along Boren is overly impacted, from views further south and up-slope on Boren. [CS2-A; CS2-I; DC2-B]

2. **Rooftop Feature Setback (SMC 23.48.010.H):** The Code requires all qualifying rooftop features to be setback 10 ft minimum from the adjoining roof edge. The applicant proposes a horizontal overhang with no setback along the majority of the north and west tower faces, together with a 60% rooftop coverage option.

The Board indicated receptivity to this encroachment, but noted the overhang itself is a key part of the "related but not identical" guidance about the residential towers under 1c above, and it might be visible from the designated "Gateway" at Mercer and Fairview, which should be studied and presented at subsequent meetings. [CS2-A; CS2-I-iii]

#### **BOARD DIRECTION**

At the conclusion of the FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board unanimously recommended moving forward to MUP application, with response to all the specific Board guidance and recommendations described herein.