



FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3011428

Address: 888 Western Avenue

Applicant: Jim Westcott of Weber Thompson Architects

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, December 14, 2010

Board Members Present: Kathryn Armstrong
Jamie Fisher
Gabe Grant
Brian Scott

Board Members Absent: Jan Frankima
Sheri Olson
Pragnish Parikh

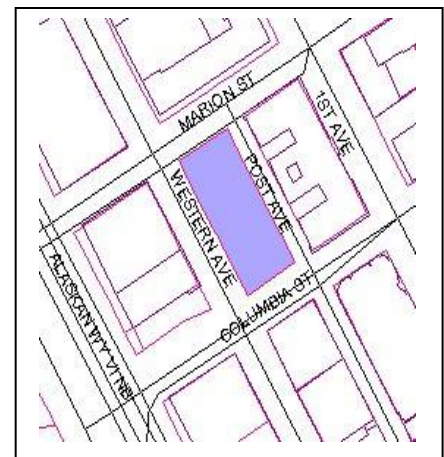
DPD Staff Present: Bruce Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Downtown Mixed Commercial with a 160' height limit (DMC 160)

Nearby Zones: North: DMC 160
South: Pioneer Square Mixed with 100' height limit (PSM 100) across Columbia.
East: DMC 160.
West: Downtown Harborfront 1 with a 45' height limit (DH1/45)

Lot Area: 24,000 square feet



Current Development: Surface parking lot with access from Marion Street.

The relatively flat site bounded by Western Avenue, Post Avenue, Marion, and Columbia Streets lies in the southwest portion of Downtown just north of the Pioneer Square Preservation District. Currently used for surface parking, the full block site has two unusual right of way characteristics. The Marion Street pedestrian bridge to the Ferry Terminal abuts the site on the north, while the Columbia Street on-ramp rises above the center of the street adjacent to the south side of the site. The raised pedestrian path, the highway on-ramp, the surrounding four to six story buildings, and the trees lining the perimeter create a distinctive, tightly enclosed site. Post Avenue, which has a 36 foot right of way, carries traffic one-way south bound and is in need of repair.

Site and Surrounding Development: Originally called the Commission District, the area where farm produce came into the City via trains, the district has a mixture of zoning classifications. The site is zoned Downtown Mixed Commercial with a 160' height limit. The area directly to the east is similarly zoned DMC-160, with the landmark Colman Building immediately across Post Avenue. To the east of First Avenue, the DMC zoning height steps up to DMC 340/290-400. To the south of Columbia Street the zoning category changes to Pioneer Square Mixed with a 100 foot height limit (PSM 100). The DMC 160 zone continues north paralleling the avenues. It extends west to Alaskan Way then transitions to Downtown Harborfront One with a 45 foot height limit (DH1/45). A 40-foot view corridor setback requirement exists on Marion.

The Colman Building across Post Avenue has city landmark status. Other significant buildings in the vicinity include the Federal Building to the north and Seattle Steam to the south of the site. The subject site lies just outside of the Pioneer Square Historic District.

ECAs: Liquefaction zone

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Land use application to allow a 16-story building containing 9,907 sq. ft. of commercial space at street level with 208 residential units above. The applicant proposes four levels of above grade parking for 124 vehicles to be provided within the structure. Project includes 4,500 cubic yards of grading.

Other Information: The Code requires “parking parity” in terms of the number of parking levels provided below grade and above grade. However, the Code allows DPD to grant an exception to this provision. A request for that exception has been submitted to DPD (dated July

30, 2010) that requests that all of the proposed parking may be allowed above grade. This is not a departure, but instead is a Type I zoning decision made by DPD.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three design schemes were initially developed. All of the options positioned the retail uses on Post Avenue and Western Avenue. The alternatives also placed vehicular access off of Columbia Street, as well as the location of ‘back of house’ services.

The first scheme (Option A) showed a prescriptive zoning envelope in direct response to the development standards allowed in the zone. This results in a stair step massing form and the greatest square footage.

The second scheme (Option B) showed a “dog-bone” building configuration with the widest areas at the north and south ends of the block. A 12-foot notch in the central part of the building is located on the east and west facades. The notched area both reflects the form of the Colman Building to the east and opens the building up to the west.

The third and applicant preferred scheme (Option C) displayed a more modulated form with a 24-foot notched area on the east façade facing the Colman Building and a setback at the north side of the block. This scheme includes a three-story connecting “cube” between the larger building mass to the south and the pedestrian bridge to the north.

By the Recommendation meeting, the applicants refined Option C. The curve of the west façade disappeared, the lines of the cube formed right angles, and a clearer relationship emerged as the interior programming of the parking garage and the studio apartments were separately expressed on the exterior. The applicant, based on discussions with SDOT, had not changed the five foot width of the Post Ave. sidewalk due to SDOT’s unwillingness to narrow the roadway width and the applicant’s unwillingness to set back the structure’s first floor by seven feet. The applicant has also redesigned the stair and elevator tower linking the Marion St. pedestrian bridge to the glass cube and its roof.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one from the public attended the Recommendation 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. The Board identified the Downtown Design Guidelines of highest priority for this project.

The Downtown guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

A. Site Planning & Massing: Responding to the Larger Context

A-1 Respond to the Physical Environment. Develop an architectural concept and compose the building’s massing in response to geographic conditions and patterns of urban form found beyond the immediate context of the building site.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed that the preferred option (Option 3) better fits into the neighborhood context and best holds the corners of the block and street edges. The Board acknowledged the unusual condition of the pedestrian bridge and the challenge of integrating it into the site and building design. The Board also recommended establishing a datum line on the façade design that responds to the nearby buildings and using this line to delineate the building base.

Datum lines, added to the façade at varying heights roughly corresponding to nearby structures, are represented as the cornices of the terra cotta walls. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

B. Architectural Expression: Relating to the Neighborhood Context

B-1 Respond to the Neighborhood Context – Develop an architectural concept and compose the major building elements to reinforce desirable urban features existing in the surrounding neighborhood.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that there really isn’t much precedent for the proposed three-story “cube” design that would connect the pedestrian bridge and the main building. The Board expressed support for the setback shown at the north side of the block to include a plaza with landscaping.

The Board had an opportunity to discuss the “cube” but did not recommend changes to it. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

B-3 Reinforce the Positive Urban Form & Architectural Attributes of the Immediate Area . Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce

desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed at length the importance of Post Avenue and that the treatment of this façade and its street level design is critical to helping create a more vibrant street.

The width of the existing sidewalk along Post Avenue is five feet, while the requirement is 12 feet. The design proposes a nine-foot width to allow for more generous landscape treatment and street trees. The Board would like to see landscaping, street trees, minimum street width and strong retail bay frontage to encourage activation. The Board is supportive of the request to SDOT to modify the street width reduction and integrate adequate sidewalk width, landscaping and street trees and a loading area. The Board agreed that having a wider sidewalk is more critical than having a wider roadway.

The Board discussed the width of the sidewalk and urged the developer to return to SDOT to negotiate increasing its width. The developer in this situation does not want to incur the cost of widening a sidewalk in which the amount of work and the cost are unknown due to the unusual construction of the right of way. The Board supported the departure request to allow the existing five foot sidewalk width to remain. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

B-4 Design a Well-Proportioned & Unified Building. Compose the massing and organize the publicly accessible interior and exterior spaces to create a well-proportioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board encouraged a simplified architectural concept and form that is unified and not overly busy and instead responds to the more simple building massing of the historic building in the immediate context.

The Board members suggested that the facades could be improved by introducing compositional techniques (e.g. weaving of pier and spandrel) that would relieve the facades of their monotony. No specific condition was recommended. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

C. The Streetscape: Creating the Pedestrian Environment

C-1 Promote Pedestrian Interaction. Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should be open to the general public and appear safe and welcoming.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed Post Avenue and how to best enliven and take advantage of this unusually narrow and historic street to become a more animated and

usable pedestrian and retail street. See also B-3. The Board noted a preference for generous landscaping than overhead weather protection along Post Avenue. They indicated potential support for a departure from overhead weather protection if it would be in direct conflict with the provision of street trees and generous landscaping accommodated for on Post Avenue.

See also the discussion of the 'cube' feature under C-2.

After thorough discussion, the Board recommended that the Post Avenue façade have a canopy even though it would not meet the Land Use Code depth standards and the sidewalk would not be widened. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

C-2 Design Facades of Many Scales. Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and materials compositions that refer to the scale of human activities contained within. Building facades should be composed of elements scaled to promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted the importance of taking advantage of the south facing façade to bring light into the building. The Board also expressed support for the proposed notch on the east side of the building which alleviates the possible canyon created by two tall building on either side of the narrow Port Avenue.

The Board found the proposed curved west façade problematic due to its lack of architectural precedent in the area for such a gesture. Instead, the façade should be flat and strive for simplicity. The Board suggested that the *modern* portion of the building (above the datum line) should recede behind the *historic* building base (which references the historic context).

The Board requested that the proposed "cube" feature be as transparent as possible and eliminate the proposed cube design concept "B" with the angled facade. The cube design should be simple and avoid adding new angles and forms that are incongruent with the neighborhood context. Of paramount concern should be the connection between the pedestrian bridge, the subject building and the movement from the bridge to ground level – this circulation function should be clearly expressed in the cube design. The Board recognized the challenge of locating retail use at the second level. The Board encouraged the provision of seating and open space at the second level abutting the pedestrian bridge. The Board also agreed that the design of this connection should consider the light and shadow of the area below the bridge and endeavor to use translucent materials where possible.

The datum lines of the nearby historic buildings should be acknowledged. The Board cautioned against too much curtain wall and glass as being out of context. Punched windows should be considered in the design of the building base.

By the Recommendation meeting, the architect redesign the upper west façade to eliminate the curve. The upper portions of the façade set back slightly from the terra cotta walls.

The walls of the “cube” or appendage to the north of the large building mass possess right angles in response to the Board’s earlier request. The three visible elevations are composed of primarily transparent glazing with a black, steel frame that defines several edges.

On the larger building mass, the glazing set within the terra cotta walls is slightly setback from the façade. The Board did not comment on whether the window / wall relationship resembled a punched opening. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

C-3 Provide Active—Not Blank—Facades. Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that on Western Avenue the residential units at the parking levels could be shifted to the curtain wall area so that the parking levels could be behind the punched masonry grid block area. It seems like screening the parking behind the grid is more effective than screening behind the spandrel glass. See also E-2.

Responding to earlier Board direction, the architect placed the studio apartments behind the glazed curtain wall along the west façade and left the terra cotta elevations to screen the parking garage. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

C-5 Encourage Overhead Weather Protection. Encourage project applicants to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major pedestrian routes.

The Board recommended that the Post Avenue elevation possess overhead weather protection along the entire length of the façade. Although the Board did not discuss the Columbia Street elevation, the overhead weather protection should likely wrap the corner of the building base. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

C-6 Develop the Alley Façade. To increase pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest, develop portions of the alley façade in response to the unique conditions of the site or project.

See C-5. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

D. Public Amenities: Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space

D-1 Provide Inviting & Usable Open Space. Design public open spaces to promote a visually pleasing, safe, and active environment for workers, residents, and visitors. Views and solar access from the principal area of the open space should be especially emphasized.

Departures # 9, 10, and 11 address the façade setbacks from the property line. The Board's recommendation of approval of the departures allows for a greater distance between the façade and the Marion Street pedestrian bridge and room for two small plazas flanking the glass cube for the lobby.

The Board discussed at length the proposed departure for added height in the Green St. setback. The glass cube with its associated stair and elevator tower links the larger building mass to the elevated Marion St. walkway. The applicant argued that the stairs and elevator would provide access to a space on the roof of the glass cube for the public. The Board recommended a condition that requires public access to the rooftop during daylight hours. Allowance for the departure for the added height in the Green St. is dependent upon the condition allowing public access to the roof. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

D-2 Enhance the Building with Landscaping. Enhance the building and site with substantial landscaping—which includes special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, and site furniture, as well as living plant material.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board focused on the Post Avenue streetscape and the Marion Street open space/plaza area. Both are prime opportunities for the integration of interesting landscaping and hardscaping to create visual interest at the pedestrian level but also as viewed from the pedestrian bridge. See also C-1.

No further discussion of landscaping occurred at the Recommendation Meeting.
(Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

D-5 Provide Adequate Lighting. To promote a sense of security for people downtown during nighttime hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building facade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board members noted they would like to see more information on the proposed lighting plan, particularly as it relates to the pedestrian bridge level and on the sidewalk/plaza area below the bridge.

Based on its review of the lighting plan provided by the applicant, the Board did not expand upon its comments at the EDG meeting. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

D-6 Design for Personal Safety & Security. Design the building and site to enhance the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board emphasized the importance of creating a safe and visually accessible area below the pedestrian bridge.

No further discussion occurred about the area beneath the pedestrian bridge. The applicant presented a lighting plan and images of the north plaza/pedestrian bridge lit at night. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

E. Vehicular Access & Parking: Minimizing the Adverse Impacts

E-1 Minimize Curb Cut Impacts. Minimize adverse impacts of curb cuts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board agreed that incorporating vehicular access from Columbia Street was appropriate. The Board would like to better understand how and where resident loading will occur and whether the proposed loading zone on Post Avenue is viable.

The applicant has delineated a loading zone on Post Ave. in front of the residential entrance. This will need to be approved by SDOT. No discussion occurred during the Recommendation Meeting. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

E-2 Integrate Parking Facilities. Minimize the visual impact of parking by integrating parking facilities with surrounding development. Incorporate architectural treatments or suitable landscaping to provide for the safety and comfort of people using the facility as well as those walking by.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board was supportive of the proposal to include studio units at the corners of the parking levels thereby enlivening the facades at the corner locations with transparency and visual access to the lighting in those units beyond what the parking screening includes. The Board looks forward to learning more about how the cars are screened. The spandrel glass may be insufficient in terms of creating an overly blank wall.

See C-3 for a discussion of the placement of the studio units in relationship to the parking garage and the design of the building facade. The Board recommended that the windows for the storage areas have clear glazing to emit light from the building in order to foster an active appearing façade during the evening. (Recommendation Meeting December 14, 2010)

Recommendations: The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans submitted at the December 14th, 2010 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in

the plans and other drawings available at the December 14th, 2010 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and the requested development standard departures from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below). The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

1. Place continuous overhead weather protection along the Post Ave. façade even though the depth of the canopy will not meet Land Use Code standards. (C-1, C-5)
2. Public access to the roof of the glass cube on the northern end of the site is required during daylight hours. (D-1)
3. Areas indicated for “back of house” operations and bicycle storage on the southwest corner of the structure on levels two through five shall have transparent windows on the two elevations. (E-2)

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board’s recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based upon the departure’s potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure(s). At the Recommendation meeting, the Board made the following decision regarding the applicant’s departure requests.

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMENDATION
1. Parking location & screening. SMC 23.49.019B2.a.2	Parking above the 3 rd story of a structure shall be separated from the street by another use for a minimum of 30%	Decrease required active street frontage at levels 4 & 5. Reduce requirement to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0% along Post Ave. • 20% along Columbia. • 24% along Western • 24% along Marion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Studio apartment will be located at Western/ Columbia and Western/Marion corners. Corner units will be on floors 2-5. Floors 2-3 would not be required by LU Code. (D-3) 	Recommended approval.
2. Façade Modulation. SMC 23.49.058B.	Required modulation above a height of 85’ above a sidewalk for any portion of structure located within 15’ of a street property line.	Eliminate requirement to set back 15’ along the Western Ave. façade.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A larger setback of 24’ x 68’ above Post Ave recalls the setbacks along the existing Colman Bldg. across Post. No setback on Western relates to other older buildings along Western. (B-3) 	Recommended approval
3. Setbacks on Green Streets SMC 23.49.058F.2	A continuous upper level setback of 15’ shall be provided on a Green street frontage above 45’.	Increase the height from 45’ to 60’. A 15’ difference to allow elevator and stair tower connecting Marion St. elevated walkway and the roof of the glass entry cube.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extra height of stairs and elevator tower would provide public access to roof garden with view of Elliott Bay. (D-1) 	Recommended approval based on public access to roof (see Condition).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMENDATION
4. Sidewalk width. Downtown Zoning Map 1C	12' sidewalk width required on Post Ave.	Allow for existing 5' wide sidewalk to remain. Roadway of Post Ave. would either be narrowed or developer would dedicate 7' for sidewalk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developer widening sidewalk at the first level would hinder retail space along Post Ave. eliminating the pedestrian interaction the retail spaces would promote. (D-1) 	Recommended approval
5. Overhead Weather Protection. SMC 23.49.018	Continuous canopies with an 8' depth. 156' on Post Ave. & 30' on Columbia.	Omit canopies on Post Ave. and Columbia. Total of 180 linear feet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5' sidewalk would limit overhead weather protection to 3 horizontal feet. 	Recommended denial.
6. Overhead Weather Protection. SMC 23.49.018	Continuous canopies with an 8' depth.	Reduce canopy depth to 7'2" for 137 linear feet along southern portion of Western Ave. A reduction of 10" for 137 feet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intent is to avoid an existing street lamp. (D-6) 	Recommended approval
7. Blank Façade. SMC 23.49.056D	Columbia St: Maximum blank façade length along Class II pedestrian street is 30'	To allow a 55'3" blank wall. 25'3" additional blank wall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service functions located on Columbia St. due to lack of alley. Increases retail presence on Post Ave. and Western Ave. (D-3) 	Recommended approval
8. Blank Façade. SMC 23.49.056D	Marion St: Maximum blank façade length along Class I pedestrian St. is 15'.	To allow a 18'9" blank wall. 3'9" of additional blank wall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Architectural feature accents the residential entry and disguises parking levels. (D-3, D-4) Façade is set back from the street. 	Recommended approval
9. Façade Setback. SMC 23.49.056B2	500 s.f. maximum setback on Marion St.	Increase setback to 3,100 s.f.--an increase of 2,600 s.f.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extends open space beyond area beneath elevated walkway.(D-1) Extends width of Green St. concept into plaza. (D-1) 	Recommended approval
10. Façade Setback. SMC 23.49.056B2	Maximum width of setback shall not exceed 80' or 30% of the lot frontage on the street.	Site is 100'. Departure request for 65% or 65' of setback beyond 15' along Marion St.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the amount of plaza along Marion St. (Green St.) (D-1) 	Recommended approval.
11. Façade Setback. SMC 23.49.056B2	Maximum setback of façade at intersections is 10'. Minimum distance the façade must conform to this limit is 20' along each street.	Increase the setback at the corner of Marion/Western and Marion/Post to 45'8". An increase of 35'8"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the amount of plaza area. (D-1) 	Recommended approval.