



The City of Seattle

Pioneer Square Preservation Board

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MINUTES OF MEETING

PSB 94/08

DATE: April 16, 2008
PLACE: City Hall, Room L280
TIME: 9:00 a.m.

Board Members Present:

Staff:

Doug Ito
Ryan Hester
Adam Hasson
Lorne McConachie
Ann Brown

Genna Nashem
Melinda Bloom

Absent:

Alex Bennett
Rick Friedhoff
John DeLanoy
Catherine Person
David Strauss

There was no quorum. Ms. Nashem informed applicants and public the next scheduled meeting is May 7 but she would try to schedule a meeting sooner if possible.

041608.31 North Lot
Briefing on possible new construction.

Alan Cornell, Daniels Development, Opus Northwest, John Chau, Don Miles briefed the Board on possible new construction in the North Lot.

Mr. Cornell said they would brief the Board on the height, bulk and scale of the projected development as well as the treatment of the ground plane. He said he believed the EIS for the South Downtown Livability would be out next month which would allow them to get into DPD with a contract rezone and a master use permit application in June. The project is a two-block development in the north half of the North Lot; it is a mixed use development which includes residential, retail, parking and office and will be configured in such a way that the east block is comprised of the replacement parking for the north lot along with office component and a retail component at ground level. The west block will be parking for residents, retail at the ground level and residential uses above.

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The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

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A model of the proposed development was provided; John Chau presented varied examples of massing, height and scale and the relationship of the development to the Stadium, Pioneer Square, King Street Station water views, and downtown. He said the range of height being considered is 180 feet to 240 feet.

Mr. Ito asked if the views being preserved that he discussed were those from the Stadium.

Mr. Chau confirmed that was correct and the planning had to do with the sale agreement to preserve the view corridors. He said the proposed project has a 90 foot right of way extending Second Ave; the building would come up to 75 feet, set back 60 feet and then rise to the EIS allowed height. He said through conversations with PSA they learned the stadium scoreboard was built vertically to enhance stadium views to the sides of it rather than the middle; this prompted a change to the proposed development to move the height (180 to 240 feet) to the middle so the view corridor is on the outer edge.

Mr. Chau said the west block would try to respect adjacent heights, rising up slowly from existing to taller buildings and even though the view corridor is on the outer edge, this massing will not create a canyon on 2nd Avenue. By moving the higher mass to the middle portion of the development it allows for much more daylight to typical office plate. He said they are working to reshape the massing to also be resident-friendly, not create canyons, provide amenities and to look at the development in the greater context of how all ties together.

Don Miles continued the presentation and provided more focus on the streetscape, the street wall relationship and impacts to pedestrians. The setbacks on the majority of the facades on Occidental create a relationship between existing buildings to the north and west and the development. He said most of the frontages are built to the back edges of the sidewalk, as suggested by Guidelines and that the corners along King are prime retail opportunities and opportunities for activity to spill out of those retail areas along the sidewalk; they have put retail there and moved the lobbies to the mid-block. He said they have aggregated vehicular activity to access points are off 2nd Avenue at the south edge where it does not impact the primary retail opportunity. He said they have distributed the service access to the west block at two points, one on Occidental and the other on 2nd Avenue. The other service activity for the office block is aggregated to 3rd. 2nd and 3rd Avenues are private rights of way.

Mr. Miles said there are opportunities for special architectural treatments on the south side for green screening for the parking which is at street level. The parking is at grade level and is not recessed so the opportunity exists to use those spaces for retail uses. The storefronts shown are 20 feet high so are representative of the storefront character of Pioneer Square historic buildings. He said they also propose the Pioneer Square streetscape standards. He said that 2nd Avenue, north of King is required to be 90 feet. He showed the Board several streetscape scenarios they are considering. They propose setting back on King and Occidental to create an open space that helps with the transition of game day activity but also lends itself to outdoor café seating that would further activate the area.

Mr. Hester said they had done a good job at showing the options of building size and shape. He asked what building mass and form makes sense for the District; Pioneer Square is rectangular and he isn't sure the angular form of a building would be in keeping with that.

Mr. Ito stated that the Plumbing Building is angled, but is angled for a reason; it has Railroad Avenue cutting the block. He said that if one walks through Pioneer Square the general sense is of rectangular grid that clashes occasionally. He said this is a platted rectangular grid; there are some offsets in the street grid at Occidental. If the angles had a more tangible reason other than stadium view, it would make more sense.

Mr. McConachie requested more information about the grid, the orthogonal nature of general Pioneer Square and what created the proposed angles.

Mr. Miles said as soon as the setback changed from 2nd Avenue to the edges it changed the dynamic and tended to put more energy on King and on 2nd Avenue and opened up space around the tower at King Street Station. He said there are other options without the angle but it wasn't just the accommodation of the view from the stadium but also in bringing in more focus and energy to the tower. The 2nd Avenue extension creates a geometry in how it cut through; he said by setting up a counterpoint to the grid, it brought more focus to the tower. Mr. Miles said they have had several discussions about the "block signature" of Pioneer Square and being on the edge where Railroad Way and 2nd Avenue Extension coming in at angles and if a different dynamic is appropriate or not.

Mr. McConachie suggested that we should focus on Pioneer Square rather than the stadium.

Mr. Chau said from an urban design standpoint this is at a place where all different forces come together including the stadium and what he thinks is more interesting is the angles that exist. He said they are deliberately trying to hold the street edge, to respect the stadium view and to retain proportion as the building rises up.

Mr. Hasson likes the dynamic nature of it and said it has a lot of interest to it. Getting beyond the view corridors, he asked how these buildings relate to one another as a project and can it work a bit better. He likes how the ground levels are working.

Mr. Miles said the proportional analysis they are doing will help with the building relationship issue. He said this is a building grouping within two new blocks and there is an opportunity to have architecture that complements what is on the block.

Mr. Ito also said he was concerned with amount of angles. He asked if they are considering this development to be two separate buildings, or is this one big development with an overarching style.

Mr. Chau said they don't know yet, but what they do know the buildings will relate to each other.

Mr. Miles said the identity of this place is Pioneer Square and its proximity to historic landmarks in the area; they want this to fit into the fabric of Pioneer Square and the City.

Mr. Ito said if that is the case and there will be two different uses and two different blocks, it seems stronger if the office block were angled then the other one would not be or would do something different than what is being done on the other block.. He said they are two different animals and they should read that way as a mass and continuing on into the fabric of the skins, or the decks and balconies. He said one of the problems

he has is when going down 2nd Avenue, if they both angle in it really would focus on the tower of the Stadium; he said the focus for the Board is Pioneer Square.

Mr. McConachie said stadia seem to be 30 year elements in our Cityscape; Pioneer Square is a 150 year element. He recommended care in what we orient around; stadia are not iconic elements that have longevity. Occidental terminates at this site, at least visually; he asked if there is any notion of a formal element/aspect of architecture that says "I'm the receiver of where Occidental is". He asked about the cantilevers on the east side.

Mr. Chau said they do have an easement requirement for truck access below.

Mr. Ito asked if they have talked to marketing people about what is the most beneficial view for marketing, water view versus City view.

Leslie Williams said originally they were concerned about getting a south facing courtyard because people prefer sunny courtyards and people like to be in the inner courtyard because it is a little quieter.

Mr. Ito stated that south facing will get all the stadium noise.

Leslie Williams agreed but most people who will live there will embrace that; that will be one of the reasons they will live there. She said there is a market for either water or a city view.

Mr. McConachie requested to hear about the terminus of Occidental.

Mr. Miles said it is an opportunity for an architectural expression and they have that as a goal, but have not developed it yet.

Mr. McConachie referred to the metaphor of DNA coming into a specific site; he advised care about what is being referenced. He said the issues about views and street grids, the built city and water are powerful shapers but the stadium is not. He felt the design was too referential toward a stadium. He said he appreciates the idea of south facing courtyards and the north-south dynamic of a residential unit looking to the sun with the City behind is powerful. He said the forms should reference the more personal DNA of the two sites or the bigger City DNA; the stadium is too momentary.

Mr. Hasson was happy to see the playfulness of shapes and wonders if all the shapes need to be interesting or if just one should be interesting shape would be more powerful.

Mr. McConachie asked the Board what is desired and what the feeling of shifting off the orthogonal grid is.

Mr. Hasson said the canyon affect is a no-go. He appreciated how the presentation was started, showing how the design evolved and he appreciates how things are continuing to evolve. It is hard to say what we want.

Mr. McConachie asked the Board if there are any explorations that haven't been touched on.

Ms. Brown lives in the Florentine and due to the height people on the east side have lost their view.

Mr. McConachie asked if there was any understanding of what the South Lot is moving toward; currently it is a parking lot.

The applicants said they did not know of any plans.

Mr. Ito said he has no problem with angles but if they are going to be done it has to be a big move and not a bunch of little ones; significant changes need to make sense.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Genna Nashem
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