

MEMORANDUM

TO: DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

FROM: Dennis Lisk, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: LAND-2013-01464 – Pre-Application Meeting #2 -- Overlake Village Block 3 Office Building

LOCATION: 156th Avenue NE and NE 28th Street

DATE: November 7, 2013

Project Context

This is the second Pre-Application meeting submittal for this project. The project site is the northeast corner of the former Group Health Overlake hospital property, for which a Master Plan was approved in late 2011. Since that time, Capstone Partners purchased the property from Group Health and has embarked upon the redevelopment of the property as the master developer of the site.

In general, the surrounding area includes a mix of uses with portions of the Microsoft corporate campus to the north and east across 156th Avenue and undeveloped or to-be developed portions of the Capstone Overlake Village site to the west and south. The two proposed buildings will be located along 156th Avenue, which is planned to be the main retail street within Overlake Village.

Project Description

The proposed development would involve a new six-story, 225,000 square foot office building at the corner of 156th Avenue NE and the future NE 28th Street. In addition, four levels of underground parking are proposed, which would house approximately 700 parking spaces. Vehicular access to the building would be via a landscaped court/drop-off area located along the west side of the building, which would lead to a garage entrance at the northwest corner of Building 3. Finally, per the Master Plan approved for the Group Health property, a linear pedestrian plaza would be located along the south side of Building 3. This plaza would be the eastern terminus of the urban hillclimb pathway that will connect 152nd Avenue to 156th Avenue, and will also be one of the primary gateways into the site.

The applicant has begun to revise and refine the design concept for Building 3 and is now showing more detailed building perspectives, elevations, and floor plans. The applicant has also provided more conceptual information and preliminary analysis of the urban hillclimb pathway and its relationship to adjacent buildings (including Building 3) and the park. Although Building

3 is not located right on the park, the site design for this property is informed to some degree by the interplay of the hillclimb pathway and the park in front of the future office buildings to be located to the west (Buildings 2A and 2B).

Design Considerations

There are several important design factors which should be considered for this project, including:

- Relationship to 156th Avenue – The applicant’s plans still show a wide green buffer from the back of the sidewalk to the building face along the east side of the building. This is proposed in order to retain the type of green parkway look and feel already existing along 156th Avenue to the north, as well as to no place the building within a 10-foot wide easement PSE maintains along 156th Avenue. Section 21.12.150(B) of the Zoning Code requires a 10-foot build-to line along 156th so that the faces of buildings are no further than 10 feet from the back of the sidewalk.

Based on comments received at the last DRB meeting, the applicant is attempting to address this design standard by projecting about half of the east façade out from the main elevation of the building to be closer to the sidewalk without infringing on the PSE easement. Staff would like to get the Board’s input on the applicant’s revision.

- Pedestrian Plaza – The pedestrian plaza along the south side of Building 3 will be a signature feature of the development of this property. It is located at one of the primary gateways into the site and will also serve as both an entry and exit point for the hillclimb urban pathway. Staff posed several questions about the design of the plaza for consideration by the Board:
 - How will the front entrance to the building relate to the plaza?
 - What is the appropriate ratio of hardscape vs. landscaping for the space?
 - Should the plaza open out more toward 156th Avenue to invite pedestrians into the site?
 - What is the best way to provide for a smooth and safe crossing of the vehicular drop-off area between Buildings 3 and 2B?

While the applicant’s revised drawings are still in their early stages, Staff has concerns that the images shown in the latest materials show a large amount of green, landscaped area. The City’s vision for this area is more urban, with a primarily hardscape plaza. Staff would like to see additional concepts from the applicant that embraces the City’s vision.

- Building Variety –Staff indicated that a high level of diversity needed to be achieved for Buildings 3, 2A and 2B in order for the overall neighborhood to have an organic urban sensibility and avoid a business park-like appearance. Staff would like to see additional design work done on this topic. The relationships that the buildings which compose the Amazon.com campus in South Lake Union provide an appropriate design cue for the three office buildings at the Capstone site.

- Building Modulation – The latest materials from the applicant show a greater amount of building modulation along several of the building facades. Staff would like additional information from the applicant to show how the building would comply with the intent statement of Section 21.62.030(E)(2)(c), which calls for the mass of large buildings to be broken up and long, continuous flat facades to be broken up.
- Building Materials -- The use of high-quality, durable, and permanent building materials is called for by the Overlake design standards. As the first major office building project within the Overlake Village area, ensuring the use of high-quality building materials is a top priority for this project.