

# Downtown Code Design Review Committee

## Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2020

*Members Present:* Porter, Hastings, Casella, Mosley, Dickson

*Staff Present:* Hammer, Wallace, Williams

*Others Present:* Alex Dickerson (Legal); Remick Moore, Doug Sloan, Emmit Martin (Sprocket Rocket); Kathryn Withers, Tony Giarratana, Ted Kromer (900 Church)

*Location:* 800 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, Metro Planning Dept. – Nolen Room

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### I. APPROVAL OF THE 2/13/2020 DTC DRC MINUTES

Mosley moved and Hastings seconded the motion to approve the February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting minutes (5-0).

### II. CASES FOR REVIEW

#### 1) Sprocket Rocket Hub

2020DTC-005-001

535 Lafayette Street

Staff Reviewer: Justin Wallace

A request to modify active use, MCSP, and vehicular access standards of the DTC.

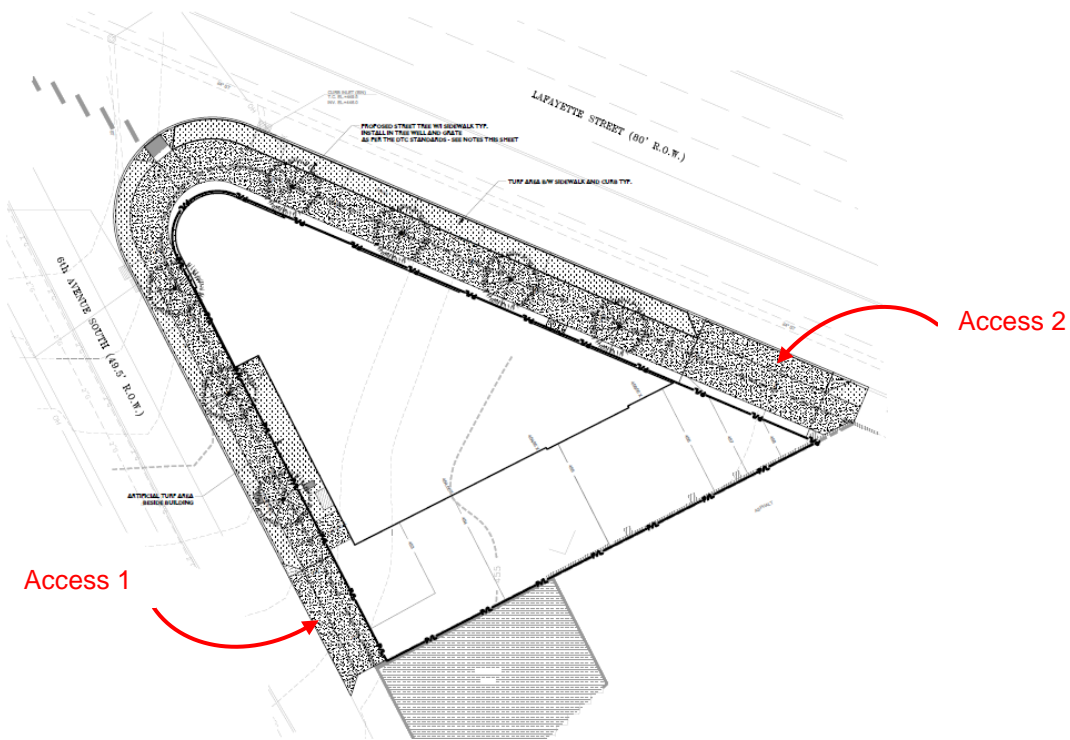
Staff Recommendation: Approval with conditions

#### APPLICANT REQUEST

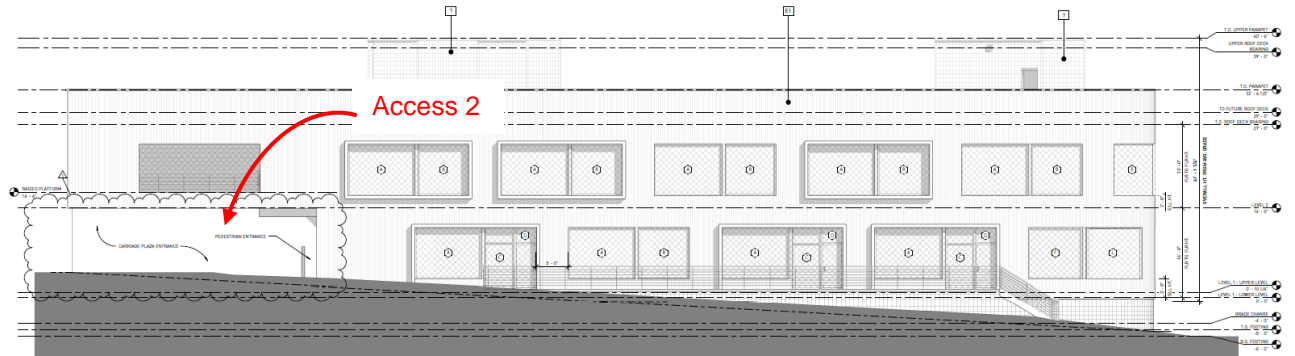
A request to modify various standards of the Downtown Code for property located at 535 Lafayette Street, (0.22 acres), at the corner of Lafayette Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, and within the Lafayette Subdistrict of the DTC.

#### DTC MODIFICATION REQUEST SUMMARY

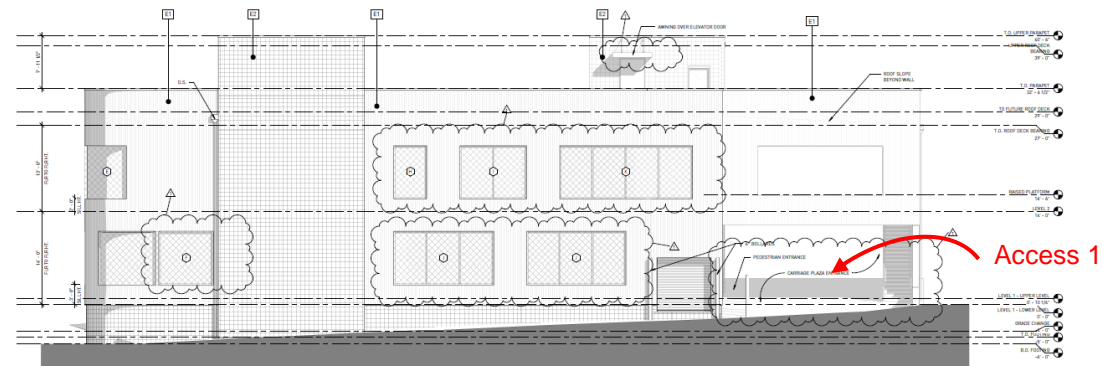
1. Active Use
  - Required: An active ground floor use requirement shall mean a habitable space occupied by retail, office, residential, institutional or recreational uses, specifically excluding parking and mechanical uses.
  - Proposed: The applicant is requesting a non-active use for a small portion of the frontage of the building.
2. Major and Collector Street Plan
  - Required: 14-ft sidewalk corridor including a 4-ft furnishing zone and 10-ft sidewalk, plus a 4-ft frontage zone
  - Proposed: 13-ft sidewalk corridor to include ADA-compliant tree grates, plus a 5-ft frontage zone
3. Vehicular Access
  - Required: Access from public streets shall be considered in the following order: Other Streets, Secondary Streets, Neighborhood Streets, and then Primary Streets as approved by Metro departments. Lafayette Street is a primary street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a secondary street. Staff recommends access to occur from 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and not Lafayette Street. Reviewers shall consider the public safety, street character, and pedestrian experience.
  - Proposed: Access points are proposed on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Lafayette Street.



Site Plan



Lafayette Street Elevation



6th Avenue South Elevation

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project proposes a 2-story, 32-ft tall building to serve as Sprocket Rocket's business operations. The first floor consists of multiple tenant spaces. The business portion includes retail, lobby, and area dedicated to parking of pedal-powered vehicles. The second level serves as offices for the business and a large outdoor covered patio space that functions as a waiting area.

## PLAN DETAILS

The property is located at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Lafayette Street. The site borders an adjacent property to the south. Pedestrian access is received from Lafayette Street and vehicular access points are indicated along 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Lafayette Street.



## ANALYSIS

### Active Use Definition

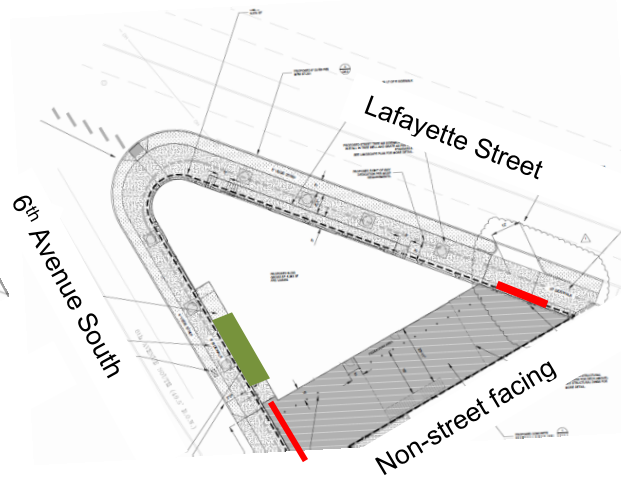
The Downtown Code requires an active ground floor use and defines active use as “a habitable space occupied by retail, office, residential, institutional or recreational uses, specifically excluding parking and mechanical uses (68).”

### Non-Active Use

The ground floor level has been redesigned so that the majority of frontage is an active use with several tenant spaces and entrances. In the spirit of the Downtown Code to promote the notion of form over use, Planning staff finds it reasonable to consider a modification to allow a non-active use for a small portion of the building. The portion of frontage that is non-active has been designed in such a way that it appears similar to other uses in the building and may be adapted to alternate uses in the future. This portion of building without active use is recessed from the street, and an amenity area is provided to further activate the street.



**Previously Submitted Floor Plan**



**Revised Floor Plan w/ non-active use**

Major and Collector Street Plan

The Major and Collector Street Plan calls for a sidewalk corridor of 14-ft to include a 4-ft furnishing zone (for street trees, plantings, light poles, etc.) and a 10-ft clear sidewalk for pedestrians, plus a 4-ft frontage zone to be used for outdoor seating, storefront signage, and the like.

The applicant is proposing a 13-ft sidewalk corridor to include a 13-ft sidewalk and ADA-compliant street tree grates in lieu of a linear planting strip. The ADA-compliant ramp, approximately 83-ft long, provides a level entrance point to the multiple storefronts along Lafayette Street.

Staff finds the modification to be warranted due to site constraints, provisions made for a walkable street, and a cohesive design. Due to the irregular shape of the lot, and underlying slope conditions, a ramp and stair are necessary to provide a level entrance for tenant spaces. In addition, the proposed entrance platform offers a cohesive entrance to the multiple storefronts along the building and delineates the frontage zone from the clear sidewalk. Finally, the ADA-compliant tree wells will allow a seamless and continues sidewalk corridor, mitigating any conflicts with the flow of pedestrians.

Vehicular Access

The DTC uses Street Types as an urban design and organizing tool to prioritize the location of vehicular access points. All streets are classified on the Regulating Plan as Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Other, or Alley. Where alleys exist, or where new alleys can be created, the DTC prioritizes alleys for access and loading. The location of vehicular access from all other streets shall be determined on a case by case basis.

The map below illustrates the location of the site within the DTC street hierarchy. Lafayette Street is considered a Primary Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South is considered a Secondary Street.

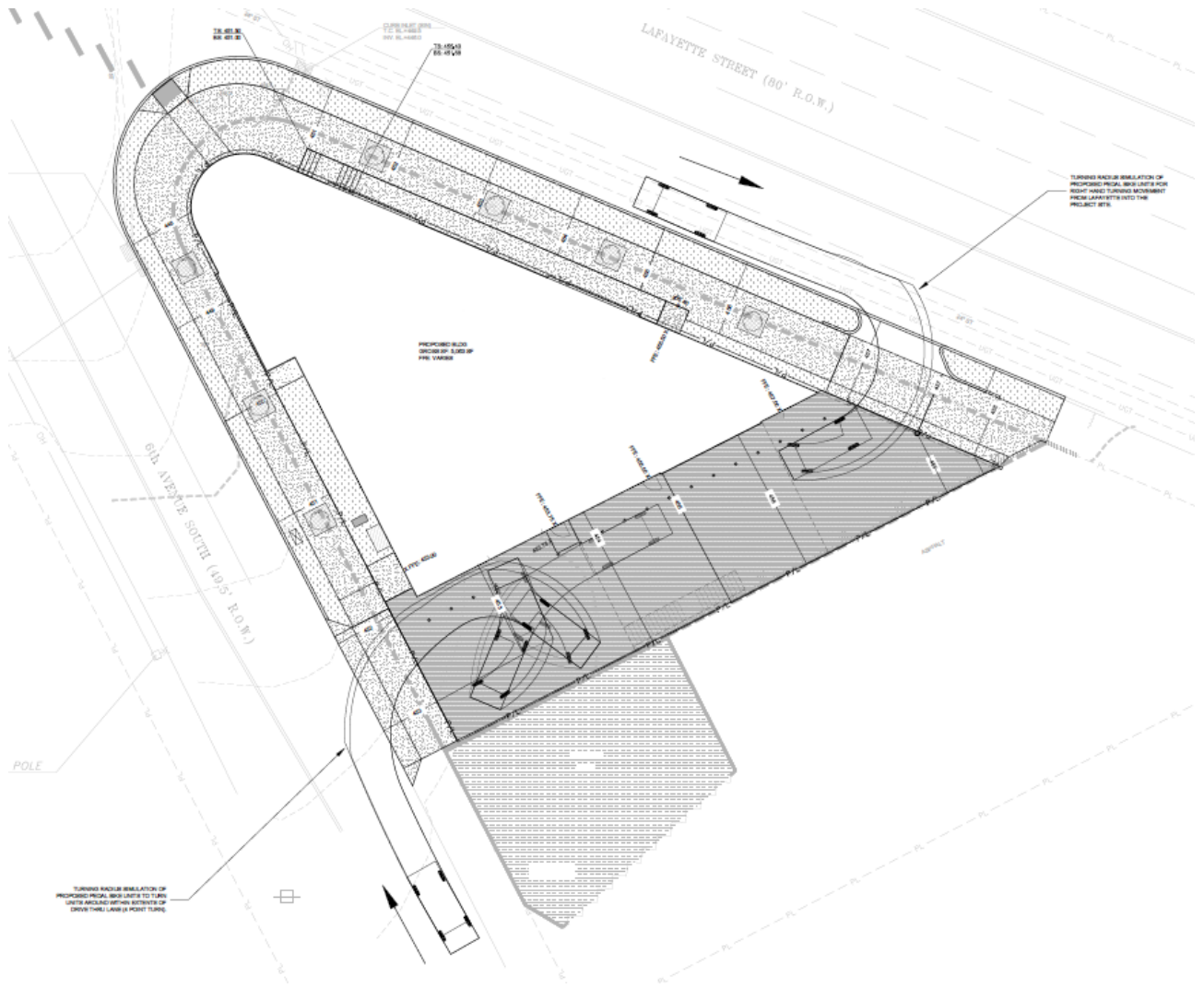


**Lafayette Subdistrict Street Hierarchy Map**

Planning staff has coordinated with Public Works and the Multimodal Transportation Division and to determine optimal design solutions. The following design considerations factor into the recommendation.

Given the complicated and challenging condition of the intersection at Lafayette Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Ewing Avenue, and Lea Avenue, Public Works prefers access to occur on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South at the signalized intersection. The frequent turning of slow-moving vehicles onto Lafayette Street, which is a 6-lane state road, is not ideal and would present a challenge for traffic flow. Further, the Downtown Code emphasizes the need to mitigate conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular traffic by reducing the number of curb cuts where possible and encourages access points to not occur along primary streets (Lafayette).

The applicant has provided diagrams that illustrate turning maneuvers of the slow-moving vehicles. The diagrams show operation of vehicles accessed from Lafayette, turning radius of vehicles within the site, and egress of vehicles to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. While not ideal, the access point along Lafayette has been designed in such a way so that slow-moving vehicles would operate via a right turn in only from Lafayette Street. The design would prevent egress of vehicles exiting onto Lafayette and reduce the overall number of vehicles crossing the sidewalk.



**Plan illustrating movement of slow-moving vehicles**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The proposed design has demonstrated efforts to align with the goals and objectives of the Downtown Code. Staff recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. Continue working with Planning staff on material of fencing and/or screening of access drive along Lafayette Street. No chain-link fencing is permitted per the DTC.
2. Revise landscape and civil site plans to show street trees within ADA-compliant tree grates in lieu of linear planting strip.

Hastings moved and Mosley seconded the motion to approve the modification request with staff conditions. (5-0)

**RESOLUTION**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the Downtown Code Design Review Committee that case 1) Sprocket Rocket Hub is approved. (5-0)



## 2) 900 Church

2020DTC-011-001

900 Church Street

Staff Reviewer: Eric Hammer

A request to modify the built-to zone, MCSP, and minimum light transmission standards of the DTC.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with conditions.

### APPLICANT REQUEST

A request to modify the build-to zone, light transmission of street level glazing, and Major and Collector Street Plan (MCSP) standards of the DTC for property located at 900 Church Street, (0.31 acres), north of Church Street, east of YMCA Way, west of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and within the Core subdistrict of the DTC.

### DTC MODIFICATION REQUEST SUMMARY

4. Build-to Zone – 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North & YMCA Way
  - Required: 0-10' from back of the public sidewalk or pedestrian easement for 80% of the lot frontage
  - Proposed: Portions of the façade, above the first floor, cantilever over the sidewalk/pedestrian easement
5. MCSP – 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North
  - Required: 8' sidewalk, 4' furnishing zone
  - Proposed: Various dimensions (to a minimum of 8' sidewalk, no furnishing zone) along portions of viaduct frontage
6. MCSP – YMCA Way
  - Required: 8' sidewalk, 4' furnishing zone
  - Proposed: 6'-11" sidewalk, no furnishing zone proposed for frontage with lay-by
7. Minimum Light Transmission
  - Required: All street level exterior windows must have a minimum light transmission of 60%
  - Proposed: Portions of the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South façade are spandrel glass

### PROJECT PROPOSAL

The proposal is a 34-story residential development consisting of 356 units with no on-site parking. The Core subdistrict allows a maximum height of 30 stories. The project is proposing to earn the additional 4 stories through LEED Silver-level certification.

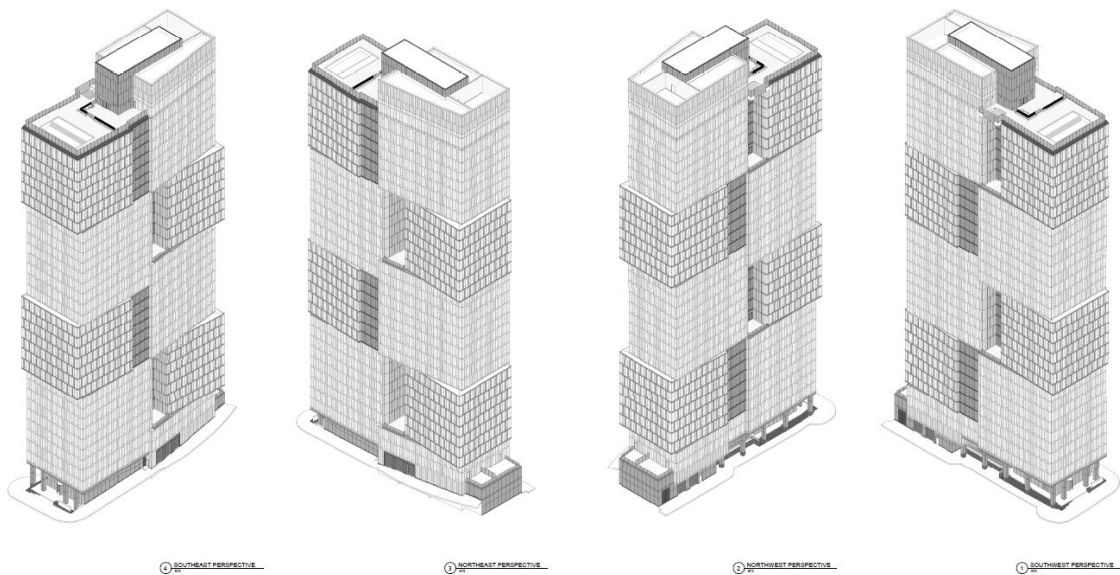




**Figure 1: Perspectives – South and Southeast**

**PROJECT DETAILS**

The property has three street frontages on Church Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, and YMCA Way with a building lobby that opens onto both Church Street and YMCA Way. A porte-cochere is proposed along YMCA Way to allow valet services for tenant vehicles, which are parked off site. Building loading is proposed from YMCA Way and NES transformers are accessed from 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North.



**Figure 2: Perspectives – All Sides**





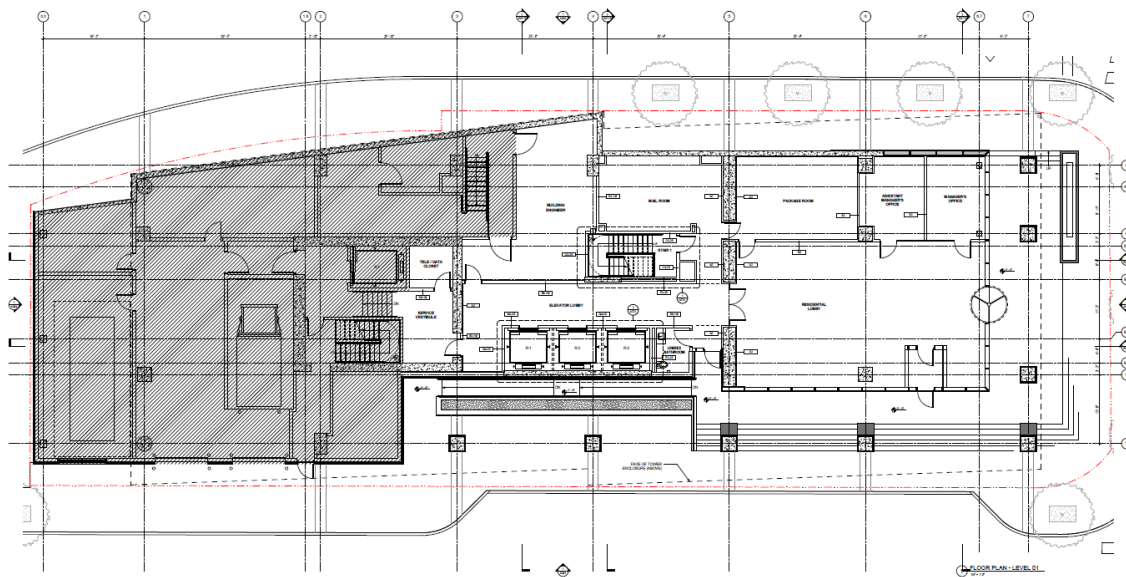
**Figure 3: Perspectives – YMCA Way Ground Floor**



**Figure 4: Perspectives – 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Ground Floor**



**Figure 5: Perspectives – Church Street Ground Floor**

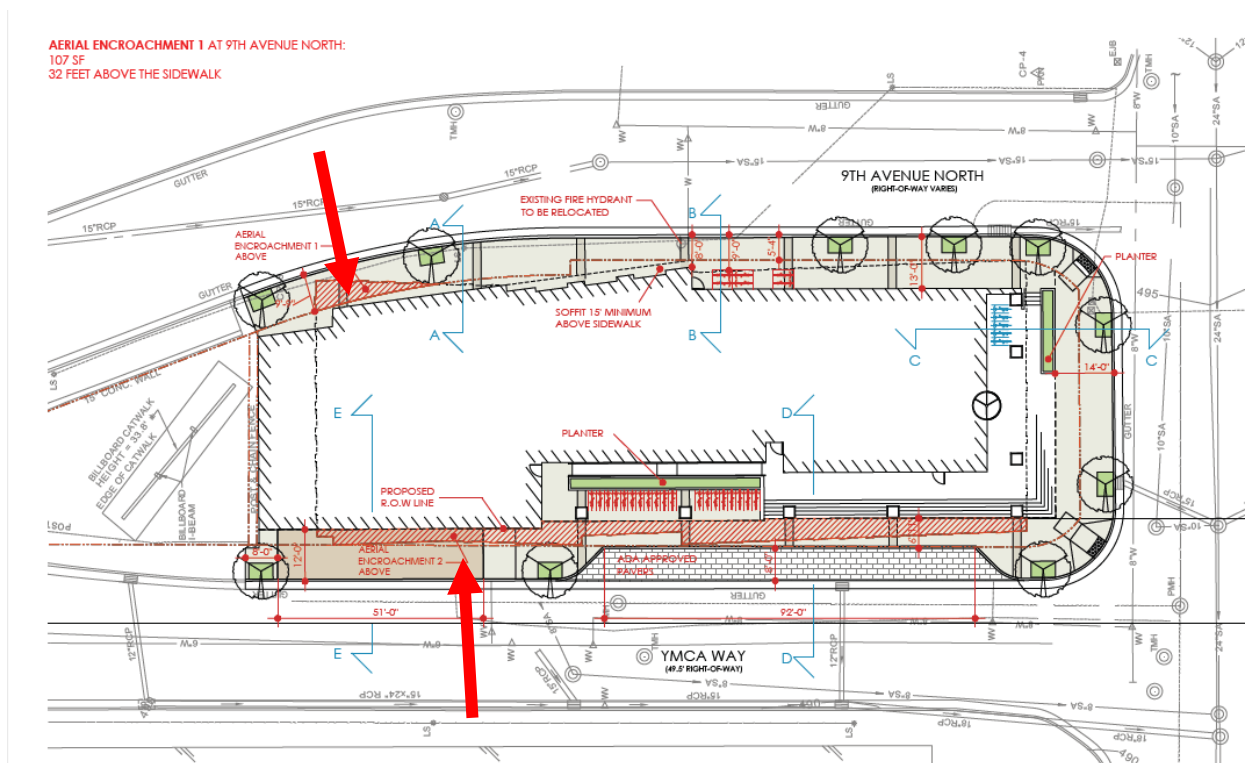


**Figure 6: Ground Floor Plan**

**ANALYSIS**

Two major challenges affect this site. First, the site is constrained by size, the parcel is only 13,383 prior to required right-of-way dedications and easement recordings, which further reduce the buildable area. Required building components like loading docks and NES transformers also need to occur at the ground floor and must be carefully located in order to maximize pedestrian-oriented active façades.

Second, the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North frontage has a significant amount of grade change and the street becomes a curvilinear viaduct approximately halfway across the frontage. 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North is joined to Union Street by this viaduct. Expanding the sidewalk corridor to meet the intent of the MCSP involves connecting the viaduct to elements of the site, which is challenging.



**Figure 7: Ground Floor Plan with Landscaping, Encroachments, and Sidewalk Widths**

Build-to Zone – 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North & YMCA Way

The required build-to zones along both 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and YMCA Way are 0-10 feet from back of the public sidewalk or pedestrian easement for 80% of the lot frontage. This building proposes to cantilever over portions of the sidewalk corridor beyond this build-to zone.

The encroachment along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North occurs towards the northern end of the façade, where the viaduct and property line begins to curve. The building's floor plates are generally rectangular, and a corner of that rectangle protrudes 32 feet above the grade of the sidewalk below. The encroachment does not impede the sidewalk corridor and allows the modular rhythm of the architecture to continue on this façade.

The encroachment along YMCA Way occurs along the entire length of the façade at 24 feet above the grade of the sidewalk corridor. The stated purpose of this request is also to allow the architectural movement of the façade. To compensate for encroachment into the pedestrian realm, the ground floor lobby of the building is recessed, visually opening that space and decreasing the impact of the encroachment. A mandatory referral is required for all encroachments and staff recommends that any approval of this modification be conditioned on the future approval of a mandatory referral.

MCSP – 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North

The MCSP calls for an 8' sidewalk with a 4' furnishing zone along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. These proposed widths are typical of secondary and tertiary streets Downtown. However, 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North is a viaduct for a portion of this frontage and any additions to the sidewalk corridor will need to be joined to the viaduct via an expansion joint or other apparatus. The applicant has proposed that for a portion of the sidewalk corridor affected by the viaduct, a minimum 8' sidewalk be provided, but that the furnishing zone be removed. This allows the preservation of the pedestrian experience in response to the viaduct condition. A portion of the publicly accessible bicycle parking required for the site is provided around this section. Due to the sidewalk constraints identified, careful coordination with the Transportation Planning division must occur to ensure facility selection and rack placement minimizes interference with the pedestrian realm.

MCSP – YMCA Way

The MCSP also calls for an 8' sidewalk with a 4' furnishing zone along YMCA Way. The proposed cross-section calls for a 6'-11" sidewalk with no furnishing zone for those portions that are affected by a proposed lay-by lane and full compliance for all portions not affected. The building has no on-site structured parking. If tenants own private vehicles, they are stored elsewhere, with an on-site valet used to retrieve vehicles. Both the width and topography of the site as well as required loading and refuse areas make other locations less optimal than the location proposed. Other potential locations are more disruptive to the sidewalk corridor than the solution proposed.

Minimum Light Transmission

The DTC requires that all street level exterior windows have a minimum light transmission of 60%. A portion of the ground floor fenestration on the eastern façade features spandrel glass. This has been requested for privacy, as there is grade separation between the ground floor and the sidewalk, causing building occupants to be a few feet lower than passersby. The spandrel glass is in the same rhythm as the clear glass and only is proposed for areas substantially affected by the grade change. Other portions of this façade do feature spandrel glass as a façade material, but these areas are covering mechanical and egress areas and are not included in glazing calculations.

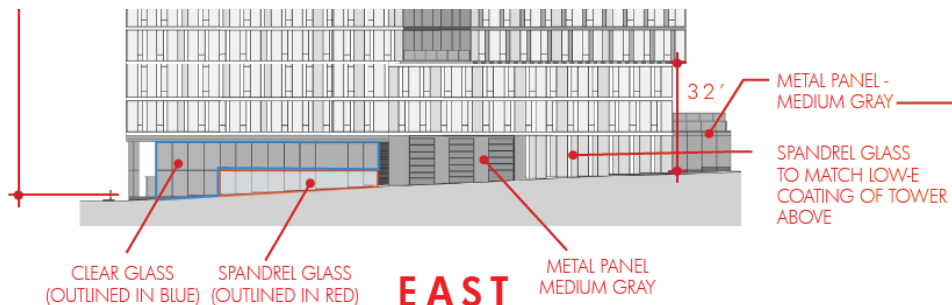


Figure 8: Elevation - East

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the modification to the build-to zone, MCSP, and light transmission standards with the following conditions and deferral without all conditions:

1. A mandatory referral for all elements encroaching into the right-of-way must be approved by Metro Council.
2. The applicant shall coordinate with the Transportation Division of the Planning Department to ensure bicycle rack placement minimizes disruption of the sidewalk corridor.
3. The modifications allowed are specific to the proposed design of the building, both in site plan and architecture. Staff shall assess any future changes to the architecture of the building and may require further review by the DTC DRC if changes are deemed substantial by staff.

The proposed modifications meet the intent of the DTC, of the Core subdistrict, and of the MCSP.

Mosley moved and Dickson seconded the motion to approve the modification request with staff conditions. (5-0)

**RESOLUTION**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the Downtown Code Design Review Committee that case 2) 900 Church is approved. (5-0)

**III) Adjournment**