To: Downtown Design Advisory Board (DDAB)  
From: Bridget Rassbach, Urban Design Architect  
Meeting: 8/22/2023  
RE: Staff Report for Detailed Design Review  
Bridget Rassbach  
SGI: USA Denver Buddhist Center  
1450 Speer Boulevard  
Project # 2021PM0000378  
o D-GT  
o New Construction  
o General Building Form  

I. Board Authority and Role of Design Review
This project is located within the Choose an item. Zone District and is therefore subject to review in accordance with the Downtown Urban Design Standards and Guidelines and the Denver Zoning Code in addition to the requirements of other agencies. Projects submitted shall conform to all the requirements of the Downtown Urban Design Standards and Guidelines, even if they are not specifically referenced in the review notes.

Please refer to the “Character Area” chapter requirements that are applicable for this location. The Standards and Guidelines establishes a process for promoting the neighborhood vision by setting clear expectations for the level of design quality that is envisioned for improvements.

Through its provisions, the Design Advisory Board is directed to consider Design Review Submittals of the proposed project (per the Design Review Process chapter and checklists), to receive the staff findings, the applicant presentations, and to hear public comment to make a motion for recommendation for Approval, Approval with Conditions, or Denial to the zoning administrator of the project’s design at each submittal to the Downtown Design Advisory Board.

II. Scope of the Project
The proposed project is a 2-story (40 ft) religious assembly building in the D-GT Zone District. It is being developed under the General Building Form. This form requires 70% Build-to on all street frontages (0’-10’), 70% street active use be provided, 50% of the required Active Use for non-residential active use be provided along Broadway, and the 70% limitation of visible parking at street facing facades. Upper story setback is required along both Primary streets above 5 stories or 70’ for 65% of the structure length to a depth of 15’. Private Open Space is required - 5% of the Zone Lot Area.

Project is meeting these minimum requirements.
III. Site Design and Massing Review
Project was approved for Site Design and Massing at the January 25, 2022 meeting with the following comments:
A. Improving the plaza landscape design to reconcile the parking area and streetscape with the building and address site geometry
B. Alternative site wall and fence designs
C. Improving the East building façade with landscaping

IV. Design Review
Project has submitted for Design Development Review.

V. Staff Findings

A. Improving the plaza landscape design to reconcile the parking area and streetscape with the building and address site geometry

Although plaza landscaping is fully planted along the Speer frontage, it provides no buffer between parking and plaza. This would seem to reduce the use and activation of the plaza. Staff recommends addition of screening planning between parking and plaza.

B. Improving the East building façade with landscaping

The east façade has no landscaping shown, only a sidewalk adjacent to the structure. Clarify the response to this concern noted at Site Design and Massing approval.

C. Provide more info on exterior lighting and pedestrian lights. Are there wall mounted lights on structure?

2.76 Accent lighting shall be coordinated with the scale and facade design of the building.

3.77 Exterior lighting shall be integrated with the building design, create a sense of safety, and encourage pedestrian activity after dark.

D. Overall Street scape landscaping is positive. Rock mulch is not allowed in ROW. Revise landscape plans to reflect the requirements for live plant materials. Fence along Speer must incorporate garden wall to screen vehicle headlights

VI. Submittal and Compliance Checklist
Refer to the attached checklist. Green-highlighted checked topics are areas that appear to comply or are not applicable to project; Orange-highlighted checked topics are issues for further design discussion; Red-highlighted checked topics (if there are any) appear to not comply and require intensive board input.
VI. DDAB Project Commentary

Refer to the attached board review form for initial board comment.

VII. Staff Recommendation

MOTION

I move to recommend the SGI: USA Denver Buddhist Center, 1450 Speer Boulevard, Project # 2021PM0000378, resubmit for Design Review to the Zoning Administrator and to study and address the following topics of concern:

1. Provide more information on exterior materials/ samples
2. Provide more developed Landscape plan and lighting plan.