Aurora 77

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Aurora 77 is a mixed use development on a 10,020 square foot site located at the intersection between Seattle’s Green Lake and Greenwood neighborhoods. Just north of downtown Seattle at the northeast edge of the Green Lake basin, the project fronts the eastern edge of Aurora Avenue North and the south edge of North 77th Street.

As one of the first major redevelopments along the Aurora corridor, the project responds to the diverse neighborhood character and intends to respectively consider the districts past, present, and future.

With a mix of street level commercial spaces and thirty-three residential units sharing access to a communal courtyard, the project strengthens the neighborhood by becoming a transition between the vehicle centric Aurora corridor and the surrounding single family areas.
Context // Streets

Aurora Ave North
north/south arterial

General
• Varied & storied history focused on automobile movement.
• Predominately one to two story early to mid twentieth century commercial buildings, with a mix of services and establishments.
• An automobile focused street, not a particularly hospitable pedestrian environment.
• Medium density, with several under-developed parcels and numerous surface parking lots.
• Several projecting canopies and awnings of various dimensions, but commonly eight to ten feet above the sidewalk.
• Narrow sidewalk right of ways.

East Side of Street Specifics
• Mainly quarter to half block scale structures with a pattern of twenty to forty foot wide commercial storefronts, some more successful than others at engaging the street.
• Narrow sidewalk right of ways.

West Side of Street Specifics
• Many smaller scale residential type structures converted to commercial use.
• Commercial buildings mainly single story.

North 77th Street
east/west residential street

• Connector between residential neighborhoods.
• Aside from the half block commercial zone along Aurora, a modest and eclectic mix of early to mid-century single family residential structures on thirty to sixty foot wide parcels.
• Mainly one and two-story buildings.
• Pedestrian oriented with sidewalks, planting strips, street parking, and narrow movement lane.
• Mixture of wood and stucco clad structures with pitched and flat roofs.
Context // Neighborhood

The site currently has a two story wood framed commercial building, constructed in 1925, with three separate business establishments including a cross fit gym and two retail goods and service shops. These commercial spaces have storefront windows and entrances on Aurora with a blank façade along N 77th St. There is surface parking along the eastern alley edge. A power pole, with extensive east/west running wires, is located at the corner of Aurora and N 77th St. This has significant impacts on the overall building strategy.

The south property edge is bordered by the St. Germain Foundation, a religious organization. This is a half block scaled property with a two story main entrance fronting Aurora, adjacent surface parking along Aurora and N 76th St, and an approximately 30 foot tall concrete masonry windowless assembly space along the eastern alley edge of the site. The structure was originally constructed in 1925 with commercial storefront spaces along Aurora. These were demolished and replaced with the surface parking lot.

Directly west across Aurora is a mix of single story structures with various commercial establishments. On the northeast corner of Aurora and N 76th St is a single residential type structure which leads west to the Greenwood / Phinney Ridge residential neighborhoods beyond.

Northwest across Aurora and N 77th St is Moto International, a motorcycle sales and service establishment. This structure is single story with active frontage on N 77th St and display windows along Aurora.

North across N 77th St is a two story commercial building home to the Seattle Holistic Center & Tenzan Aikido. This is a quarter block scaled structure with three other quarter block commercial buildings adjacent to the north. The building has commercial storefront windows and awnings along Aurora. These turn the south corner to N 77th St, but only for a few feet leaving the remaining façade along N 77th St a two story blank wall.

East of the site, across the alley, are residential structures in the Green Lake neighborhood. The adjacent residences are one and two story buildings with pitched and flat roofs.
Movement

Movement through the site area is influenced by three primary forces:

1. Regional connections
2. Controlled crossings
3. Local attractions

Due to the volume of north/south vehicular movement along the Aurora corridor, east/west movement is concentrated at traffic controlled intersections found at Winona, N 77th St, and N 80th St.

Narrow sidewalks and vehicle traffic limit pedestrian activity along Aurora. Pedestrians filter to Aurora on a block by block basis from the neighborhood or surface parking areas. Pedestrian travel through the alley east of Aurora was observed that links residential areas to key local attractions.

Local attractions of the Green Lake Residential Urban Village draw vehicular traffic from the Greenwood and Phinney neighborhoods across the site area at the traffic controlled intersections.

Primary contributors to pedestrian activity are the Daniel Bagley Elementary School, the PCC, and Green Lake recreation areas.
Edges
Zoning // Use

The Aurora corridor character and use is a moderately intensive mix of small scale commercial buildings and surface parking lots. Cultural facilities in the neighborhood include the D. Bagley Elementary School, neighboring St. Germain Foundation and Green Lake proper.

The Aurora corridor has begun a transformation with increased scale and density as a NC3-40 zone. Development is likely to occur at half-block scales similar to this proposed project. There may be narrower parcel based projects as well as larger full block scaled developments, similar in scale to recent mixed use buildings found throughout Seattle’s various urban neighborhoods.

Within the last few years a similar half block scaled mixed use development “The Clarke” was completed south of the project on the western edge of Aurora fronting the lake. There is also a current proposal for redevelopment of 7216 Aurora with a similar scaled four story half block structure.
Structure Height
• Maximum structure height = 40 feet (SMC 23.47A.012.A.)
• Additional 4 feet permitted when a floor to floor height of at least 13 feet is provided for non-residential uses at street level (SMC 23.47A.012.A.1.)
• Additional 4 feet permitted for roof top features including open railings and parapets (SMC 23.47A.012.C.2.)
• Additional 16 feet permitted for roof top features including stair and elevator penthouses, if maximum 25% of roof area (SMC 23.47A.012.C.4.)

The average grade plan elevation is +208.70’ resulting in a maximum elevation of +252.70’

Floor Area Ratio
• The maximum allowable FAR for residential and non-residential mixed-use is 3.25 (SMC 23.47A.013 Table A)
• Lot area = 10,020 square feet
• Allowable gross floor area = 32,565 square feet
• Portions of the structure that are completely underground are exempt from FAR limitations (SMC 23.47A.013.D.1.)

Setback Requirements
• 15 foot setback required at rear lot line when across alley from a residential zoned lot for any portion of structure above 13 feet up to 40 feet, increasing by 2 feet for each 10 feet above 40 feet (SMC 23.47A.014.B.5.)
• One-half width of alley may be counted as part of the required setback, prior to any dedication that may be required for alley improvement purposes (SMC 23.47A.014.B.4.)
Design Opportunities

The project team has established the following design objectives:

- Provide a dynamic environment for urban residents.
- Improve street, sidewalk, and alley edges to encourage vital pedestrian activity.
- Encourage neighborhood establishments that positively contribute to the district by providing varied commercial space.
- Create a cohesive design vocabulary that responds to the character of Aurora while sensitively addressing the character and scale of the adjacent single family neighborhood.

In addition to these objectives the team has identified the following key design opportunities:

**Corridor // Cellular**

While the double loaded corridor typology provides an efficient organization for the typical apartment building, the resulting dwelling units often lack daylight and there is little interaction between occupants.

**Courtyard // Active**

A courtyard creates the potential for the urban condition of the street to integrate with daily use of the building. The project provides a neighborhood amenity with active participation between occupants and neighbors. The courtyard allows dwellings to openly interact on two sides and between multiple floors.

**Power Lines // Open Space**

Required setback from power lines at northwest corner of site provides opportunities to provide open space and strengthen the quality of the pedestrian realm and accentuate modulation at the building corner.

**Access // Community**

Public to private interface at street level is an opportunity to provide appropriate uses and promote a high degree of interaction between this development and the urban neighborhood. There is an opportunity to provide this on all sides of the project.

**Views // Residents**

Optimizing the connection between the residential units and the Green Lake Basin and Cascade views will concentrate unit organization along the eastern view edge. Roof top amenity space will provide continued interaction with the courtyard and view access for all.

**Edges // Neighborhood**

Expanded pedestrian environments along Aurora, N 77th St, and the alley is an opportunity to transition and extend meaningful public space and facilitate active neighborhood re-engagement with all sides of the project.
Lot area = 10,020 sqft

Existing grade high at NW corner +211’ dropping approximately 3 feet along Aurora to +208’ at the SW corner and approximately 2 feet along N 77th St to +209’ at the NE corner. The lowest point of the site is approximately +206.5’ at the SE corner.

A. Power lines and required setback at northwest corner of site = 42 sqft irregular shaped area.

B. Northwest corner sidewalk clutter of control box, light standard, and power pole.

C. Narrow sidewalks (SDOT sub-standard) along Aurora (9'-2" to 9'-3" wide) and N 77th Street (7'-11" to 8'-0" wide).

D. Restricted parking (rush hour 6-9am + 3-7pm tow away zone, 1 hour 9am-3pm) along Aurora and N 77th Street (1 hour 7am-6pm).

E. No landscaping along either street. Note pattern of landscaped traffic calming areas projecting into N 77th St east of site.

F. Interaction with alley, the space that mitigates transition from commercial use and scale to residential zone.

G. Vehicular corridor.

H. Views west to Phinney Ridge and Greenwood.

I. Commanding views (above 25 feet) east towards Green Lake, Maple Leaf Ridge, and Cascade Mountains beyond.

J. Partial views south to downtown skyline over adjacent structure (from roof).

K. Neighborhood pedestrian environment.
Development Summary

The proposed project is a four story mixed-use building with a single level of below grade parking, street level retail and three levels of apartments above with access to roof top amenity space for all residents. The anticipated gross square footage of the building is approximately 39,450 (inclusive of parking). Parking for approximately 24 vehicles will serve the commercial and residential needs. 18 stalls will be located in a below grade structure accessed from the alley, with an additional 6 stalls located along and off the alley within the structure. Commercial spaces totaling approximately 3,645 sqft will be located at street level along the primary frontage of Aurora Avenue North and returning at the northwest corner along North 77th Street. There is an opportunity for an additional 890 sq ft of either commercial area or live-work space at the northeast corner of the building fronting North 77th Street and the alley along the eastern edge. The three residential levels will provide 33 units consisting of studios, one bedroom, and two bedroom apartments. In summary, the intended uses for the project are market rate residential apartments, restaurant and neighborhood retail, and parking for the commercial and residential uses.

Potential Design Departure Requests

SMC 23.47A.016.D.1 Screening & Landscaping Requirements
Surface parking across an alley from a residential zone is required to have a five foot landscape buffer and six foot high screening along the lot line.

Departure requested to allow an alternate to the screening and landscaping requirements. There are no residential properties opening onto this portion of the north/south oriented alley, so vehicular movement to and from Aurora Avenue will have little impact on the rear yards of the residential neighbors. Parking off the alley gives ready access to the commercial uses and contributes to the vitality of those establishments. To mitigate the appearance of the parking, the design proposes to locate the stalls completely within the structure. Also, the use of permeable paving and the planting of trees along the column lines of the building will help to improve this edge condition.

SMC 23.47A.032.G. Parking Location & Access
Refer to previous section

SMC 23.S4.030.B.2 Parking Space Requirements Nonresidential uses and live-work units
When ten or fewer parking spaces are provided, a maximum of 25% of the parking spaces may be striped for small vehicles. A minimum of 75% of the spaces shall be striped for large vehicles.

Departure requested to allow 5 medium stalls and 1 large ADA stall. The medium 8 foot wide stalls have the capacity for an extended length to 19 feet (equal to a large stall), but due to the structural column layout, driven by economical constructability, these stalls cannot be 8.5 feet wide to meet the large stall definition.

Relevant Design Guidelines

Citywide & Green Lake Neighborhood

A. SITE PLANNING

1. Responding to Site Characteristics
   • Courtyard provides light and ventilation opportunities for through units.
   • Courtyard provides opportunity for strong connection with N 77th St.
   • Street trees along Aurora aid in mitigating western exposure to solar gain.
   • Drive ramp to below grade parking located near lowest topographical elevation at alley.
   • Opportunity to provide street trees and landscaping along Aurora Ave N, N 77th St, and alley edges.
   • Opportunity to implement project drainage system into water feature at courtyard to mitigate vehicular traffic noise from Aurora.
   • Opportunity for views to Green Lake.

2. Streetscape Compatibility
   • Opportunity to expand width of public realm, buffer street traffic, and provide shelter at sidewalks.
   • Opportunity to maintain and enhance pattern and scale of street level commercial uses.
   • Opportunity to connect residential entry, open staircase, and courtyard with public realm and promote social and economic interaction.

3. Entrances Visible from the Street
   • Opportunity for residential entry to open onto generous urban stair and courtyard space.
   • Opportunity for all commercial entries to front Aurora and have a direct relationship to sidewalk with weather coverage.

4. Human Activity
   • Opportunity to translate code required clearances required for power pole and overhead power lines slicing through the northwest corner of the property into meaningful open space and building form modulation.
   • Opportunity to provide covered open space and shelter for the pedestrians whom often pause waiting to use the cross-walk at this intersection.
   • While the courtyard, conceived as an interactive outdoor room, is technically a ‘private’ space for residents it provides an opportunity to extend the public realm with a strong connection to N 77th Street pedestrian flow.
   • The corner site is an opportunity to create open space and coverage for pedestrians, while still maintaining a strong urban edge to the block.
     • Opportunity to accommodate multiple modes of travel and to provide convenient, secure, and safe bike storage located adjacent to the residential entry and accessed at grade from the alley.

5. Respect for Adjacent Sites
   • Create an alley facade that engages the view and physical environment of the Green Lake Basin, while respecting the adjacent single family residential properties.

6. Transition Between Residence and Street
   • Appropriate floor level relationship to sidewalk at potential live/work unit.
   • Preferred alternate locates residential entry on N 77th St leaving Aurora frontage exclusively commercial storefront.

7. Residential Open Space
   • Preferred alternate locates the residential entrance on the quieter N 77th St frontage. The large staircase is designed to function as a flexible amphitheater type space that can informally and formally function not only as a circulation element but also as a residential gathering space that directly engages the sidewalk pedestrian route.
   • The courtyard typography provides an opportunity to create a strong connection and extension of the sidewalk and public realm into the residential portion of the project while maintaining privacy for residents.
   • Opportunity for roof top access and additional residential open space.

8. Parking and Vehicle Access
   • Garage and parking access off alley.
   • Opportunity to provide secure residential parking below grade and a limited number of highly convenient commercial stalls located off the alley.

9. Corner Lots
   • There is an opportunity to enhance pedestrian flow at the northwest corner of site by providing additional space with the building setback.
   • Opportunity for commercial retail space at corner.

B. HEIGHT, BULK, AND SCALE

• The NC zoned properties fronting Aurora Avenue North
Historical research into the pre-War character of Highway Alley provides an opportunity to create a layered transition through the use of trees and landscaping between the proposed structure and the existing residences to the east.

C. ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS AND MATERIALS

1. Architectural Context
   - The building on this site has little historical significance and it is not feasible to reuse and or salvage the structure.
   - The proposed project provides an opportunity to reinvigorate the commercial storefront typology and activate the street edge by introducing additional sidewalk width for the pedestrian.
   - Opportunity to provide front doors for all units, spaces, and uses. Residential elevator fronts courtyard space at all levels.
   - Opportunity to provide trash and recycling located away from pedestrian areas and enclosed within structure away from neighboring residential zone across alley.

2. Architectural Concept and Consistency
   - Through this evolving neighborhood, in transition particularly along Aurora, there is an opportunity to articulate a contemporary design vocabulary that responds to the mid century architectural history of the neighborhood.
   - As one of the first projects of this scale, the project provides an opportunity to establish a positive and desirable context for others to build upon in the future.
   - Opportunity for the courtyard open space concept to become a replicable typology for these transitional sites.
   - Opportunity for courtyard to allow use of daylight and ventilation on both sides of units while circulation edges have protective covering.
   - Common open space creates an opportunity to promote physical activity and encourages social interaction within the building and directly to the street.
   - Opportunity to provide a street level commercial typology and pattern scaled to both the pedestrian and the mobility of Aurora.

3. Human Scale
   - Opportunity for building facades, entries, courtyard, and materials and finishes to engage the pedestrian and address issues of human scale in a manner consistent with the overall architectural concept.
   - A broad overhanging canopy, architecturally integrated into the overall building massing, is an opportunity to provide coverage over portions of the sidewalk leading to the recessed entrances.
   - While vehicular noise from Aurora is challenging, the storefront commercial spaces have the opportunity to open up and directly engage the pedestrian environment.

4. Exterior Finish Materials
   - Opportunity to provide visual depth and interest through continuous canopy, which acts as a multi-purpose element providing weather protection and connection to other neighborhood buildings.
   - Opportunity to integrate signage with façade design, lighting, architectural language, and respond to the historical significance of the early to mid 20th century commercial character of the Aurora corridor.
   - Opportunity for durable, well crafted, and easy to maintain climate appropriate materials.
   - Material and finishes detailing to be further evaluated.

5. Structured Parking Entrances
   - Garage and parking access off alley at lowest topographical location of site.

D. PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

1. Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances
   - Opportunity to layer design elements including landscaping along street front edge, while providing active and transparent façades.
   - Opportunity to provide front doors for all units, spaces, and uses. Residential elevator fronts courtyard space at all levels.
   - Opportunity to provide trash and recycling located away from pedestrian areas and enclosed within structure away from neighboring residential zone across alley.

2. Blank Walls
   - Preferred alternate avoids large blank walls. Street level building wall along alley to receive landscaping.
   - Opportunity to provide residential activity and use on north facade and eliminate blank wall planes.

6. Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas
   - Opportunity to provide trash and recycling located away from pedestrian areas and enclosed within structure away from neighboring residential zone across alley.
   - Opportunity to extend pattern of traffic calming curb bulbs along N 77th St.

7. Pedestrian Safety
   - Opportunity to provide eyes on both streets and alley with adequate lighting and street-level transparency.
   - Opportunity for residential entry and courtyard to act as a safe gathering place with direct view and physical connection to street.
   - Opportunity for pedestrian focused lighting which highlights architectural and landscape details as well as commercial signage.

8. Treatment of Alleys
   - Opportunity to provide landscaping and tree buffer along alley edge with permeable paving along width of setback.
   - Preferred alternate avoids row of garage doors and locates parking completely within structure.

9. Commercial Signage
   - Opportunity for creative and colorful signage integrated into overall language of building and the broad canopy in the preferred scheme.
   - Opportunity to provide lighting that highlight while avoiding glare and off site night light pollution.

10. Commercial Transparency
    - There are opportunities to provide pedestrian amenities include projecting canopy for seasonal refuge, lighting, year round landscaping, trees, storefront windows, and opportunities for engaging retail displays through commercial transparency.

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12. Residential Entries and Transitions
   - Opportunity created by courtyard space to insure adequate edge and through circulation while creating gathering space.
   - Potential live/work unit along N 77th St to maintain appropriate floor level to sidewalk relationship.

E. LANDSCAPING

1. Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites
   - Opportunity to extend N 77th St street edge landscaping towards Aurora.
   - Opportunity to improve overall pedestrian experience and landscaping condition along Aurora.

2. Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site
   - Opportunity to combine hardscape, softscape, and other architectural elements to promote variety and respond to intensity of use.
   - Opportunity to provide landscape materials that thrive in an urban condition while reinforcing the architectural and spatial language along with the overall use of the project.
   - Opportunity for landscaped roof top amenity space.
   - Trees and planting along alley to screen façade and transition to residential neighborhood.

3. Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions
   - Opportunity to incorporate continuous row of street trees along each of the three facades.

New Core Development Workshop AD | 3 December 2013 | DPD 3016093 | 16380151
The 'notch' provides the minimum required clearance for the power lines at the northwest corner of the site. It holds a firm street corner edge at the first 3 floors and sets the 4th floor back with a 'bite' out of the massing. It places the residential lobby entrance off Aurora adjacent to the neighboring St. Germain Foundation entry with access through to the central courtyard volume that serves the residential levels above. There is a 5 foot projecting canopy along the Aurora sidewalk with street trees. The commercial storefront spaces wrap the western and northern sides, maximizing the potential for retail area. At the northeast corner the street level retail space projects towards the alley to the 2 foot dedication line. This creates a language for projecting balconies along the eastern alley façade for residential units to take advantage of views toward Green Lake and the Cascade Range beyond. Surface parking off the alley is within the structure with a high bay overhang since grade is dropping down to the low south east corner of the site where the ramp to the below parking is located.

Advantages
• Courtyard interior and contained volume mitigates noise issue from Aurora
• Efficient layout, maximizing rentable area
• Maximizes street facing commercial spaces

Disadvantages
• Residential entry off busy vehicular corridor
• No direct courtyard link to street and urban connection
• Transition to residential neighborhood along N 77th St is direct and abrupt.
• Eastern façade projects and pushes towards adjacent residential property
• Compromised building form with corner "bite"
9.5 feet
Alternate B // Slice

The 'slice' orthogonally sets the northwest corner of the massing back from street to roof to meet the required clearance for the power lines. It places the residential lobby entrance off Aurora near the middle of the facade. There is no canopy nor street trees, rather the commercial storefront is set back from the property line which produces a building overhang above. Retail spaces wrap the corner past a stair tower along the northern side. At the northeast corner of the street level retail space the facade is solid and in line with the residential units above which are oriented to the east. Surface parking off the alley is within the structure screened by garage doors. The ramp to the below grade parking is located at the low grade southeast corner.

Advantages
- Affords public amenity space at corner and improves pedestrian environment with widened sidewalks
- Courtyard interior and contained volume mitigates noise issue from Aurora
- Efficient layout, regular stepped orthogonal massing
- Maximizes street facing commercial spaces
- Massing, bulk, and scale transition along N 77th St to residential neighborhood

Disadvantages
- Residential entry off busy vehicular corridor
- No direct courtyard link to street limits potential for urban connection
- Blank wall and garage doors along alley edge
- Spreads vertical circulation cores out to three roof top features
14 feet
Preferred Alternate C // Inflect

This preferred alternate follows the diagonal power line setback by gently inflecting the building massing. This creates opportunity for an enlarged public sidewalk space at the corner where pedestrians most often pause and gather. The storefront edge along Aurora is setback 2 feet and provides a continuous widened sidewalk improving the pedestrian environment. A 5 foot projecting canopy wraps the street facing facades and creates a pedestrian datum to register the programmatic changes between commercial and residential use. The scheme prioritizes the courtyard environment as an extension of the urban fabric with an open residential entry off North 77th Street. A broad staircase leads up through the various levels of the building. This dynamic courtyard spatially engages the interior common volume with the street and neighborhood through movement and a degree of transparency from ground to roof level. The space at the northeast corner of the building fronting N 77th St is proposed to be a live-work unit with appropriate degrees of transparency and interaction with the street. This façade line also gently inflects to provide a greater setback as the project transitions east to the residential context. Trees are proposed along Aurora and N 77th Street, with landscaping continuing around to the eastern alley edge. Six parking stalls are located off the alley, covered and enclosed within the structure yet still open to the alley for convenient use. The trees at the alley follow the residential unit division and structural rhythm of the building as well as providing a foreground landscape element that mitigates privacy between the residential units and the single family residence across the alley. The ramp to the below grade parking is located at the lowest grade southeast corner.

Advantages
• Affords public amenity space at corner and improves pedestrian environment with widened sidewalks and canopy
• Courtyard linking to street for strong urban connection
• Appropriate use division along street facades that quickly transitions from high intensity at Aurora to quiet neighborhood along N 77th St.
• Massing, bulk, and scale transition along N 77th St to residential neighborhood
• Landscaping and street trees improve edges

Disadvantages
• Mitigation of noise from Aurora into open courtyard
Preferred Alternate

stair at lobby entry off N 77th St

top of stairs to courtyard - level 2
Preferred Alternate

Plan 0
below grade parking

Plan 1
street level
Plan 2
residential courtyard level

Plan 3-4
residential levels
Preferred Alternate

NW corner
Previous Work

Colman Triplex - Workshop AD

Stadium 302 - Workshop AD

31st & Day - Workshop AD

339 Townhouses - Workshop AD

1124 Pike Street - New Core Development

500 Yale Avenue North - New Core Development