



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

D.M. Sugimura, Director

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE
SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Meeting Date: July 22, 2008

Report Date: July 28, 2008

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3008728

Address: 8124 Rainier Avenue South

Applicant: Scott Starr of SMR Architects for Housing Resources Group

Board members present: Steve Sindiong (Acting Chair)
Brett Conway
Robert Mohn
Michele Wang

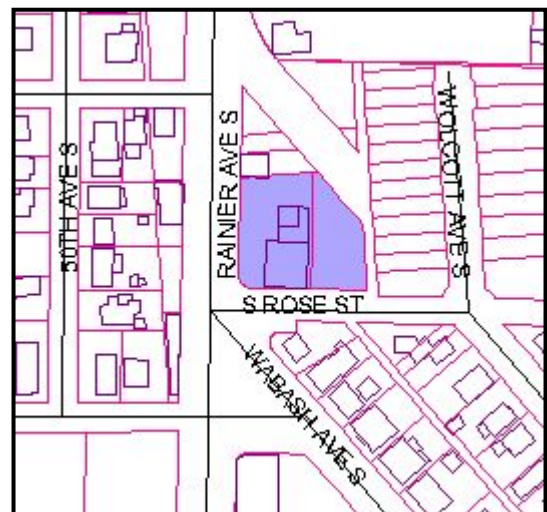
Board members absent: John Woodworth

Land Use Planner present: Marti Stave

SITE AND VICINITY

The proposed project is located at the northeast corner of Rainier Avenue South and South Rose Street in the Seward Park/Rainier Beach neighborhood. The 26,356 square foot site is currently vacant. The site is generally flat. The zoning is Neighborhood Commercial 2 with a 40 foot height limit (NC2-40). The zoning is intermittently NC2-40, Lowrise 3, and Lowrise 3 with Residential/Commercial on both sides of Rainier Avenue S for several blocks in each direction north and south. To the east and west the zoning is Single Family 5000.

Rainier Avenue South in this area is characterized by a mix of vacant parcels, older commercial buildings and multifamily structures. Directly to the east of the site across the alley is a new permitted single family



subdivision with home sites under construction. The site to the north of the subject project is a Buddhist Center.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes a 4-story, mixed-use building with approximately 4,000 square feet of commercial space at street level and 70 residential units above. Parking for 71 vehicles will be provided below grade. Access is proposed to be from the alley that abuts the site on the east. The proposal includes the vacation of a portion of Wolcott Avenue South from the alley northwest to Rainier Avenue South. The applicant contemplates future development on the parcel abutting to the north.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include ground level commercial retail on Rainier Avenue South with three levels of residential units above, parking located below grade accessed from the alley. Access to the trash collection area would be from the alley as well.

Scheme 1 shows a U-shaped building with a large interior courtyard facing north. Commercial space is located on Rainier Avenue S and the residential entry is on Rose Street on the south of the building. A small surface parking lot accessed from Rainier Avenue South is located at the north end of the west leg of the “U”.

Scheme 2 is a similar U-shape but oriented to the south. The commercial space on Rainier Avenue S is larger with no surface parking and the residential entry is located on the east leg of the “U” which is set back from Rose Street.

Scheme 3 (the preferred concept) is an H-shaped building with a large south-facing courtyard and a smaller playground on the north. The connecting area is the residential entry which is accessed through the south courtyard. The commercial space along Rainier Avenue S has three separate entries and there are several small plaza areas proposed around the site. Because the site is irregularly shaped, the building is set back from the alley entrance allowing for a landscaped respite area.

Materials and color palette have yet to be chosen. The overall building form shows the façade up to properties line at street level and several small plazas at ground level. Green factor requirement would be met by extensive landscaping at ground level. To view the design proposal, visit the DPD Design Review website at www.seattle.gov/designreview. Click on “Project Reviews”, then “Archives” and enter the project number.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Six members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Not truly three design options; same building mass oriented differently.
- Question about whether ground level residential units would be for disabled persons.
- Liked the separate courtyard and playground areas.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, the Design Review Board members provided the siting and design guidance described below. The Board identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*" of highest priority to this project.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

A Site Planning

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics

The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street

Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

A-4 Human Activity

New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites

Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street *For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.*

A-7 Residential Open Space

Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access

Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.

A-10 Corner Lots

Buildings on corner lots should be oriented towards the public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

- The Board agreed that the corner of Rainier Avenue South and South Rose Street presents a higher threshold of attention especially visible to northbound traffic on Rainier Avenue South and because of the street alignment. The Board feels that there is an opportunity for the building to present a corner gesture that relates to both street fronts.

- The Board would like the applicant to consider continuing the commercial space further around the corner onto South Rose Street. The transition from commercial to residential space will be an important aspect of the design.
- The Board liked the large south-facing courtyard but would like to see the entry gate further back from the street. They feel this is an opportunity for an inviting entrance statement providing that the fence and gate are as transparent as possible.
- The Board appreciated the many proposed plaza areas and look forward to a more refined design for the uses of these areas.
- Though there are residential units proposed at the street on South Rose Street, there are no entrances to these units from the street. The applicant is proposing higher windows for the units at the street level and are requesting a departure to locate residential uses at grade level.
- The Board generally liked the idea of the pedestrian/vehicle pass-through on the north of the site and would like the applicant to explore two or three additional schemes for this area. They especially would like the applicant to address how the proposed parallel parking will relate to the future proposed development on the north parcel.

B **Height, Bulk and Scale**

B-1 **Height, Bulk and Scale**

Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by , less-intensive zones.

- The Board supported the preferred Scheme 3 with it's generous south-facing courtyard and separated playground to the north. Though the adjacent zone to the east is Single Family, the Board feels that the alley dedication and generous landscaping proposed will provide adequate transition to this zone.

C **Architectural Elements and Materials**

C-2 **Architectural Concept and Consistency**

- *Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept.*
- *Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building.*

C-3 **Human Scale**

The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.

C-4 **Exterior Finish Materials**

Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

- The Board is looking forward to seeing the refined design and the proposed architectural expression.
- Providing ample overhead weather protection will be an important element of the design of the commercial spaces on Rainier Avenue South..
- The use of exterior finish materials should convey a sense of permanence. The Board is looking forward to seeing the proposed materials and color palette at the next meeting.

D **Pedestrian Environment**

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

D-8 Treatment of Alleys

The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrians' street front.

D-9 Commercial Signage

Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.

D-10 Commercial Lighting

Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts evening hours.

D-11 Commercial Transparency

Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.

D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions

For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and be visually interesting for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops, and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

- The residential entrance and courtyard presents an opportunity for visually inviting plaza. Additional attention should be given to other amenity spaces as well (at alley entrance).
- The Board especially liked the proposed alley treatment with the generous landscaping and plaza area at the entrance off South Rose Street.
- The transition from the commercial spaces on Rainier Avenue South to the residential uses adjacent should be given careful attention to design.
- The Board looks forward to conceptual proposals for commercial signage and exterior lighting.

E Landscaping

E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites

Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or site

Landscaping, including living plants, special pavement, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

- The Board is looking forward to a more refined landscape plan and is especially interested in the landscape transition and use of rain gardens on the north edge of the site.
- The Board suggested that the proposed rain gardens at the north edge of the site presents an opportunity for an interesting architectural expression.

DEPARTURES FROM DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Departure Summary Table

REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	APPLICANT'S JUSTIFICATION	BOARD RECOMMENDATION
Street level development standards (SMC23.47A.008D2) Either the first floor of the structure at or above grade shall be at least four (4) feet above the sidewalk grade or the street-level façade shall be set back at least ten (10) feet from the sidewalk.	Request to allow residential use to be 5 feet from sidewalk at grade.	There are no entries on this façade and windows are proposed to be higher than usual to contribute to security and privacy.	The Board is inclined to entertain the departure request contingent on design response to these guidelines.

NEXT STEPS

Using the design guidance above the architect should develop the next iteration of the design response. The following items summarize what should be included in the submittal materials for MUP application and recommendation meeting. See guidance above for applicable details.

- 4 sets of MUP plans, 5 copies of the filled out and signed SEPA checklist, owner authorization form, financial responsibility form, site plan (8.5"X 11") for SEPA large sign (**see Director's Rule 29-2006**).
- Provide a written response to the Design Review guidelines and guidance above at MUP submittal (see attachment B of CAM 238). Please send the planner the electronic version of the narrative design response via email.
- Provide the topographic survey in the recommendation packet.

- Provide detailed large scale street level vignettes for the proposed street level designs along Rainier Avenue South, South Rose Street, and the north pedestrian/vehicle pass-through to illustrate the streetscape experience.
- Provide a full color rendering of the building looking northeast from southwest corner of Rainier Avenue South and South Rose Street.
- **Provide a full color materials board with tangible examples at the recommendation meeting. Also, provide some pictures of the material applications in built projects.**
- Provide full color shadowed elevations in the MUP plans (N-S-E-W) with material callouts.
- A conceptual plan for signage type and location as well as conceptual lighting design will be required at the next meeting.
- Provide a large scale full color landscape plan in the MUP plans. Include two or three alternative designs for the pedestrian/vehicle pass-through on the north.
- Provide larger scale site plans at the recommendation meeting.
- Please call the Planner (Marti Stave at 206 684-0239) when you have made your MUP intake appointment.

Stavem/DOCS/Design Review/3008728 Rainier Avenue South/3008728 EDG.doc