



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE PRIORITIES
OF THE
SOUTHEAST AREA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**
Date & Place of Meeting: May 27, 2008, Rainier Cultural Arts Center

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3008863

Project Address: 3501 Rainier Avenue South

Applicant: Brittani Ard for
Pb Elemental Architecture

Board members present: John Woodworth (Chair)
Michele Wang
Robert Mohn
Brett Conway

Board member absent: John Sindiong

DPD staff present: Mark Taylor, Land Use Planner

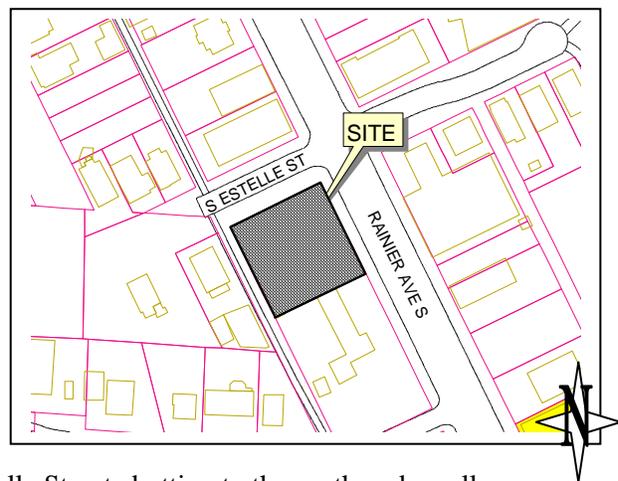
Report Date: June 17, 2008

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for the design and construction of 20 live-work units. No off-street parking spaces are being proposed. The existing structure will be removed as part of the proposal.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site is zoned Commercial 1 with a 65-foot height limit (C1-65) and developed with an existing structure. The site is relatively flat and contains approximately 14,400 square feet of lot area. The site is a rectangular shaped lot with Rainier Avenue South abutting to the east, South Estelle Street abutting to the north and an alley abutting to the west.



SURROUNDING AREA DESCRIPTION

The site is located within a commercial corridor along Rainier Avenue South. Much of the existing development along this stretch of commercial corridor is a mix of one and two story commercial and multi-family structures. A six-story mixed-use structure is located a block to the south. Properties to the west of the site across the alley are zoned Single-Family 5000 (SF-5000) and developed with a variety of single-family structures. The properties directly to the east across Rainier Avenue South are zoned C2-65.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

The architect presented three schemes at the Early Design Guidance meeting. The first scheme (Option 1) was for a 6-story mixed used building with retail on the first floor off Rainier Avenue South, live work units off South Estella Street, residences located above and two levels of underground parking. The structure had a variety of modular elements designed throughout the structure on every floor and façade. The second alternative (Option 2, code compliant) was very similar to the first, as far as use layout but the structure was more box-like with significant less modulation elements within the design. The third scheme (Option 3) was for twenty, three-story live work units with a centralized courtyard and no off-street parking proposed. The preferred scheme was Option 3.

BOARD CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS WITH ANY ANSWERS

- *Question:* Will the public have access to the central courtyard?
Response: Yes.
- *Question:* Will there be vehicular access to the courtyard to allow deliveries?
Response: None is currently proposed but this will be considered in the future design.
- *Question:* Where will the entrance to the residential portion of the live-work unit be located?
Response: The residential entrance will be accessed internally from the live-work portion.
- *Question:* Why was the project scaled back from what was advertised in the public notice?
Response: The cost and time of burying the overhead power lines, having two levels of underground parking and preserving the existing street trees was difficult, and the scale and bulk of the proposal with comparison to the single-family zone to the west was inappropriate.
- *Question:* Will there be modulation elements such as decks incorporated into the design?
Response: There may be decks facing the courtyard. Decks are not proposed and are not well suited along Rainier Avenue South.
- *Comment:* Would have liked to see more massing schemes centered around 20 units for the site.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Approximately 5 members of the public attended the Early Design Guidance meeting. The following comments were offered:
- Wanted construction impacts such as noise and dust mitigated.
- The project may be located within a liquefaction area.
- Do not want to see a row of garbage cans off the alley.
- Will loading and unloading be off Rainier Avenue South.
- What “green” construction elements will be incorporated into the design.
- The newer projects tend to look very “modern”. Consider using materials and design elements which blend better with the surrounding residential neighborhood which is more craftsman style.

DESIGN GUIDELINE PRIORITIES

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance and 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.

A. Site Planning

- A-2 **Streetscape Compatibility.** The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.
- 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-8 **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-10 **Corner Lots,** Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

The street facing façade should engage and activate Rainier Avenue South and South Estelle Street by having visible entrances facing the streets. The Board believes the bulk of the proposed three-story structures off the alley are more compatible with the single-family structures located across the alley, in comparison to the height allowed in a C-65 zone. The Board wants appropriate design treatment on the corner of the structure to acknowledge the intersection of South Estelle Street and Rainier Avenue South.

B. Height, Bulk, and Scale

- B-1 **Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility.** 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 nearby, less intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk, and scale between the anticipated development potential on the adjacent zones.

The Board believes the mass of the proposed three-story structures off the alley is more compatible with the single-family structures located across the alley, in comparison to the height allowed in a C-65 zone.

C. Architectural Elements

- 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 wants to review a material and color board and a conceptual signage and lighting plan to see how these different elements will make the overall design unified. The Board also wants the architect to develop street level vignettes from a variety of viewpoints to illustrate how passing pedestrians and residents will interpret and interact with the commercial storefronts, entryways into the courtyard and the courtyard itself. The Board wants additional design elements such as structure modulation and/or decks included along the street and internal facades.

D. Pedestrian Environment

- D-1 Pedestrian Open Space 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.**
- D-2 Blank Walls, Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.**
- D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas, Building sites should located service elements such as trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screen from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.**
- D-7 Personal Safety and Security, Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.**
- 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 Board wants to review a conceptual material and color board and a signage and lighting plan to see how these different elements will make the overall design unified. The lighting plan should ensure the site is appropriately illuminated to increase personal safety while not overwhelming the senses. The sign plan should show smaller appropriately scaled signs, which tie the businesses together, but provides the opportunity for each business to display individuality. The Board also wants to see street level vignettes from a variety of viewpoints to illustrate how passing pedestrians and residents will interpret and interact with the commercial storefronts, entryways into the courtyard and the courtyard itself. The Board is weary of granting a departure to the transparency requirement, but will entertain the request if the proposed design can capture the intent of having viable commercial spaces off Rainier Avenue South and South Estelle Street by incorporating quality materials, appropriate levels of glazing and avoiding blank walls.

E. Landscaping

E-2 **Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site, Landscaping including living plant material special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.**

The Board will want to review a landscaping plan. The courtyard should use a variety of surface and functional features to enhance the user experience.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departures will be reserved until the final Board meeting and will be based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure. The following departures from the development standards were proposed at this phase:

Departure Summary Table

STANDARD	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION
SMC 23.47A.008.B.2.a Requires a 60% transparency between 2' & 8' along Rainier Avenue South (432 SF Glazing) & South Estelle Street (378 SF Glazing)	Reduce requirement to 50% along Rainier Av. S. (360 SF Glazing) and S. Estelle St. (315 SF Glazing).	Allow more glazing for the facades facing the interior courtyard.
SMC 23.47A.008.B.3.b Requires a 13-foot floor to floor height along Rainier Avenue South & South Estelle Street	Reduce requirement to 12 feet.	Stairs could be designed without a landing.

SMC 23.47A.008.B.2.a Transparency – The applicant prefers more glazing for the facades facing the interior courtyard. The Board interprets the transparency requirement as a means to create viable commercial spaces along street facing facades. The Board is reluctant to grant this departure but will further consider the request. During the recommendation, the applicant will need to demonstrate how these commercial spaces will be viable.

SMC 23.47A.008.B.3.b Floor to floor height – The applicant prefers 12 foot high ceilings, which would allow the stairs to be designed without a landing. The Board took no issue with this departure request.

NEXT STEPS

MUP Application:

1. Submit application for Master Use Permit (MUP) application. Please call Mark Taylor (at 206-684-5049) when you have scheduled your MUP intake appointment.
2. **Please include a written response to the guidance provided in this EDG.** Plan on embedding four 11x17 colored and shadowed elevations, landscape and right-of-way improvement plans and three-dimensional street level vignettes into the MUP plan set (4 per sheet) and label sheets DR.

Recommendation Meeting:

3. The Board wants the following specific design elements presented and discussed in more detail;
 - A. Colored renderings and/or graphics showing the proposed design from the pedestrian perspective at street level. Show the proposed landscaping in the drawings.
 - B. Submit a color and materials board.

- C. Submit a conceptual commercial lighting plan.
 - D. Submit a conceptual commercial signage plan.
 - E. Submit a landscaping plan.
4. The Board wants the applicant to graphically clarify the following elements in the recommendation packet;
- A. How will commercial deliveries be made to the commercial spaces?
 - B. How will the garbage disposal be handled, i.e. where will the trash cans be located for collection, how will the visual impacts be mitigated?
 - C. How will the interior courtyard's design operate to serve the residential and commercial needs of the occupants, while also engaging passing pedestrians?