



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

D.M. Sugimura, Director

**FINAL RECOMMENDATION
of the
QUEEN ANNE/MAGNOLIA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Meeting Date: December 17, 2008

Report Date: January 5, 2009

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3009330

Address: 708 6th Avenue North

Applicant: Boyd Pickrell of Nicholson Kovalchick Architects for Steelhead Real Estate Investments

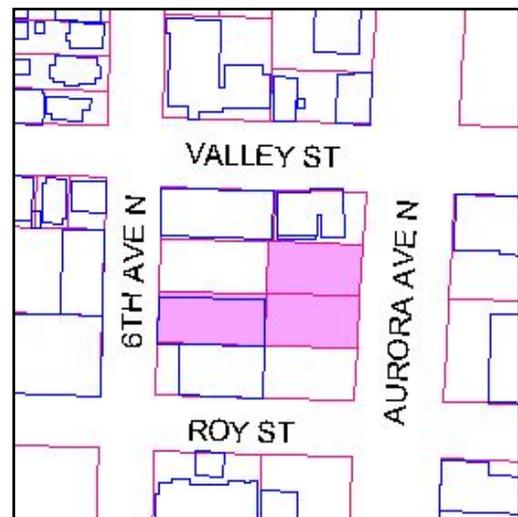
Board members present: Matt Roewe (Chair)
Mark Garrell
Bill Vandeventer

Board members absent: John Rose Jr.
David Nemens
Kristen Clem

Land Use Planner present: Marti Stave

SITE AND VICINITY

The proposed project is located on 6th Avenue North between Roy Street and Valley Street on the eastern edge of the Uptown Urban Center on lower Queen Anne. Aurora Avenue North abuts the site to the east and Mercer Street is two blocks to the south. The site slopes gently down to the east approximately two feet. The development consists of three parcels: the eastern two parcels fronting on Aurora Avenue North are zoned Commercial 1 with a 65 foot height limit (C1-65) and the western parcel fronting on 6th Avenue North is zoned Neighborhood Commercial 3



with a 40 foot height limit. The block to the north changes to Lowrise 3.

The immediate area is dominated by light manufacturing uses, warehouses, office buildings, auto repair and motels. Abutting the site to the north is the offices of the Girl Scouts of America; to the south is a repair shop for the Auto Club. Across 6th Avenue North is an office building and an old warehouse housing the Ruins restaurant club. Seattle Center lies a few blocks to the west and the new Gates Foundation site will be located just to the south across Mercer Street. The newest development in the area is the recently completed QFC/mixed use project at 5th Avenue North between Mercer and Roy Streets. To the east, Aurora Avenue North with its high speed traffic and center concrete barrier effectively isolates the neighborhood from Lake Union and South Lake Union.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes a mixed-use project consisting of 18 live-work and/or retail uses at street level and 100 residential units above. The western portion of the building (NC3-40 zone) is proposed to be four stories and the eastern portion (C1-65) is proposed to be six stories. Though the site is a through lot, access to parking is not appropriate from Aurora Ave. North. Therefore, access to parking, trash collection and services will be from 6th Ave. North. Parking for approximately 69 vehicles is proposed on one below-grade level. Pedestrian entrances are proposed on 6th Ave. North and possibly on Aurora Ave. North.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE: AUGUST 20, 2008

DESIGN PRESENTATION

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include a four-level structure fronting on 6th Ave. N and a 6-level structure fronting on Aurora Avenue North. Parking access for all options is from 6th Ave. N. All options include a small commercial space on 6th Ave. N, Live/Work units on the ground or lowest level and residential units above.

Option 1 proposes two distinct structures over a single level of above grade parking. The structures would be separated on a podium-level by an open space plaza. The proposed massing at Aurora would be set back with open space separating the structure from the street. Option 2 is similar to the first but with the parking located below grade. Circulation is outside for the smaller, four-story structure and within the building in the other. The large open space separating the structures is at grade overlooking the Girl Scout building parking lot.

Option 3 (the preferred option) features a single structure with the west portion four stories and the east portion six stories. The lower, four-story portion of the structure fronting on 6th Ave. N would extend several feet onto the C1-65 zone. This option proposes an additional one-half level of parking which would front onto Aurora Ave. N requiring a departure. Access to parking, trash collection and services would be from the 6th Ave. N frontage. Residential amenity space would be provide in a combination of street-level landscaped area, private decks, and a rooftop deck. The Green factor requirement would be met by extensive landscaping at street level and on rooftop deck.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

- Concern that the new structure will block the light to building located adjacent to the north.
- When planning materials, consider that there is a lot of brick in the neighborhood.
- Concern that the parking lot to the north might be used by building residents.
- Would like to see some softening treatment of the blank façade on the north.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION MEETING: DATE: NOVEMBER 16, 2008

The architect presented the refined design which was presented as two large “bookends”, one in each of the two zones, with a weave of open walkways connecting them. Materials include corrugated metal and painted fiber cement. Railings for the open walkways are proposed to be frosted glass. (The architect indicated that an option being considered as a cost saving measure is to enclose the open walkways.) Green features include solar collectors for hot water on the roof and rainwater collection planters incorporated into the landscaping.

PUBLIC COMMENT

One member of the public offered comments at the Final Recommendation meeting as follows:

- Concern about the large expanse of blank wall on the north side.
- Oppose enclosing the open walkways which are a significant aesthetic feature.
- Still has major concerns about the shadowing of the building to the north (neighbors installed automatic lighting system).

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

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. The Board’s comments and recommendation follow the guidance in ***bold italicized text***.

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-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-7 Residential Open Space

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

- The Board acknowledged that the site is difficult with two distinctly different frontages. Because Aurora Ave. N., with its high speed traffic, is not very inviting for pedestrians, the proposed parking podium at street level and raised plaza in front of the proposed live/work units appeared to be a reasonable design option. The board observed that this actually makes this façade more defensible. The Board would like to see entrances either to the live/work units or the proposed lobby at this end of the structure from Aurora Avenue North, however.
- The Board agreed that the preferred Option 3 made the most sense in terms of circulation between the two sections of the structure, however they liked the idea of two separate buildings which would allow light through to the site to the north.
- The Board expressed concern about the proposed open space areas and questioned whether they would be functional. The fact that the areas may be meet the development standards does not necessarily make them an attractive, functional amenity. The Board is looking forward to a more detailed design that will show how private balconies and rooftop decks as well as ground-level areas are incorporated into an overall residential open space amenity plan.

At the Recommendation meeting the Board was pleased with the refined design recognizing that connecting the two buildings makes the most sense in terms of circulation. They also liked that open walkways on the four-story portion of the building and the resulting passive ventilation, but were disappointed to hear that the applicant was considering enclosing these walkways due to costs. The Board strongly recommended that the applicants apply value engineering in another portion of the building, possibly on the Aurora façade, rather than enclosing these open walkways. The Board also liked the added entry stairs on the Aurora Avenue side leading to the live/works units.

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.

- While the Board supported the preferred Option 3 that proposes a single building connecting the four-story and six-story portions they agreed that it is not without problems. The Board agreed that the visual interest of two separate buildings is lost with Option 3 and is also sensitive to the neighbor's concerns about blocking sunlight to their site. The Board

encouraged the applicant to explore ways to lighten the mass in ways that would have less impact on the site to the north. If the applicant can find a way to make the two-building option work, the Board would be pleased.

At the Recommendation Meeting, the Board agreed that the refined design of the preferred Option 3 works well. They particularly like the “book-end” quality of the design. The massing of the buildings is designed to read as two separate buildings with the larger portion facing Aurora pushed to the east of the site

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.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances

The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

- The Board agreed that this neighborhood located at the edge of the Uptown Urban Center has lacked significant redevelopment and there are, therefore, few design cues with the exception of the new QFC/mixed use project a block to the west. In general, the Board liked the proposed architectural concepts shown observing that it appeared to relate more to a 50's and 60's apartment building but with a modern industrial effect.
- The use of brick in the materials selection is not endorsed by the Board. They are comfortable with the use of metal siding and wood for a softening effect.
- The Board would like to see details of the proposed parking garage entrance doors.

At the Recommendation Meeting, the Board was very pleased with the refined 50's-style apartment look for the design accentuated by the open walkways on the north side of the four-story portion of the building. Materials choices are dominated by corrugated metal siding with some fiber cement panels. Exterior decks are faced with frosted glass.

The parking garage entrance from 6th Avenue N is set deep inside the building to minimize it's visual impact. The Board would like to see that there are business listings somewhere on the side of the building.

The Board suggested that the light spandrel panels at the north end of the Aurora Avenue façade introduced too many features and detracted from the “book-end” quality of the design. They recommended that this area of the façade be simplified.

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-2 Blank Walls

Buildings should avoid large blank walls. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of the a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened form the street and adjacent properties.

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 e a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

- The Board instructed the applicants to bring cross-sections that illustrate the balcony units and the live/work units on Aurora Avenue North and how they relate to the adjacent properties.
- The Board concluded that the blank wall on the parking lot near 6th Ave. N. is quite small compared to the rest of the building but directed the applicant to provide detailed elevations at the next meeting to judge its true impact. They did observe that the applicant did have the right to build to the property line in this zone and the step back of the rest of the structure was a nice gesture to the adjacent property. They also encouraged the applicant and the property owner to the north to mutually explore ways to provide landscaping or other softening strategy for this wall section.
- The Board instructed the applicant to address how the garage will be ventilated and to avoid ventilation that impacts the pedestrian realm on Aurora Ave North and adjacent neighbors.
- The Board looks forward to proposals for commercial signage and exterior lighting plans.
- With respect to the proposed commercial space at the 6th Ave N façade, the Board would like to see this space designed for eventual use as a commercial space rather than meet the code requirement for residential uses on the street-level, street-facing façade. Therefore, the Board is very receptive to the requested departure from the code standard for residential uses on a commercial street front.

At the recommendation meeting the Board was concerned about the expanse of the blank walls on the north side of the building. They recognized that even though future development will likely build up to the property line as well, it may be a long time before these walls are obscured. The Board would like the applicant to work with DPD staff to explore different patterning or colors on these walls in order to add additional visual interest. Garage ventilation has not yet been engineered.

E **Landscaping**

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 agreed that the Aurora Ave. N. environment is not very pedestrian friendly but would like to see landscaping along the building edge to soften the blank wall of the garage level.
- The board is looking forward to a detailed landscape design that addresses the Green Factor and special treatment for sidewalks, street trees and fencing.

The Board was very pleased with the Aurora Avenue N façade and the landscaping added to soften to raised garage.

The Board unanimously approved the project subject to the following conditions:

1. The board feels strongly that the open walkways on the north side of the four-story portion of the building are a vital component of the design. Therefore, in any measures to cut costs, the applicant is directly to values engineer in other areas than these walkways.

2. The Board recommended that the north end of the Aurora Avenue façade be simplified by possibly removing the light spandrel panels.
3. The Board recommended that the applicant work with DPD staff to explore additional patterning and color options for the several blank walls in the proposed design.

DEPARTURES FROM DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Departure Summary Table

REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	APPLICANT'S JUSTIFICATION	BOARD RECOMMENDATION
<p>Blank facades** SMC23.47A.008A Blank façade segments of the street facing façade between 2 and 8 ft. above the sidewalk may not exceed 20 ft. in width.</p>	<p>On the Aurora Ave N façade, because the parking garage is exposed for a portion of the sloping grade, the length of blank façade will exceed the requirement by 9' 5.5"</p>	<p>Because of the sloping site and the desire to provide a defense against speeding traffic and noise, a portion of façade is blank but will be screened with landscaping. A-1; A-2</p>	<p>The Board agreed that the blank wall feature contributes to the defensibility of the building on this facade. The Board unanimously agreed to grant this departure request.</p>
<p>Blank facades** SMC23.47A.008A The total of all blank façade segments may not exceed 40% of the width of the façade.</p>	<p>The total length of blank façade on 6th Ave N is exceeded by 2' or 5%.</p>	<p>In order to screen the solid waste room on 6th Ave N, the door to the room is turned to face away from the street. D-6</p>	<p>The Board agreed that the better goal is to screen to door to the solid waste room. The Board unanimously agreed to grant this departure request.</p>
<p>Transparency.** (SMC23.47A.008B) . a. Sixty (60) percent of the street-facing facade between two (2) feet and eight (8) feet above the sidewalk shall be transparent.</p>	<p>Because the upper parking level is only partially buried below grade (see above, transparency on the Aurora façade is reduced to 21%.</p>	<p>This departure results from the decision to only partially bury the garage. See the departure above for justification and DR guidelines.</p>	<p>The Board unanimously agreed to grant this departure request. The blank wall feature contributes to the defensibility of the building.</p>
<p>Transparency.** (SMC23.47A.008B) . a. Sixty (60) percent of the street-facing facade between two (2) feet and eight (8) feet above the sidewalk shall be transparent.</p>	<p>The 6th Ave N facade is reduced to 37% transparent.</p>	<p>Because of the location of the solid waste storage room and the desire to obscure it from the street, transparency is reduced. A-1; A-2</p>	<p>The Board agreed that the better goal is to screen to door to the solid waste room. The Board unanimously agreed to grant this departure request.</p>
<p>Street level development standards ** (SMC23.47A.008D) . When a residential use is located on a street-level street-facing façade, either the first floor of the structure at or above grade shall be at least 4 ft. above sidewalk grade or the street-level façade shall be set back at least 10 ft. from the sidewalk.</p>	<p>The residential lobby and leasing office on 6th Ave N is proposed to be reduced by 3' from the sidewalk. The residential amenity area on Aurora Ave N is proposed to be reduced by 6' 5" from the sidewalk.</p>	<p>Lobbies, leasing offices and other residential accessory units do not suffer from being adjacent to the sidewalk. Such uses can be very lively and engaging at the sidewalk and are, therefore, supportive of the following DR guidelines: A-2 Streetscape compatibility; A-3 Entrances visible from the street; A-4 Human activity.</p>	<p>The Board unanimously agreed that lobbies and leasing offices, while classified as residential uses, are a necessary part of residential buildings and need to be located near the sidewalk at times. The Board unanimously agreed to grant this departure request.</p>

<p>Non-residential street level requirements SMC23.47A.008B Non residential uses must extend an average of at least 30 ft. and a minimum of 15 ft. in depth from the street level street facing façade.</p>	<p>The retail space on 6th Ave N will initially be a residential use (leasing office).</p>	<p>Because of the need for a leasing office, there will be no non-residential use at the street level street facing facade.</p>	<p>The Board unanimously agreed to grant this departure request.</p>
<p>Street-level uses** 23.47A.005.D Residential uses may not exceed more than 20% of the street level street facing façade</p>	<p>The residential amenity area on the Aurora Ave. N façade comprises 21.6% of this façade. (increase of 1' 10")</p>	<p>While this space is characterized as a residential use it is a shared space for both residential and non-residential uses. The departure responds to A-1.</p>	<p>The Board unanimously agreed to grant this departure request.</p>
<p>Site Triangle** SMC23.54.030G For 2-way driveways a site triangle shall be provided and be kept clear for a distance of ten feet form the intersection of the driveway and the sidewalk.</p>	<p>The site triangle is proposed to be reduced by 11" to 9' 1" .</p>	<p>Because of the limited area available on the 6th Ave N façade to vehicle access and garbage pickup, it was deemed better to face the solid waste room doors away from the street, thus reducing the site triangle on the north side. A-1; A-2; D-6</p>	<p>The Board recognized the limitations of this narrow frontage and the necessity to locate vehicle access and garbage pick up here. The were satisfied that the shortened site triangle posed no danger to pedestrians. The Board unanimously agreed to grant this departure request.</p>