City of Seattle

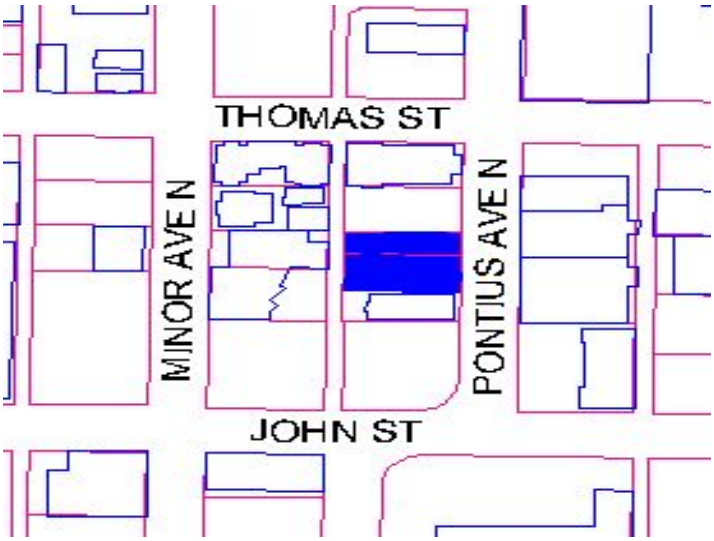
Department of Planning & Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE
QUEEN ANNE / MAGNOLIA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
February 2, 2011

Project Number:	3011476
Address:	219 Pontius Avenue North
Applicant:	Kate Smith, SMR Architects for Plymouth Housing Group
Date of EDG Meeting:	Wednesday, February 2, 2001
Board Members Present:	John Rose Jr. (Chair) David Delfs Mark Garrell
Board Members Absent:	Jill Kurfirst Lipika Mukerji
DPD Staff Present:	Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone:	SM/R 55/75, South Lake Union Urban Center
Nearby Zones:	SM 75 & SM 125
Lot Area:	The site is rectangular, relatively flat and totals 9,617 square feet in size.



Current Development:	The site is currently occupied by a vacant single story commercial building, a vacant single-family residential building, and surface paving.
Access:	Current access is off both Pontius Avenue North and the alley.
Surrounding Development:	The site directly to the north is occupied by the Immanuel Lutheran Church, an historic landmark. A parking area, serving the church, lies directly to the north of the proposal site and to the south of the church structure. The site directly to the south of the proposal site is an older apartment building. Further south, at the corner of Pontius Avenue N. and Thomas Street is the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance House, a recently constructed residential building that provides housing for patients and their families. . Across the alley are multi-family residential buildings, a commercial building and a childcare center. Across Pontius Avenue North to the east is a mixed-use project, primarily housing, that incorporates a historical landmark, the Richmond Laundry Building. The Pontius Avenue half-block development is part of a full block development with commercial retail and office as well as housing known as Alley 24.
ECAs:	There are no identified environmentally critical areas on or abutting the site.
Neighborhood Character:	The site is part of the Cascade neighborhood of South Lake Union. The neighborhood combines residential, retail, office and warehouse buildings for a dynamic character. The neighborhood has been encouraging residential buildings to bring more activity to the area. There has been a special focus on bringing affordable housing to the Cascade neighborhood. The area is very walk-able with green spaces within the Cascade neighborhood and along South Lake Union.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a six-story apartment building with 84 low income housing units (Plymouth Housing Group). The existing structures on site will be demolished.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

After a brief introduction about Plymouth Housing Group by Tom English, Kate Smith of SMR Architects presented the proposed project to the Board and members of the public attending the meeting. After review of the zoning and neighborhood character, the applicant presented three massing schemes focusing on entry articulation, screening/privacy, open space/green space and alley treatments.

Scheme A focused on providing a base, middle and top character to the massing with a strong emphasis given the pedestrian entry of Pontius Avenue N. The entry was located in the center of the building and aligned with the pedestrian alley access across Pontius Avenue North. The north and south facades were pulled back from the property lines to allow for green space between the adjacent developments. The alley façade was stepped back to comply with the

upper level setback required by SMC 23.48.012. This configuration of the massing provided 81 units, short of the desired 84 units.

Scheme B focused on vertical massing to emphasis the entry. A majority of the Pontius Avenue N. first floor façade was recessed to provide openness as well as screening along the sidewalk between the public and private space. The north and south facades were pulled back from the property lines to allow for green space between the adjacent developments. The massing was pulled back along the alley façade approximately twelve feet the entire height of the building to allow for green space and light. Due to the setback along the alley, residential units were placed on the first floor to meet the desired unit count. Given this massing configuration a departure from SMC 23.48.012 would be required. It was explained that the applicant considered providing green space along the alley and stepping the entire building back was a greater benefit to the neighbors and community than having a setback at the upper floor of the proposed building.

Scheme C, presented as the preferred scheme, focused on simplifying the massing while introducing gestures to break up the massing. The entry was identified with an arch to relate to a historic brick building in the neighborhood. A strong horizontal ban distinguished the first floor residential services from the residential floors above. Vertical notches in the east and north façades added interest while identifying a residential unit stack and a stair tower. The north and south facades were pulled back from the property lines to allow for green space between the adjacent developments. The alley façade resembled the Pontius Avenue North façade by reflecting the arch. The stated goal was to have a transparent connection from the alley to the pedestrian connection across Pontius Avenue N. Horizontal elements were introduced along the alley to minimize the massing. A departure from SMC 23.48.012 would be required for Scheme C . It was explained that the applicant felt that providing green space along the alley and steeping the entire building back was a greater benefit to the neighbors and community than having a setback at the upper floor of the proposed building.

Following the three massing schemes, the applicant presented some elements of further design development for preferred Scheme C, indicating window and material articulations, a color palette, together with an analysis of the several neighborhood building façade treatments.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 12 members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. The following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Most agreed the proposed project should pay attention to the nature of the alley, allowing for green space, providing for garbage storage within building, and providing a safe environment.
- A representative of the childcare facility directly across the alley requested to see at the next Design Review meeting a sun/shade study that would show the impacts on the outdoor play area that bordered on the alley.
- Another member of the public encouraged a clean, well organized roof and requested to see examples at the next meeting.

- A member of the public noted a preference for Scheme B because of the way it was articulated.
- A few members of the public preferred the exterior residential amenity space private from the public green spaces.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

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 design guidance, identifying the following Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines to be of highest priority for this project.

A. Site Planning

A-1 **<u>Responding to Site Characteristics</u>. 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-2 **<u>Streetscape Compatibility</u>. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.**

A-3 **<u>Entrances Visible from the Street</u>. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.**

A-4 **<u>Human Activity</u>. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.**

A-6 **<u>Transition Between Residence and Street</u>. 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 **<u>Residential Open Space</u>. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.**

The Board agreed that the residential open space should be private and separate from public open space. This was a priority for the Board, but they noted it was lower on the rating scale.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

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

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

C-1 **<u>Architectural Context</u>. New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.**

C-2 **<u>Architectural Concept and Consistency</u>. 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. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.**

The Board agreed to the layout Scheme C achieved, but would like to see the massing intent of Scheme A and Scheme C combined. Scheme A's base/ middle/top concept was favored with a more symmetrical approach to the entry and façade. Scheme C's setback from the alley and transparency through the building was favored.

C-3 **<u>Human Scale</u>. The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements, and details to achieve a good human scale.**

The Board encouraged different window types for the residential units different from those they had been shown .

C-4 **<u>Exterior Finish Materials</u>. 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 encouraged the use of masonry to reflect the historic buildings in the neighborhood and encouraged using cladding materials other than metal.

D. Pedestrian Environment

D-1 **<u>Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances</u>. 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.**

The Board agreed with the applicant's approach to align the main building entrance with the pedestrian 'alley' connection across Pontius Avenue North. The alley behind the proposed structure was also a focus of concerns for security and the Board conveyed a conviction that the applicant and owner would adequately provide for a secure environment.

D-2 **<u>Blank Walls.</u> 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.**

The Board would like the project to respectfully address the wall treatment along the north façade facing the Immanuel Lutheran Church. The applicant and owner will be

meeting with the church members to receive comments and coordinate responses to their concerns and wishes..

D-6 **<u>Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas</u>. Building sites should locate service elements like 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 screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.**

The applicant noted that the dumpsters will be located inside the building, off of the alley and will be accessible to trash collection by means of a hard-surface access route. The preferred Scheme C layout proposes the utility and service areas along the alley which will be screened with green space.

D-7 **<u>Personal Safety and Security</u>. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.**

D-8 **<u>Treatment of Alleys</u>. The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.**

The Board preferred the Scheme C layout which provides transparency through the building and locates office space adjacent to the alley providing 'eyes on the alley'. The Board encouraged setting back from the alley and providing green space there.

D-12 **<u>Residential Entries and Transitions</u>. For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front 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.**

E. Landscaping

E-1 **<u>Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites</u>. Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.**

E-2 **<u>Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site.</u> 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.**

E-3 **<u>Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions.</u> The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.**

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board supported the requested departure from SMC 23.48.012 in order to modify the amount of required Upper Level Setback along the alley facade. The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board focused on the massing, alley treatment, entry and functionality of the first floor layout. The Board preferred the symmetrical massing of Scheme A with a base, middle, top approach. The Board also preferred the massing at the north & south elevations and alley provided in Scheme C. The location of the entry, transparency through the building, and relationship to the pedestrian connection across Pontius Avenue North is a strong element to be developed. The layout of Scheme C was preferred; creating transparency through the building, 'eyes on the alley' and functional residential floor plans. The Board is in favor of window type variation and maximizing the proportion of glazing to the units. The Board would like to see some cladding options developed and encouraged the use of brick while discouraging metal siding. For the next meeting, the Board requested that the applicant present sun/shade studies, especially as these illustrate impacts on the properties west of the alley, and provide roof-treatment examples.