

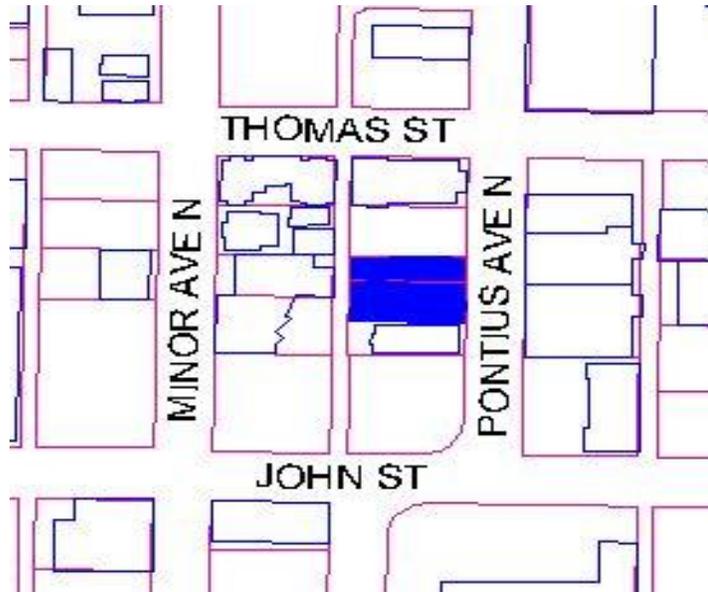


**RECOMMENDATION OF THE  
QUEEN ANNE / MAGNOLIA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
MAY 18, 2011**

Project Number: 3011476  
 Address: 219 Pontius Avenue North  
 Applicant: Kate Smith, SMR Architects for Plymouth Housing Group  
 Date of EDG Meeting: Wednesday, May 18, 2011  
 Board Members Present: David Delfs  
 Lipika Mukerji  
 Mindy Black  
 Board Members Absent: Jill Kurfirst  
 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 known as Alley 24, with commercial retail and office on the east half block as well as housing on the west half.

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 residential units, 81 low-income housing units and 3 staff units for Plymouth Housing Group. The existing structures on site will be demolished.

## **DESIGN PRESENTATION**

After a brief review of the zoning, neighborhood character and building program, the applicant addressed the responses to the Design Guidelines specified of highest priority for the success of the project at the Early Design Guidance Meeting.

### **A. Site Planning:**

**A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics.**

**A-2 Streetscape Compatibility.**

**A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street.**

**A-4 Human Activity.**

**A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street.**

**Applicant Response:** The mid-block site is located on pedestrian friendly connections between downtown Seattle and the Cascade Neighborhood, along Pontius Avenue North as well as the alley to the west. The main entry to the building strongly aligns with the mid-block pedestrian passageway of Alley 24, located directly across Pontius Avenue North. The recessed entry and

first floor common rooms allow for privacy between the public sidewalk and the private uses interior to the building. Landscaping at the recesses, between the curb and the sidewalk, and two new street trees that highlight the proposed entry enhance the pedestrian experience on the west side of Pontius Avenue North. The building is setback from the alley with a landscaped buffer and residential p-patch. This allows for a walk-able alley that has a strong connection to the Cascade P-Patch that can be seen at the north end of the alley.

#### **A-7 Residential Open Space.**

**Applicant Response:** The exterior residential open space is located in the south court area where it maintains a sense of privacy. The height of the exiting retaining wall is broken up by raised planters and green screens. The open space can be seen from Pontius Avenue North through the storefront windows that create a transparent first floor.

### **B. Height, Bulk and Scale**

#### **B-1 Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility.**

**Applicant Response:** This site, located on and west side of Pontius Avenue North, has the same zoning ( SM/R 55/75) as the property located on the east side of the street. The proposed height is approximately 65'-0" above grade plane which is 10'-0" below the allowable zoning. The proposed massing and height are very similar to those elements in the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance which is located south of the site.

### **C. Architectural Elements and Materials**

#### **C-1 Architectural Context.**

#### **C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency.**

**Applicant Response:** The proposed building successfully combines the massing preference of the Early Design Guidance Scheme A ('base/middle/top') and the transparency of Scheme C at the first floor plan layout. A strong base with brick and concrete anchors the building to the site. The centrally located entry establishes a symmetry that extends to the middle and top of the façade. Window alignment and siding elements of the 'middle' strongly connect the base to the top. While the top mimics the horizontality of the base, the proportion of the windows creates a light and open feel.

#### **C-3 Human Scale.**

**Applicant Response:** There are three window types and spacing variety of spacing provides interest on the exterior and to the of interior of the units. The alignment on the exterior creates relationships between the 'base/middle/top'. On the interior, each studio unit has at least two different window types.

#### **C-4 Exterior Finish Materials.**

**Applicant Response:** Brick has been proposed on the ‘base’ of the building to relate to the numerous historic building in the neighborhood. A fiber cement siding scheme has been proposed for the ‘middle & top’ of the building to present an option for the Design Review Board. While it was suggested at the Early Design Guidance meeting that the applicant look at other siding options, it is felt that metal siding is an appropriate siding material for the neighborhood. The long term durability of metal siding and richness of the finish will provide a strong and clean façade. Over time, the metal siding will hold up better than fiber cement siding which requires ongoing and frequent maintenance.

#### **D. Pedestrian Environment**

##### **D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances.**

**Applicant Response:** The proposed main entry is aligned with the pedestrian passageway across Pontius Avenue North and reinforced with lighting and street trees. Landscaping encompasses the sidewalk with planting areas along the building and the curb, enhancing the pedestrian experience on the west side of the street. The alley is improved by setting back the proposed building to allow for landscaping and lighting to provide a pedestrian-friendly pathway to the Cascade P-Patch and Playground. Adequate lighting and security cameras will be monitored 24/7 by the desk staff. A staff lounge is located along the alley to improve the security and safety.

##### **D-2 Blank Walls.**

**Applicant Response:** The Owner and Design Team met with the Immanuel Lutheran Church (ILC) to review the north elevation and project as a whole. The ILC is pleased with the treatment of the north façade and the opportunity to provide this type of housing. The landscaping along the north property line will be integrated with the project.

##### **D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas.**

**Applicant Response:** The dumpster storage will be located inside the building screened by an overhead door. The landscape buffer will soften the mechanical room and the Seattle City Light vault along the alley. Since the gas service is located in Pontius Avenue North, the gas meter will be required to be located on the east façade. The gas meter will be shielded from the sidewalk with landscaping and screening while maintaining required access.

##### **D-7 Personal Safety and Security.**

##### **D-8 Treatment of Alleys.**

**Applicant Response:** Pedestrian safety will be upgraded upon the completion of this project along Pontius Avenue North and the alley. Street lights as well as building lighting will encourage the use of the west side of the street. An office that is staffed 24/7 faces Pontius Avenue North and will provide constant ‘eyes on the street’. The proposed building maintains the transparency shown in Early Design Guidance Scheme C from the main entry through to the

alley. A staff lounge and copy area are adjacent to the alley to provide 'eyes on the alley'. The alley is improved by setting back the proposed building to allow for landscaping and lighting to improve the pedestrian-friendly pathway to the Cascade P-Patch and Playground. Adequate lighting is provided and there are security cameras monitored 24/7 by staff. A staff lounge is located along the alley to improve the security and safety.

#### **D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions.**

**Applicant Response:** The main entry along Pontius Avenue North is recessed and the common rooms north and south are set back from the east façade to remove the more private areas away from the more public sidewalk. The building is buffered from the sidewalk by landscaping, although transparency is still maintained through large storefront windows.

#### **E. Landscaping**

**E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites.**

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

**E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions.**

**Applicant Response:** Landscaping surrounds the building and every recess is planted with native, drought tolerant plants and trees. Pontius Avenue North will have landscaping at the building's edge and along the curb, with two new street trees that enhance the symmetry of the building and highlight the main entry. Along the north property line, the landscaping will be integrated with the church property so as to appear seamless. Planting beds, raised planters and pervious pavers will define the exterior resident open space in the south courtyard. The alley provides a lot of opportunity for the building and its neighbors. There is a 10'-0" buffer between the alley and the building where human scale planting and p-patches will soften the building and create a pedestrian-friendly experience.

The applicant also addressed two specific requests from the Board and public. A shade study was presented to reveal that there will be little or no shade cast on the childcare play area as a result of this building. A well-organized roof was presented out of respect for neighbors that may be looking down on this building.

Two exterior schemes were presented by the applicant; both schemes incorporated the Board's request for a strong entry, 'base-middle-top' and a variety of windows. The strong base was represented with concrete and brick in both schemes with a focus on the entry enhanced by a brick arch. The middle was represented with a metal siding and fiber cement color scheme. The metal siding scheme tied the entry vertically through the 'middle' to the 'top', while the fiber cement scheme separated the 'base-middle-top.' The 'top', in both schemes, wrapped the building and had a different window type than the 'middle.'

#### **REQUESTED DEPARTURES**

**SMC 23.48.012:** The applicant requested a departure to the upper level setback requirement along the alley. The entire building is setback approximately eleven feet (15' required) from the

alley allowing for pedestrian level landscaping and openness at the ground level enhancing the walk-ability of the alley.

SMC 23.48.020: The applicant requested a departure from the Residential Amenity Area calculations. The request includes a departure from the 1.) 50% requirement for exterior space and the minimal 2.) dimensional (15') and 3.) minimal square foot (225) requirements. The applicant is providing more than the total amount required.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Four members of the public attended the Design Review Meeting. The following question was asked:

- Is parking provided on site?

The applicant responded:

- No parking is proposed or required per 23.54.015. The low-income residents are not expected to have vehicles and the on-site staff will take public transportation. 21 bicycle spaces will be provided.

## **BOARD ASSESSMENT OF RESPONSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board agreed the applicant succeeded in appropriately responding to the Early Design Guidance Recommendation and Design Guidelines. The brick and concrete base was acknowledged as appropriate in creating a strong base; it provided a strong welcoming element and created a connection to the neighborhood. The Board asked the applicant to focus on the detailing of the brick, especially at the entry, to ensure that it is of high quality. The Board preferred the bronze anodized windows for the storefront in the base. The Board would like the differentiated 'base-middle-top' to become less differentiated by reducing the contrast in colors. It was suggested that it might help to have the darker color in the 'middle' and the lighter color in the 'top' to provide a better progression. The Board was in favor of the simpler 'middle' of the second scheme that allowed each element to stand on its own. "Keep it simple, keep it clean" was the Board's consensus advice.

The Board also preferred the second scheme's window pattern. Linking the center windows to the 'top' has the effect of creating an emphasis on the entry and providing a unity of 'base-middle-top'. Providing two different window styles, single-hung and picture-with-slider, was also preferred to create interest on both the exterior and interior.

Given the guidance and considerations noted above, the Board recommended approval of the design of the project as presented.

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The Board supports and recommends granting both requested departures: SMC 23.48.012 and SMC 23.48.020.