City of Seattle

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

FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE
QUEEN ANNE/ MAGNOLIA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3011606

Address: 420 Pontius Ave. N.

Applicant: Vulcan Real Estate Inc.

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, April 20, 2011

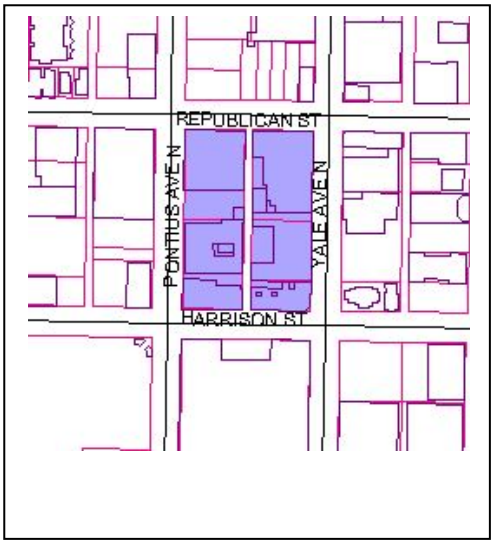
Board Members Present: David Delfs, Chair
Maria Barrientos
John Rose
Jill Kurfirst

DPD Staff Present: Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed Residential (SM/R 55'/75')

Nearby Zones: (North) SM/R 55'/75'
(South) SM75'
(East) SM 75'
(West) SM/R 55'/75'



Current Development:	Turn of the 20th Century brick and heavy timber commercial and industrial buildings.
Access:	Access can be had from the alley though the full block and from each of the four surrounding streets.
Surrounding Development:	In addition to the historic landmark Russian Orthodox Church across Yale Ave. there is a mix of older warehouse type commercial buildings and newer multi-family and office buildings.
ECAs:	None.
Neighborhood Character:	Prominent elements of the neighborhood character include the landmark Russian Orthodox Church across Yale Ave., the landmark Supply Laundry Building and smoke stack on the site, the Cascade Park to the southwest and the narrow Yale Ave. roadway width.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for a full block retail and residential development with two new buildings, preservation of the Historic Landmark Supply Laundry Building and accessory parking (Application to be reviewed with 3011607 and 3011522). The two new buildings are designed to appear as several building expressions.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

The applicants presented a further refined and developed version of the Concept K alternative shown in the Early Design Guidance phase of review. Concept K is organized around a central core on either side of the alley with the historic smoke stack as an element of a plaza space. The designated historic landmark Supply Laundry Building and smoke stack are to be preserved and the building reused. The proposed new buildings are organized in a three part relationship. While there are two new buildings proposed, one on each side of the alley, these are divided into multiple building forms giving the look of multiple, attached buildings. Three of the building expressions would form an urban fabric; rectangular and functional. Two of themwould be “objects;" focal points of architectural interest. The main “object building” expression would occupy the southwest corner of the site and would be in visual relation with the Cascade Park to the southwest.

Two views of the proposal from the southwest are shown below.

J.4 RENDERINGS

VIEW FROM THE SOUTHWEST (CASCADE PARK)

BLOCK 10 LAUNDRY BLOCK · MIXED · USE

Runberg Architecture Group, PLLC · Vulcan | City Investors XVII, LLC

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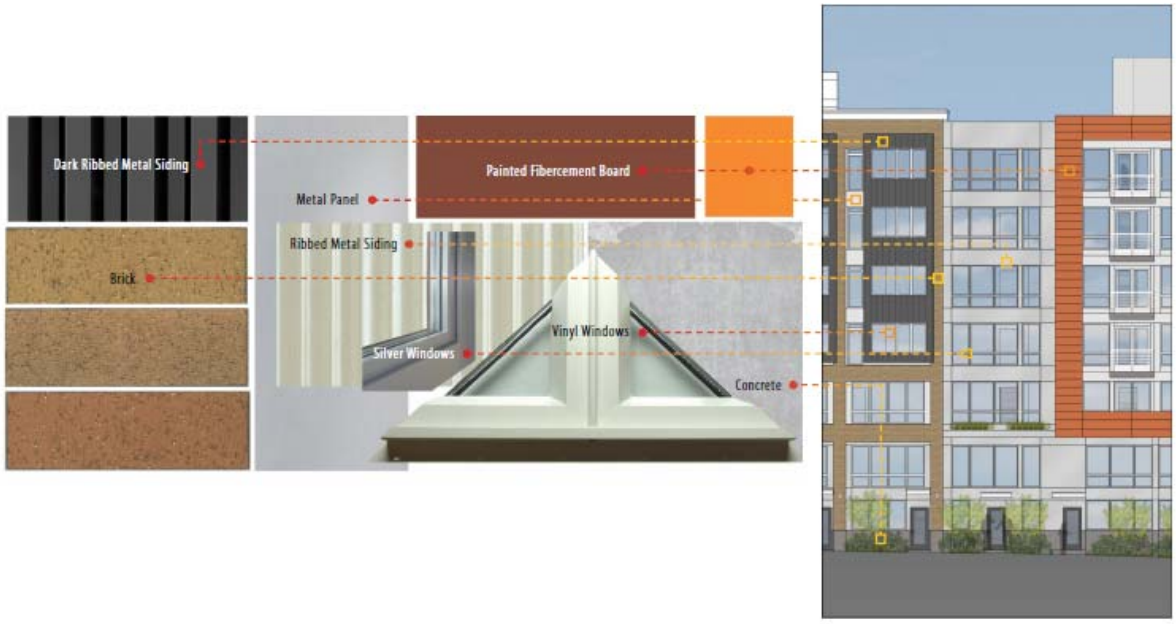
Commercial reuse, either retail and/or office, is likely in the historic Supply Laundry building. Commercial uses are also planned for street frontage along Harrison St. Residential uses would face sidewalks and a Seattle Public Utilities water quality treatment swail along both Yale Ave. and Pontius Ave.

Energy efficiency is a design objective as is provision of some elements of urban food production. A portion of the roof surfaces would be covered with a rooftop garden.

Materials to be used include painted, ribbed metal siding, brick, painted cementious siding and concrete as shown in the materials board shown below.



PUBLIC COMMENT

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

- Noted that the alley oriented open spaces work well.
- Stated that the building repeats its upper massing volumes throughout the block and thereby becomes too big. Changing the sizes and shapes of the masses would help. This late in "the game" changing the colors between the elements may be all that is possible.
- Encouraged the street level elements be varied in a way that provides interest and allows individuality of expression by users.
- Concerned those residential users at street level will close blinds most of the time, creating an "offensive experience" at the street. An approach to the problem may be to lessen the amount of glazing and to use landscape to communicate when one is and when one is not welcome to come up to a window.
- Endorsed putting more glass in the "link" portion of the project; more like what was shown in the EDG materials.

- Asked that the cisterns next to the driveway entry be celebrated as an artistic element and that they be cylindrical.
- Observed that the fabric of components lacks hierarchy or rhythm (as in the brick facades) and that the object element at the southwest corner is very visible but lacks scale, has an office tower character without a sense of movement.
- John Phearson summarized his observations by stating the green street presentation was too limited to really understand what would be created along them, there should be some three bedroom units for families, the pedestrian experience should be created that avoids avoids a monolithic quality, and that the driveway access departure for access from Republican (rather than from the alley) should be granted, but that the sight triangle is important.

BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities and drawings showing the proposal, the Design Review Board members **recommended approval** of the design and the requested **departures** with some recommended **conditions** as described below.

The Board decided that the commercial store fronts need to be further developed to add variety and separate character between what could be individual tenants in the pedestrian realm. A single, unchanging character needs to be avoided. Methods which could be incorporated include: use of a rhythm in textures and variety of awning types, variety of window fenestration types (maybe including a roll up door or two), lighting variety, and individual signage opportunities.

The "object building" at the southwest corner of the site should be smooth in appearance with closed joints like those used in the Agnes Lofts. The lap siding look which shows in the renderings at the meeting should be avoided.

The link elements should be distinguished from the other building mass elements by setting them back from the perimeter wall (as shown at the meeting) and also by giving them a shorter parapet height.

The cistern visible between the alley and the proposed driveway should be a cylinder rather than a box and there should be some educational display incorporated into its installation.

The Board stated that the recommended conditions outlined above could be accomplished to the satisfaction of DPD Design Review staff and incorporated into the MUP plans prior to MUP issuance.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board reviewed the following requested Development Standard Departures and in each found that each one would result is a building design which would meet the objectives of the applicable Design Review Guidelines as well or better than the code prescriptive approach. Each recommendation was unamiously supported by all the members present unless otherwise indicated. The Board's rationale for each departure is also stated in the matrix below.

Departure Matrix

	Description	Request	Justification	DRB Comments
1	**Upper Level Setbacks** SMC 23.48.012 Upper level setbacks are required along Harrison Street above 45'-0". Upper level setbacks are required for facades facing alleys for any portion of the structure greater than 25'-0" in height.	To allow the top 2 floors to extend into the setback along Harrison Street and the top 4 floors to extend into the setback along the alley. See graphic H.1 from the Graphic Packet presented at the meeting and reproduced below.	The project provides an varied pattern of upper level and lower level setbacks which provide a result better suited to the context and site than the code proscribed pattern. The proposal sets back several feet at sidewalk level to allow activity to spill out onto portions of the sidewalk. On the upper levels the project is voluntarily setting back along Harrison to preserve views to and from St. Spiridon Cathedral and the building massing sets back significantly from the alley in places to create breathing room for the ground level spaces located along the alley.	The Board recommended approval of this departure.

			Please see diagrams on plan sheet **T03** in support of this departure request.	
2	**Façade Heights** SMC 23.48.014B2 Class 2 pedestrian streets require a minimum façade height of 25'-0".	To allow portions of the new building facades along Harrison street to be between 21' - 25' tall.	The southeast building is intentionally setting back the upper floors to allow visual clearance to and from St. Spiridon Cathedral. Additionally, to avoid pinching the alley with two tall buildings, the east side of the west building pulls back from the alley and street.	The Board recommended approval of this departure.
3	**Façade Transparency** SMC 23.48.018.A.1 On Class 2 pedestrian streets a minimum of 60% of the façade must be transparent between 2' and 8' above grade.	Allow a reduction in transparency along Republican Street from 60% to 48.8%	The easternmost portion of the opaque façade is setback from the property line by 10'-0" to allow pedestrians along the alley and Republican St a better view of the cars entering and exiting the parking garage. Please see diagrams on sheet **T02** in support of this departure	The Board recommended approval of this departure.

			request.	
4	**Blank Façade** SMC 23.48.018.B.1 On Class 2 pedestrian streets the maximum width for a blank façade is 15' wide (exclusive of garage entries)	Allow a 16'-9" wide blank façade along Republican Street.	This blank façade is set back from the property line by 10'-0" to allow pedestrians along the alley and Republican street a better view of the cars entering and exiting the parking garage. Please see diagrams on sheet **T02** in support of this departure request.	The Board recommended approval of this departure.
5	**Residential Amenity Area** SMC 23.48.020Residential amenity area =5% of the gross residential square footage must be provided.	Allow the residential amenity area to be accommodated for the project as a whole rather than requiring a proportional division by building.	Consolidation of the amenity spaces to serve the entire site, rather than the individual buildings allows them to be of better function and design. Please see diagrams on sheet **T02** in support of this departure request.	The Board recommended approval of this departure.

6	**Parking and Loading** SMC 23.48.034 When a lot abuts an alley, parking access must be off of the alley	To allow the parking garage entrance to be accessed off of Republican Street.	A primary goal of the project is to create a safe pedestrian environment along the alley to provide public amenity space to the neighborhood and site. Reducing traffic along the alley will contribute to this goal. At the request of the DRB the project has been revised to open up the NE corner of the west building, thereby providing better view access for pedestrians along the alley and Republican street to see vehicle movement in and out of the garage. Please see diagrams on sheet **T03** in support of this departure request.	The Board recommended approval of this departure.

7	**Site Triangle** SMC 23.48.034.G.2 A site triangle on the side of the driveway used as an exist shall be provided and shall be kept clear of any obstruction for a distance of 10 Feet from the intersection of the driveway or easement with a driveway, easement, sidewalk, or curb intersection if there is no sidewalk.	To allow a moderately sized column to interrupt the site triangle.	The column provides an aesthetically pleasing connection between the building and the ground while holding the driveway entry into the building back 10'-0" from the sidewalk, to allow adequate visibility between vehicles exiting the driveway and the adjacent pedestrians.	The Board recommended approval of this departure.

Illustration of Upper Level Setback Departure Request

RECOMMENDED DESIGN REVIEW CONDITIONS:

The Board recommended the following Design Review Conditions with all the members present voting for each one unless indicated otherwise. Compliance with these conditions is recommended to be accomplished to satisfaction of DPD planning staff and to be incorporated in the MUP and future plan sets for the proposal.

1. The commercial store fronts shall be further developed to add variety and separate character between what could be individual tenants in the pedestrian realm. A single, unchanging character needs to be avoided. Methods which could be incorporated include: use of a rhythm in textures and variety of awning types, variety of window fenestration types (maybe including a roll up door or two), lighting variety, and individual signage opportunities.

2. The "object building" at the southwest corner of the site shall be smooth in appearance with closed joints like those used in the Agnes Lofts.

3. The elements of the link facades shall be distinguished from the other building mass elements by setting them back from the perimeter wall and also by giving them a shorter parapet height.

4. The cistern visible between the alley and the proposed driveway shall be a cylinder rather that a box with some educational display incorporated into its installation.

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