



## EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE QUEEN ANNE/ MAGNOLIA /WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012798 (east half); 3013563 (west half)

Address: 221 Minor Avenue N (east); 222 Fairview Avenue N (west), Seattle

Applicant: Michele Wang, Runberg Architects

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, August 15, 2012

Board Members Present: David Delfs (Chair)  
Mindy Black  
Jacob Connell  
Jill Kurfirst

Board Members Absent: Lipika Mukerji

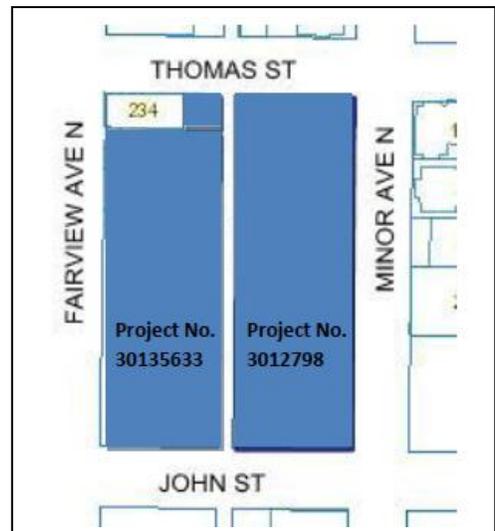
DPD Staff Present: Garry Papers, Senior Land Use Planner

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM/R 55'-75' (east) IC-85 (west)

Nearby Zones: (North) IC-65  
(South) SM-125  
(East) SM-75  
(West) IC-85

Lot Area: 43,200 sf (east, full half block);  
40,400 sf (west)



The block bounded by Fairview Ave N to the west, Minor Ave N to the east, Thomas St to the north, and John St to the south. The east half block is predominantly surface parking lot, with a 2 story commercial building, approximately 50 x 130 ft, located mid-block on Minor Avenue. The west portion is currently occupied by a 2 story commercial structure with a parking court, formerly occupied by the Social Security administration; the 1 story restaurant (Laada Indian), 35 x 80 ft at the northwest corner, is NOT part of the project site.

**Current Development:** The east half block is predominantly surface parking lot, with a 2 story commercial building, approximately 50 x 130 ft, located mid-block on Minor Avenue. The west portion is currently occupied by a 2 story commercial structure with a parking court, formerly occupied by the Social Security administration; the 1 story restaurant (Laada Indian), 35 x 80 ft at the northwest corner, is NOT part of the project site.

**Access:** Vehicular access from the existing alley, and existing curb cuts off Minor Avenue and one off Fairview Avenue.

**Surrounding Development:** Alcyone apartments and the SLU streetcar maintenance building to the north; Cascade Park and Peoples Center to the northeast; a mix of residential, commercial, day-care and surface parking to the east; the 120 ft tall Mirabella residential block to the south; and the 3 story Seattle Times block to the west.

**ECAs:** N/A

**Neighborhood Character:** Cascade neighborhood has an interesting mix of new and historic buildings. Historic structures include Immanuel Lutheran Church and St. Spiridon Russian Orthodox Cathedral. New residential developments include Alley24, Alcyone Apartments, both of which successfully built street frontage accessed units, and interestingly incorporated neighborhood artwork. South of the property site is a large scale senior living retirement community. The project site is located diagonally across the corner from landmark Cascade Park and Cascade Pea Patch.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

East half block: #301 2798

Demolish existing building and construct a new 7-story structure containing approximately 264 residential units, 5,000 sq. ft. of commercial retail space, and ground level residential units. Parking for approximately 260 vehicles will be provided below grade. Project will include a contract rezone from SM/R 55'/75' to SM - 85'.

West half block: #301 3563

Demolish existing buildings and construct a new 7-story structure containing approximately 213 residential units, 12 live/work units, and approximately 2,500 SF of commercial retail space. Parking for approximately 210 vehicles to be provided below grade. Project will include a contract rezone from IC – 85 to SM -85'. The existing public alley between the half blocks will be retained and the parking will not be connected below it.

## **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include 7 story massing on both half blocks and approximately the same program areas, but distribute the massing in different shapes with varying shadow and light results, and different bulk/scale impacts to the alley and streets.

The **Option A** scheme was code compliant and showed both half blocks with west facing rectangular courts to capture afternoon light. The upper floors of the east block along the alley are stepped back, but the continuous tall wall along the west edge of the alley negated any light penetration from the step back. The building wall was well modulated along Fairview, but the one along John and Minor is very solid.

The **Option B** scheme showed the courtyards aggregated into longer north-south, angled shapes, which modulated the large tall walls on the alley, Fairview and Minor streets. This affords better light into the alley facing courtyards and alley, and implied a departure from the alley step backs. The scheme included a curved northeast corner that reduced the bulk and shadow onto the intersection and Cascade Park, however this feature could be integrated into any scheme.

The **Option C** scheme **was applicant preferred**, and showed east-west courtyards that are aligned across the alley for maximum sun penetration, and they provide modulation on Fairview and Minor streets. A departure from upper step backs along one side of alley is requested, but those portions are short and don't improve light significantly. The wall plane along John Street was canted back to provide modulation and usable roof decks. The northeast corner was curved and the entire wall setback from Thomas, requiring a slight departure from the 12 ft maximum setback. A through-block 'pedestrian mews' was shown, crossing the alley at the southern third point, while vehicular entries occur off the alley at the northern end, near Thomas Street. A 4 story pedestrian bridge over the mews was shown as light and transparent glass, and the applicant stated it may be open-air; a similar 1 story bridge over the alley is under consideration.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

During public comment, the following comments, issues and concerns were raised:

- Supported the applicant preferred option C and the inclusion of the through-block pedestrian mews.
- Stated the relationship to the retained corner restaurant (off project site) should be handled well. Applicant clarified there is a 15 foot step back there and windows in the proposed wall.
- Requested clarification on vehicle access points? Applicant answered parking and garbage access are off the alley, at the north end away from the proposed mews and John Street.

- Supported the green roofs as a project amenity and attractive surface for adjacent buildings to look onto, and suggested they be expanded further with an interesting design pattern.
- Encouraged the alley to have a pedestrian character as “charming” as the pedestrian mews.
- Supported the commercial limited to the 2 corners, and the development of the pedestrian mews as a quiet, lively pedestrian space similar to Alley 24 nearby.
- Requested clarification on the 85 ft height proposed on east block? Applicant answered the 85 ft line would allow for the partial “roof caps” and the 10 ft floor to floor heights proposed, but not an additional full story.
- Asked what the construction timeframe might be? Applicant answered start excavation mid 2013 (assuming typical permit process) then 20-24 months construction; 2 half-blocks will be phased, primarily for construction staging reasons.
- Supported the stoop treatment along John Street and other site frontages with residential.

## 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 siting and design guidance. The Board identified the following **Citywide Design Guidelines** (A-1, A-2, etc) and South Lake Union (**SLU**) **Neighborhood specific guidelines** (as applicable) of highest priority for this project; these are shown **in bold**.

All the **Neighborhood specific guidelines** are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

### 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.

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- ***Encourage provision of “outlooks and overlooks” for the public to view the lake and cityscapes. Examples include provision of public plazas and/or other public open spaces and changing the form or facade setbacks of the building to enhance opportunities for views.***
- ***Minimize shadow impacts to Cascade Park.***
- New development is encouraged to take advantage of site configuration to accomplish sustainability goals. The Board is generally willing to recommend departures from development standards if they are needed to achieve sustainable design. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design\*(LEED) manual which provides additional information. Examples include:

- Solar orientation
- Storm water run-off, detention and filtration systems
- Sustainable landscaping
- Versatile building design for entire building life cycle

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed expanding the usable roof area, maximizing the green roofs, and providing multiple roof overlooks for residents and guests.

**A-2 Streetscape Compatibility.** The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

The vision for street level uses in South Lake Union is a completed network of sidewalks that successfully accommodate pedestrians. Streetscape compatibility is a high priority of the neighborhood with redevelopment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming and open to the general public.

- Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities, such as: tree grates; benches; lighting.
- ***Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.***
- Where appropriate, consider a reduction in the required amount of commercial and retail space at the ground level, such as in transition zones between commercial and residential areas. Place retail in areas that are conducive to the use and will be successful.
- ***Where appropriate, configure retail space so that it can spill-out onto the sidewalk (retaining six feet for pedestrian movement, where the sidewalk is sufficiently wide).***

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board strongly supported creating a public gathering space at the northeast corner, and supporting this with façade refinements that make a stronger presence in the middle portion of the corner; perhaps carrying a façade treatment up from the commercial storefront, or creating a distinctive composition that does not duplicate the adjacent residential walls.

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

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- ***Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.***
- ***Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.***

- ***Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.***
- Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.
- Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.
- Create businesses and community activity clusters through co-location of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.
- ***Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.***

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the mews and alleys as valuable connectors and discussed the treatment of the alley needing to be safe, well-lit and quality materials. The Board also encouraged the live-work frontages along Fairview Avenue to be flexible for commercial uses and read as storefronts, not purely residential.

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

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

***Consider designing the entries of residential buildings to enhance the character of the streetscape through the use of small gardens, stoops and other elements to create a transition between the public and private areas. Consider design options to accommodate various residential uses, i.e., townhouse, live-work, apartment and senior-assisted housing.***

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed at length the importance of the stoop transitions along the John, Minor and Thomas Street townhouse frontages. The Board encouraged the applicants to ensure the setback along Minor Street accommodates landscaping and a usable area for small tables and chairs for each unit, and that might require enlarging the setback to 7-8 feet wide. The Board recognized the building above may overhang the widened setback, as long as the setback is 2 stories in height, to afford adequate light and scale to the stoops.

- A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access.** Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties, and pedestrian safety.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board supported the location of all vehicular and loading access as shown, off the alley, and toward the north end away from the mews cross-over.

## **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 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.

### **SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through building placement, scale and details with specific attention to regional transportation corridors such as Mercer, Aurora, Fairview and Westlake. These locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements.
- Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.
- Relate proportions of buildings to the width and scale of the street.
- ***Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that relate to the existing structures or existing pattern of development in the vicinity.***
- Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as: landscaping; trellis; complementary materials; detailing; accent trim.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the importance of the modulations shown in Option C , along all three streets, to moderate the bulk, improve daylight penetration, and create scale along the lengthy frontages.

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

**C-1 Architectural Context.** 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.

### **SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- ***Support the existing fine-grained character of the neighborhood with a mix of building styles.***
- Re-use and preserve important buildings and landmarks when possible.
- Expose historic signs and vintage advertising on buildings where possible.

- Respond to the history and character in the adjacent vicinity in terms of patterns, style, and scale. Encourage historic character to be revealed and reclaimed, for example through use of community artifacts, and historic materials, forms and textures.
- Respond to the working class, maritime, commercial and industrial character of the Waterfront and Westlake areas. Examples of elements to consider include: window detail patterns; open bay doors; sloped roofs.
- ***Respond to the unique, grass roots, sustainable character of the Cascade neighborhood. Examples of elements to consider include: community artwork; edible gardens; water filtration systems that serve as pedestrian amenities; gutters that support greenery.***

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the importance of the modulations shown in Option C , along all three streets, and requested that the next meeting include a design rationale for how façade treatments might vary along streets, courtyards and alley, to moderate the repetition of the full-block mid zone.

**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. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

***Design the “fifth elevation” — the roofscape — in addition to the streetscape. As this area topographically is a valley, the roofs may be viewed from locations outside the neighborhood such as the freeway and Space Needle. Therefore, views from outside the area as well as from within the neighborhood should be considered, and roof-top elements should be organized to minimize view impacts from the freeway and elevated areas.***

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed expanding the usable roof deck, and the green roof area, both with an attractive “fifth elevation” design.

## **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.

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm, i.e. the transition zone between private property and the public right of way. The Board is generally willing to consider a departure in open space requirements if the project proponent provides an acceptable plan for features such as: curb bulbs adjacent to active retail spaces where they are not interfering with primary corridors that are designated for high levels of traffic flow; pedestrian-oriented street lighting; street furniture.

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

Providing parking below grade is preferred.

The Board applauded that all proposed parking is below grade.

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

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- ***Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18-hour public activity. Methods to consider are: enhanced pedestrian and street lighting; well- designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street; police horse tie-up locations for routine patrols and larger event assistance.***

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board noted that the alley treatment should reinforce pedestrian activity, and especially the south portion up to the mews should have a residential feel, with windows/eyes on the alley, and quality materials that wrap from the street into the south alley and mews.

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

See D-7 above.

- 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 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.

See A-6 above.

## **E. Landscaping**

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

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- ***Support the creation of a hierarchy of passive and active open space within South Lake Union. This may include pooling open space requirements on-site to create larger spaces.***
- ***Encourage landscaping that meets LEED criteria. This is a priority in the Cascade neighborhood.***
- Where appropriate, install indigenous trees and plants to improve aesthetics, capture water and create habitat.
- Retain existing, non-intrusive mature trees or replace with large caliper trees.
- Water features are encouraged including natural marsh-like installations.
- Reference the City of Seattle Right Tree Book and the City Light Streetscape Light Standards Manual for appropriate landscaping and lighting options for the area.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board recommended that the mews, stoop setbacks and portions of the alley provide an enhanced public realm for pedestrians, and these areas should incorporate quality, sustainable landscape features, reinforcing a special restful, residential character along the mews and in the Fairview courtyard.

**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.

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

- Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a building and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the previous uses of the area. Neighborhood themes may include service industries such as laundries, auto row, floral businesses, photography district, arts district, maritime, etc.

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

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

Landscaping should be designed to take advantage of views to waterfront and downtown Seattle.

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) 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(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, the following departures were requested:

- 1. Alley Setback (SMC 23.48.012.A.2):** In brief, the Code requires structures abutting an alley to provide an upper-level setback for any portion of the structure greater than 25' in height. Section 23.48.012 B further stipulates that the structure shall be setback 1' for every 2' above 25', up to a maximum required setback of 15'.

The applicant proposes to waive this upper setback, since it is a mid block zone change condition affecting only one side of the alley, and Option C "provides a series of setbacks around the perimeter of the site, for greater benefit than alley setback".

The Board indicated clear support for this departure in consideration of the aligned, wide and deep courtyards along the alley (Option C) that afford even better light penetration to the middle block and alley. **(Design Guidelines: B-1, C-2, D-1)**

- 2. Street-level Setback (SMC 23.48.014.D):** In brief, The Code requires structures on these streets to be setback a maximum of 12 ft from the property line, and that setback area must meet landscape provisions of 23.48.024.

The applicant proposes a 15 ft setback along the Thomas street frontage of the ground level commercial use, to create a generous public café zone, across from the park.

The Board indicated clear support for this aspect of Option C, that an additional 3 ft setback is warranted at this strategic community corner, as long as the paving and material treatment are a strong, positive contribution to the public realm. The Board also stipulated the residential stoops in the setbacks provide a carefully designed combination of landscaping, entry sequence, privacy layering, and usable surface area for at least small café table/chairs for each unit. **(Design Guidelines: A-2, A-6, C-3, d-12, E-1)**

- 3. Additional Setbacks (SMC 23.48.014.D.2):** In brief, The Code requires any setbacks in excess of 12 ft to be limited to 30% of the setback street wall, and that they be at least 20 ft from any corner. The applicant proposes 2 setbacks along Fairview avenue that are deeper than 12 feet (mews and courtyard), and they total approximately 39% of the setback portion of approximately 257 ft.

The Board indicated support for the mews and courtyard, as long as the courtyard provides multi-purpose features and landscape amenities for the adjacent recessed live/work units, and the façade treatment along Fairview defining the compliant setback, has a strongly commercial design character. **(Design Guidelines: A-4, D-1, E-2)**

## **BOARD DISCUSSION SUMMARY**

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, in summary, the Board discussed the following:

- 1) Expanding the usable roof area, maximizing the green roofs, and providing multiple roof overlooks for residents and guests.
- 2) Strongly supported creating a public gathering space at the northeast corner, and supporting this with façade refinements that make a stronger presence in the middle portion of the corner; perhaps carrying a façade treatment up from the commercial storefront, or creating a distinctive composition that does not duplicate the adjacent residential walls.
- 3) Supported the mews and alleys as valuable pedestrian connectors and discussed the treatment of the alley needing to be safe, well-lit and quality materials. The board also directed the live-work frontages along Fairview Avenue to be flexible for commercial uses and read as storefronts, not purely residential.
- 4) The Board discussed at length the importance of the stoop transitions along the John, Minor and Thomas Street townhouse frontages; they should provide a carefully designed combination of landscaping, entry sequence, privacy layering, and usable surface area for at least a small café table and chairs for each unit.
- 5) The importance of the modulations shown in option C , along all three streets, and requested the applicants present at recommendation stage, a design rationale for how façade treatments might vary along streets, courtyards and alley.
- 6) Discussed how the mews, stoop setbacks and portions of the alley provide an enhanced public realm for pedestrians, and these areas should incorporate quality, sustainable landscape features, reinforcing a special restful, residential character along the mews and in the Fairview courtyard.

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

**At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forwards to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.**