



# City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development  
Diane M. Sugimura, Director



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

Project Number: 3012808

Address: 1201 Mercer Street, Seattle, WA 98109

Applicant: Holland Partners Group

Date of Meeting: December. 15, 2011

Board Members Present: David Delfs (Chair)  
Lipika Mukerji  
Jill Kurfirst  
Board Member #4

Board Members Absent: Mindy Black

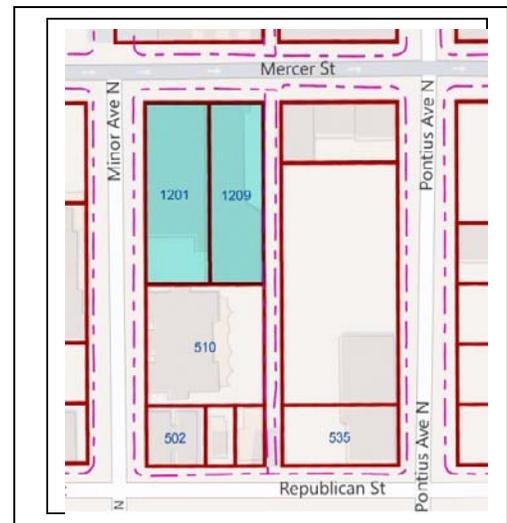
DPD Staff Present: Colin Vasquez

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM/R 55/75

Nearby Zones: (North) C2-65  
(South) DMC 340/290-400  
(East) SM-75  
(West) IC-65

Lot Area: 21,626 square feet



The project site consists of a roughly ¼ block parcel. The site slopes from a low point at the northwest corner intersection to approximately +19' at the south west corner.

Current

Development: There is an existing, one-story commercial building on the site, which will be razed to accommodate the proposed project. An existing apartment building is to the south and an apartment building is across the alley to the east

Access: Access to a below-grade parking garage is proposed to be from Mercer Street as far east from the intersection of Mercer Street and Minor Avenue N as the site allows. There is also a second proposed garage entrance from the Alley east of the site.

Surrounding Development: The surrounding development consists primarily of market-rate and low-income apartment buildings. The buildings are typically 6 - 7 floors tall, with the exception of the neighboring building to the south, the Kerner Scott House, which is 4 floors. Materials include metal panel, cement board, stucco and cast-in-place concrete.

ECAs: None

The Cascade Neighborhood is a quiet, residential neighborhood with South Lake Union to the north and west, and Downtown to the south. The neighborhood is defined by I-5 on the east, Fairview Avenue on the west, the Mercer Street on-ramp on the north and Denny Way on the south.

Neighborhood Character: Because there are no east-west or north-south connections through this neighborhood across I-5, the area is quiet and has a residential atmosphere to it.

The neighborhood consists mostly of multi-family housing uses, with other uses spread throughout. The REI flagship store and Amazon's corporate offices are attractions to the neighborhood.

In the center of the neighborhood is the Cascade P-Patch and Playground, where longtime community members and newcomers interact.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for a residential apartment building that is comprised of approximately 150,000 square feet in eight levels of construction, including one below-grade parking level. Parking will be accessed off Mercer Street with a second access off of the Alley to the east to help negotiate the steep grade of the site. A total of 139 residential units and 105 parking spaces will be accompanied by an indoor amenity space, an exterior landscaped courtyard and a roof top dog run.

### EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING: December 15, 2011

## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options include the Leasing/Lobby space on the prominent northwest corner of the site.

The first scheme (Option 1) showed a site-maximized, full bar scheme that resembled the shape of an “I” that emphasized the northwest corner of the building. This scheme is fully code compliant with no departures. The massing creates long, narrow units with poor daylighting. This scheme has bulky massing on the Alley façade.

The second scheme (Option 2) showed a “C” shape massing providing relief on the Alley with a 46’ setback creating a quiet landscaped courtyard. This scheme requires a full departure from upper level setback requirements on the Alley side to meet project goals.

The third scheme (Option 3) is the preferred Option. It showed a “C” shape massing providing relief on the Alley with a 32’ setback creating a quiet landscaped courtyard. This scheme requires a partial departure from the upper level setback requirements on the Alley side. The lower level setback above the plinth has a setback greater than the required setback as a compensation for the upper level departure.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

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

- The members of the neighborhood are concerned that there are few opportunities for family housing. He recommended that this project include three-bedroom units to accommodate this void in the neighborhood. The comment was duly noted, but no response was given.
- It was stated that LEED Silver certification should be a minimum goal with a target of LEED Gold. Marty Goodman representing Holland Partners, responded by stating that LEED Certification was the project target.

## 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 Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

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

***The Board discussed the massing options and given the size of the site was in agreement that the best response was to hold tight to the property line at Mercer and Minor and create the outdoor courtyard at the alley side. The Alley facing elevation needs to be mindful of pedestrian activity however and the adjacent units that look into the alley.***

**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).

***The Board discussed the appeal of retail in this neighborhood but agreed that it seemed unlikely. The best response on the ground floor for this project and creating an active streetscape was the residential lofts that have direct access to the sidewalk.***

- 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.

***The Upper floors of the southwest corner of the building should be pulled back from the property line to allow for south facing windows toward the property to the south (Kerner-Scott House) whose northeast corner has windows facing north. Care should be taken to avoid windows facing directly into bedrooms of the Kerner-Scott House.***

- 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.

***On the West elevation, the 5 foot setback of the base of the building is advantageous to create a defensible zone for the occupants. The board discussed whether it should be 8 feet and should be reviewed at next meeting.***

- A-7 Residential Open Space.** Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

*The board discussed the C-shaped building and size of the courtyard and while the amount of light in the courtyard itself might be less it is the best response for the alley and the units across the alley.*

- 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.

*The Board was generally in favor of both garage entry locations. There should be an attempt to align the garage entry from the alley with the garage entry of the neighboring property across the alley to minimize service zones along the alley where trash collections take place.*

- A-10** **Corner Lots.** Building on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

*The board was in agreement with the applicant's response to the corner with the massing, entry location and roof deck- all of which take advantage of the views to Lake Union and Queen Anne.*

## **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.

***The Board discussed the challenges of this massing for the site and building. They agreed that the preferred option C-shape with the units also facing south is the best for this site.***

## **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.

***See A5 comments above.***

**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.

***The board was in favor of the concept shown of the preferred massing and would like to see more detail at the next meeting.***

**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.

*The Board asked about any proposed materials for the project and would like to see more detail at the next meeting.*

**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 main garage entrance is proposed on Mercer Street near the alley. There are not entrances along Minor. The second garage entrance is in the alley to access the upper garage level. Therefore minimal impact to street frontages.*

## **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.

*See A6 comments above.*

**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 a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

*See C5 comments above.*

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

*The board wanted further study of the alley to look for opportunities to align the garage access point with the garage entry of AMLI535 across the alley and provide*

*softness through landscaping. Since there is no area for landscaping at the alley level, plantings that would grow down the garage wall may accomplish the effect.*

**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 A6 comments above. The residential units on Minor are an appropriate response and the Board liked the covered space. The access to the units needs further refinement for the next presentation.*

## **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.

*The Board supported the use of plants and the open space on the alley side and south side of the project in addition to the roof.*

**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.

***The Board discussed the appropriate response of outdoor space in front of the units along Minor Avenue and agreed that the best place for the roof deck is as shown in the preferred scheme.***

#### **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. SMC 23.48.012.A.3 & B- Upper Level Setback:** The Code requires Structures on lots abutting an alley in the SM/R designated area shall provide an upper level setback for the façade facing an alley, for any portion of the structure greater than 25 feet in height. B. Upper level setbacks shall be provided as follows. Any portion of the structure shall be set back at least 1 foot for every 2 feet of height above 25 feet, 45 feet or 75 feet whichever is applicable pursuant to subsection A of this section, up to a maximum required setback of 15 feet.. The applicant proposes to allow the new building to encroach 7'-6" or half of the required setback. The intent of the zoning ordinance is for the protection of sun exposure on residential zones. The proposed departure would not adversely impact the adjacent residential building. In addition the departure allows for structural constructability for this type of wood construction.

The Board indicated that they were in favor of this departure.

#### **BOARD DIRECTION**

**At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forward to the MUP application and a Recommendation meeting.**