



The City of Seattle

Pioneer Square Preservation Board

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PSB225/25

Staff Report

Board meeting Sept 3, 2025

Board Members Please Note: The citations from the District Ordinance, Rules for the Pioneer Square Preservation District, and Secretary of the Interior's Standards listed below are for your consideration in addition to any other citations you find relevant in considering each application.

090325

Grand Central, City Loan and Buttnick Buildings

(Squire Latimer, Gottstein, Brunswick-Balke-Collender)

200 1st Ave S

Briefing on proposed rehabilitation and reuse of the three buildings including an addition

Staff report: The proposal is for a 42 foot addition on the Buttnick Building, a 13 foot addition above the City Loan and 28 foot 6 inch addition above the Grand Central and a hotel use with street level parking.

The Board reviewed and approved a 12 foot penthouse addition on the Grand Central and Buttnick buildings in 2021. The Board found that the project complied with SMC 23.66.140 for office penthouses. The Board reviewed in 2017-2018 a proposal for a 36 foot, 4 story addition on the 4 story Grand Central Building and a 21 foot two story addition on the Buttnick Building. The Board thought that the addition did not comply with the District Rules that say that additions of floors are discouraged and did not comply with the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and especially Preservation Brief 14 for additions to historic buildings and did not support that project. A two story addition project was also reviewed by the National Park Service who also agreed that even the two story addition did not meet the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation standards specifically 2 and 9 because of the size and prominence of the additions.

The three buildings are historic contributing buildings to the Pioneer Square Skid Row National Historic District and the Grand Central was individually listed on the National Register in 1971.

Through all previous reviews the Board thought that the façade facing the park was highly visible and that it should not be considered a secondary façade like some other less visible alley facades. The Board typically looks at any addition or penthouse from various viewpoints not just the original primary façade.

This proposed addition does not qualify as a penthouse per the SMC 23.66.140 . A penthouse addition of one story 15 feet above the roof, set back and covers no more than 50% of the building. (even considering the three building as one property) could be allowed by code.

The Pioneer Square Preservation District Rules say that additional stories to buildings are discouraged. Preservation Brief 14 provides guidance additional guidance for appropriate additions. Generally a one story addition set back a bay is all that is recommended for a rooftop addition.

SMC 23.66.140 k requires that a greenhouse (primary purpose is the cultivation or protection of plants) cannot cover more than 35% of the roof, though the Board may increase that to 45% after considering all other factors including visibility and scale. However the greenhouse is limited to 8 feet tall above the roof if set back 15 feet and 15 feet tall above the roof if setback 30 feet. It does not appear to be setback more than 30 feet on all sides and appears to be larger than 35% of the rooftop and appears to be approximately 25 feet in height.

Note that retail and event space are two different uses. Retail is listed as a preferred use. Event space is neither preferred or discouraged but would need some additional documentation for evaluation to see if it complies with the code for approval of discouraged uses. No square footage is listed on the floor plans to determine if uses are preferred or discouraged because of square footage.

Parking is not required but is proposed. Parking use is discussed in SMC 23.66.124 and SMC 23.66170. and required it to be surrounded by at least 20 feet of preferred use if at street level. Washington Street Classification is Class 1 Pedestrian, and the alley is next to a park including a children's play structure. The areaway along Washington has notable features and was reinforced in a way to protect those notable features.

The Hearing Examiner previously determined that SMC23.66180 Scale gives the Board the authority to determine the appropriate height of a building up to the maximum. The Board usually determines this with view studies and guidance from the Seattle Municipal Code, District Rules and the Secretary of Interior Standards including Brief 14.

Code Citations:**Seattle Municipal Code****23.66.030 Certificates of Approval required**

Certificate of approval required. No person shall alter, demolish, construct, reconstruct, restore, remodel, make any visible change to the exterior appearance of any structure, or to the public rights-of-way or other public spaces in a special review district, and no one shall remove or substantially alter any existing sign or erect or place any new sign or change the principal use of any building, or any portion of a building, structure or lot in a special review district, and no permit for such activity shall be issued unless a certificate of approval has been issued by the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

23.66.100 Creation of district, legislative findings and purpose

- A. During the City of Seattle's relatively brief history, it has had little time in which to develop areas of consistent historical or architectural character. It is recognized that the Pioneer Square area of Seattle contains many of these rare attributes and consequently is an area of great historical and cultural significance. Further, the regional sports stadiums, constructed in and near the Pioneer Square area, and the traffic and activities that they generate have resulted in adverse impacts upon the social, cultural, historic and ethnic values of the Pioneer Square area. To preserve, protect, and enhance the historic character of the Pioneer Square area and the buildings therein; to return unproductive structures to useful purposes; to attract visitors to the City; to avoid a proliferation of vehicular parking and vehicular-oriented uses; to provide regulations for existing on-street and off-street parking; to stabilize existing housing, and encourage a variety of new and rehabilitated housing types for all income groups; to encourage the use of transportation modes other than the private automobile; to protect existing commercial vehicle access; to improve visual and urban relationships between existing and future buildings and structures, parking spaces and public improvements within the area; and to encourage pedestrian uses, there is established as a special review district, the Pioneer Square Preservation District. The boundaries of the District are shown on Map A for 23.66.100¹ and on the Official Land Use Map.
- C. Reasons for Designating the Pioneer Square Preservation District.
 - 1. Historic Significance. The Pioneer Square Preservation District is unique because it is the site of the beginning of The City of Seattle. The area also retains much of the original architecture and artifacts of its early history. The District has played a significant role in the development of Seattle, the Puget Sound region and The State of Washington. It was the first location of industry, business and

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homes in early Seattle and the focus of commerce and transportation for more than a half century.

2. Architectural Significance. As a collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century buildings of similar materials, construction techniques and architectural style, the District is unique, not only to the City but to the country as well. Most of the buildings within the District embody the distinctive characteristics of the Late Victorian style. Many buildings are the work of one architect, Elmer H. Fisher. For these and other reasons, the buildings combine to create an outstanding example of an area that is distinguishable in style, form, character and construction representative of its era.
5. Educational Value. The restoration and preservation of the District will yield information of educational significance regarding the way of life and the architecture of the late nineteenth-century as well as adding interest and color to the City. Restoration of the District will preserve the environment that was characteristic of an important era of Seattle's history.

23.66.124 - Uses subject to special review

A. Flexible-use parking garages for short-term parking at any location, except flexible-use parking garages for short-term parking in structures authorized pursuant to Section [23.49.180](#), require approval of the Department of Neighborhoods Director after review and recommendation by the Preservation Board and may be permitted if the following conditions are met:

1. The use will not increase the ambient noise level in existing residences within line of sight of the proposed parking structure; and
 2. Exterior materials, height, wall openings, and fenestration will reflect, to the extent possible, the character of the adjoining structures or structures on the adjoining block facing the site; and
 3. Access will comply with the standards in Section [23.66.170](#); and
 4. Automobile circulation within the garage will not be visible from the adjoining public streets.
- B. Uses at street level of approved parking garages are limited to those uses permitted in the area, other than parking, to a minimum depth of 20 feet along all street frontages, and along alleys and malls that are limited solely to pedestrian use.

23.66.130 Street-level uses

- A. 1. Uses at street level in the area designated on Map B for 23.66.130 require the approval of the Department of Neighborhoods Director after review and recommendation by the Preservation Board.
- B. Preferred Street-level Uses.

1. Preferred uses at street level must be highly visible and pedestrian oriented. Preferred street-level uses either display merchandise in a manner that contributes to the character and activity of the area, and/or promote residential uses, including but not limited to the following uses:
 - a. Any of the following uses under 3,000 square feet in size: art galleries and other general sales and service uses, restaurants and other eating and drinking establishment uses, and lodging uses;
- C. Discouraged Street-level Uses.
 1. The following are discouraged at street level in the area designated on Map B for 23.66.130:
 - a. Any use occupying more than 50 percent of any block front;
 - b. Any of the following with gross floor area over 3,000 square feet: general sales and services uses, eating and drinking establishment uses, and lodging uses;
 - c. All other uses with gross floor area over 10,000 square feet;
 - d. Professional services establishments or offices that occupy more than 20 percent of any block front; and
 - e. Parking garages that are not accessory to preferred uses.
 2. Discouraged uses may be approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director after review and recommendation by the Preservation Board if an applicant demonstrates that the proposed use is compatible with uses preferred at street level.
- D. Conditions on Street-level Uses. Approved street level uses in the area designated on Map B for 23.66.130 are subject to the following conditions:
 1. No use may occupy more than 50 percent of the street-level frontage of a block that is 20,000 square feet or more in area;
- F. The street-level location of entrances and exits of all vehicular-oriented uses, where permitted, shall be approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director after review and recommendation by the Preservation Board. View-obscuring screening may be required as needed to reduce adverse visual impacts on the immediate area.

23.66.140 Height

- A. Maximum height. Maximum structure height is regulated by Section 23.49.178.
- C. Rooftop features and additions to structures
 1. The height limits established for the rooftop features described in this Section 23.66.140 may be increased by the average height of the existing street parapet or a historically substantiated reconstructed parapet on the building on which the rooftop feature is proposed.

3. The setbacks required for rooftop features may be modified by the Department of Neighborhoods Director, after a sight line review by the Preservation Board to ensure that the features are minimally visible from public streets and parks within 300 feet of the structure.

4. Height limits for rooftop features

b. For existing structures, open railings, planters, clerestories, skylights, play equipment, parapets, and firewalls may extend up to 4 feet above the roof of the structure or the maximum height limit, whichever is less. For new structures, such features may extend up to 4 feet above the maximum height limit. No rooftop coverage limits apply to such features regardless of whether the structure is existing or new.

c. Solar collectors, excluding greenhouses, may extend up to 7 feet above the roof of the structure or the maximum height limit, whichever is less, with unlimited rooftop coverage, provided they are a minimum of 10 feet from all lot lines. For new structures, solar collectors may extend up to 7 feet above the maximum height limit, except as provided in subsection 23.66.140.C.4.j.1, and provided that they are a minimum of 10 feet from all lot lines.

d. The following rooftop features may extend up to 8 feet above the roof or maximum height limit, whichever is less, if they are set back a minimum of 15 feet from the street and 3 feet from an alley. They may extend up to 15 feet above the roof if set back a minimum of 30 feet from the street. A setback may not be required at common wall lines subject to review by the Preservation Board and approval by the Department of Neighborhoods Director. The combined coverage of the following listed rooftop features shall not exceed 25 percent of the roof area:

1) Solar collectors, excluding greenhouses;

2) Stair and elevator penthouses;

3) Mechanical equipment;

4) Minor communication utilities and accessory communication devices, except that height is regulated according to the provisions of Section [23.57.014](#).

Additional combined coverage of the rooftop features listed in subsection 23.66.140.C.4.d.1 through 23.66.140.C.4.d.4, not to exceed 35 percent of the roof area, may be permitted subject to review by the Preservation Board and approval by the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

f. Rooftop penthouses. The following types of occupied rooftop penthouse uses are permitted as a rooftop feature of a new building, or as a rooftop addition on an existing structure if it is at least 40 feet in height. Measurement of height for

purposes of this subsection 23.66.140.C.4.f may include the height of already-permitted and already-built rooftop penthouses regulated by this subsection 23.66.140.C.4.f.

1) Residential penthouses may cover a maximum of 50 percent of the total roof surface and may extend up to 8 feet above the roof if set back a minimum of 15 feet from the street property line, or 15 feet above the roof if set back a minimum of 30 feet from the street property line.

2) When permitted, office penthouses may cover a maximum of 50 percent of the total roof surface, may extend up to 15 feet above the roof of the structure, shall be functionally integrated into the existing structure, and shall be set back a minimum of 15 feet from all property lines. Accessory mechanical equipment may be placed on roofs of these penthouses if needed to support these uses. The height of this equipment is limited to the minimum needed to serve its function, and its coverage is subject to the coverage limits in subsection 23.66.140.C.4.d.

3) Penthouses for lodging uses. When permitted, penthouses for lodging uses may cover a maximum of 50 percent of the total roof surface, may extend up to 15 feet above the roof of the structure, shall be functionally integrated into the existing structure, and shall be set back a minimum of 15 feet from all property lines. For purposes of this subsection 23.66.140.C.4.f.3, lodging uses may include accessory uses such as dining areas, and eating and drinking establishments. Accessory mechanical equipment may be placed on roofs of these penthouses if needed to support lodging uses. The height of this equipment is limited to the minimum needed to serve its function, and its coverage is subject to the coverage limits in subsection 23.66.140.C.4.d.

4) Penthouses for eating and drinking establishments. When permitted, penthouses for these uses may cover a maximum of 50 percent of the total roof surface, may extend up to 15 feet above the roof of the structure, shall be functionally integrated into the existing structure, and shall be set back a minimum of 15 feet from all property lines. Accessory mechanical equipment may be placed on roofs of these penthouses if needed to support these uses. The height of this equipment is limited to the minimum needed to serve its function, and its coverage is subject to the coverage limits in subsection 23.66.140.C.4.d.

5) The combined height of the structure and a penthouse, if permitted, shall not exceed the maximum height limit for that area of the District in which the structure is located. 6) View studies depicting views toward a proposed improvement, including from distances up to 300 feet, are required for all rooftop penthouses. Increasing setbacks, lowering roof heights, or other design adjustments may be required to ensure the penthouse is minimally visible.

g. Screening of rooftop features. Measures may be taken to screen rooftop features from public view subject to review by the Preservation Board and approval by the Department of Neighborhoods Director. The amount of rooftop area enclosed by rooftop screening may exceed the maximum percentage of the combined coverage of rooftop features listed in subsection 23.66.140.C.4.d. In no circumstances shall the height of rooftop screening exceed 15 feet above the maximum height limit or height of an addition permitted according to subsection 23.66.140.C.4.i or otherwise, whichever is higher.

k. Greenhouses are permitted if they meet height and setback provisions in subsection 23.66.140.C.4.d and if the combined total coverage of greenhouses, solar collectors, stair and elevator penthouses, and mechanical equipment does not exceed 35 percent of the roof area. If the coverage includes greenhouses, a combined coverage of these rooftop features not to exceed 45 percent of the roof area may be permitted subject to review by the Preservation Board and approval by the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

(23.84A.014 "G" "Greenhouse" means a structure or portion of a structure, made primarily of glass or other translucent material, for which the primary purpose is the cultivation or protection of plants.)

23.66.170 - Parking and access

A. Parking standards in the Pioneer Square Preservation District are set forth in Section [23.49.019](#).

B. To mitigate the potential impacts of required loading on the District, the Director of Neighborhoods, after review and recommendation by the Preservation Board, may waive or reduce required loading if reasonable application of the loading standards will adversely affect the visual character of the District.

C. If parking is provided it shall be subject to the requirements of Section [23.54.030](#).

D. Standards for location of access to parking

1. Access to parking and loading from alleys, and from streets that generally run east/west is preferred to access from Avenues. If a lot abuts more than one right-of-way, the location of access shall be determined by the Department of Neighborhoods Director in consultation with the Director of Transportation. This determination shall be made according to the traffic classification of the street, depicted on Map D for 23.66.170. Access shall be from rights-of-way classified as follows, from the most to least preferred (a portion of a street that is included in more than one category is considered as belonging only to the least preferred of the categories in which it is included), except when the Department of Neighborhoods Director, following review and recommendation by the Board, determines that access from the preferred right-of-way would create a hazardous condition: alleys;

access streets, regardless of pedestrian classification; Class II pedestrian streets-minor arterial; Class II pedestrian streets-principal arterial; Class I pedestrian streets-minor arterial; Class I pedestrian streets-principal arterial; principal transit streets, regardless of pedestrian classification; green streets.

2. Curbcut width and the number of curbcuts permitted per street frontage shall be governed by Section [23.54.030](#).

3. The street-level location of entrances and exits of all parking garages, if permitted, shall be permitted only if approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director after review and recommendation by the Preservation Board. View-obscuring screening may be required as needed to reduce adverse visual impacts on the immediate area.

23.66.180 - Exterior building design.

To complement and enhance the historic character of the District and to retain the quality and continuity of existing buildings, the following requirements shall apply to exterior building design:

A. Materials. Unless an alternative material is approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director following Board review and recommendation, exterior building facades shall be brick, concrete tinted a subdued or earthen color, sandstone or similar stone facing material commonly used in the District. Aluminum, painted metal, wood and other materials may be used for signs, window and door sashes and trim, and for similar purposes when approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director as compatible with adjacent or original uses, following Board review and recommendation.

B. Scale. Exterior building facades shall be of a scale compatible with surrounding structures. Window proportions, floor height, cornice line, street elevations and other elements of the building facades shall relate to the scale of the buildings in the immediate area.

C. Awnings. Awnings shall be functional, serving as weather protection for pedestrians at street level, and shall overhang the sidewalk a minimum of five feet (5'). Awnings may be permitted on upper floors for the purpose of climate control. All awnings shall be of a design compatible with the architecture of buildings in the area.

Rules for the Pioneer Square Preservation District

III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REHABILITATION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

In addition to the Pioneer Square Preservation District Ordinance and Rules, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation with Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and the complete series of Historic Buildings Preservation Briefs developed by the National Park Service shall serve as guidelines

for proposed exterior alterations and treatments, rehabilitation projects, and new construction. (7/99)

Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. (7/99) In considering rehabilitation projects, what is critical is the stabilization of significant historical detailing, respect for the original architectural style, and compatibility of scale and materials.

The following architectural elements are typical throughout the District and will be used by the Board in the evaluation of requests for design approval:

- C. Building materials. The most common facing materials are brick masonry and cut or rusticated sandstone, with limited use of terra cotta and tile. Wooden window sash, ornamental sheet metal, carved stone and wooden or cast iron storefronts are also typically used throughout the District. Synthetic stucco siding materials are generally not permitted. (7/99)
- D. Color. Building facades are primarily composed of varied tones of red brick masonry or gray sandstone. Unfinished brick, stone, or concrete masonry unit surfaces may not be painted. Painted color is typically applied to wooden window sash, sheet metal ornament and wooden or cast iron storefronts. Paint colors shall be appropriate to ensure compatibility within the District. (7/99)
- F. Additions. Additional stories to existing buildings are discouraged unless they were original to the structure.

Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings Concerns

Page 1 A new exterior addition to a historic building should be considered in a rehabilitation project only after determining that requirements for the new or adaptive use cannot be successfully met by altering non-significant interior spaces.

Preserve Historic Character

Page 5 A new addition should always be subordinate to the historic building; it should not compete in size, scale or design with the historic building. An addition that bears no relationship to the proportions and massing of the historic building—in other words, one that overpowers the historic form and changes the scale—will usually compromise the historic character as well.

Page 5 The appropriate size for a new addition varies from building to building; it could never be stated in a square or cubic footage ratio, but the historic building's existing proportions, site and setting can help set some general parameters for enlargement. Although even a small addition that is poorly designed can have an adverse impact, to some extent, there is a predictable relationship between the size of the historic resource and what is an appropriate size for a compatible new addition. However, there is more specific guidance for rooftop additions.

Rooftop Additions

Page 12 Generally, a rooftop addition should not be more than one story in height to minimize its visibility and its impact on the proportion and profile of the historic building. A rooftop addition should almost always be set back at least one full bay from the primary elevation of the building, as well as from the other elevations if the building is free-standing or highly visible. It is difficult, if not impossible, to minimize the impact of adding an entire new floor to relatively low buildings, such as small-scale residential or commercial structures, even if the new addition is set back from the plane of the facade.

Summary

This guidance should be applied to help in designing a compatible new addition that will meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

- A new addition should be simple and unobtrusive in design and should be distinguished from the historic building—a recessed connector can help to differentiate the new from the old.
- A new addition should not be highly visible from the public right of way; a rear or other secondary elevation is usually the best location for a new addition.
- The construction materials and the color of the new addition should be harmonious with the historic building materials.
- The new addition should be smaller than the historic building—it should be subordinate in both size and design to the historic building.

The same guidance should be applied when designing a compatible rooftop addition, plus the following:

- A rooftop addition is generally not appropriate for a one, two or three-story building—and often is not appropriate for taller buildings.
- A rooftop addition should be minimally visible.
- Generally, a rooftop addition must be set back at least one full bay from the primary elevation of the building, as well as from the other elevations if the building is freestanding or highly visible.
- Generally, a rooftop addition should not be more than one story in height.

- Generally, a rooftop addition is more likely to be compatible on a building that is adjacent to similarly sized or taller buildings.

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Genna Nashem

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