



The City of Seattle

## International Special Review District

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ISRD 307/08

### MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, December 9, 2008

Time: 4:30pm  
Place: Bush Asia Center  
409 Maynard Avenue S.  
Basement meeting room

#### Board Members Present

Robert Ha  
Misun Chung Gerrick  
Weng Chan  
Joshua Osborne-Klein  
Jerry Chihara  
Bill Lee  
John Bisbee

#### Staff

Rebecca Frestedt  
Melinda Bloom

Chair Robert Ha called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

#### **120908.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*November 4, 2008*

MM/SC/JC/MCG

5:0:2 Minutes approved. Messrs. Bisbee and Lee abstained.

#### **120908.2 CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL**

120908.21

##### Sun Bakery

658 S. Jackson St.

*Applicant:* Michael Sun, business owner

**Signage:** Proposal to replace business identification sign.

Ms. Frestedt read the staff report and introduced business owner Michael Sun. The application was for installation for new business signage; the proposed signage is 48" x 96" w. Exhibits included Dibond material and color samples. The business is located within the Asian Character Design District. The amount of signage proposed meets the guidelines per SMC.23.66.338. The existing sign was approved by the Board in 1995. The new sign is larger than the existing sign but the dimensions are proportionate to existing signage of other businesses in the same building.

Mr. Sun explained the colors that were proposed.

**Administered by The Historic Preservation Program  
The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

"Printed on Recycled Paper"

Mr. Chihara encouraged the use of Asian characters into the signage; Mr. Sun stated he tried but it didn't fit on the sign. Mr. Sun added that the sign will be screwed into plywood that is already there.

Ms. Frestedt explained the existing signage had been calculated into the overall sign calculations; the entire allotment is allowable based on half of the signage having Asian characters.

Ms. Chung Gerrick thought the sign was more animated and colorful than the existing and suggested maintaining Asian characters on one side of the storefront windows.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Board Discussion: The Board determined they had enough information to make a decision.

**Action:** I move that the International Special Review District Board approve a Certificate of Approval for signage, as proposed. **This action is based on the following:**

The proposed alterations meet the following sections of the **International Special Review District Ordinance and applicable Guidelines:**

**SMC 23.66.338 – Business identification signs**

**International Special Review District Design Guidelines  
Design Guidelines for Signs**

MM/SC/MC/JC                      7:0:0    Motion carried.

120908.22      Kong Yick West Building  
508 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.

Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed replacement of 27 windows on the north and west facades of the building. The applicant proposed to replace the vinyl windows with Marvin "Tilt-pac" wood windows. Exhibits included drawings, photographs and manufacturer specification sheets.

Ms. Frestedt explained that the existing vinyl windows were installed without Board approval. The Kong Yick West Building is a contributing building within the District. The building is located within the Asian Character Design District. She said that windows are considered a character-defining feature of historic buildings. She introduced Richard and Arnold Kay, representatives for Yick Fung Investment Co, the property owner.

Arnold Kay explained their desire to replace windows that were inadvertently replaced with vinyl with wood windows with wood sashes. Using a mock-up of a window system that he made himself, he explained how the new windows would function and how they would be in keeping with the character of the building. He went on to explain the process of how they would remove the vinyl windows and install new wood sashes. The jamb lines will be a putty color and will match wood; only a very small portion will be visible. The blind stop and exterior molding are intact and painted and will remain. The interior casing won't change.

Board Questions:

Mr. Chihara noted the Marvin window is a good product and asked about the cladding.

Mr. A. Kay explained it would be a wood window with vinyl jambs. He said it matches the actual sash dimension within 1/8". The windows will be double glazed which won't be noticeable; Marvin does a single pane but applicant preferred double. He said that about 6 windows are for bathrooms and asked if they could use obscure glass for those.

Ms. Frestedt explained that the proposal for textured glass in the bathroom windows isn't consistent with the original fenestration and therefore, the proposal would be considered a change to the character of the building. She suggested he bring a sample to ARC for review and show which windows would be changed so the Board could see the impact, if clear glass is not proposed.

Ms. Chung Gerrick said that the proposed windows are a good solution to replacing vinyl. She said that the Board would have likely disapproved of a retroactive approval for the vinyl windows and this is an appropriate alternative.

Mr. Chihara said he appreciated the level of detail in the model. He said that the proposed windows are more consistent in approaching the frame and details of the originals and maintain the historic character of the existing. He said the proposal is a win-win for everyone and is consistent with the design guidelines. He stated his gut reaction to different glazing on the bathroom windows would be to not approve the proposal because it would set up a different rhythm on how the building reads from outside.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Board Discussion: The Board determined they had enough information to make a decision.

Action: I move that the International Special Review District Board approve a Certificate of Approval for the exterior alterations, as proposed. **This action is based on the following:**

The proposed alterations meet the following sections of the **International Special Review District Ordinance and applicable Guidelines:**

**SMC 23.66.336 – Exterior building finishes**

**A. General Requirements**

**B. Asian Design Character District**

**International Special Review District Design Guidelines**

**Storefront and Building Design Guidelines**

**Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation**

#2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

#5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall 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.

MM/SC/JC/JOK 6:0:0 Motion carried.

120908.23

Tropics Thai Restaurant

606 S. Weller St.

*Applicant:* TR Nguyen, Seattle Signs

Ms. Frestedt explained the proposal to replace the existing fabric awning with a new aluminum frame awning system on the south façade. The top of the proposed awning will consist of a Dibond material and feature a white Lexan (polycarbonate) sign face. Colored vinyl lettering and the business logo will be applied to the awning/sign face. Exhibits included drawings, photographs and attachment details. Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed signage meets the allowance requirements of SMC 23.66.338. The amount of signage proposed is 26 sq. ft; the allowance is 42.7 sq. ft., adjusted for the lack of Asian characters. The awning will be illuminated from within by two fluorescent tubes. The bottom of the awning will feature a fabric screening material. The business is located within the Asian Design Character District. She noted that the proposed awning materials do not conform to the following provision of the Design Guidelines for Awnings and Canopies: “*B. Prohibited Elements. 1. Awnings shall not be made of shiny, high-gloss, and translucent materials.*”

**Applicant Comments:**

T. R. Nguyen, Seattle Signs, and business owner Kai Xuang provided samples of the proposed materials and described the design. Mr. Nguyen cited other businesses in the District that he thought had similar awnings to what he was proposing. Ms. Frestedt indicated that the design of the businesses he mentioned weren't comparable due to form or materials.

The Board generally agreed the proposed awning did not meet the Guidelines and explained that the purview of the Board is to protect the historic character of the District; the awning does not contribute to that as it is translucent and glossy. The Board requested the applicant come back with other options, soft material being preferred.

Mr. Nguyen stated he chose the material based on its lifespan. He said vinyl has a life of only five to seven years.

Mr. Chihara explained the Board is not opposed to durability; it is the translucence of this awning design and that it is reading too much like a backlit sign.

**Action:** I move to deny the application as presented and asked applicant to come back with a revised version.

MM/SC/JOK/JC 7:0:0 Motion carried.

Ms. Frestedt explained the denial; She said that the Board is supportive of the addition of an awning in concept, but the proposed material is not appropriate. She suggested that the applicant look at existing awnings in the ID and in Pioneer Square for design ideas.

The Board discussed awning design in the District. The Board expressed concern about the amount of information proposed for the face of the awning. Board members stated that text in addition to the company name and logo can lead to cluttered design. A suggestion was made to limit or minimize the message or text on an awning to the name of the business and other information should go on the store front window or a sign.

120908.24

Various locations throughout the District

*Applicant:* Julia Nelson, Chinatown International District BIA

**Signage and Street Use:** Proposal to temporarily hang red lanterns from street lights for the Chinese Lunar New Year.

**Postponed at the request of the applicant.**

120908.3

### **GUIDELINE REVISION WORK SESSION**

Board discussion regarding Design Guideline revisions.

Ms. Frestedt passed out draft guidelines to Board members and asked them to review changes and to provide feedback.

The Board reviewed the history section and recommended making a few changes in response to Ms. Betty Lau's comments at the prior work session. Ms. Frestedt stated that she borrowed the draft language from the narrative in the District's National Register nomination.

Ms. Chung-Gerrick suggested adding a footnote referring where the text came from. The Board discussed minor revisions to the history section.

Ms. Frestedt stated that she was sensitive when writing this section of how much detail should be included; especially considering that so much of the history of this neighborhood has been documented elsewhere. The intent was not to recreate or rewrite it but to accurately summarize how the District evolved.

Ms. Frestedt said Ms. Lau also commented on the name of the District so Ms. Frestedt corrected the way she had presented it with the National Register Name in accordance with some of Ms. Lau's comments.

She continued on to the Purpose and Intent section of the Draft. She informed the Board of changes that had been made to individual bullets. She said she was trying to eliminate some of the repetitiveness.

Mr. Osborne-Klein suggested taking out "characterized by" and saying "preserving a mixed income residential community with both historic and newly constructed buildings that contribute to an active pedestrian oriented urban environment." He suggested not using "community" twice.

Mr. Chihara suggested instead of "newly constructed buildings" just "new construction".

Ms. Frestedt said the second bullet references locally owned retail specialty shops and at the prior meeting there was discussion about how this would allow for private ownership and publicly owned buildings like the PDA and other possible configurations that are not privately

owned or corporately owned. A lot of specific detail is eliminated by saying “encouraging the use of street level spaces for pedestrian oriented locally owned retail specialty shops”.

Mr. Osborne-Klein suggested adding “vibrant business community” to first bullet and removing bullet #5: “Preserving a mixed-income residential community with both historic buildings and new construction that contribute to an active pedestrian oriented urban environment and a vibrant business community”.

Mr. Ha asked about locally owned retail and how franchising would fit into that.

Ms. Frestedt said the one thing that is going to become an increasing discussion point over time and coincides with discussions with the 2030 group regarding the South Downtown rezone. Members of that group were interested in language within the Livable South Downtown Ordinance that discourages formula retail (“chain”) business. One of the challenges is there are chains in Uwajimaya but they are Asian chains that do complement the District and are not contrary to the uses of some of the retail spaces there. Franchises can be locally owned and honors those business owners who own franchises. It is a sensitive issue.

Board members mentioned Beard Papa’s, Utopia Yogurt and Herfy Burger as examples of potential formula fast food that exists in the District.

Ms. Frestedt said the guidelines say “encourage locally owned” so it doesn’t prohibit non-locally owned but the intent is to retain local ownership even if it is a chain.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said maybe the way to get away from the question of discouraging a McDonald’s while promoting a business like Beard Papa’s is to emphasize the Asian character distinction – that businesses that have emphasis on Asian character/culture are favored. He thought that should be emphasized more in the guidelines.

Ms. Frestedt continued to the Certificate of Approval process and said she expanded in greater detail information about each type of approval: Use, design etc.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said in “Design approval” the phrase “impact a building’s exterior” is accurate but vague. He suggested changing to “any modification that is visible from the street” so it is clear to people.

Ms. Frestedt agreed; She said she will reword it to be less vague.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said #4 under “Criteria for Review” doesn’t fit here and that it should go above specific guidelines. Separate details for contributing and non-contributing buildings should be included and have the definition of what they are and then say “for contributing buildings here are the requirements....”

Ms. Frestedt: contributing/non-contributing issue is a challenging one; the Land Use Code does not define what a contributing and non-contributing building is. She said this issue has been raised during discussions with DPD on the draft Ordinance for the South Downtown rezone. She said that it would be possible to add a definition of contributing and non-contributing buildings within the Design Guidelines. She discussed the different determining factors of whether or not a building is contributing. Part of what determines a contributing building is the number of alterations that have been made and how much of a building’s original integrity remains intact.

Mr. Chihara stated that he would prefer to leave this level of detail out of the guidelines in order so that they may be as user-friendly as possible. He suggested that the determination of a building's contributing status be addressed with the property owner or applicant, as needed, as part of the application process.

Ms. Frestedt said there may be ways to address the contributing/non-contributing status without actually defining it in the guidelines.

Mr. Chihara appreciated reviewing the Ballard and Columbia City guidelines and preferred to address guidelines in separate sections with headings specific to alterations to existing buildings and new construction, etc.

Ms. Frestedt said she is fine with eliminating criteria for contributing and non-contributing buildings and it can be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Ms. Frestedt stated that whether or not a building is contributing or not has to do with the year in which it was built and if it has the integrity of its original design.

The Board discussed the National Register nomination and boundaries within the District. Ms. Frestedt said that the National Register building inventory didn't extend to entire District. There are buildings that weren't inventoried at that time that do fall within the boundaries of the District. The Board then discussed the boundaries of individual sections of the District (Chinatown, Nihonmachi or Japantown, for example).

Ms. Frestedt noted there was overlap and the Chinatown core includes parts of S. Jackson St.

Mr. Bisbee commented on the differing perspectives of historic neighborhood boundaries. He said that when this area was labeled the Chinatown/International District there are a number of people that feel that was a problem and that Japanese ownership of businesses was glossed over and neglected.

Ms. Frestedt stated she would like to add detailed map to include National Historic Register District in addition to the local boundaries and the Asian Character Design District.

Mr. Osborne-Klein suggested a shaded/colored map – to show the general area of Japantown and how it goes to blend with the borders of Chinatown to show how the borders are not really fixed.

Ms. Frestedt moved to the section of the Guidelines for rehabilitation and new construction. She discussed ways to divide this section. She commented on the many geographic areas within the District, including the Asian Character Design District, Nihonmachi/Japantown, east of I-5. She suggested creating a distinction between alterations to existing buildings *within* the Asian Character Design District and alterations to existing buildings *outside* the Asian Character Design District. For example, she said there may be alterations that would be appropriate outside of that would not be appropriate within and right now the Ordinance gives very little direction for what types of alterations are appropriate outside of the Asian Character Design District.

Mr. Chan suggested businesses in the core express their Asian character.

Mr. Osborne-Klein asked for clarification on what Asian Character Design District means – letters or characters?

Ms. Frestedt explained it is more a matter of character in reference to materials and broader design and directed Board members to 23.66.366 general requirements: B – Asian Character Design District. She said the Code goes into elaborate detail about material, colors, surface area, transparency; however, she noted that none of those provisions apply to the area outside of the Asian Character Design District.

Mr. Chihara stated they are all qualities that should apply throughout District.

Ms. Chung-Gerrick asked if there would be separate guidelines for each area.

Ms. Frestedt responded that it is something the Board should consider applying certain aspects to the District as a whole. She said SMC 23.66.336 C – Exterior Building Design Outside of the Asian Character Design District – is the only guidance that the Land Use Code gives for the broad area outside of the historic core. This is where the guidelines will be influential in establishing some direction, particularly with new construction. She said there should be some flexibility in the area outside the historic core for property and business owners to express themselves in a different way. With regard to new construction within the Asian Character Design District there she said there should be greater rigidity.

Mr. Osborne-Klein stated that a lot of what is written in SMC 23.66.336 B – Exterior building finishes within the Asian Character Design District uses strong language and a lot of mandatory language (e.g. “shall”). He thought the way to distinguish would be to say “buildings outside this Asian Character Design District the Board favors construction consistent with those requirements”. He suggested incorporating the same requirements but make them more of a “preference” as opposed to a “requirement”.

Mr. Chihara asked why make the distinction – even buildings that have been proposed that are within the Asian Character Design District (ACDD) – there is enough flexibility to allow different materials that may not be considered historic and to allow the owner to express individuality. He thought there was already some flexibility built in and didn’t think the areas outside the ACDD needed more built in. He stated there was some consistency and uniformity that is desirable but maybe not to the point where it is mandatory.

Ms. Frestedt suggested adding a guideline that relates to some consistency in design throughout the District. In addition to encouraging Asian characters and other languages represented in signage (including not just Asian but Spanish, Ethiopian etc.). She suggested encouraging elements that respond to or are consistent with the provisions of the ACDD and compatible with the District as a whole.

Mr. Osborne-Klein expressed concern that some people may see “continuity” as a homogenization of the District. Little Saigon is different than Chinatown in the way the buildings look, in the overall approach and in type of businesses.

Ms. Frestedt agreed and stated that could also become a guideline; to recognize the distinct character of the neighborhood and to recognize the distinct differences between neighborhoods while continuing to relate to the District as a whole. There is a way to state that in general terms that would prevent homogenization.

Mr. Lee asked if the Asian Character Design District will expand and if so, would the guidelines expand into those areas as well.

Ms. Frestedt said that at this point there is no plan to expand the Asian Character Design District. Within the specific guidelines she recommended that the area east of I-5 should be addressed separately within the Guidelines. There was a discussion about how much to include under “General” guidelines versus the “Specific” guidelines section. Ms. Frestedt said the Board can focus on the Specific section, but recommends including a couple key statements that apply more generally to the District as a whole.

**120908.4 BOARD BUSINESS**

**ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Rebecca Frestedt, Board Coordinator  
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