



The City of Seattle

## International Special Review District

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649  
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ISRD 87/09

### MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, March 10, 2009

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

#### Board Members Present

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

#### Staff

Rebecca Frestedt  
Melinda Bloom

#### Absent

Robert Ha

Vice Chair Misun Chung Gerrick called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

#### **031009.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*January 13, 2008*

**MM/SC/JOK/JC**

**5:0:0 Minutes approved as amended.**

#### **031009.2 CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL**

030109.21

#### H&R Block

518 S. King St. (American Hotel)

*Applicant:* Diane Kline, H&R Block

**Signage:** Proposed business identification signage.

Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed business identification signage. She said this proposal consists of 8" vinyl adhesive letters to be applied to the storefront window. Exhibits included renderings and photographs. She said the Board reviewed a proposal for retroactive approval of an interior-lit cabinet sign on Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>. The Board did not support that proposal due to reduced transparency and requested alternative sign options. She said the Board also approved a

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

"Printed on Recycled Paper"

Certificate of Approval for exterior alterations on December 4, 2008. Ms. Frestedt introduced Diane Kline, from H&R Block.

Applicant Comment:

Ms. Kline said that she talked to the sign vendor following the last ISRD Board review. She said the contractor recommended adhesive lettering on the glass. She said they will move the light box on the wall inside the suite.

Ms. Frestedt stated the revised proposal was an improvement and is consistent with similar signage elsewhere in the district.

Mr. Chihara appreciated the applicant's flexibility to explore alternate signage; he supported the application.

*Mr. Chan arrived at 4:43 P.M.*

Ms. Chung Gerrick seconded Mr. Chihara's comment and appreciated the applicant's flexibility and response to Board comments.

Mr. Bisbee expressed his support of the application.

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.

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

**ISRD Design Guidelines for Awnings and Canopies, Façade Alterations and Signs**

**I. Storefront and Building Design Guidelines**

**II. Design Guidelines for Signs**

**a. Buildings with multiple tenants**

**SMC 23.66.338 – Business identification signs**

**MM/SC/JC/JOK**

**6:0:0 Motion carried.**

031009.22

Gourmet Noodle Bowl

707 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.

*Applicant:* Justin Lo

Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed modifications to existing signage, to reflect new business name. She said the business owners were requesting retroactive approval to replace the text (neon and channel raceway lettering) on the existing Dibond sign located above the entry. She distributed drawings and photographs to the Board. Ms. Frestedt explained that the shape, placement and attachment of the sign backing were approved by the Board in June 2005. The Board also approved the existing vertically oriented projecting signage at that time.

Applicant comment:

Ms. Frestedt presented the application on behalf of the applicant who was unable to attend and reviewed the proposal with the Board. She said only the sign faces are being changed out.

Mr. Chan translated the sign and said the characters represent the business name. He said the first character represents kongi and noodle and the second represents dessert or small dishes like an appetizer. He noted that the photograph was different from the drawing with the application form but said the characters are consistent.

Board Discussion:

Mr. Osborne-Klein had no problem with the application and noted the increase in retroactive approvals.

Ms. Frestedt explained she had been doing compliance work and has been actively following up with business owners to bring them into compliance.

Mr. Chihara emphasized the importance of building owners notifying tenants of the guidelines.

Mr. Lee the signs were appropriate.

Action: I move that the International Special Review District Board approve a Certificate of Approval for signage, as proposed.

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

**ISRD Design Guidelines for Awnings and Canopies, Façade Alterations and Signs**

**III. Storefront and Building Design Guidelines**

**IV. Design Guidelines for Signs**

**a. Buildings with multiple tenants**

**SMC 23.66.338 – Business identification signs**

**MM/SC/JOK/MCG**

**6:0:0 Motion carried.**

**031009.3**

**SOUTH DOWNTOWN CODE AMENDMENTS**

*Presented by:* Susan McLain and Gordon Clowers, City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development

Briefing on proposed land use code text amendments (Seattle Municipal Code 23.66.338) related to signage requirements. Ms. Frestedt passed out a hard copy of revisions to the sign code. She said DPD is interested in Board comments.

Gordon Clowers provided handouts regarding sign regulations. He said the City is proposing to amend the Code to eliminate the table which regulates the amount of signage that is allowed per business. The proposal is to amend the Code to be more in line with the requirements outlined for the Pioneer Square Historic District. He said the Pioneer Square Preservation Board doesn't

define size limits; instead the Board regulates signage according to the proposed appearance and character of signs and compatibility with the character of the building. There is an effort to avoid visual clutter. He said the ISRD could express a preference for Asian characters and regulate according to qualities of the District that are desired for preservation.

Mr. Osborne-Klein expressed concern that over time the Code requirements for signs would become detached from an aspirational standard. He suggested that the Code include a stated goal or preference for the amount of signage and that an aspirational standard be added to provide context.

Ms. Frestedt described some of the recent challenges that the Board has faced due to the current proscriptive requirements for the amount and size of signs. She cited the Board's recent approval of the Wing Luke Asian Museum blade sign as an example. She said that in her opinion the proposed Code language would provide the business owners greater flexibility.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said he would like to see Asian Characters strongly encouraged included in the language.

Mr. Chihara liked the discretionary aspect of the proposal. He commented on the recent trend of business owners wanting to include information on their signage other than just the business name. He suggested that the signs become too busy or detract from the main message.

Ms. Frestedt noted that the Board will still have the discretion to create standards or modify the design guidelines. She said that guideline revisions wouldn't be codified in the code but would supplement it.

There was discussion about the amount of non-business identification text that should be allowed on the sign face and the criteria for the Board's review of signs.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said that the Board should review the overall aesthetic of the sign, not just the sign's size. He said Asian characters should be encouraged wherever possible.

Ms. Frestedt said the existing Pioneer Square Code seems to be effective and that is the basis for proposing to amend the ISRD Code to be more in line with the Pioneer Square historic district, since they're both under title 23.66 of the Land Use Code.

Ms. Chung Gerrick and Mr. Osborne-Klein expressed concern about over proliferation of signage. Ms. Chung Gerrick noted that the transparency requirement would also limit the size of signs.

Ms. Frestedt said the transparency requirement is specific to the Asian Design Character District in 23.66.336. She added that it would be worth including that requirement District-wide.

Mr. Clowers said the proposed text amendments could allow for a greater number of signs and less numeric limits on them, but would also allow for additional judgment and control through the Board.

Ms. Chung Gerrick noted that in Chinatowns in other cities streets are covered with signs compared to here where signs are limited. She said that perhaps excessive signage is characteristic of Chinatown.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said that at the Inter\*Im community dinner a month ago; photos were up of different Asian neighborhoods and people were asked to select which neighborhood they wanted the ID to look like. The photo with a surplus of signs got the most votes.

Mr. Clowers said it is unusual in the City because there are very few opportunities to expand signage allowances. He said things like flashing or running lights would be frowned on.

Ms. Frestedt, in a response to Board member comment, explained that a billboard on the side of the Governor Apartments is grandfathered in. She explained that the owners recently submitted an application to install a different type of sign further north on the same façade; however, she said if they remove the billboard from the original location they will lose their grandfathered status. She said the billboard predates the creation of the District. If it is ever removed a sign of that size cannot be added to the building unless it is recreated with the exact same materials in the exact same place which would be an in-kind replacement.

There was general discussion about flags and banners as sign types. Mr. Clowers noted there was a limitation on projecting elements that impede visibility in the guidelines. The guidance in 338.C says that “banners and flags bearing emblems, symbols or message shall be subject to periodic review and approval to ensure that their appearance is maintained.”

The Board discussed the possibility of allowing greater flexibility for flags and banners. One member said that family association flags might add to the character of the District as would flags for the night market. Ms. Chung Gerrick said it is not uncommon for some Japanese stores to display small cloth material at the doorway indicating what is sold inside. The Board was generally interested in having flags included as an allowed element.

Mr. Clowers said banners and flags should be subject to the same types of criteria and considerations as signs; many of which may fall under temporary sign category. Discussion ensued about limiting text on awnings to business name or product and to re-conceptualize the difference between signs and awnings. There is a separate section for awnings and it can be written in a way to further make distinctions.

#### **031009.4**

#### **GUIDELINE REVISION WORK SESSION**

Board discussion regarding Design Guideline revisions.

Ms. Frestedt went over other changes made since the last revision session and reviewed the summary of the Certificate of Approval process. She said the section will explain who is eligible to submit applications; and will include language that owners and managers have a responsibility to notify tenants of the process. There was discussion about the formatting of the section and possible definitions that should be included.

Board members suggested changes regarding the application process. A member suggested adding “Prior to full Board review Department Staff may recommend review by ARC”.

Mr. Chihara said he was comfortable with the approach and said that some language might be in conflict with South Downtown proposal: street level uses related to residential/town home and that first level retail or restaurant uses were preferred. He said that given the impact of new heights any kind of development will impact historic views and said that views should be respected.

Ms. Frestedt noted that view protection is already in the Code in terms of Kobe Terrace.

The Board discussed the appropriate language to use in the guidelines. Mr. Osborne-Klein said that the phrases “shall be” and “should be” seemed too declaratory and recommended “including but not limited to”. He recommended making the language more consistent and preferred the term “must” instead of “shall” or “should”.

Ms. Frestedt stated that “shall be” was commonly used, but said this is something that can be considered further. Regarding the creation of specific guidelines she said it may be appropriate to allow greater flexibility when considering exterior design requirements on the periphery of the neighborhood that may not be appropriate in the historic core. She recommended that the Board differentiate the Guidelines for the areas outside the Asian Design Character District, stating that what is appropriate in one part of the District may not be appropriate in the other. She asked the Board to consider which design elements and materials should be desired throughout the District.

Mr. Chihara said the Asian core and the area outside it are contextual environments and suggested revisiting the definitions section. He said that the difference in approach to design in core and outside context will make a difference - how we define the terms will provide the framework.

There was discussion about contributing and non-contributing buildings and whether or not these definitions should be included in the guidelines. Ms. Frestedt noted that in an earlier discussion the Board suggested removing the definitions since the status of the building is discussed as part of the application process. She said she can add the definitions back into the list if that is the desire of the Board.

In addition to the completed design guidelines, a community member suggested creating a separate one page brief directed at new business or property owners that could be translated to Chinese and Vietnamese.

In preparation for the next revision session Ms. Frestedt asked the Board to review the outline for specific guidelines and consider the order and format for this section. She encouraged the Board to forward additional thoughts and feedback to her via email following the meeting.

*Justin Lo, representative for Gourmet Noodle Bowl arrived and Ms. Frestedt explained she presented the application on behalf of the owners and the Board approved the request.*

## **031009.5 BOARD BUSINESS**

Ms. Frestedt explained new board members Rich Murakami with Araya Jackson Architects would be confirmed on March 27 and will attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting in April.

Mr. Osborne-Klein proposed a small reception to say farewell to Mr. Chihara and to welcome the new members; he asked board members to select a date and let him know. He offered to hold the reception at the Asia Condo building.

## **ADJOURN**

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