



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

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ISRD 210/08

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, August 12, 2008

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

Board Members Present

Jerry Chihara
Misun Chung Gerrick
Robert Ha
Weng Chan
Amalia Gonzalez-Kahn
Joshua Osborne-Klein

Staff

Rebecca Frestedt
Melinda Bloom

Board Chair Robert Ha called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm.

081208.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 24, 2008

MM/SC/JOK/JC 3:0:2 Approved as amended. Mr. Weng and Ms. Chung Gerrick abstained.

July 8, 2008

MM/SC/JOK/JC 5:0:0 Minutes approved.

081208.2 CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL

081208.21 Mak Fai Washington Kung Fu
606 Maynard Ave. S.

Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed installation of a 30" w x 24" h Dibond business identification sign panel in the existing consolidated sign frame. Text and logo will be applied directly to the sign backing. The proposed design is consistent with the existing sign panels. She noted that the existing sign frame was approved by the Board on May 27, 2008. Ms. Frestedt introduced Fai Mak, the owner of Mak Fai Washington Kung Fu.

Ms. Gonzalez-Kahn arrived at 4:42 p.m.

Applicant Comment: The applicant had no comment.

Board Discussion:

Ms. Chung Gerrick appreciated that the graphics include Chinese characters.

Public Comment:

Tom Dang said he likes the sign.

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 signage meets the following sections of SMC Chapter 23.66 and ISRD District Guidelines:

SMC 23.66.338 – Business identification signs
ISRD Design Guidelines
Design Guidelines for Signs

MM/SC/JC/JOK

5:0:1 Motion approved.

Ms. Gonzalez-Kahn abstained as she arrived late.

Ms. Frestedt noted that the applicants for the second item on the agenda had not yet arrived. She suggested that the Board skip to the next item to allow time for the applicant's arrival. The Board agreed. Mr. Ha invited the applicants for the next application to the table.

081208.22

Sub-Sand

419 6th Ave. S.

Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed installation of a 45”w x 32”h neon business identification sign. Sign will have a smoke black plastic backing with orange vinyl letters and orange neon tubes. The sign will hang approximately 18” back from the window on the interior. Ms. Frestedt distributed drawings and photographs to the Board. She noted that the amount of allowed signage is 64 sq. ft. and said the proposed signage does not exceed the allowance. Ms. Frestedt introduced the business owner Tom Dang and Cao Hoang, from Sign & Design Co.

Applicant Comment: Tom Dang said the old sign will be removed. He added that the neon tubes will outline the letters on the new sign.

Board Comment:

Ms. Chung Gerrick liked the graphics but wondered if the style of the font and if the bold, round letters would be legible from a distance.

Mr. Dang said the font was designed to appear “short and stubby like a submarine and sandwich.”

Mr. Chan asked if the neon light will be orange.

Mr. Dang said it would. He added that the design was created to increase visibility since the sign will be set back from the window.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

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

The proposed signage meets the following sections of SMC Chapter 23.66 and ISRD District Guidelines:

SMC 23.66.338 – Business identification signs
E. Illumination
ISRD Design Guidelines
Design Guidelines for Signs

MM/SC/AGK/JC 6:0:0 Motion approved.

081208.23 J & J Gift Shop/Fujisada Building
510 6th Ave. S.

Summary of proposed changes:

Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed subdivision of current retail space (approximately 3,000 sq. ft.) into retail (1,514 sq. ft.) and office (1,453 sq. ft.) space. She said retail use will remain along the street frontage, with new office suites added behind the newly configured retail spaces on the ground floor. She said the applicant proposes removal of a storefront window and construction of a recessed entrance with sidelights. Exhibits included drawings and photographs.

Ms. Frestedt said the Fujisada building was built in 1999 and is a non-contributing building to the District. She said the building is located within the Asian Character Design District. She noted that the proposed entrance has been designed by and would be constructed by the same contractor that did the original work. Ms. Frestedt introduced the applicant, David Wu, Tse Architects. She said Mr. Wu was joined by property owner and J&J Gifts business owner Josepha Chu and her daughter Wendy.

Applicant Comment:

Mr. Wu said this is a condo space, owned by Ms. Chu. He said that the space is too large for the gift shop and that Ms. Chu approached him to explore alternative uses for the space. They're proposing to subdivide the existing retail store into smaller, more functional spaces. He said the front portion will be more retail with the back spaces used as office. He said the entry is to the side and they plan to keep the existing entry but they will open up a central corridor entry to serve all the tenants. He said they would like guidance from the Board on how they should approach signage for new tenants, given the internal configuration. He said they would like to have one sign that would represent all the tenants.

Mr. Osborne-Klein confirmed that the only actual change to the storefront would be the corridor-entry.

Mr. Wu concurred.

Mr. Chihara suggested Mr. Wu take the lead in establishing design guidelines for signage and not to turn that over to a sign company.

Ms. Frestedt said the formula for amount of signage considers businesses that are located on the interior and don't have street frontage; she said it is outlined in the Land Use Code SMC 23.66.338. She agreed there may be options to create a consolidated sign frame whether as a blade sign or on the face of the building.

Ms. Gonzalez-Kahn asked if the existing door would continue to be operable.

Mr. Wu said it would and that it would serve the south tenant exclusively. He said the center corridor door will serve all the tenants and the south tenant.

Ms. Gonzalez-Kahn was concerned that the only window for the south tenant is the door which is in a recessed spot. She said it limits visibility.

Ms. Chung Gerrick was concerned about door swinging outward.

Mr. Wu said the door couldn't swing beyond the property line which is why they recessed it; they are trying to keep it as pedestrian friendly as possible.

The Board discussed the changes required to accommodate the required depth of the recessed entry.

Mr. Wu said that the entrance may need to be pulled back an additional 6".

Ms. Frestedt said if the Board approves allowing the additional 6" she would need an updated drawing before a Certificate could be issued.

Ms. Chung Gerrick was concerned about how much the entry should be recessed; architecturally, she said it looks like it wants to mimic the adjacent bay but at the same time she understands why they don't want that much depth.

Mr. Wu said they want to create something different from the south entry to create a focal point.

Mr. Chihara thought it respects the general vocabulary of the architecture and keeps intact the integrity of the structure that defines the building. He concurred that entry isn't as deep but noted that it is a secondary entrance.

Ms. Frestedt stated she reviewed the application in light of the fact that this is a non-contributing building; it seemed to be consistent with what is there currently.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Action: I move that the International Special Review District Board approve a Certificate of Approval for a change of use and exterior alterations, as modified to allow an additional 6" recess of the new entry. This action is based on the following:

She said that she is added a section on the outline for a discussion of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. She said that she could also incorporate a discussion of public safety strategies into the introduction.

Ms. Frestedt distributed a handout on creating and using design guidelines. She thought it would provide a good framework for the guidelines revision process they are undertaking. She summarized the content of the handout. She said guidelines are intended to supplement the Ordinance and add clarification about the design regulations for the District. They are intended to help reinforce the character of the historic area and protect visual aspects. She said the guidelines will serve as a tool for designers, clients, business and property owners.

Ms. Frestedt explained the consistency of how the guidelines are upheld is critical. She said guidelines can not limit growth or regulate where it takes place; that is determined by the underlying zoning. The intent of the guidelines is to ensure that exterior alterations and development is compatible with the District as a whole and relate to other buildings.

There was a brief discussion about the regulatory authority of the design guidelines versus that of the ordinance. Ms. Frestedt said that there are limitations to guidelines and what they can enforce. She said if there are elements or sections of the ordinance that the Board would like to see reinforced or changed this is an opportunity to make note of those elements for future reference. She said changes to the ordinance must be approved through a legislative process by City Council.

The Board reviewed through the draft guideline that Ms. Frestedt sent out.

Ms. Chung Gerrick thought it was really helpful to have the draft to start off with.

Mr. Chihara noted that there are different users of the guidelines and different levels of interest and knowledge about the aspects that are being discussed. He stated that a general overview and history was appropriate as it would be too overwhelming to get into it in depth. He said that if a person or a project requires that depth the resources should be available through DON but he wasn't sure it should all be stated here. He thought Ms. Frestedt did a great job of condensing a lot of information in the draft she prepared.

Ms. Frestedt said she borrowed language from the National Register listing regarding the district's history. She appreciated that the National Register narrative references alternating periods of immigration and deportation because that is a big part of the district's history. She expressed concern about how to refer to the neighborhood given previous debates about that. She asked the Board to let her know of any concerns they have or that community members may have so she can continue to refine this section.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said it would be good to add a bit more about in the section on objectives and goals that addresses anticipated future changes in the neighborhood, as well as the community's aspirations, to bring the design guidelines into context. He said it would be helpful to talk about economic pressures, anticipated growth, and changes to land use.

Ms. Gonzalez-Kahn said Vision 2030 does a good job in summing up general ideas.

Ms. Chung Gerrick asked if there are other organizations besides the Vision 2030 group that they are not acknowledging and we need to be more inclusive of other groups if one is mentioned.

Mr. Osborne-Klein thought it was best to just mention the broad aspirations rather than a particular group.

Mr. Chihara said the Vision 2030 group is supposed to be a representative of the district at large in the Chinatown, Japantown district and extending out to Little Saigon; it is a pretty broad spectrum represented in the vision statement.

Ms. Frestedt said she will resume meeting with small group of different sectors of the neighborhood to get an initial sense of what members of the community would like to see. She will ask if there are others they feel should be consulted or approached so we can be sure that different opinions are included.

Ms. Gonzalez-Kahn expressed concern that if we go too in-depth about everyone's aspirations for the future we will confuse people about what the Board's role is.

Ms. Frestedt said there is language that can be used that is more general but still addresses the changing face of the neighborhood.

The discussion moved on to the section on Goals and Objectives.

Mr. Osborne-Klein reiterated Mr. Chihara's comment that safety and security should be goal and objective and should be part of the Ordinance and not just the guidelines.

Mr. Ha wondered about expanding the section dealing with security gates.

Ms. Frestedt stated that this should be a specific topic of a future work session. She stated that one way to enhance this section and continue to discourage security gates would be to offer suggested alternatives, such as increased lighting, the addition of security systems, maintaining transparency and active monitoring of building activity.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said that density would be a natural deterrent to crime; more people walking around would make a lot of crimes much less likely.

Mr. Chihara thought that was what environmental design was about, that it may not be visible design but there is designing of the environment, the eyes on the street that aren't as apparent as the hardscape stuff. He reiterated that it is important to integrate the safety security issues into the goals and objectives and maybe elaborate on it elsewhere. He said we should include environmental strategies for making the neighborhood safer and more secure.

Ms. Frestedt agreed and said including this earlier would help set the stage for discussion of specifics. Some of the other principles have to do with landscaping and streetscape and there are ways to incorporate those more general principles into the goals and objectives. If the Board thinks it appropriate she could include the section on goals and objectives either abbreviated or in its entirety from the code but then add a second section that talks about additional goals and objectives of which security and safety would be one of them. She asked if there are others the Board would like to see referenced.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said that this safety should also be part of the ordinance and asked if it was going to be revisited soon.

Ms. Frestedt said there is not a set plan to do that yet but there may be a window of opportunity related to the South Downtown rezone. She said reiterated that this is an opportunity for the Board to make suggestions.

The Board noted that the current section of the ordinance (SMC 23.66.302) that discusses ISRD goals and objectives includes a number of auto- and parking-related items.

Mr. Chihara said SMC 23.66.302G is really specific related to traffic impact related to event traffic but he thought it should be more general. He thought there may be a way to update it to account for the fact that some streets and rights of way weren't designed to accommodate the amount of traffic that they now receive. He cites 6th Ave. S. where cars exit I-5 over Yesler and movement through the neighborhood to access Dearborn as examples. He said people drive way too fast and are not stopping at stop signs.

Ms. Frestedt said pedestrian friendly streetscapes could be called out.

Mr. Osborne-Klein agreed and added that he would also like to see the inclusion of language that acknowledges that the district is located in the middle of a transit nexus and encourages multi-model transit options over vehicular use.

Ms. Frestedt noted that the origins of the focus on auto-orientation likely stems from the fact the district was developed, in part, in response to community concerns about encroachment stemming from the development of the Kingdome and the proximity to I-5.

Ms. Gonzalez-Kahn said that in the future those really won't be the issues.

Ms. Frestedt said when talking to business owners in the community the issues that arise most often are public safety and availability of parking. She said there may be ways to craft language that encompasses parking as need be but also address pedestrian friendly streetscapes and the proliferation of transit options.

Mr. Osborne-Klein suggested combining points B, C, and G and add green principles as much as possible.

Ms. Gonzalez-Kahn acknowledged business and property owner concerns about the limited availability of parking and cautioned the Board that taking a strong anti-parking stance could be problematic.

The Board briefly discussed the tensions that can occur when discussing preservation and sustainability.

Ms. Frestedt said the most sustainable approach is to not tear down an existing building and increase awareness about the amount of embodied energy that is already contained within historic buildings. She said there are ways to incorporate that language and to focus on green principles considering both historic preservation and new construction.

Mr. Osborne-Klein suggested that the Board look at how SEPA deals with historic buildings as part of (DPD's) environmental review process.

Ms. Chung Gerrick said she would like to add something about encouraging Asian character signage.

Ms. Frestedt agreed and suggested that the guidelines encourage multi-lingual signage more broadly, acknowledging the increase in East African families and other ethnic groups within the area.

Mr. Ha asked if colors could be included in the revised guidelines.

Mr. Chihara said that colors are currently included and suggested that the Board have an expanded discussion about colors when we get to the details of that section.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said compatibility of signage within individual building is also important and may need more emphasis.

Ms. Gonzalez-Kahn said the guidelines are not clear about the Board's preference for aesthetics when it comes to new uses in historic buildings. She asked if the goal is to keep the building looking the way it always has or to allow it to change and grow.

Ms. Frestedt asked the Board to think about the values and goals for the district in light of change and new development. She encouraged the board to think about how storefronts integrate current contemporary uses into historic buildings. She asked Board members if the preference is to allow some flexibility to be expressive in a more modern and contemporary way, or to find some compromise where the storefront should honor that historic appearance in some way?

Ms. Chung Gerrick said the Secretary of Interior Standards outlines that each property will be recognized as a physical record of time, place and use....." which she felt meant more of a time capsule but then noted that the Standards talk about new construction and state "work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with historic material, size, scale...."

Ms. Frestedt said her interpretation of Standard #3 is rooted in the second sentence which states, that changes that create a false sense of historic development, such as adding contextual features or elements from historic properties will not be undertaken. She said it is a fine line to create a new contemporary sign in a historic storefront. She provided a recent successful example in Columbia City, another historic district, where a sign (for the Columbia City Bakery) was installed that had a historic feel but featured a contemporary design. She stated that the sign met the Standards because the materials and colors were distinct enough that they wouldn't be mistaken for historic. She thought a similar approach would be possible within the ISRD.

081208.4 BOARD BUSINESS

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.

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