



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

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ISRD 240/08

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, September 9, 2008

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

Board Members Present

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

Staff

Rebecca Frestedt
Melinda Bloom

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

090908.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES August 12, 2008

MM/SC/JC/AGK 5:0:1 Minutes approved as amended. Mr. Osborne-Klein abstained.

090908.2 CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

090908.21 Maynard Ave. Green Street
Maynard Ave. S. between S. Main St. and S. Jackson St.
Applicant: Tom Im, Inter*Im Community Development Association

Ms. Frestedt read the Staff Report and distributed drawings, specifications sheets and photographs for Board review. She said this is a proposal for the addition of landscaping, street trees, benches, wayfinding signage and artwork in the space between the curb and sidewalk on Maynard Ave S. between S. Main and S. Jackson Streets. She said the applicants also propose to install a concrete and steel cistern on the West side of Maynard that will extend approximately 14' 6" over the sidewalk and be connected to the west façade of the Nihonmachi Terrace apartment complex. She stated that the applicants received a Certificate of Approval in August 2007 to extend the curb on the East side of Maynard Ave. S. The Board received a project briefing on July 8, 2008. Ms. Frestedt introduced the applicant, Tom Im, from Inter*Im Community Development.

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

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Applicant Comments:

Mr. Im explained the Maynard Avenue has been identified as a green street and provided background on the green street planning process. He introduced Dave Rogers, from SVR Design and architect Rumi Takahashi and artist Steve Badanes. Mr. Im provided a summary of the concept. He said the serpentine piece will lead the eye up the street and will have a “gateway impact”. The street has a steep slope and the design is intended to be eye-catching. There is a concrete pattern serpentine art piece would lead the eye up to Maynard Avenue creating a gateway affect not just for Nihonmachi but also for Danny Woo Gardens.

Ms. Takahashi said the red squares are a serpentine element where they may place historic photographic tiles of Nihonmachi or Japantown. She said the images would be subtle, using muted sepia, black and white tones. She said they propose photovoltaic lights embedded in the concrete flush with the surface; they require no wiring as they are solar powered.

Mr. Osborne-Klein asked if the applicant would come back for approval on the tile-photos.

Ms. Takahashi thought they would go through a community process to pick out appropriate photographs and then they would come back for Board approval.

Ms. Frestedt advised applicant should come back with specific photo and text.

Ms. Takahashi said the lights are embedded into the concrete and are subtle to illuminate the curb line. They also propose a score pattern on the sidewalk and may stain it a contrasting color. Concrete seats with table with a Go board or something appropriate to the Japanese culture embedded in the top so it could be an interactive piece are also proposed. She located on the drawing the larger cistern that captures the water from the building. She said they propose a pipe that comes across the sidewalk with a vertical element that comes down into the cistern. They will include educational signage on the sides of the cistern element.

Mr. Osborne-Klein asked if people might think they can drink the water.

Ms. Takahashi stated they would make sure there was plenty of signage or notifications discouraging that.

Mr. Rogers noted there would be signage but there is no guarantee that someone wouldn't drink it. He confirmed that the water would be non-potable and that signage would need to be in multiple languages. He added that the cisterns will be relatively low planters, about 6” – 18” high; one could sit on the lower end. They would be about curb height at the top.

Ms. Takahashi explained a drain, flush with the sidewalk, would connect to an existing catch basin out in the street. Any excess water would be discharged out to the street. This would be visible as there would be an overflow pipe and it would be another opportunity to understand the hydrology system that is in place.

Mr. Rogers said it is a structurally sound system that is clean. He said they calculated how much irrigation they would need each month and how much runoff they can get from the roof. The cisterns are designed to infiltrate 100% of a six month storm event; it would infiltrate into the cisterns and would be conveyed down the hill and would discharge into the catch basin. He said anything over the six month event would overflow the cisterns.

Mr. Osborne-Klein asked if the system was designed to deal with up to a 25 year rain event.

Mr. Rogers noted the slope of the channel will carry a lot more than a 25 year event; for code one has to calculate up to a 25 year event. He explained the construction and said there will be an 8" reservoir where water can pond as it infiltrates down to the soil which will be an engineered mix of sand and organics that will hold on to the water and provide organics to the plants and allow the water to go through. The upper cistern will be 8' deep and 6' in diameter. There will be a valve in case it needs to be emptied and the irrigation system will be gravity fed for the majority of the area. With the hand-pump it will discharge into a rock pocket; it would be possible to lock it out so water couldn't be emptied out but during the winter the cistern would be able to fill seven times over.

Ms. Chung-Gerrick asked if the hand pump would be at the top only.

Mr. Rogers concurred.

Ms. Takahashi said the five cisterns down toward the bottom would all be planted.

Mr. Rogers added they would be planted with a mixture of tall and low wetland species.

There was discussion about whether the pipe coming out of the building was straight or curved. Mr. Rogers explained it is curved around the light pole that is there.

Mr. Chihara asked where the water is entering the cistern from the building. He asked if it was possible to have a pipe vertically in the building that would then come out horizontally to the cistern underground.

Mr. Badanes stated that the intention of the grant that is contributing to the funding of the project is to show people that it is possible to reclaim water that is typically wasted and use it in a streetscape to irrigate plants.

Mr. Chihara expressed concern that as a design element, the cistern should be looked at with care because it is somewhat of a foreign element in an urban space. He said the design of the pipe element looks incompatible with what he thinks is a sophisticated design proposal outside of this pipe.

Mr. Rogers explained that five pipes were originally proposed, each would have had art attached to it.

Mr. Osborne-Klein asked if there was a way to convey the message and tell story about water collection and storm runoff without having the pipe extend over the sidewalk. He said the design features a lot of water running through it and it is going to be apparent to people walking by when there is rain. He added that an explanation through signage might be sufficient.

Ms. Chung Gerrick noted at the bottom there is a trench drain where the water is visible and asked if the pipe could come out of the building and into the trench drain so that everything is underground still connected together.

There was discussion about the feasibility of channeling the water under the sidewalk.

Mr. Chihara wished there was a way of referencing the design of the system by another typology that is already in the district. He said the only thing he could think of that bridges sidewalks or right of ways is the new gate on King Street; however, he noted that this is a different type of element and it is detached from the building. He asked if different options were considered.

Mr. Rogers said they had looked at different options.

Mr. Chihara said the pipe as an element has no relationship to anything right now; it is neither a part of the building nor a part of the urban landscape.

Ms. Gonzalez Kahn noted that the Board's concerns focus on one aspect of the proposal and asked if the design could be approved conditioned on the submitting another design for the pipe and cistern.

Ms. Frestedt confirmed that the Board could approve the application conditional on coming back with new designs for the cistern element.

Mr. Osborne-Klein noted because many other agencies (like SDOT) will have approve he didn't think that conditioning the approval on submission of a new design of the pipe would slow down much.

Mr. Rogers said if certain design elements are supported they can go the City and advise that they have the Board's general support.

Mr. Osborne-Klein said the he supports the project and would like to figure out a way to deal with the one element without holding up the rest of the project.

Ms. Chung Gerrick asked if native plants would be used and 8" depth is enough for plants to stay in place considering the slope of the street.

Mr. Rogers replied there are a mixture of Asian and native plants. Some are not indigenous but do well in this environment and have a connection with primarily Japan. He said when SDOT put in the curb they put in an organic soil/compost mixture; during a rainstorm the soil absorbed the water and there was almost no runoff from the planting strip even without plants. There are two Ginkgo variety trees which were approved by SDOT; they are planning to transplant them. They will also add a Japanese Maple and a Persimmon Tree.

Mr. Chihara asked about the height of the cistern at the high end of the street.

Mr. Rogers said it is about 6" above existing; it is a curb height.

Mr. Chihara asked if this included resting spots.

Mr. Rogers responded on the downhill side of each cistern one could sit down; they've thought of bolting down a bench at those locations.

Board Discussion:

Mr. Osborne-Klein said the pipe is not consistent with the rest of the project and would like to see more work in designing this element.

Ms. Gonzalez Kahn stated that she was involved in the early part of the artist selection process, but did not contribute to the final decision about which artist was selected. She expressed excitement about the project and wasn't concerned about the pipe; in the early part of the discussions there was talk of making it part of the art installation and thought it worth exploring other options.

Mr. Ha supported the project but expressed concern about the pipe and thought it could be more hidden. He liked the hand pump.

Mr. Chan agreed with Mr. Ha and would like to see something done with the pipe.

Mr. Chihara noted the rest of the project is wonderful and shows a lot of sophistication. It is a positive contribution to the community. He said he appreciated the educational piece and thought it was needed. He would like to see a more creative approach in how they bring the water in. He preferred the pipe be concealed.

Ms. Chung Gerrick said it is an exciting project. She would rather see the pipe at street level than above. She said she wasn't sure if the solar lights are helping and wondered about ongoing maintenance.

Public Comment:

Betty Lau, Chong Wa Benevolent Society, said it is great for Japantown to beautify the street. She thought the pipe would look like a shower pipe with the bend in it. She thought there were more creative ways to educate people. She liked the idea of educating people by making the wall transparent or do a cut away with a piece of glass in the sidewalk or a cascade.

Ms. Gonzalez Kahn asked if this approval would be for all the elements.

Ms. Frestedt confirmed that is what the applicant is asking for. She said the motion should be quite specific as to what is approved, what may be conditional or denied.

The Board discussed how best to word the motion so work could progress while other details could be re-designed and reviewed again.

Action: I move to approve a Certificate of Approval for the alterations and design as proposed, conditional upon submission of details regarding the design and installation of the large cistern and all signage.

Relevant Guidelines and Code sections for a motion regarding proposed Street Use, Design and Exterior Alterations:

General Requirements Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 23.66.336 - Proposed rehabilitation projects should respect the architectural and structural integrity of the building in which the work is undertaken, through sympathetic use of colors, material and style.

SMC 23.66.334 – Streets and sidewalks

SMC 23.66.336 – Exterior building finishes

A. General requirements

B. Asian Design Character District

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction

#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 shall 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 shall 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.

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

Ms. Gonzalez Kahn left at 6:00 p.m.

090908.3 GUIDELINE REVISION WORK SESSION

Ms. Frestedt noted that the meeting was running behind schedule and that she was going to abbreviate the guideline revisions session. She summarized the work that she had done since the last work session.

Ms. Frestedt suggested adding a section on Introduction and Policy to the revised guidelines. She said she is modeling this section on the Ballard and Columbia City design guidelines. The Board was supportive of this suggestion. She will include a reference to the local and national designation for the district and to include a statement about the current context of the district, in light of the pending South Downtown rezone. The Board expressed concern about the emphasis on parking and auto-orientation within the goals and objectives section of the current ordinance. At the request of the Board, Ms. Frestedt said that she would address the proximity of multi-modal transit options in the introduction and context section. The individual goals and objectives will be more of a narrative summary, instead of restating SMC 23.66.302 of the current ordinance.

Ms. Frestedt recommended adding a section on the application process and how to use the guidelines and a section on meetings and procedures. She summarized the changes to the working draft and asked the Board to send her comments or input via email.

Mr. Chihara noted the length of the draft and said that the Board should look at it with an eye toward abbreviating sections, where possible.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

The Architectural Review Committee convened immediately following the Board meeting.

090908.4 ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE BRIEFING

090908.41 605 8th Ave. S.
Chinatown Wellness Plaza
Presenter: Rodrigo del Carpio, Freeman Fong Architecture

Ms. Frestedt said that this is a briefing on proposed revisions to Use and Preliminary Design of a six-story mixed-use building that was approved by the Board in November 2007. She introduced the applicants Rodrido del Carpio and Freeman Fong, from Freeman Fong Architecture.

Mr. Fong explained changes they have made to the design since the last briefing: they deleted the basement and one residential level.

Mr. Carpio stated the building is same mass that was authorized in the original design but now it is a six story building without a basement with the same square footage as the original design. The building will remain 85' tall, but only have six stories allowing for greater floor to ceiling heights. He said they are trying to create a design based on the diverse spirit of the area. He said the scale in this area is not too high and there are a lot of vacant lots. He expects the area will grow in the future. The identity of the area can be read in the buildings, the height in proportion to the width is very pedestrian friendly. He said their objectives are to maintain the current scale of the district; keep historic appearance, encourage physical elements that exhibit Asian character; contribute to the color and activity of the streetscape through using street level space of building for pedestrian oriented retail. Mr. del Carpio presented pedestrian level views.

He said they are trying to adapt the mass of the building to the context from neighboring buildings. A lot of buildings in this area have bay windows that emphasize verticality. They are trying to use the same element to start breaking the mass of the building and also as an element that starts gathering the building with the context. They have two empty lots around the buildings that probably will be developed in the future. They want the building to look good when it is built so they are working to break to mass of the empty side walls. They have broken the mass into three elements: the pedestrian level, the middle body and the top.

Mr. del Carpio said the bay windows and stripes are strong elements and they want to emphasize that they are on a corner and have a strong element there. They propose to use the same proportions of other windows in the area; they will be somewhat recessed that will create some shadow effect. The whole building will be made in three hard elements beside glass: concrete block, brick and exposed concrete. They propose windows on the party wall even though they believe something will be done with the neighboring property sometime in the future. The narrow niche on the ground level (west and south façade) will be lit at night and will not be deep enough that would allow someone to hide.

Mr. del Carpio showed the relationship between all four elevations. He said 8th Avenue will have the main entrance for the apartments and the office. They will use same materials that exist throughout Chinatown but with a new approach. The corner joins 8th Avenue with S. Weller Street; an exposed concrete element at the corner will have the name of the building in Chinese characters. Earlier the entrance had been shown in the center for feng shui but if that had been done there wouldn't have been room for a parking and retail so they have moved the entrance to the end of the building. The lobby will be modern with colors and details borrowed from Chinese character. He explained the store fronts and windows pointing out details on the drawing.

Ms. Frestedt stated these are details requested by ARC to have a better sense of the retail level.

Mr. del Carpio reiterated they would have retail at the first story with natural materials. They will have wood frames with very clear spaces to show interior and a lot of transparency. There

are two window options: fiberglass with wood and aluminum clad wood windows. They prefer the fiberglass. The color will be white and he provided sample of the proposed profile. He provided sample of materials for building exterior.

Mr. Chihara asked for clarification on the composition of the storefront windows.

Mr. del Carpio said it is the large picture window and is not broken up into the smaller section.

Mr. Chihara thought it an improvement in terms of the retail functions they have been able to add to the street frontage. He said having actual contiguous storefront retail space is an improvement; before there were pods of retail that were broken by requirements for egress and access. He appreciated the applicant showing the process and analysis of the design as well as the effort to design a building that fits in with the character and context of the District. He said the south and west elevations are an improvement; the vertical elevations help to address the massing aspects and scale issues. He thought how they did the bay window was interesting.

Ms. Chung Gerrick said the façade seems to be much more compatible with other buildings in the District with lots of storefronts and being more pedestrian friendly. The material seems compatible; she hasn't seen the proposed terracotta in the community and thought it would be interesting to see once it is finalize all the material. In looking at the first slide and the massing, she said one could see how bad it could be but proportionally they way the windows have been located and the massing has been broken down feels really nice. She supported the design and its compatibility with the guidelines.

Ms. Frestedt clarified that the concrete block on the west elevation will be evident that it is a bit shallow. The terracotta brick will only be inset where the windows exist; the rest will be alternating concrete block and exposed concrete detailing. She asked ARC members what comments or questions they might have before the application comes before the full Board.

Ms. Chung Gerrick thought the addition storefront space was an improvement but wanted to make sure the stores are not so narrow that they are not sustainable or undesirable. She asked the applicant to look at the retail space to determine if they are really rentable because some of them seem to only be ten feet wide.

Mr. del Carpio thought that may be a concern for the owner as well; they will work on that.

Mr. Chihara stated that previously there had been some three-dimensional drawings which may be helpful for the non-architectural members of the Board.

Ms. Chung Gerrick asked about the windows even though that is not typically discussed at this stage. Ms. Frestedt stated because the windows are such a significant part of the overall design it makes sense to discuss now because if the windows are at all problematic it could impact how the rhythm of those primary facades relates to the rest of the District.

There was discussion about the proposed window type for the upper stories.

Mr. del Carpio said the proportions and sizes of the windows that they will use are being looked at right now as well as the colors. Any doubt they may have would be in terms of the material.

Mr. Chihara asked the applicants if they could ensure the tile product be a variegated color so that it looks like brick rather than one uniform color tone.

Mr. Freeman explained they have been looking at some brick buildings and the variation in texture starts to look like an old building and this will be a modern building with clean lines.

Ms. Frestedt thought that with regard to texture and color the instincts may be right; one of the earlier comments by the ARC was concern that there may be too much going on in terms of the number of different proposed materials.

Mr. Freeman said when they put the color boards together it will all come together.

Ms. Frestedt said that the Architectural Review Committee meeting was adjourned.

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