



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

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ISR D 157/21

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, September 28, 2021

Time: 4:30pm

Place: Remote Meeting

Board Members Present

Lizzy Baskerville
Matt Chan, Vice Chair
Matt Fujimoto, Chair
Russ Williams
Tanya Woo
Andy Yip

Staff

Rebecca Frestedt
Melinda Bloom

Absent

Faye Hong

Chair Matt Fujimoto called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

092821.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 8, 2020

MM/SC/AY/RW 5:0:1 Minutes approved. Ms. Baskerville abstained.

February 23, 2021

MM/SC/MC/TW 5:0:1 Minutes approved. Ms. Baskerville abstained.

092821.2 PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

092821.3 BOARD BRIEFING

092821.31 701 S. Jackson St.

Presenter: Anton Dekom, Neiman Taber Architects

Ms. Frestedt introduced the briefing on Use and Design proposal for new construction of a 9-story mixed-use building, to include 245 apartments, 76 congregate dwellings, 169 small

scale efficiency units and ground floor retail. No parking is proposed. The lot size is 13,439 sq. ft. The proposal includes demolition of a one-story commercial building and related service station island, listed as a “secondary contributing” building in the Seattle Chinatown National Register listing.

Brad Padden, OZ Navigator/Housing Diversity, part of the development team, provided context of the site in the district and said the gas station at the northwest corner of the site is no longer in use. The auto repair garage occupying the south and east edges of the site is mostly vacant as well, except for a tenant space in the southwest corner that is currently occupied by the New Century Tea Gallery. A large portion of the lot is paved and is currently being used for surface parking.

Mr. Padden said the existing buildings on site will be demolished. The proposed building will require excavation of the entire lot, and the existing contamination associated with past on-site vehicular uses will be removed in coordination with the Washington State Department of Ecology. Existing sidewalk will be replaced, and numerous curb cuts associated with on-site vehicular uses will be removed. A new, smaller curb cut will be added along 7th Avenue for waste removal access. Existing street trees and street lamps will be preserved.

Mr. Padden said the proposed project is a 9-story (approximately 100,000 SF) mixed use building with small-scale efficiency residential units (congregate dwellings and SEDUs) throughout and 3,000 SF of commercial tenant spaces at street level. The building will be constructed as 5 stories of wood construction on top of 4 stories of concrete construction with one basement story below. In support of mass transit and sustainability goals, no parking is provided. O. Z. Navigator, a joint venture between Housing Diversity Corp. and Nitze-Stagen, is working in partnership with the Mar Family to redevelop their property at 7th and Jackson. The Mar Family has been a property owner and active contributor in the Chinatown-International District for over a hundred years. The new project will include placemaking design qualities that will connect South Jackson Street with the neighborhood business core.

Mr. Patton said the following guiding principles were written as part of the partnership.

- He said they plan to meet with individuals and groups in the CID and Little Saigon to discuss this redevelopment project and welcome questions, ideas, and input before and throughout the design review process with the International District Special Review Board (ISRD).
- Engage with community stakeholders, businesses, and civic organizations to learn what is important through design, art, and public spaces to celebrate the district’s place as the center of Asian culture in Seattle past, present, and future.
- Contribute to a just and inclusive community that serves all incomes and all ages with a mix of rental rates that promote economic diversity and are attainable for current CID residents.

- Provide financially attainable new housing that is affordable for existing members of the community.
- Design housing that appeals to seniors, professionals, and students who want to live at the center of Asian community and culture in Seattle.
- Develop a project that serves as a public gateway to easily connect pedestrians along South Jackson Street to the neighborhood.
- Work with the CIDBIA and SCIDpda to identify community-desired ground-floor retail tenants.
- Play a role in maintaining a neighborhood where residents and visitors feel at home speaking many different languages.
- Provide safe, accessible, and welcoming public spaces that invite visitors to linger and are designed for families, especially grandparents and grandchildren.
- Provide long-term support for CID initiatives and activities by participating on community boards and being involved with neighborhood groups.

Susan Boyle, BOLA, provided a historic overview of the buildings and the site beginning with a visual tour of the site over time through photos. (Full historic overview available in DON file). She said Jackson Street was regraded in 1908 and 1911. The L-shaped, one-story garage was constructed in 1927. The gas station – a steel building manufactured by the gas company, was moved to the site in 1956. She said both buildings have changed over time and the site has deteriorated and is mostly used for parking.

She noted other historic garages in the district including 407-411 7th Avenue which was used by Wing Luke Museum for a time and is now used by the Theater Off Jackson, and 710-72 S. Jackson is still open as a garage.

Ms. Boyle said the L-shaped garage and retail building at 711 South Jackson Street dates from the 1920s. As noted in the National Register Historic District nomination, the building is one of four early garages in the International District. These buildings are associated with the general commercial development of the neighborhood. The other garages appear to have retained more of their original features and are in better condition. A quick comparison between the subject garage and the former Wing Luke Museum, located in an original garage, or the existing garage across the street, reveals the more expressive character of the others. The garage building is relatively small. Although it is located at corner site, it is not a prominent visual structure because of its setback on the lot. Clad in painted stucco and changed through the infill of original storefronts, window, and door openings, it does not appear expressive of its older construction methods or materials -- timber and wood framed and masonry. The exterior masonry appears to be in very poor condition, especially on the west facade.

Ms. Boyle said Barry Mar's family owned the property for four generations after purchase by his grandfather in 1921. She said Mr. Mar recalled that one of the tenants proposed moving the current gas station to the site, and this occurred in the late 1950s. He also noted that tenants included two partners, Ted Imanaka and Charlie Toshi who operated the gas station. There have been several long-standing tenants on site who operated the 7th Street Garage. Charlie Toshi owned the auto repair business before the Pat Abe. Pat's son, David Abe, recalled working in Mr. Toshi's garage in the 1980s. Pat Abe owned the gas station since 1972, having purchased the business from Ted Imanake. Mr. Imanake established the business in 1946, after he had returned to Seattle from internment. It was during his ownership that a former wood frame station on the site was demolished, and the existing station building was move to the site from its earlier location at 520 Seneca Street (the location of the present-day W Hotel).

Ms. Boyle said while it is a contributing resource in the district, the garage has lost features and its integrity. She cited SMC 23.66.318 and said the buildings are no longer useful and have no integrity.

Ms. Frestedt confirmed that this is a briefing, and that no formal decision would be made at this time. She noted the application is not yet complete.

Mr. Fujimoto said it was heartwarming to hear the stories about Mr. Mar and Mr. Abe. He said he found the history interesting.

Mr. Yip said he would have no problem with demolition of the site. He said the site is well-known and he was encouraged to see the site being put into use again.

Ms. Baskerville appreciated hearing the history of the site and said it does not evoke that history now.

Mr. Chan said that the buildings are no longer contributing but evoke the personalities involved. He asked if there were any plans to commemorate the Mar and Abe history there.

Mr. Padden said the human side is very important and they are trying to figure out how to address that.

Mr. Fujimoto said it is not enough to cite a couple paragraphs and noted the First Peoples were not adequately covered. He suggested tapping into remaining oral histories.

Ms. Woo echoed comments made about history and the interpretation of history. She said community outreach is important for input and to honor the past, and to educate the future about history there that is not known. She was interested in structural condition of island building. She asked if a structural report is needed.

Ms. Frestedt said the Board should inform the applicants if more information is needed.

Ms. Boyle said it is constructed of steel as a gas station structure. She said it goes back to a period when large manufacturers came up with a building prototype that would be used

as branding. She said the prefab structure had an Art Deco look and was constructed of pieces of sheet metal. She said it had two garage components and the cylindrical space was the office. She said the heavy metal panels are rusting at the corners and the structure is in poor condition.

Mr. Fujimoto asked the Board if additional information is needed.

Mr. Chan said he had enough information. He said he is interested in how human activity is addressed – the legacy of what took place there.

Mr. Williams agreed. He said the personality and human factor and contribution are worth preserving. He said if an inventory is done, he suggested possible surviving items be offered to Wing Luke Museum.

Mr. Yip said he had enough information on existing structures. He asked if artifacts from the building / site history would be incorporated into new building.

Mr. Fujimoto said over time the service garage structure lost features that warranted its listing on National Register.

Ms. Boyle said ‘garage’ had a typology as utilitarian, with size determined by size of vehicles. She said signage has not been there for a long time. She said interpretive imagery might be a record to Wing Luke. She said she found photos at Seattle Municipal Archives and there might be others. She said there are no features to save.

Mr. Fujimoto said he had enough information and cited as important the stories of the Mar and Abe families.

David Neiman, Neiman Taber Architects, said the site is contaminated and will require a massive cleanup with 15-20’ of excavation to remove soil. He said in order to do that the existing buildings must be removed. He said community outreach had been done over 23 meetings and tours of other projects. He the project should be accessible to people who live in the community i.e., mixed income levels, diverse ages, business owners and employees of neighborhood businesses and agencies; affordable retail spaces that cater to small local businesses that serve community needs and desires; spaces for community benefit – use for meetings, gatherings for nonprofit organizations and community groups. He said iconic fabric buildings have been studied for bulk and scale and design context.

Mr. Neiman noted how the stacking of windows in historic buildings creates quiet repetition that acts as a foil to the activity at street level. He said deep set windows create texture and relief. He said horizontal banding in historic buildings is done with contrast in material, color, and masonry. He said horizontal banding adds rhythm, depth and order to a façade. He said banding can be achieved by changing orientation of material, using a different material or create relief. He noted the use of storefront openings to activate the public realm. He said full height glazing with clerestory windows provide natural daylight into commercial spaces. He noted use of vibrant colors and tactile materials where building sees most traffic.

Mr. Neiman said the massing of the new building will be similar to that of Uncle Bob's Place. The allowable structure height in the IDR-75/85 zone is 85' for residential uses. While setbacks are not required, the building mass will be offset from the east property line by 10' to allow for increased window area on that side of the building and to set back from potential future development. An upper-level setback is also provided on the west side of the building to reduce the structure height along 7th Avenue. A central courtyard provides access to light and air for the building's interior facing residential units. The massing takes the form of a U-shape in plan with the courtyard opening to the south in order to maximize daylight during winter months when the sun is low in the sky and traces a more southern arc. The upper-level setback results in a building with a stepped roof line and creates an opportunity for breaking down the mass of the building. The courtyard in the middle of the building creates an opportunity for bioretention planters and lush landscaping for interior-facing units to look onto. The lot size and need for a south-facing light well constrain alternative options for the building massing.

He noted the grade change and how the design relates to that. The proposed project is an eight-story mixed-use structure with small efficiency dwelling units (SEDUs) and congregate dwellings located on the upper levels with commercial spaces located at grade. He said SEDUs are complete studios that are smaller and more affordable. He said congregate units have shared kitchen and amenities that allows for reduced rents.

Anton Dekom went over massing options and noted C was preferred. He noted features of reduced height along 7th Avenue, split massing on north façade creates relief and interest along Jackson Street, increased glazing height at east end of Jackson Street frontage, and pedestrian canopies protect retail and residential entries. He requested input on how much, if any, canopy is appropriate. He provided ground level character study sketch for review.

Mr. Neiman said they are looking for feedback on the proposed demolition and massing alternatives.

Ms. Baskerville suggested outreach to InterimCDA WILD Youth program and work around lighting and safety study to make it pedestrian friendly. She said she supports Scheme C and said she was interested to see where it goes. She said it is not a unified mass and she likes the way it is broken into two. She said it meets community character. She noted affordable units are proposed which seem to be catered to young people and not the family housing that is needed.

Mr. Padden said the units are aimed at individuals and couples, rather than families.

Mr. Yip echoed Ms. Baskerville's comments and said he supports Scheme C. He noted it lends itself to compatibility with the district. He asked about lack of parking for building.

Mr. Chan noted the plan to build right up to sidewalk and expressed concern it would create canyon effect even with modulation. He asked if how to mitigate that through the massing. He suggested having where the roofline height meets the Republic Hotel to be the podium line and then set back mass to differentiate. He said there isn't enough modulation, and the building is out of character with the rest of the buildings. He said it's

an "imposing mass". He encouraged the team to pick up on what exists on Jackson and to echo that and to hone in to the character of the district to create a feel of what it is. He asked for more variety in fronts.

Mr. Williams concurred on Mr. Chan's comment about the canyon effect, noting that it can feel intimidating. He said incorporation of street and retail space is important, noting the connection of outdoor to indoor. He said lot line to lot line prevents that. He suggested keeping the height of the new building consistent with what is around and still meet the number of units.

Ms. Woo asked for more view perspectives, south of S. King St and from 5th Ave S. and to see how they plan to incorporate the mural and art into the project. She was interested in seeing how the material and placement would be incorporated into building and said it should fit in with Asian Design Character District. She said this site is a huge thoroughfare where the community spirit can be presented, and she wanted to know how the design team plans to incorporate that into this building.

Mr. Fujimoto asked to include the Republic in further presentations.

Mr. Neiman said 245 units are planned with 169 SEDU units at 270 square feet and 76 congregate units at 200 square feet. He compared the project with the old residential hotel building and said the design is driven by function inside. The SRO was a simple, minimal affordable housing for the working population. He noted the straightforward design and the need to stack the building. He said the units are as small as they can be, and it would be hard to modulate the building anymore.

Mr. Williams asked the height of the top finished floor.

Mr. Neiman said 85' on average. He said it is just below high-rise; it is as tall as it can be without getting into the high-rise category.

Mr. Fujimoto asked for elaboration on first four floors.

Mr. Neiman said the first to 4th floors are concrete, masonry clad; above that it is wood with masonry cladding.

Mr. Padden said it is the most affordable way to build housing. He said they are providing diverse and mixed-income residential. He said they focused on this area of the market. He said they want to be as inclusive as possible to the broadest audience and he hopes this will be an option to people in the community. He said non-profit organizations have tax credits. He said that is the struggle of the market driven developer versus non-profit developer. He said a building of singles and couples will activate pedestrian realm in ways different from what is there now. He said family units are often occupied by roommates rather than families. He said they will provide a type of housing and he hoped to provide opportunities for family housing.

Mr. Chan said demographics change but the building will exist for a long time and he said he was concerned with the massing. He said he was concerned about the longevity of the design and material.

Mr. Fujimoto cited SMC 23.66.304 F. He asked for proposed mass and options that pay more respect to existing buildings. He said SRO designs were cited as reason to stack the design. He said the result is narrow in proportion. He said the adjacent Republic Hotel is important and to show it in future renderings.

Mr. Chan said the Republic roofline could be carried through the building to help mitigate mass. He said design should respect adjacent structures and that is not visible here. He commented on the narrow proportion of Option C.

Mr. Williams challenged the team to look at different construction types in terms of what it could bring to the cost and life cycle of the building that will be here in 50 years. Bring more warmth to the building.

Mr. Yip appreciated the presentation and the team being candid about challenges, design, housing type, and that they are trying to bring the rent down. He said SEDU and congregate housing still command high rent per square foot. He encouraged the team to take the comments to heart and to honor the community and design elements here.

Mr. Fujimoto cited the goals and objectives of the IDM zone in the land use code and asked the team to consider how to respond to them. He said the building is in the Chinatown-International District and massing should be ground in that.

Mr. Padden said they have spent time touring existing buildings in the community and drawing from those for design. He noted the Atlas Hotel and Bush Hotel and said the proposed design is consistent with what they saw in the community. He said the Bush Hotel went from an SRO to small studio units which are the same size as the proposed SEDUs. He said the new building will last 100 years or more. He said parking is not required by Code and pedestrian uses are favored.

Mr. Chan said living in an SRO is a product of racism and that people were herded into those spaces. It was all they could get. He said it's not a preferable way to live and he suggested the design team talk to residents of the Atlas Hotel.

Mr. Fujimoto said SROs housed seasonal workers; they lived harsh lives in a limited space.

The discussion turned to parking. Mr. Neiman said including parking would require elimination of most affordable units and would drive up the cost of other units. He said there are parking lots in area and they have some good ideas about off-site parking strategies.

Mr. Dekom said they are still working out the massing and the size and type of retail. He said the grade change impacts spaces and interior connections. He said below grade space could work for commercial uses that don't need daylight.

Ms. Woo said grade change and odd angles are not unique in the district. She suggested exploring how others have solved the problem in the district.

Mr. Fujimoto said the continuous canopy as presented in Scheme A is not in keeping with the district. He suggested breaking it up into bays. He referenced scheme C, breaking up the cornice.

Ms. Frestedt noted the board emphasizes how the base relates to the streetscape and how it relates to other buildings in the district.

Ms. Woo said seeing materials would help. She said the board can't look at the future, only what exists now.

Mr. Fujimoto said further study is needed on horizontal datum.

Mr. Dekom said they are just at massing now and more articulation comes in future and will help the building not seem so imposing. Regarding respecting the height of the Republic Hotel, he asked if there needs to be a transition to future development of the lot. He referenced the future development of the Diamond Bay (former House of Hong) site said Uncle Bob's Place is a 7-8 story monolithic structure.

Mr. Chan suggested extending the roofline of the Republic Hotel with transition of corner lot. He said to set a tone on Jackson that can be echoed on the rest of the street as it is developed. He said the building needs distinctive design characteristics.

Mr. Padden said input was very helpful.

Mr. Yip said to be forthcoming about parking when talking to community. He said businesses worry about availability of parking and that correlates to economic viability. Get the community's response to off-site parking plans.

Mr. Williams appreciated the presentation and said he is glad the site will be used. He emphasized the importance of the pedestrian experience and to look at extension retail to the sidewalk.

092821.4 BOARD BUSINESS

Ms. Frestedt explained the election would be held via mail this year due to the unique situation of 2020 election being postponed. She noted that positions 1, 2 and 4 would be elected for 2-year terms and positions 3 and 5 would be elected to 1-year terms because they would have been on last year's ballot had an election been held.

Adjourn 7:15 pm

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