Seattle design Commission

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
January 15, 2015

Fire Station 22 – Roanoke

Ed Murray
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Osama Quotah, Chair

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Grant Hromas

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Ross Tilghman

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Nicolas Welch
Planner

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Commissioners Present

Osama Quotah, Chair
Shannon Loew, Vice Chair
Bernie Alonzo
Lee Copeland
Grant Hromas
Ellen Sollod
Ross Tilghman

Commissioners Excused

Thaddeus Egging
Martin Regge
Brodie Bain (excused at 10:20 am)

Project Description

The Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) proposes to build a new Fire Station 22 at the site of the existing station at 901 E Roanoke St. Built in 1964, the existing station no longer meets staffing and service requirements. The project site, located near Interstate 5 and the terminus of State Route (SR) 520, serves the North Capitol Hill neighborhoods. The updated station will be designed for service needs and allow drive-through access, which the current station does not accommodate. On July 1, 2014, the Design Commission reviewed and approved the concept design for the station.

Meeting Summary

With a vote of 6 to 1, the Design Commission approved the schematic design of Fire Station 22. In its approval, the Commission added a condition that the project team coordinate with relevant agencies to accommodate a viable east–west linkage in the regional multi-use trail that is part of the Washington State Department of Transportation's SR 520 project.

Given its reservations about the relative opacity of the north façade, the Commission also recommended greater attention toward the west façade and refining it to engage the public realm more effectively and support the notion that the architecture reflects the facility's programmatic requirements.

The Commission also saw the proposed artwork for the first time. Though supportive of deeply integrating the art into the building architecture, the Commissioners had questions about the durability of the woven hoses and some concern that concealing the hose tower could have a negative impact on the expression of the overall building massing.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

January 15, 2015
9:00 – 10:30 am

Type
CIP Project

Phase
Schematic Design

Previous Reviews
July 1, 2014

Project Team Present
Charles Cordova
Seattle Fire Department

Michael Fernandes
FAS

David Jackson
FAS

David Kunselman
FAS

Erina Queen
Seattle Fire Department

Lauren Rock
Weinstein A+U

Meredith Sessions
Murase Associates

Mark Tilbe
Murase Associates

Ed Weinstein
Weinstein A+U

Attendees
Mark Archambault
Capital Hill Community Council + Central Seattle Greenways

Lyle Bicknell
DPD

Cheryl Klotz
UW student

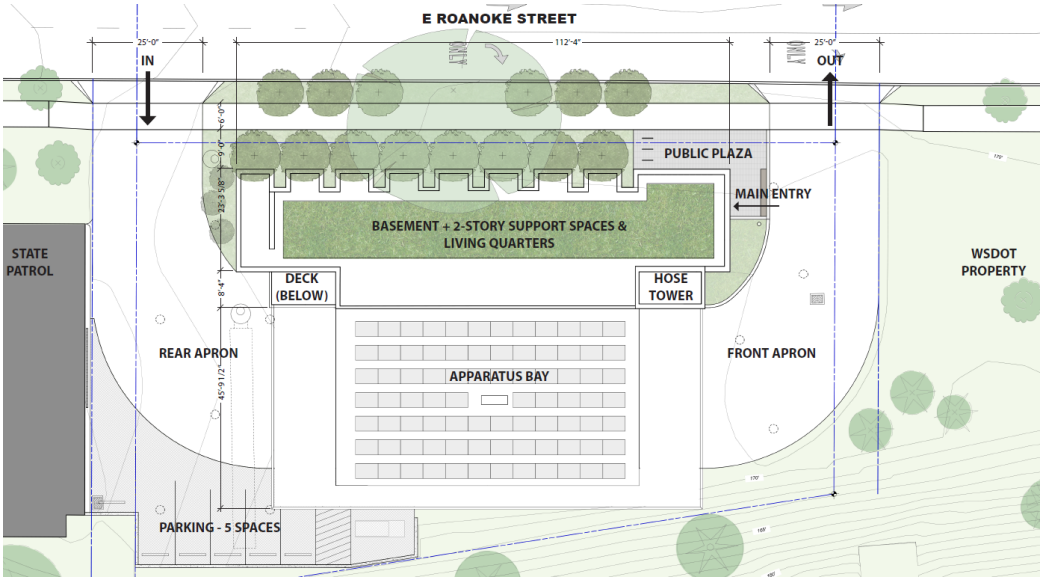
Kelly Pajek
Office of Arts & Culture

Alex Tsimerman
StandUP-America

Summary of Presentation
In a series of slides, Ed Weinstein presented the evolution of the design since the last review. His presentation is available on the Commission website. A site plan identified the existing Fire Station, nearby open spaces, and potential future Delmar Lid as part of the SR 520 replacement program. He mentioned that attendees to a recent community open house were overwhelmingly positive about the proposed station design.

Several photos showed the existing fire station. Mr. Weinstein noted the prominence of the existing apparatus bay and relative obscurity of the public lobby. He also described the "zone of bad behavior" along E Roanoke St and 10th Ave E, where rush hour congestion is high.

Mr. Weinstein addressed the Commission's previous concern about the facility turning its back on the neighborhood. In response, he described the programmatic requirements of the project, specifically the need to locate the apparatus bay on the south end of the site. He also discussed the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) decision not to grant a 24-foot-wide easement for drive-through access on its adjacent parcel. As a result, the team had to extend and compress the facility in the north–south and east–west directions, respectively.



Revised site plan following WSDOT's decision not to grant an easement across its adjacent property.

Several elevations showed design alternatives for the number and arrangement of monoliths and crenellations on the north façade. According to Mr. Weinstein, the programmatic and fenestration requirements drove the façade design; the team pursued a "rhythm of elements" rather than arranging windows in a contrived or inauthentic pattern.

The team asked for the Design Commission's support for four waivers from development standards:

1. Height limit for the hose tower and flag pole
2. The "22" signage
3. Front yard setback
4. Lot coverage

Finally, Mr. Weinstein introduced the proposed artwork by Oliver Hess. He noted that Mr. Hess is interested in involving the community in assembling and installing the artwork.

Mark Tilbe briefly presented the planting palette for landscaped areas at the northeast public entry, along the north frontage, and at the west end of the facility.

Following Lyle Bicknell's comment, Mr. Weinstein and David Kunselman discussed how moving a proposed bicycle path from the south edge of the site to the E Roanoke St frontage would conflict with fire trucks leaving at great haste during a call, creating a serious liability for the City. Mr. Kunselman stated that SDOT, FAS, and the Fire Chief are fully engaged on the question of how to accommodate the east–west multi-use path.

The SR 520 Regional Shared-Use Path illustrated in orange (left) and the area in question identified in WSDOT's Final Concept Design (right).

Agency Comments

Lyle Bicknell raised an urban design issue that is potentially problematic. The SR 520 replacement project design includes a regional shared-use path along the Portage Bay Bridge, on the future Delmar Lid, and across I-5 to points west. The corridor along E Roanoke St is a critical part of that connection. The current proposal is for a 14-foot-wide multi-use path, but the sidewalk in the Fire Station 22 design is six feet wide. According to Mr. Bicknell, WSDOT is open to moving the Fire Station site to the south to accommodate the multi-use path [though Lee Copeland noted that moving the building south would be very expensive, and FAS said it is unclear what WSDOT would be willing to fund]. Without some modification, a major ped/bike facility that is always 14 feet wide to the east would narrow to six feet before returning to 14 feet across I-5 — not a satisfactory outcome for the community or SDOT. [According to Mr. Jackson, FAS received information about relocating the multi-use path to E Roanoke St in November 2014.]

Public Comments

Mike Archambault is a representative of Capitol Hill Community Council and Central Seattle Greenways. He read a letter that he had submitted to the Commission prior to the meeting. In brief, Mr. Archambault and the cosigners of the letter advocate for nonmotorized transportation modes and want to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian routes safely and effectively connect the neighborhood for people of all ages and abilities. The letter expressed concern that the six-foot-wide sidewalk shown in the proposed design will be inadequate to accommodate users coming from the new SR 520 multi-use trail and connecting to destinations west of I-5. Mr. Archambault requested that the design team work with the City and WSDOT to ensure the sidewalk immediately north of Fire Station 22 complements the SR 520 pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

Alex Tsimerman stated that he is the president of StandUP-America and a candidate for Seattle City Council. He wants to make the Design Commission more effective for people. He presented a proposal for the Bertha Knight Landes room at City Hall to be open from 12:00 to 4:00 pm every Sunday for questions with Council candidates. He wants to stop the Council mafia. According to Mr. Tsimerman, when you open the Bertha Knight Landes room to discuss anything and ask questions, the people will get equal treatment under the Constitution. He asked that the Commission support his proposition.

Summary of Discussion

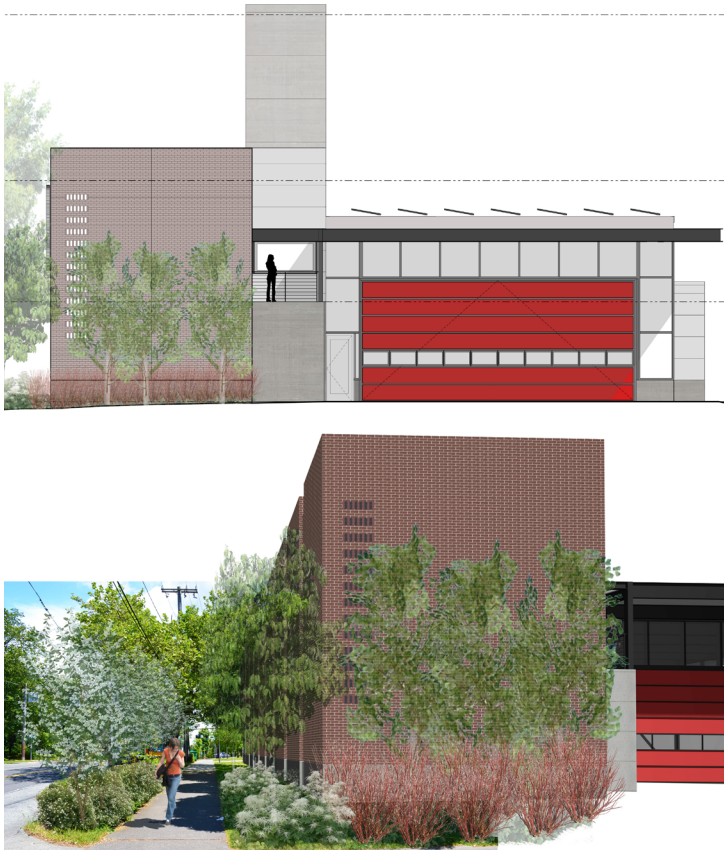
The Commission appreciated the team's thoughtful work overall but especially on the north façade and the site constraints resulting from WSDOT's decision not to grant an easement on its adjacent property. While the Commission had previously expressed strong concern about the opacity and "armoring effect" of the north façade, for both the original and updated concept designs, they recognized the team had looked closely at alternatives. The Commissioners were receptive to the notion that the interior functional requirements were driving the design of the exterior.

In that vein, the Commission recommended greater attention to the west façade. If the potential for transparency on the north façade is very limited, the west façade needs more than a few openings into the stair. The Commission suggested strategies for refining the west façade to complement the concept for the north façade, including:

- Breaking down its solidity
- Articulating the staircase within
- Incorporating more windows and lighting
- Exposing more of the deck or wrapping it around the corner
- Ensuring there is adequate transparency on the west apparatus bay doors

These changes would also remind the public that people live and work in the facility, helping to anchor it in the neighborhood. There was agreement that, if the architecture reflects what happens inside, the west façade can do more to express the activity at the station.

The discussion also focused on the art, which the Commissioners saw for the first time. They appreciated the effort to integrate the art with the building architecture and the desire to involve the community in its installation. However, there was concern that the art conceals the hose tower, a crucial component for alleviating the otherwise difficult building massing. They agreed that the artwork should not fully engulf the hose tower and asked to hear how the team will resolve these issues and execute the installation.



The Commission encouraged the team to refine the west façade…

Action

The Design Commission thanked the project team for the presentation of the schematic design of Fire Station 22 on E Roanoke St. The Commission recognized the challenging topography and site constraints and, as always, appreciated the team's thoughtful and detailed work and presentation.

With a **vote of 6 to 1**, the Seattle Design Commission approved the schematic design of Fire Station 22 with the following condition:

1. Provide a solution to the station and site design that accommodates a viable east–west multi-use connection from the SR 520 regional shared-use path across I-5 that is appropriate for all ages and abilities and that all relevant agencies approve. Present the resolution of this issue at the design development review.

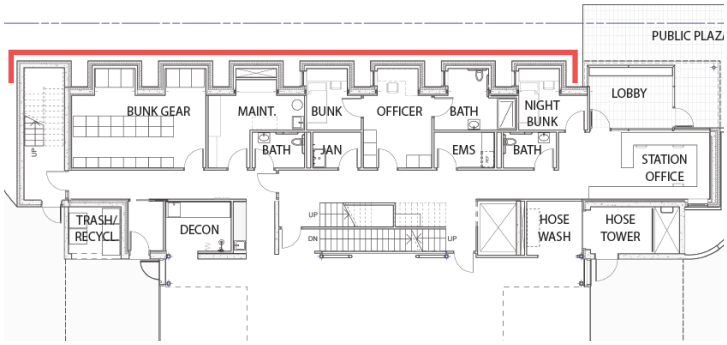
The Commission also made the following comments and recommendations to guide the station design:

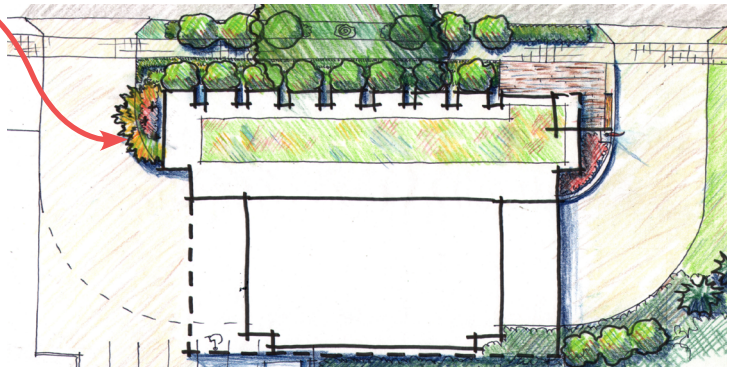
1. Present perspectives of the south façade given that it is visible from the North Capitol Hill neighborhood and 10th Ave E.
2. The west façade is an important and perhaps underexplored part of the design. Continue to refine it with the goal of supporting the concept that the

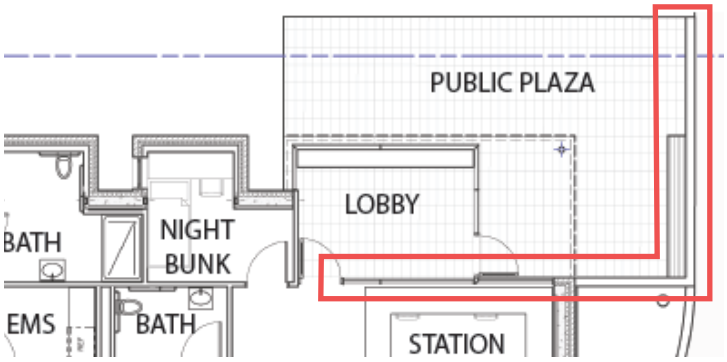
…to engage the public realm as effectively as the east façade does.

north façade is more veneer than mass. The west façade should have a relationship to the north façade the way the east façade successfully does.

3. Continue to study the potential effects and impacts of the north façade crenellations on interior spaces. The Commission wants to understand clearly that the team has worked with SFD to understand these impacts on circulation and overall programmatic flow.
4. Further study the plantings at the west side of the facility given the constrained landscaped area in that location.
5. While we applaud the intention to integrate art into the station architecture, the Commission has strong reservations about the siting of the artwork and how it modifies the architectural concept. We want the artist to be present at the next review and are eager to understand the installation and potential public involvement. Please show a) the proposed lighting, b) views from the south, and c) an example of the woven material. The team should also address the particular concern that the artwork conceals an important part of the overall massing and architecture.
6. We understand the project will require several variances:
    a. The setback variance is related to the aforementioned condition and, accordingly, we will discuss it further at the next review.
    b. We support the height limit variance for the hose tower and flag pole.
    c. While generally supportive of the sign variance, we would like to understand more clearly its design and lighting at the next review.
    d. The lot coverage variance is not problematic in itself but is related to the ongoing discussion about the overall site and its constraints.
7. Provide more detail about the interior public spaces, the transition of the wall that moves from exterior to interior, and the relationship of the interior and exterior benches (at right). Provide images and material samples for the public spaces and treatment of the ground plane. Continue to evaluate the safety of the pedestrian crossing at the driveway apron.







The reason for the vote against was as follows:

Bernie Alonzo: There are too many significant changes bundled into the condition that the team coordinate with SDOT and WSDOT on the location of the multi-use path. This coordination will likely drive site plan changes that are too significant for us to know that the project is truly at schematic design—though that is not the fault of the architect team.