



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

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ISRD 21/22

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY February 22, 2022

Time: 4:30pm
Place: Remote Meeting

Board Members Present

Lizzy Baskerville
Matt Fujimoto
Ryan Gilbert
Nella Kwan
Michael Le
Ming Zhang
Andy Yip, Chair

Staff

Rebecca Frestedt
Melinda Bloom
Maribel Stephens

Community Liaisons/Interpreters

Lillian Young
Qingci Cai

Absent

Ms. Frestedt instructed attendees how to access Cantonese interpretation.

Chair Andy Yip called the meeting to order at 4:34 pm. He asked public speakers to make comments brief. He suggested that commenters who have spoken before make way for others who have not had a chance to be heard.

ROLL CALL

02222.1 PUBLIC COMMENT

Eugenia Woo, Historic Seattle, submitted public comment not supporting demolition of the existing buildings. She said a third-party engineering report was submitted from structural engineer Dan Say stating the building can be rehabilitated. She said the proposed massing is out of scale and not compatible with existing buildings. Responding to the Chair's comments about public comment, she said she wanted to see where it was written that people who had spoken previously could not comment again.

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

"Printed on Recycled Paper"

David Woodward said he learned a little about the project as he knows the leadership from Rotary. He said there is a lack of housing which must be addressed. He said what is proposed is a great fit and could change the district into a destination place which would help the economy, support diversity. He said the contemporary design would draw more people in and noted affordability and diversity.

Elaine Ko thanked board members for their service reviewing complex projects. She said differences within the community makes it better. She supported the project and said she has worked on affordable housing and understands what it takes to building from the ground up. She hoped Bush Garden can be part of the Uncle Bob project. She said she used to work at Bush Garden. She said Vibrant Cities is ready to go and the board has a duty to due diligence. She said the project should move forward without further delay.

Tanya Woo, owner, Louisa Hotel noted a history with structural engineering firm Stoller LLC after the Louisa was damaged by fire in 2013. She noted Stoller made comparisons of the subject site to the Louisa that were unclear, vague and misleading. She said the intention was always to preserve the Louisa Hotel and its history; she preferred that a building being saved not be referred to while planning the demolition of another one.

Nina Nobuko Wallace spoke in opposition to demolition and redevelopment of the site. She said that rehabilitation is possible. She said more housing is needed and she favored restoration of the building with creation of senior and affordable housing on top. She demolition of site and luxury housing do not honor the history of the site. She said the neighborhood is dealing with a lot. She said the community needs affordable housing and not to be erased and displaced. She said to make sure the community will still exist. Immigrants, elders and all people of color can thrive. She said that 'social and economic consequences' need to be considered by the Board, per Code.

Derek Lum, InterimCDA, supported comments made by Eugenia Woo and Nina Wallace. He said with all the potential harms development could bring, it doesn't serve the community here. He noted the need to fully preserve building and meaningfully uplift the history that has taken place at this site. He said Jasmine doesn't come close to doing that.

Jacqueline Wu, OCA Greater Seattle spoke in opposition to demolition of existing buildings citing SMC 23.66.318 The ISRD ordinates states that "a certificate of approval may be granted only if the requested demolition will not adversely affect the District and no reasonable alternatives to demolition." She said demolition would massively impact the district. She noted the loss of history and said the building was built by the first Japanese architect in the nation and is comparable in age to the Kong Yick building which houses the Wing Luke Museum. She said the building could never be replaced. She said the Louisa and Cadillac buildings show that rehabilitation is possible. Demolishing the historic Elgin Hotel and turning it into a 17-story, 200-unit luxury condo is disrespectful to the community and its history. The proposed mass of "Beijing brick" does not honor or acknowledge the ethnic history of the neighborhood – the first Chinese immigrants in the neighborhood hail from Toisan and Guangzhou. The scaling of the proposed project is three times out of proportion of the average building height in the neighborhood. The proposed project will dwarf International House and Legacy House, as well as the

surrounding affordable housing projects in the interior core – negatively affecting elders and working residents.

Ms. Frestedt responded to comment by Eugenia Woo about the public comment process. She explained sign up for public comment opens up two hours prior to starting meeting, as noted on the agenda, and is consistent with Seattle Design Commission, other boards and commissions and City Council. She said public comment is not curated by staff; whoever signs up will be on the list to speak and is not regulated in Ordinance or Land Use Code.

022222.2 BOARD BRIEFING

022222.21 614-620 Maynard Ave S.
Applicant: Li Alligood, Otak

Briefing on proposed redevelopment plans for the properties at 614 Maynard S. (Elgin Hotel) and 620 Maynard Ave. S. (warehouse). The focus of this briefing will be on further exploration of massing options for the proposed development. No formal actions will be taken at this meeting.

Gary Reddick, Otak, presented (full presentation documents in DON files). He said three massing schemes were presented with Option 3 preferred. He presented highlights of documents presented at August community meeting including graphic representation of space dedicated to community activity on first and second floors. He said the project wants to honor the importance of the history of the site and said the existing buildings helped to define a time period however it is the people of the district that define the true qualities of community, history, and culture. Images were presented that represent inspiration for the building mass: thin vertical elements reference bamboo; stacked masses reference historical building forms; folded lamp, light and color, paper lanterns which define connection to the principles, heritage, and energy within the CID. A rendering of ultimate zoning layered on existing buildings depicts 170' height limit.

Ron Dean, Otak, went over a series of massing elements that the team determined to be important: extend pedestrian edges to intersection; pedestrian view from middle of street; create building offsets to respond to scale of adjacent buildings. He went over the departures requested to provide relief for connections to adjacent buildings. Various street views from around the district were provided to show how massing blends with context and how the tower recedes. He indicated the transparency of commercial, retail and community gathering spaces and noted the visual connection to the street to increase safety. He showed the proposed stacking of spaces and various views from the pedestrian street experience showing proposed creation of dynamic pedestrian experience. Adjacent building datums will be reinforced in materiality and glazing. He explained the proposed strategy based on the image of delicate bamboo structures using a system of vertical elements, echoing bamboo, which provides visual interest to the façade. He said the vertical elements provide a serene visual and conceptual connection to nature. Approach allows a heavier base and dissipate as it grows taller. Shows a level of detail that will be shown at future briefings.

Mr. Reddick asked a series of questions for board feedback:

- Does the board agree with the project vision?
- Does the board support the preferred massing?
- Does the board support the proposed first and second floor uses?

He said the next briefing would touch on materiality and architectural detail.

Ms. Frestedt said that link to more detailed information is provided on agenda. She said the project briefing is a truncated version of full packet. She said no action is being taken, it is a chance to ask clarifying questions and to request additional information.

Mr. Gilbert asked if there is a parking plan.

Mr. Reddick said three levels of below grade parking will be accessed off the alley and Lane Street.

Mr. Gilbert noted the plan for luxury apartments and asked what percentage would be affordable.

Mr. Reddick said he has not been involved in those discussions but that the layout could accommodate several types of units. He said their focus has been on the first couple floors.

James Wong, Vibrant Cities said they will meet or exceed any affordable housing requirements for this type housing. He said they are exceeding that with rooms for community and for non-profit use that could be used for a nominal fee. He said Bush Garden was important and held important events; the Jasmine will add to that and they will display photos of Bush Garden in the building to remember that history.

Mr. Yip said focus should be on items within ISRD purview; affordability is not.

Mr. Fujimoto said the team had not addressed the newly provided structural assessment and asked for their comment.

Mr. Reddick said he saw the report yesterday and they had additional conversation with Bruce at DCI. He said they are comfortable with their position. He said they have been in the building and noted Swenson Say Faget had only been at exterior and didn't know building's actual structural integrity.

Bruce Zhong, DCI Engineers, said he read the letter from Dan Say and sent a letter to staff to forward to the Board. He said he disagreed with Mr. Say's report because they have not had access to interior of building and just walked around outside. He said he has worked on successful retrofits and saved buildings, but this building is in bad shape. He said the building was built as a one-story building and at a different time two stories were added with no solid base. He said it's like Lego blocks stacked on top of each other with no glue holding them together. In a bad quake, it may collapse.

Mr. Wong said part of the building wall fell down in the last earthquake.

Ms. Frestedt noted the large number of new board members who joined after the last briefings occurred. She said she provided past history of the project along with minutes and briefing information about a week prior to the meeting, so they have context and understanding.

Mr. Fujimoto said Dan Say's report was compelling and offered a good starting point for discussion. He asked he found them compelling to read and offered good discussion for later on. He asked if the applicant team has any materials to present regarding the new structural assessment.

Mr. Reddick said no, other than their comments during the meeting. He said that they stand by their assessment. He said the building is not fit for retrofit or rebuild.

Ms. Baskerville thanked the presenters. She said that the memo from Mr. Say has caused her to step back from talking about the massing and toward having a broader discussion. She said the board encourages the rehabilitation of existing structures and assessment of alternatives to demolition. She said that since they didn't have this information before, it's making her want to step back.

Mr. Yip said the applicant team may not have received the report in time to comment on it. There was discussion about the timing of the receipt of the report and when the applicants and Board members received it.

Ms. Frestedt said she received the report in December 2021. She said she made a decision to wait on giving the letter to the Board until they had a couple of meetings under their belt. She said she made the decision to wait new Board members were onboarded and until the project was slated for review so board members would have context and it would be aligned with the scheduling of the project. She said she received a request from the applicant for public comments and forwarded it to the applicants in response.

Mr. Yip questioned what the Board would want to do in light of this new information.

Ms. Frestedt suggested that the board determine if additional information is required now and if so, what.

Mr. Fujimoto noted SMC 23.66.318B and structural safety and the reports from the two structural engineers. He said one structural engineering report calls the building a danger, the other does not.

Ms. Baskerville said she is not a structural engineer. She said at the last meeting the board was told there was no way to preserve the western façade building and removing building brick by brick doesn't preserve the original building; however, the new memo says there is nothing unusual or risky about the building which can be repaired using traditional methods. She said the new memo noted damage as water staining not rot. She said the new information makes her rethink the ability to preserve the building. She asked if the third-party engineer could be allowed access to interior to continue his assessment.

Mr. Fujimoto noted Ms. Baskerville's question and cited SMC 23.66.318 A and wondered if the board had truly assessed alternatives to demolition. He said it was an opportunity to have the new information.

Mr. Zhang said he was not an engineer, but an architect. He said DCI put their liability in project and the other party just walked by. He said the building is not safe, with a foundation made for one floor and supporting two additional. He said it's common sense that this building is not safe. Number one priority should be safety. He said if we don't solve that issue, nothing further can be discussed. He said four meetings have been spent talking about structure and now board is getting back to that. He said Board should be more decisive and not keep going back to that issue.

Mr. Yip said he has sat through all briefings and did a board site visit on August 27, 2019 so the discussion has come up before.

Mr. Reddick said they started the briefing the way they did to remind folks about the length of the process. They have respected the process and been patient. He said they have gone through four briefings with serious deep dive into the building. He said none of us can deny the sentiment for this building but that he has been involved with retrofits, etc. He said there is a part of this lament that speaks to his heart, but also that there is a sizable group that will never accept it. He if Mr. Say was in the building he would say, "Oh wow! I had no idea". He said it is an expensive journey for the building owner and team. He said it is exhausting and exasperating and he wondered when it will ever be settled. He said they thought it was settled and were excited to begin the design process.

Mr. Wong said the Elgin Hotel building was built as a one-story and the second story was added without adding to the foundation. Third floor was built later, without adding to structural conditions. He said they paid multiple licensed architects and consultants at the front end who said it is not on sound foundation and is on landfill. He said the last time they came with detail on what it would take to save the façade and only way to save it would be to save the bricks, which are falling apart. He said at the last meeting they brought lots of detail to last board meeting and were directed by the Board to work on the massing.

Mr. Fujimoto said it would be interesting to have Mr. Say or any one from Swenson go take a look and follow up and put it to rest. He said it isn't it ust be a matter of letting Mr. Say into the building to move this forward.

Mr. Wong said they shut the building down because it is not safe. He said they don't let people in. He said letting Mr. Say in would be a safety concern. He said that Eugenia is at Historic Seattle and she and Mr. Say are working together and saying anything can be saved. He said certain things can be saved within reason. Ms. Woo's job is to save old buildings, but this building is not reasonable.

Mr. Fujimoto said it is the responsibility of the board to make sure alternatives are explored per SMC 23.66.318 and to discourage unnecessary demolition. He noted the new opinion from an credible expert and he said it's important to follow up with that and that any alternatives to demolition be assessed.

Ms. Baskerville she understands frustration of setbacks and process, so she has empathy but as a Board member it is her job to uphold SMC 23.66.318 and must really know whether or not a building can be saved. She said once it's gone, it's gone. She said DCI works for Vibrant Cities and Mr. Say was contacted by Historic Seattle. She said all information is needed to make a decision and said why not allow Mr. Say access to the building to make an assessment.

Mr. Wong said many of the board members weren't around when the Four Seas restaurant project was reviewed. He said it is inside the historic (National Register) district, but the Bush Garden building is not. He said Four Seas was just as significant as Bush Garden and that building was allowed to be demolished; Interim wasn't put through as much scrutiny as this project. He asked the Board when it is going to end.

Mr. Yip asked if the other third-party reports could be sent out.

Ms. Frestedt said everything that has been presented to the Board members is in the SharePoint she'd sent with the ISRD Board. She said the applicant team was sent this information including public comment and the letter from Dan Say on Friday afternoon. She said she could provide the Board more direction to which meetings the reports were presented so they are easier to find. She said there is a tremendous amount of information from the past meetings.

Mr. Reddick said his instinct was to save the building, but that this building is unsavable. It would have to be recreated.

Mr. Zhong said he always wants to save historic buildings and he doesn't want to see them destroyed. He said he is working on the Republic Hotel and they are saving that building. He said the building will be retrofitted and new apartments put in. He said if it can be saved, they will save a building. He said Bush Garden hotel building is in really bad shape. He said he got the letter Friday night and he responded. He said it is too bad it wasn't read earlier by the design team. He said if the building is to be saved then they have to do it in a way to protect construction worker safety. He noted in briefing #4 it is almost impractical and dangerous. He said he hoped all can agree with his earlier report; he said his job is to protect public safety.

Mr. Yip said the applicant team has spent years on this. He said to the board's point this is the first time that a third party, not employed by applicant, is saying something other than the applicants. He proposed the applicant team to meet with Dan Say or get a report from another third-party at board's choosing to put the issue to rest and move forward.

Ms. Frestedt said the board cannot choose a third structural engineer to review the project. If there is interest in knowing more based on Dan Say's information, it is up to the applicant to respond to whether the engineer would have access.

Ms. Kwan said she agreed with Mr. Zhang that this has taken much too long. She said if Dan Say came in, her concern is that he would be doing it on behalf of Historic Seattle and

it feels non-partisan. The longer this takes, the longer it will be until the public safety issues will persist.

Mr. Le said as a business owner he understands what it takes going through ISRD process. He noted structural engineer's knowledge and skills and their opinion that the building is not structurally sound. He said the building has been vacant for many years and is not safe. He is excited to see what the Jasmine project can offer something to the community.

Mr. Fujimoto appreciated Ms. Kwan and Mr. Le's comments and where they are coming from. He discussed some concerns about the ways in which the applicant was talking about "making way" for housing. He said the CID has experienced an incredible amount of hardship recently. In addition, architects and urban planners have challenged the area by reconsidering the laws that allow size and scale of new buildings. He said it is an opportunity that this community faces but it is also a stressor. There is a lot of stress on this neighborhood, and it needs to be considered.

Mr. Zhang said he joined the board and wants the CID to get better in the future. He asked everyone to think about how to make a vibrant, sustainable community. This is a community; people live here many years. He noted the need to attract different types of people, so the community is more than just affordable senior place. He wanted the community to be good for a younger and more diverse population to be here; for the community to be a safe and livable place. He said the numbers have to work for developer; this will be market rate not luxury. For this size project, project has to adopt affordable housing into the project; the bigger the project, the more opportunity for affordable housing. He said that the board really needs to think about long-term impacts to community and timing is everything. He said if 3rd party engineer is required, he wants to know how they can save building. If existing structure is used it would be saving façade only, the interior structure would be totally different. He said the wall is just dangerous without any bracing. He said he understands emotionally and culturally the value of Bush Garden. He said there are many ways to preserve this heritage. 1. Can preserve façade and integrate into design. 2. Admire the effort to have a community room; that is another way to preserve culture of the site for all ages.

Ms. Frestedt said she appreciated the ongoing passion of the building and the site. Need to remind board that the task at hand. Ultimately has an application to redevelop site and massing details. Part of that review is to determine if board has enough information about demolition. A consensus is not required. If you don't have enough information, what information does the board need? Based on information shown, regarding massing, what comments do you have about that. What additional information may be need, to move that discussion forward. Speaking to the community, she reminded all that affordability is not part of board purview. She said to focus comments on information needed rooted in the Code, Guidelines, and Secretary of Interior Standards.

Mr. Yip noted documents to look up:
10/31/2018 DCI report
7/24/2018 Johnson report
8/27/2019 board site visit

2/21/22 DCI supplemental report

Mr. Wong said he works in the CID and is invested in the neighborhood. He said they have looked at trying to save the building or a façade which adds costs, but they were willing. He said they were asked by the board what they would do if they had a clean slate and they said they would do something great for the community – community space, a large two-story space. He asked if the board has enough information to make a decision on demolition and if not, what is needed.

Ms. Frestedt said the board can't make binding decision; the application is not complete. She asked board members if they have enough information about portion related to demolition to move forward and if not, what would that be.

Mr. Le said he has enough information.

Mr. Fujimoto said he does not have enough information and cited SMC 23.66.318 – any alternatives to demolition shall be assessed. He said the board recently learned of third-party report and it is prudent to allow them to finish and finalize that.

Mr. Zhang said he has enough information.

Ms. Baskerville said she wants more information and wants a fuller report from third party engineer, Dan Say, who did a very thorough report but did not get access into the building. She said takes her position on board seriously that all board members should assess any alternatives to demolition.

Ms. Kwan said she has enough information, and expressed concern about bias from the third party engineer.

Mr. Yip said he has enough information. He said everyone is on board for benefit of community, especially the amount of time spent is done for the community. He said there is not always consensus and there are different cultural opinions and expertise. He said the system is in place for disagreement and majority rules. He said there are good NGOs building needed housing for the community. He cited SMC 23.66.302. He said the board tries its best and exhaust all options to save historic buildings. He said the ISRD board does that and more; it was established to promote, preserve, perpetuate cultural economic historic and otherwise beneficial qualities of the area. We want to save as many buildings as we can because once a building is gone, it's gone. He said there is no shortage of buildings in good condition and others whose life span has run out. He said the question is how to perpetuate the spirit and give it new life. We save where we can, we build where we can't save. He said while not financially invested, board members are emotionally invested in community.

Mr. Fujimoto noted that "non-partisan" was used to describe people's work professionally. He said he wanted to offer caution that we may be conflating things and misrepresenting work that has occurred or may occur in the future. He the board has an incredible body of work provided by the applicant team and now we have a third-party opinion which is being evaluated.

Ms. Frestedt said in light of what she was hearing a consensus will likely not be reached. She asked based on information received, if the board is ready to comment on massing options presented. She asked those not ready to entertain these, to state so explicitly, to the applicants so we don't have to revisit the same conversation a couple months from now

Mr. Yip said if Mr. Say were to be allowed access it could lay the issue to rest.

Ms. Frestedt said the applicant does not need to respond to that today.

Mr. Wong said access to building is not allowed because it is not safe. He said the building is empty. He said the warehouse and the Elgin are both empty; there will be no displacement.

Mr. Yip said the project team asked the board:

1. does the board agree with the project vision;
2. does the board support the preferred massing;
3. does the board support the proposed first and second floor uses.

Mr. Fujimoto:

1. yes, a 9 out of 10.
2. Give the allowed envelope; yes.
3. Yes. Excited to see the thought behind first and second floors.

Mr. Zhang:

1. Yes, support vision, it is a right step for the future
2. Improvement; like setbacks and wedding cake concept and overall massing
3. Appropriate, activation at street level. Community space an attractive draw. Transparency – emotionally – story, culture, think about masonry at base to respect original material – many ways to do it. Explore.

Ms. Baskerville:

1. It is an honor to work with all. Ideas of bridging the past with the future, history is stackable.
2. Need more information. Consider scale and character and that it is a green street.
3. Community space – exciting – activities, weddings, banquets. If cannot save any piece, honor the façade in some way: stone façade, rice paper screens, bamboo on front, Japanese American heritage.

Mr. Le:

1. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. Yes, activation and need space.

Ms. Kwan:

1. Yes;
2. Yes. Surprised by 17 stories. As long as within height limit.

3. New idea for community center, important for district, family associations, non-profits. Japanese façade and art. Retail will bring people in and activate.

Mr. Yip:

1. Yes, very excited for more people in community. Lots of crime now. More young, vibrant people will be helpful to the old and frail.
2. Excited to see changes. West façade lines up with adjacent building, south façade lines up with condo. Modulation – be mindful of shadowing.
3. Community room – more choices that community has is good for weddings etc. Tell how will make this goal happen. Save façade? Elements to save as homage.

Ms. Baskerville said to consider scale. Housing is needed and 17 stories is allowed but it is out of scale, too tall.

Mr. Fujimoto said the zoning that is allowed is out of scale with district.

Mr. Reddick said they have information needed. He noted appreciation for board member feedback.

Ms. Frestedt thanked all for getting to this point. She hoped the design team was provided with information to help the project move forward. She encouraged the design team to provide additional information on structural elements if they want to. She said she will get minutes to board for review as soon as possible and encouraged design team to share any notes they have.

Messrs. Fujimoto, Gilbert, and Yip left the meeting.

022222.3 BOARD BUSINESS

Ms. Frestedt said she has received no further direction on appointees for Mr. Fujimoto's seat on the board. She is awaiting information from the mayor's office. She will update board as she gets more information on virtual versus in-person meetings.

Adjourn 7:30 pm

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