

Fire Station 31 - Northgate

Commissioners Present

Justin Clark, Chair
Adam Amrhein
Amalia Leighton-Cody
Elizabeth Conner
Jill Crary
Mark Johnson
Vinita Sidhu
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins
Valerie Kinast
Juliet Acevedo

Bruce A. Harrell
Mayor

Rico Quirindongo
Interim Director, OPCD

Justin Clark, Chair

Adam Amrhein

Amalia Leighton-Cody

Elizabeth Conner

Jill Crary

Mark Johnson

Vinita Sidhu

Elaine Wine

Michael Jenkins
Executive Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Juliet Acevedo
Administrative Staff

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Recusals and Disclosures

None

Project Description

The City of Seattle's Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) has proposed construction of a new Fire Station 31, located at Meridian Ave N and N 113th Streets, in the Northgate neighborhood (*see Figures 1 and 2*). The station will replace the existing Fire Station 31 located along N Northgate Way. The new 22,000 square foot facility will accommodate one engine company, a ladder unit, a medic unit, one aid car, and room for reserve vehicles. A total of 13 active-duty personnel per shift are anticipated. Design for this station began in March 2021 and continue into design through 2022. Outreach will include design open houses in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022.

Meeting Summary

This is the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) second review of the Fire Station 31 project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the schematic design (60% design) phase. The SDC voted, 8-0, to approve the schematic design for the Fire Station 31 project with several recommendations.

Summary of Presentation

The presentation was presented by Scott Wolf and Zubin Rao of Miller Hull, Martina Wirtl of Osborne Consulting, Andy Ishizaki and Kate Spitzer of FAS, and Chief Daniel Murray of Seattle Fire Department. The presentation addressed changes to the overall program and refinements to the proposed development standard waivers that will be sought as part of the City Council approval process. No date has been set for Council review. The presentation included an update and overview on items that included

- Project overview;
- Neighborhood and site context;
- Community open house and neighbor outreach;
- Stakeholder engagement;
- Agency updates;
- Artist selection;
- Sustainability and materials;
- Site design;
- Building design.

FAS identified the following departures from development standards that require City Council approval for the proposed design:

January 20, 2022

1:30 - 3:40 pm

Project Type

CIP

Phase

schematic development

Previous Reviews

5/20/21

Presenters

Andy Ishizaki
FAS

Scott Wolf
Miller Hull

Zubin Rao
Miller Hull

Marina Wirtl
Osborne Consulting

Kate Spitzer
FAS

Chief Daniel Murray
SFD

Attendees

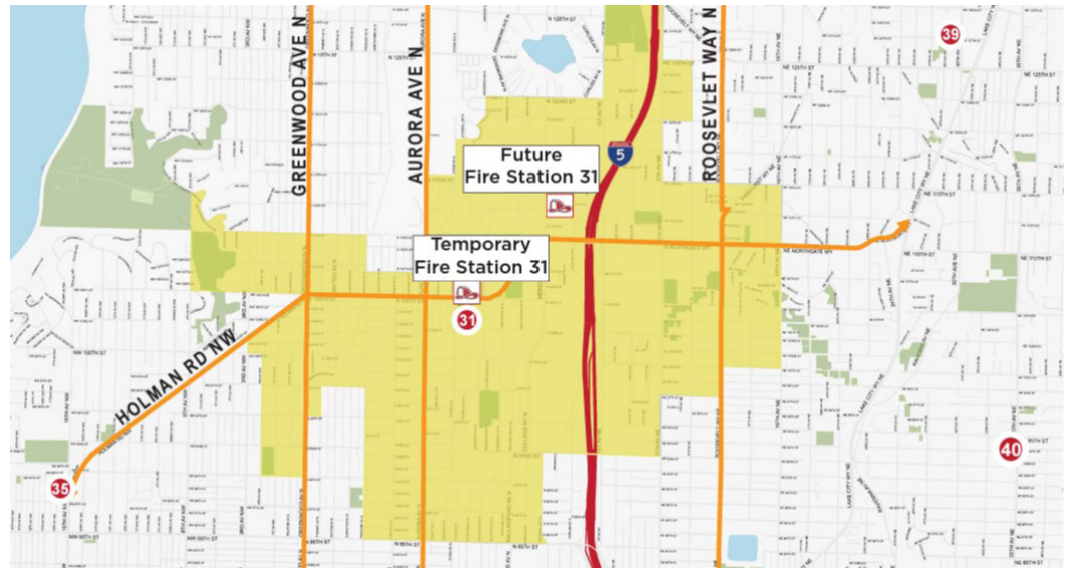


Figure 1: Project location



Figure 2: Neighborhood context

SMC 23.45.570.F.3 - Side Setbacks at North Property Line and South Property Line - the proposal includes locating a portion of the structure directly along the north property line abutting an adjacent single-family zone as well as reducing setbacks between two and four feet along the south property line;

SMC 23.54.030.F.2.b.4 - Curb Cut Widths - A 70-foot-wide curb cut on Meridian Ave N is proposed, a 30-foot maximum is currently allowed;

SMC 25.11.070 - Tree Protection - The proposal assumes the removal of three trees classified as Exceptional in the land use code. Relief is proposed from onsite planting and replacement requirements.

Agency Comments

None

Public Comments

None

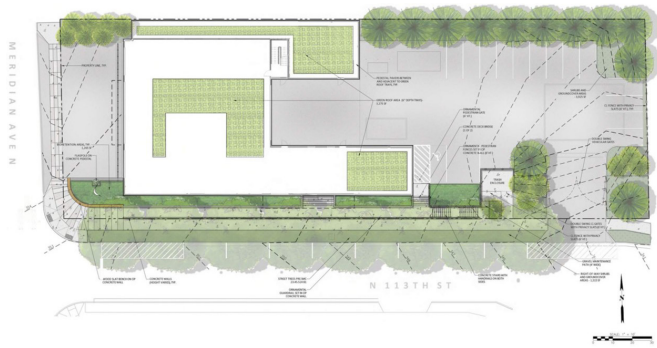


Figure 3: Landscape plan



Figure 4: South elevation

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following six topics:

1. Request for development departure request;
2. Building programming and expression;
3. Ground floor programming;
4. Areas to enhance the public realm;
5. Equitable outcomes;
6. Sustainability.

Request for Development Departure Request

Commissioners generally support the rationale and solutions for the departures related to landscaping (see Figure 3). Commissioners were interested in gaining additional tree planting in the N 113th right of way as opposed to offsite mitigation. Commissioners indicated that additional work needs to occur on the north setback, including the nature and extent of proposed screening. The proposed chain link fencing on the north property line should be reconsidered in favor of enhanced vegetative screening and other fencing options. Continued engagement with owners to the north should inform these solutions.

Additional work should also occur related to the south wall facade to offset its closer location to the property line (see Figure 4). Additional design development at the southwest corner through introduction of more transparency, detailing of materials along the first floor, incorporating artistic and other interventions, to offset location of the building closer to the public realm.

Building Programming and Expression

Commissioners indicated that the building expression and choice of materials and their distribution is responsive to the program. Commissioners did indicate that building symmetry on the west facade could be refined (see Figure 5). One option would be to offset the strong horizontal line created by use of materials through introduction of vertical features to provide better balance along that facade.

Ground Floor Programming

Commissioners indicated that the design team continue to explore options that include how the west facade and its related truck bays can enhance opportunities to engage with the public and the public realm. Due to density of development to the south of the site, signage on the west facade may help with station visibility as opposed to current location of signage over



Figure 5: West elevation

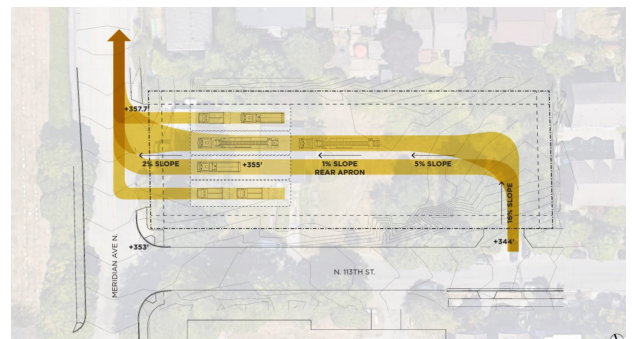


Figure 6: Site constraints

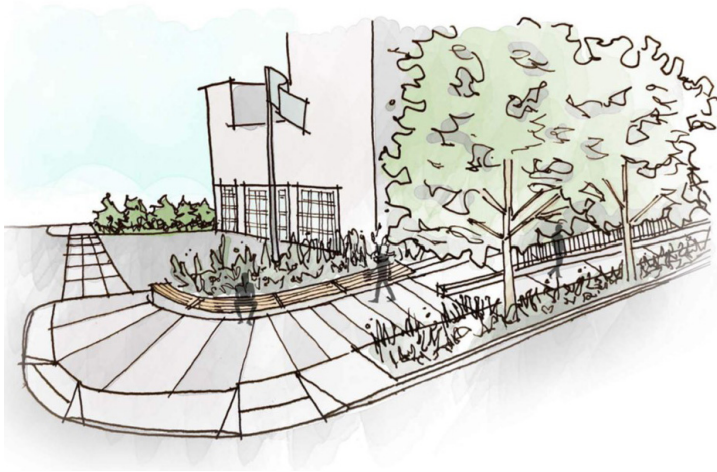


Figure 7: Seat wall

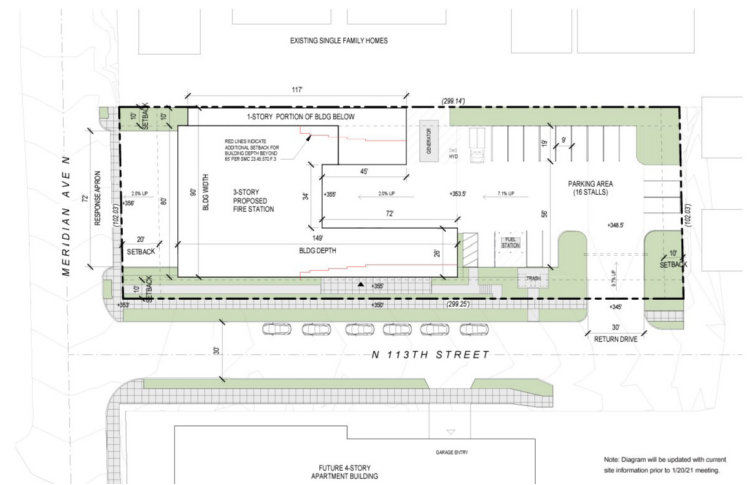


Figure 8: Curb cuts and side setbacks

the doorway on N 113th.

Areas to Enhance the Public Realm

Commissioners requested that the design team continue to study and advance opportunities to engage with the public in the interior on the south access points along N 113th. Commissioners expressed concern about the implications of the retaining wall along N 113th and how design solutions (patterning, materials, artistic interventions, etc.) can be used to offset the impacts of the wall. While the south wall is necessary due to site grading slope and other similar constraints (see Figure 6), enhancing design outcomes is important for the character of the public realm. Commissioners understood the details of the seat wall at N 113th and Meridian and support further design development of this feature (see Figure 7). More information should be provided about characteristics of N 113th to look for options to enhance the right of way while balancing needs of truck and turning movement. Suggested areas here include providing increased planting areas within the right of way to offset tree loss. Commissioners expressed interest in getting more information on the type of signal needed for the station and the implications it has on the use and function of pedestrian movement.

Overall, the characteristics of the proposed N 113th right of way should continue to be studied. Since N 113th is being used for returning vehicles to the station, as opposed to the area along Meridian used for exiting of vehicles, there should be more flexibility in its design. Commissioners supported evaluating the need for widened turning movements, widened ramping, the location and extent of parking, the proposed 30-foot width of the curb cut, and how reducing or refining these features would enhance the N 113th right of way and offset the location of the retaining wall (see Figure 8).

Equitable Outcomes

Enhancing and working with the public should continue, including with neighbors to the east. The Commission understood and supported the efforts with neighbors to the north and south.

Sustainability

No specific comments other than supporting the direction of the sustainability program.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation on the schematic design phase for the Fire Station 31 replacement project. The Commission appreciated the thoughtfulness with which the team responded to the challenges of accommodating a complex program for this building and the site.

The SDC voted, 7-0, to approve the schematic design for the Fire Station 31 replacement project with the following condition:

1. Increase public interaction with the building by increasing the opportunities for the public to see and access the building and surrounding spaces, including the south retaining wall and the separation created between the building and the public realm.

The Commission also had the following recommendations:

1. Create a facility that is as transparent and welcoming as possible;
 2. Study planting and the proposed north property line treatments, including fencing options, that provide safety and security without relying on chain link fencing;
 3. Look at enhancing the public nature of the west apron along Meridian Ave N, including the use of materials, integration with seating area at N 113th and Meridian corner, artistic interventions, and refinements to the west facade
- to enhance visibility into the building;
4. Engage with the artist immediately and include him in public engagement, design development, and all subsequent phases of the project through construction;
 5. Evaluate the width of the N 113th driveway with the goal of reducing its width;
 6. Consider making the SW room available for public use;
 7. Look at vertical elements to offset the bulk and scale of facades, including those that are facing N 113th and Meridian Ave N;
 8. Looking at optimizing N 113th right of way to create a more welcoming urban condition through greater planting width, reducing turning area, enhanced pedestrian movements, and other similar features;
 9. Look at the SW building corner to make it a more welcoming and publicly accessible space.