

## Fire Station 31

**Jenny A. Durkan**  
Mayor

**Rico Quirindongo**  
Interim Director, OPCD

**Justin Clark**, Acting Chair

**Adam Amrhein**

**Kim Baker**

**Elizabeth Conner**

**Azzurra Cox**

**Jill Crary**

**Mark Johnson**

**Amalia Leighton**

**Vinita Sidhu**

**Elaine Wine**

**Michael Jenkins**  
Director

**Valerie Kinast**  
Strategic Advisor

**Aaron Hursey**  
Planner

**Juliet Acevedo**  
Administrative Staff

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### Commissioners Present

Justin Clark, Acting Chair  
Kim Baker  
Elizabeth Conner  
Azzurra Cox  
Mark Johnson  
Vinita Sidhu

### Commissioners Excused

Amalia Leighton  
Elaine Wine

### Non-Voting Commissioners Present

Adam Amrhein  
Jill Crary

### Project Description

In October 2019, Seattle Fire, together with Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) and the Mayor's Office, determined that the existing Fire Station 31 no longer met the needs of this growing sector of the City. The new site, several blocks to the northeast of the existing station, was determined to have the required response times for Fire Station 31's service area. The replacement Fire Station 31 will be approximately 21,000 SF and will accommodate one engine company, a ladder unit, a medic unit and one aid car for a total of thirteen active duty personnel per shift. Design for this station began initiation March 2021 and continues 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) first review of the Fire Station 31 project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the pre-concept design phase. The SDC voted, 6-0, to approve the pre-concept design for the Fire Station 31 project with several recommendations. The project will be reviewed again at schematic (60%) and design development (90%) phases.

### Recusals and Disclosures

None

**May 20, 2021**

1:30 - 3:40 pm

**Project Type**

CIP

**Phase**

Pre-Concept Design

**Previous Reviews**None**Presenters**

Andy Ishizaki

FAS

Zubin Rao

Miller Hull

Scott Wolf

Miller Hull

**Attendees**

Dove Alberg

FAS

Dongtao Bi

Miller Hull

Kristen Dotson

Miller Hull

Joy Jacobson

FAS

Dan Murray

SFD

David Nguyen

FAS

Michelle Reed

FAS

Heather Ruszczyk

Miller Hull

Kate Spitzer

FAS

Rich Whealan

Miller Hull

**Summary of Presentation**

Scott Wolf and Zubin Rao of Miller Hull, and Andy Ishizaki of FAS presented the project. The team introduced the project and expressed the aim of meeting the programmatic needs of the facility and design to be a part of the context. Health of fire fighters, who are at higher risk than the general population, is a driver of design. Creating a civic presence is another.

In 2003, the City undertook a lengthy program rebuilding and updating several of the City's Fire Stations, following the approval of a levy. As funding of that levy has expired, this project is being developed through the City's regular yearly budget process. Miller Hull has led the design of fire stations in Seattle and in other jurisdictions.

The context within the city, in the Northgate urban village was described (*see figure 1*), as was the program of the facility. More functions and staff than usual for this type of station must be accommodated on a relatively small site. Cost estimating is underway, and budget will be presented later. The design will be completed in 2021, with visits to the SDC twice after this review. Currently, options have been explored and one preferred option was selected to present.

**Context**

The team described the eclectic built urban context of the location. The site is along an arterial, Meridian and a smaller residential street, N 113th. The design is guided by several considerations, including health of the fire fighters, with an eye toward flexibility to adjust as context and programmatic needs change.

**Site organization and massing**

Initial thoughts for the building were presented. The approach to creating a presence in the neighborhood and meeting programmatic needs was addressed. Configuration of program and circulation were discussed (*see figure 2*).

The urban design approach was described. The designers have worked on community centers and understand providing for interaction with the public. The approach to this facility is to provide a beacon without being a magnet because the station is busy and not always safe to be near when it is in use.



Figure 1: Neighborhood context

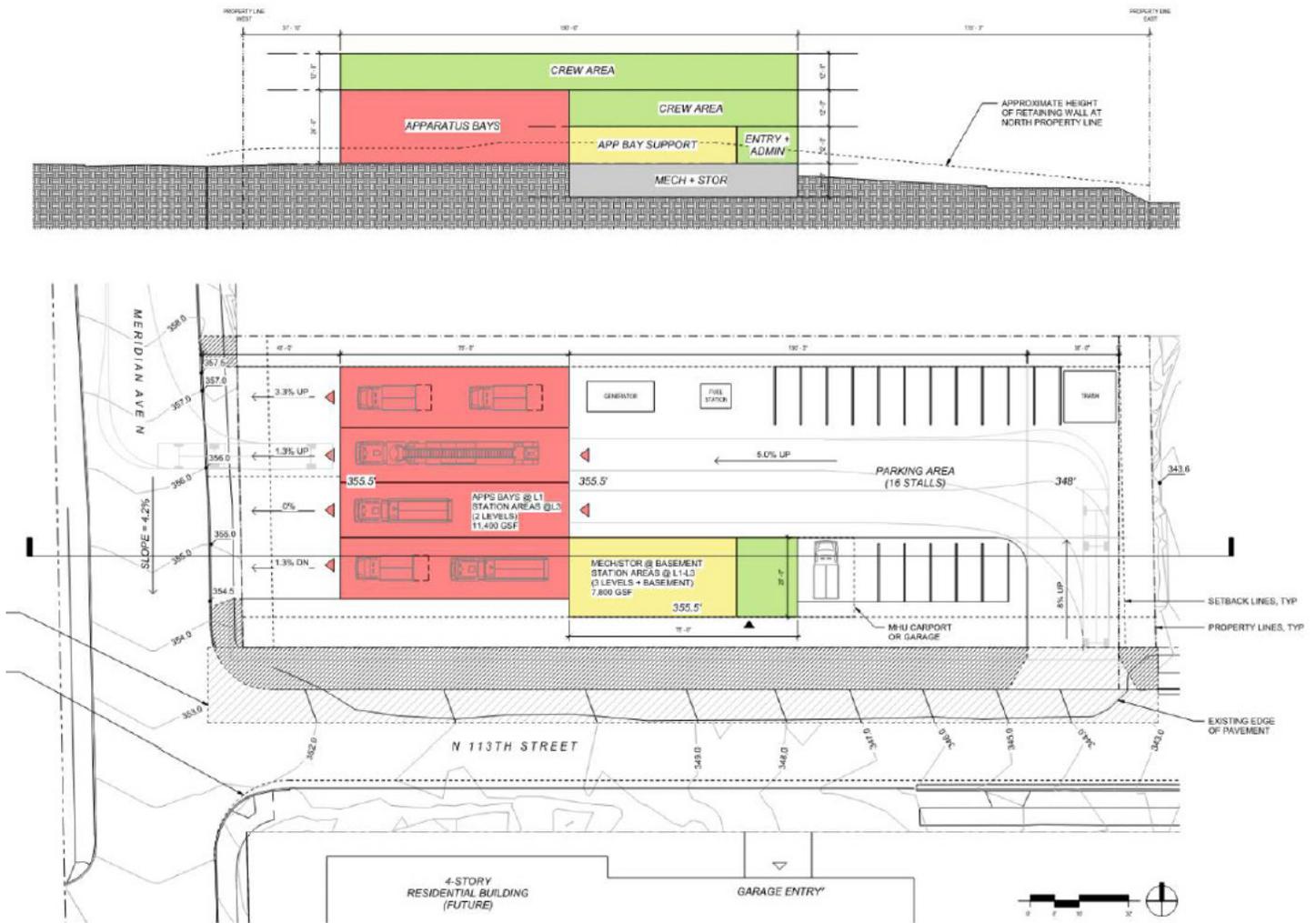


Figure 2: Preferred facility layout for Fire Station 31

Fire fighter safety was described, and how it drives the placement of various functions in the structure. The team explained how fire fighters use the building. Shifts are long, up to two days. They include meetings, training, house duties, rest and rehab, and alarm responses. Because the rate of illness and death are higher in fire fighters, efforts to protect and allow firefighters to recover from work are important.

The site was described. It is a narrow lot that is sloping significantly, located near single family and multifamily residential.

**Sustainability**

LEED Gold 4 is the goal established for this project. City policy goals have also been applied to this project, including the elimination of fossil fuel use and lower carbon use. The team explained their approach to achieving sustainability. It is heavy on energy and materials toxicity measures.

**Community**

Engagement will be held at 30%, 60% and 90% design.

**Coordination**

Initial coordination has been undertaken. OSE was involved in the sustainability charrette. Will be contacting SDOT about permits soon. Have spoken with Seattle Fire about Race and Social Equity Tool Kit.

**Equity**

The importance of this to the project team was expressed. Gender neutrality is a given. Seattle Fire is advising on the design of outreach to underrepresented groups. Also considering sustainability broadly in this regard.

## Agency Comments

None

## Public Comments

None

## Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- How the alternatives provide for program needs of the fire department
- Relationship to context, expression, scope, and scale of project
- Sustainability strategy
- Outreach and equity strategies

The approach to the relationship of the station to the neighborhood was discussed. Commissioners encouraged the team to create a strong public presence. They asked that the facility be designed to be a magnet that provides social value and resources to the community. They advised that the building should be transparent and provide views of the interior of the station. The building should afford physical connection not just visual to the community. Extending the thoughtfulness of the building design outward toward the edges was an idea that was voiced.

The importance of the role of the landscape architect in telling the overarching story and situating the facility in the community was emphasized. Also, the team was encouraged to pursue involving the artist early, to be part of this.

The need to carefully design the edges of the site, as touched on above, was discussed. In the effort to make the station a public asset in the neighborhood, the open space along N 113th St should be considered for something more than just circulation. The preferred alternative provides opportunity to green N 113th more than the other alternatives. A continuous green edge along the north would provide buffering to neighbors to the north, as can be seen well in the sections. Greening the structure would maximize the limited opportunity along the north.

The conversation included advice on engagement. Commissioners encouraged the team to go door to door to the nearby neighbors to gather their thoughts before consulting the broader community. They also saw great value in continuing to engage with the fire fighters. They suggested involving a diversity of fire fighters to design a building that provides a sense of belong for generations to come.

On the question of trees, commissioners saw the challenges of retaining trees when so much program was being located on a site of this size. They encouraged the team to consider using the trees in building the facility.

## Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation on the pre-concept design for the Fire Station 31 Replacement project. The Commission appreciated the thoughtfulness with which the team responded to the challenges of the site and the amount and nature of the program that it needs to accommodate. Commissioners were glad to see that the fire fighters were being consulted. They applauded the team for considering toxicity within an integrated approach to sustainability.

The SDC voted, 6-0, to approve the pre-concept design for the Fire Station 31 Replacement project with the following recommendations:

1. Create a facility that is as transparent and welcoming as possible.
2. Activate the southern edge of the site and create a visual bridge from Meridian eastward.
3. Further explore buffering solutions to residential properties to the north, using grade, vegetation and building design.
4. Solicit direct, in person input from the neighbors closest to the site.
5. Continue to work with fire fighters in the design process and evaluate scenarios with them.

6. Continue to design for a spectrum of users of various races, ages, and genders.
7. Continue to provide opportunities for the public to learn about the project and provide input both in person and virtually.
8. Develop a compelling site story that encompasses the trees, slopes, and buffers, to aid decision makers on the waivers from development standards.
9. Consider using the trees that are being removed as material for the building.
10. Continue the material investigation and initiative for less toxic interiors.