



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649
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ISRD 65/21

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, April 27, 2021

Time: 4:30pm

Place: Remote Meeting

Board Members Present

Matt Chan

Matt Fujimoto

Faye Hong

Sergio Legon-Talamoni, Chair

Russ Williams

Tanya Woo

Staff

Rebecca Frestedt

Melinda Bloom

Absent

Andy Yip

Chair Sergio Legon-Talamoni called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

042721.1 PUBLIC COMMENT

Nina Wallace, CID Coalition expressed concern about the change of use to private amenity for residents only. She said turning a publicly accessible space that could have housed a local small business into a private, residents-only amenity room does nothing to promote, preserve, or perpetuate the cultural, economic, and historical qualities of the Chinatown-International District. She said it takes away opportunities for community or retail space that would contribute to the social and economic health of our neighborhood. She cited section 23.66.326.B of the ISRD code "Preference shall be given to pedestrian-oriented retail shopping and service businesses that are highly visible or prominently display merchandise in a manner that contributes color and activity to the streetscape." KODA's proposal to create a private "living room" that will exclude everyone else who lives, works, and spends time in the CID, clearly falls outside the preferred street-level uses for the District. Rather than changing the use of the 5th & Main space -- a permanent solution to a temporary problem, which comes at the expense of residents and small business owners who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic -- KODA should be held to their previously stated commitment to include retail or community space to mitigate their

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impact on the CID community as the first luxury high-rise. This proposal is contradictory to the ISRD mandate and guidelines and should be rejected.

Ms. Frestedt said all public comment is entered into the public records and is forwarded to DON Director.

042721.2 CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

042721.21 450 S. Main St. - KODA
Applicant: Yang Lee, Da-Li International

Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed change of use from commercial to residential amenity space (696 sq. ft.) Exhibits included plans. She said the zone is IDR/C. The site is located outside of the Asian Design Character District, the Retail Core and the Street-Level Use Requirement overlay within SMC 23.66. A Certificate of Approval for installation of artwork was approved in March 2021. A Certificate of Approval for Final Design of the building was issued in January 2019. The Board received a briefing on the proposed use in March 2021.

Gary Lin, Da-Li, said he spoke with Shanti Bresnau, SCIDPDA, about opportunities for use of the space. He said she shared his similar sentiment that there is no tenant available in this market. He said they will stay in touch. He said he is actively marketing the Retail North and Retail East and Koda Gallery spaces. He said he has no prospective tenant for the Gallery space. He said he has had preliminary conversations with a couple of prospective retailers for the Retail North and Retail East spaces. He said Retail East is currently office use and needs to be converted back to retail. He said finding tenants is a big challenge in this market.

Mr. Chan asked if the marketing team has had other substantive conversations outside of SCIDPDA.

Mr. Lin said that while the space is heavily marketed, he has had no direct contact with other local organizations. He said he has spoken to Interim but not about this space.

Mr. Chan asked about potential tenants for north and east retail spaces.

Mr. Lin said they will stay as retail. He said he has two prospects of restaurant use.

Mr. Chan asked how Da-Li responds to community members who pushed against this development and was promised this would be a public space. He said it was a hard-fought effort for community access to the space. He asked how it contributes to opening up to the community, to traffic, and how will this fit into community culture. He asked what their response to the community is.

Mr. Lin said the overall project brings a lot to the community with streetscape and landscape, retail north and east. He said they will weigh consideration about could happen at galleryspace. He said even if COVID impacts are far reaching, they prefer an activated space over dark, empty, vacant space. He said they will provide good lighting in area.

Mr. Chan said from the description he is not sure what the gallery / art space would be other than a luxury view into life there. He said the Panama Hotel reflects the history and culture of the area. He said the drawings seem exclusive and privileged. He said he was concerned about how it reflects in the community.

Mr. Lin said the condo pricing is not for luxury high end product. He said the gallery is just a seating and gathering space that will be used for activation rather than left dark.

Mr. Chan asked if they have considered local artists or installations on a revolving basis that reflects the community.

Ms. Woo asked if outreach had been done to community or potential buyers to get their take on this change.

Mr. Lin said they haven't done a specific event or community outreach for this space, but that they're talking to potential buyers all the time.

Ms. Woo asked if this is a permanent change.

Mr. Lin said yes.

Yang Lee said they reached out to Shanti and had a long discussion – she mentioned retail it is not easy. He said this is the best they can do.

There was discussion about the entrances and access points.

Ms. Woo asked if the lobby will be a hallway of sorts.

Mr. Lin said yes, along with property management and lobby functions.

Ms. Woo said Retail North and Retail East are not leased out yet and said they might miss out on opportunity. She asked if other options were considered.

Mr. Lin said they considered many things; this has been a challenge. He said it hasn't been a knee-jerk reaction. He said they prefer to have rent coming in and activation and would hate for the space to sit vacant.

Mr. Chan asked if they considered other local coffee bar operators. He suggested seeking one from outside the neighborhood that could transition to a locally owned business.

Mr. Lin said he has done broad outreach and there is no interest.

Mr. Williams suggested a coffee cart scenario on a temporary basis until the market changes.

Mr. Lin said they plan on a piano, lights, and speaker; in the future it could be converted back.

Mr. Williams asked if there is a required percentage of retail they are supposed to have.

Ms. Frestedt said not at this location.

Ms. Woo asked if the gallery enclosed.

Mr. Lin said no; it is open, the lines are just a delineation.

Mr. Fujimoto wanted clarity about descriptors used and asked how it would be used as a performance space.

Mr. Lee said the floor level is above sidewalk level so we said is it 'stage like'. It has higher visibility. He said the residents want meeting space for family and friends. He said many local residents appreciate their ideas.

Ms. Woo asked where the sales office would be located.

Mr. Lin said it would be within the building. It won't be a separate sales office; it will be part of the building.

Ms. Woo said currently Retail East is being used as sales office and asked who will apply to change that back to retail.

Mr. Lin asked it will convert back to retail when they have a tenant. He said it is likely Koda will apply for change in use.

Ms. Frestedt noted the drawing doesn't accurately reflect the conversion of Retail E to office use. She said it is important to condition any decision on submission of plans reflecting the correct current use.

Mr. Lin said they are happy to condition gallery conversation and tie it to use conversion.

Mr. Chan said the Ordinance gives the board no jurisdiction over use of space. He said it is frustrating and a failing in the City that the Board can't represent what the community has been promised to what they are feeling. He said he joined the board to be a custodian of what happens in the CID. He noted the changing of Board members over the course of the project and said many here were not on board when this project was reviewed and approved. He said a precedent is being set where a developer can make promises to the community and then turn their back. He said if a promise is made, a developer must, to the best of their ability, do what was promised.

Ms. Woo said having a sales office is important and using Koda Gallery to represent is a good idea. She hoped they would come forward with Retail East as commercial space. She said she agreed with Mr. Chan and said she wasn't seated during the original project approval. She said hearing from the community and their unhappiness is saddening and a missed opportunity to develop excitement in this time.

Mr. Fujimoto said he appreciated Mr. Chan's comments regarding precedent. He said the applicant team had shown interest in corner retail and larger scale Retail North and Retail East. He said he appreciates Mr. Chan's comments and noted it is a larger problem with the City or the process. He said the board is reviewing application and at one time the applicant made a promise and is now going in a different direction. He said the team has talked about a welcoming aspect to the community.

Mr. Hong said he just came on the board a year ago and was not part of the review of Koda project. He said he has reservations about changing things approved by a former board. He said change from commercial to gallery space takes income away. He said he didn't want to second guess the project approval, whether the space was commercial or amenity it is changing now and maybe goes against what was agreed to before. He said the developer could rent it out as commercial space and have more income.

Mr. Williams said he echoed Mr. Chan's comments and that it was summarized correctly. He said in general he wished design team and developer would have taken the opportunity to engage the community more than what was done. He said there are missed opportunities. He said it falls back to the City process. He wished the developer had better transparency. It is unfortunate and he understands the leasing climate.

Ms. Frestedt said the proposed motion in the Staff Report is based on staff identifying relative Code sections and permitted uses and street level.

Action: I move that the International Special Review District Board recommend approval of a Certificate of Approval for use at 450 S. Main St.; site plan indicated as Retail E should be revised to correctly indicate its current use.

The Board directs staff to prepare a written recommendation of approval, based on consideration of the application submittal and Board discussion at the April 27, 2021 public meeting, and forward this written recommendation to the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

This action is based on the **following applicable sections of the International Special Review District Ordinance:**

SMC 23.66.320 – Permitted uses

SMC 23.66.326 – Street-level uses

F. Outside the Retail Core, development on lots abutting S. Jackson Street east of Interstate 5 and/or 12th Avenue S. as shown on Map B for 23.66.326 shall comply with the street-level use requirements set forth in Section 23.49.009.

G. To promote street-level activity in commercial structures outside the Retail Core, street level uses identified in subsection 23.66.326.B are required along a minimum of 50 percent of each street frontage of any structure that contains no residential uses and that is in an IDR zone or is in an IDM 75/85-150 zone. This standard may be waived by the Director of Neighborhoods, after consultation with the Board, if it is determined that the proposed uses and design of the structure at street-level are compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood and the goals and objectives of the International Special Review District and of the zone in which the structure is located.

MM/SC/MF/TW 3:1:1 Motion carried. Mr. Chan opposed. Mr. Hong abstained. Ms. Frestedt noted the challenge presented by an applicant with a commitment to the community who then comes back and reverses course. She said it is noted and is part of the record.

042721.3 PROJECT BRIEFING

042721.31 **Hing Hay Park kiosk**

Presenters: Paul Wu, Wu Architecture

Briefing on proposed replacement and redesign of Hing Hay Park kiosk

Paul Wu proposed replacing the park sign. He said he represented Friends of Hing Hay Park and they would like input from the board on their proposal to beautify this corner of the park. Mr. Wu said he saw an interactive touch screen set up in China that he hopes to someday replicate here. He said this project will include installation of conduit to the kiosk to accommodate future interactive panels. He said the kiosk would be given to the Wing Luke Museum.

Ms. Woo asked if the bulletin board is a landmark.

Ms. Frestedt said the kiosk is not. She said the bulletin board at the Louisa is an individually designated landmark and is a contributing feature in the district; it has functioned there for generations. She said the Hing Hay kiosk is a later addition.

Ms. Woo asked when the current one was put in.

Mr. Fujimoto said it was a gift from the Mayor of Taipei in 1975.

Mr. Hong asked why there are no Chinese characters on the new kiosk. He said there are four sign panels, and it should be inclusive of the history of the neighborhood.

There was some discussion about numerology and whether or not 4 is an unlucky number.

Mr. Wu noted the connection to the four directions.

Ms. Frestedt said there is an opportunity to connect to the lantern and the different translations that were included.

Mr. Wu that most of the Chinatown Gate is steel; the new marquee will be made of steel that will look like wood so it will be long lasting. He said they want to make the kiosk vandal-proof. He said the kiosk will be constructed off site.

Mr. Fujimoto appreciated conduit being placed underground. He appreciated the care being put into the kiosk design and was happy with the new vision for it.

Mr. Wu said they can fabricate the kiosk and apply anti-graffiti coating over the paint.

Ms. Woo asked if any outreach had been done to get community thoughts about replacing it.

Mr. Wu said as an architect he is always looking at beautification. He said the existing board is a more Hollywood version and he wants to provide a more accurate representation. He said Friends of Hing Hay Park agree it should be upgraded. He said the area is gentrifying, like it or not, and with the Republic project, they want to beautify the district. He said more eyes on the street is beneficial.

Ms. Woo said Japanese, Filipinos, Native Americans all want representation in the park. She said by taking away the current and putting in something new, how will they ensure community input.

Mr. Wu said he hopes to recognize history. He said Chinatown is made up of lots of different racial groups and is a landmark district.

Ms. Woo suggested doing some community outreach to hear what different communities thinks. She said next time the project comes before the Board, she'd like to hear how outreach has informed the project.

Mr. Fujimoto concurred with Ms. Woo and encouraged Friends of Hing Hay Park to explore how to engage more people. He said to explore how people feel about replacing existing kiosk.

Ms. Woo asked for more information about CPTED issues, more details about lighting and a maintenance plan.

Mr. Fujimoto commented on the geography of the park and the site plan and said a two-post marquee may offer more transparency than a four-sided kiosk.

Mr. Chan said it is an interesting project and was interested to see how it develops.

Mr. Hong supported the project.

Mr. Williams said he looked forward to seeing further progress and community involvement.

BOARD BUSINESS

Board members voted for Chair and Vice Chair through a virtual anonymous poll. Ms. Frestedt noted that a seventh vote was received; there are six members on the board. She said she wasn't sure how that occurred, but it did not impact the outcome. Board members voted unanimously for Matt Fujimoto as Chair and Matt Chan as Vice Chair.

Ms. Frestedt said she has been exploring alternate platforms for virtual meetings that will provide better access to community and interpreters. She said she is in process of getting licenses to hold meetings via Zoom which allows simultaneous interpretation and community members can follow the meeting in their own language. She said the City's Information Technology department does not allow Zoom and the Department of Neighborhoods received special approval to use it. She said she is working with the Communications Team to send a press release to the community papers. She noted that it is imperfect because some community members may not be able to access virtual meetings.

Mr. Chan said that is key; technology is automatically inequitable, and he wants to ensure equity.

Ms. Frestedt said she has been including application materials on agenda so people can view materials. She said she is target spring to hold new construction briefings but all is contingent on technology / Zoom.

Ms. Frestedt provided an update on Board terms. She said the existing board will serve until the pandemic allows in person election.

Mr. Chan said if briefings resume, he feels unprepared to delve into minutiae. He said Board review feels pro-forma because of the Ordinance. He said he felt like there was nothing the board could do except push it back to DON. He said the community says one thing, the Ordinance says another, and it seems like there is no equity in how decisions can be made.

Ms. Frestedt said some of these comments came up pre-COVID. She said there are some things the board does not have jurisdiction over, that are important to community. She said updates to Design Guidelines and the addition of new construction guidelines will give more clarity. She said there are things that the board can't dive into because the topics extend outside of Chapter 23.66 of the code.

Mr. Chan said now it is a blunt instrument that doesn't take into account nuances in this neighborhood.

Mr. Fujimoto asked if draft of Guidelines will be made publicly available.

Ms. Frestedt said the board engaged with Schemata Workshop as a consultant and worked with community members in a series of work sessions. She said a draft is available on the website and is the most recent version received from the group. She said when the SEPA determination is published it will be publicly noticed before board

meeting. She said many projects are choosing to opt into the Guidelines which have been reviewed by City Attorney team.

Adjourn 6:30 pm.

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