



Substantive Site Characteristics:

This 26,646 square foot subject site has frontage on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue to the southwest, Clay Street to the northwest, Cedar Street to the southeast, and an alley to the northeast. The site is zoned Downtown Mixed Residential/ Commercial 125/65. The flat site is currently occupied by one three-story institutional building, the City Church, with an adjacent surface parking lot with a driveway access off of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. There are several street trees along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Cedar Street.

The adjacent uses include residential towers, surface parking lot, and mixed use buildings. The site is not located in any mapped Environmentally Critical Area.

Proposal Description:

The applicant proposes to construct a two-story (53 feet at its highest) expansion comprising 12,210 sq. ft. of an existing institutional building, The City Church, on the southeastern portion of the site for a total of 34,020 sq. ft. for the building. The addition includes a lobby and auditorium for meetings and events with 566 seats at the main floor and 251 seats at the mezzanine level for a total of 817 seats. There are no proposed changes to the existing building elevations adjacent to the alley, Clay Street, or 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

The proposal includes the removal of surface parking for 28 vehicles. The existing three trees on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue would be removed and replaced, and the two curb cuts on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue would be removed.

Public Comment:

The comment period for this proposal ended on March 19, 2008. During this period, four comment letters related to this project were received. The letters' content focused on the removal of the existing parking lot and the additional vehicles needing on-street parking in the neighborhood on Sunday mornings.

**ANALYSIS - SEPA**

Environmental review resulting in a Threshold Determination is required pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), WAC 197-11, and the Seattle SEPA Ordinance (Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 25.05). The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this project was made in the environmental checklist submitted by the applicant dated February 8, 2008. The information in the checklist, project plans, and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar projects form the basis for this analysis and decision.

The SEPA Overview Policy (SMC 25.05.665 D) clarifies the relationship between codes, policies, and environmental review. Specific policies for each element of the environment, certain neighborhood plans, and other policies explicitly referenced may serve as the basis for exercising substantive SEPA authority.

The Overview Policy states, in part: *“Where City regulations have been adopted to address an environmental impact, it shall be presumed that such regulations are adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation,”* subject to some limitations. Under certain limitations or circumstances (SMC 25.05.665 D 1-7), mitigation can be considered. A more detailed discussion of some of the potential impacts from this proposal follows.

### Short-Term Impacts

The following temporary or construction-related impacts are expected: decreased air quality due to suspended particulates from building activities and hydrocarbon emissions from construction vehicles and equipment; increased traffic and demand for parking from construction equipment and personnel; increased noise; and consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources.

Several construction-related impacts are mitigated by existing City codes and ordinances applicable to the project, such as: the Noise Ordinance, the Critical Areas Ordinance, the Stormwater Grading and Drainage Control Code, the Street Use Ordinance, and the Building Code. Compliance with these applicable codes and ordinances will be adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation and further mitigation by imposing specific conditions is not necessary for these impacts.

### Long-Term Impacts

Long-term or use-related impacts may include decreased air quality from vehicle emissions; increased energy consumption; increased height, bulk and scale on the site; increased light and glare; increased demand on public services and facilities such as sewers, storm drains, solid waste collection, police and fire protection etc.; increase in pedestrian and vehicle traffic volumes; and decreased water quality due to pollutant-laden runoff from streets and parking areas. These long-term impacts are not considered significant because the impacts are minor in scope.

These long-term impacts are typical of institutional buildings and will be mitigated by the City’s adopted codes and/or ordinances. Specifically these codes and ordinances include: the Stormwater, Grading, and Drainage Control Code; the Land Use Code; the Critical Areas Ordinance; the Building Code; the Noise Ordinance; and the Seattle Energy Code. An analysis of impacts associated with specific SEPA policies follows.

### Earth

The site possesses a 2% slope. The applicant stated in the environmental checklist that approximately 2,100 cubic yards of material will be excavated and removed from the site and that any new fill will be engineered structural quality. Development will be required to employ erosion control measures during construction per City standards. Because the site is currently developed, this proposal will not result in an increase in impervious surfaces.

No conditions are warranted to mitigate impacts to earth.

*Plants*

There are three street trees along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue which include a 9” and 7” (diameter at breast height) flowering plum trees and a 3” Crimson King Norway maple. There are three street trees along Cedar Avenue which has been designated as a “Green Street”, and these include three SDOT-maintained Red maples (*acer rubrum*) with an average diameter of 8”. This proposal regarding street trees was reviewed by Bill Ames, SDOT forester. There is also a tree guard on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue which is a sculptural element with historical connection because these exist along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

*Aesthetics*

There are no proposed changes to the existing building elevations adjacent to the alley, Clay Street, or 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. The existing façade of The City Church on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue will be unchanged. The maximum building height for the addition is 62 feet, with building materials of brick, concrete, and aluminum windows. The applicant stated in the environmental checklist that: “the new facades have been carefully designed to respect and blend in with the existing neighborhood context.” Although the building is sixty years old, the church has requested that the building not be nominated for landmark status.

*Light and Glare*

The new addition will have a sloped roof. There was some concern expressed by nearby residents that this metal roof could reflect and cause glare to adjacent properties. The possible impact will be reduced by the applicant’s decision to paint a dark color on the sloped metal roof.

*Historic and Cultural Preservation*

The Department of Neighborhoods had identified The City Church building as one that appeared to be eligible for designation as a City Landmark. In a letter dated August 17, 2007 from Troy Anderson, general counsel for City Church to Karen Gordon, City Historic Preservation Officer, he stated: “The property is used solely for church purposes, and The City church opposes the planned landmark nomination. We ask that the City of Seattle and the Department of Neighborhoods not move forward with the nomination.”

There are two historical elements that exist on the site, a tree guard on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, which is part of a collection of such tree guards along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. The second element is a historical Wilkeson Sandstone bollard located on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. These two elements were reviewed Urban Arboretum Project Artists, Buster Simpson and Jack McKie, in order to comply with the goals for the Urban Arboretum.

*Traffic and Parking*

The construction of the proposed auditorium of 12,210 square feet will likely result in some increase in pedestrian and vehicular traffic. According to church staff, the existing use of the church has included three weddings from April 2007 to May 2008. The church estimates approximately one wedding per month for the new auditorium. Church staff stated that approximately half of these wedding events would be scheduled on Friday evenings and the remaining half would occur on Saturday afternoons.

Information was provided by church staff regarding vehicular trips to the church, with an estimate of 150 one-way vehicular trips on Sundays. Thus, parking for the current church building and functions has been accommodated by existing on-street parking or nearby parking lots, given that the existing surface parking lot has 28 spaces. Church personnel estimate that approximately 25% of their members either walk to the church or take transit. There are approximately six vehicular roundtrips per day for Monday – Friday for the church office staff and this would likely remain the same.

Although there is likely to be an increase in pedestrian and vehicular traffic during the events scheduled in the proposed auditorium, there is no requirement per SMC 23.49.019 for the provision of either long-term or short-term parking within the Downtown area. The removal of 28 surface parking stalls is unlikely to significantly impact the adjacent uses given that the majority of the approximately 150 vehicles which currently arrive on Sundays are accommodated by existing on-street and off-street parking.

### Summary

In conclusion, several adverse effects on the environment are anticipated as a direct impact of the proposed construction. However, specific impacts identified in the foregoing analysis have been mitigated by existing codes and ordinances, per adopted City policies.

### DECISION – SEPA

This decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency, of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and form. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21C), including the requirement to inform the public agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

- [X] Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030 2c.
- [ ] Determination of Significance. This proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030 2c.

### CONDITIONS – SEPA

None.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (signature on file)  
Bruce P. Rips, AICP  
Department of Planning and Development

Date: May 4, 2009