



**City of Seattle
Seattle Department of Neighborhoods
Bernie Matsuno, Director**

**CITY OF SEATTLE
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS**

Application Number: 3009292
Applicant Name: Todd Crooks for the Madison Middle School PTSA,
Seattle Public School District
Address of Proposal: 3429 45th Avenue Southwest

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Land Use Application to allow a 3'9" X 7'10" changing-image electronic readerboard sign (Madison Middle School). The sign will be on the east wall of the gymnasium.*

*Note: The project description has been revised from the following original notice of application: Land Use Application to allow a 3'11" X 7'10" changing image electronic reader board sign. The sign will be on the east wall of the gymnasium. (Madison Middle School)

The following approval is required:

Development Standard Departure-To approve or condition the following departures (SMC 23.79):

1. To allow a changing-image sign in a single-family zone – SMC 23.55.020.B

SEPA DETERMINATION: Exempt DNS MDNS EIS

DNS with conditions

DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site and Vicinity Description

The existing Madison Middle School Campus encompasses approximately 7.92 acres located in West Seattle. This rectangular-shaped site is zoned Single Family 5000 (SF 5000). The school site consists of a main three-story educational building, library, wellness center, classrooms and offices; an athletic field; detached gymnasium; and surface parking areas.

The Campus abuts four streets: 45th Avenue Southwest to the east; Southwest Hinds Street to the north; 47th Avenue Southwest to the west; and, Southwest Spokane Street to the south. All four streets are considered non-arterial streets pursuant to SMC Chapter 23.53. The streets are also improved with paved roadways, curbs, sidewalks, gutters and street trees.

The property north, south, east and west of the entire school campus is also zoned SF 5000. Uses immediately surrounding the site are single family residences varying in age and architectural style. The Schmitz Park Elementary School and natural forest area is located three blocks to the west of the school site. Another Seattle Public School (West Seattle High School) and City of Seattle Parks Department property (Hiawatha Community Center and playfield) are three blocks northeast of the site.

Proposal Description

The Seattle Public School District ("District") together with the Madison Middle School Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) proposes to install a 3'9" X 7'10" (29.4 square foot (sq. ft.)) single-faced changing-image electronic readerboard sign on the east façade of the existing gymnasium building. The proposed internally illuminated east-facing sign would be 12'9" above the walkway and centered above an existing window situated at the mid-portion of the gymnasium building's enclosed entry. The sign would be designed to use amber-colored electric light (LED's) to display programmed messaging created remotely by computer located in the school's office controlled by staff.

Public Comments

The required public comment period for this project ended May 14, 2009. DPD received several written comments regarding this proposal which are available for review per request.

Development Standard Departure Committee Meeting

One public meeting of the Development Standard Departure Advisory Committee ("Advisory Committee") was held on June 25, 2012 to consider development standard departures for the school proposal. The Department of Neighborhoods prepared and submitted a report to document public testimony and make recommendations to DPD for modifications to land use code development standards. The report contains the Committee minutes, public comments, Committee recommendations and conclusions, and appendices. Specific details outlined in this report are available for review in the DPD project file for this proposal (3009292).

Additional Information

On April 14, 2009, the District submitted a land use application to DPD for review. This application also included a request for the City to initiate the Development Standard Departure Process, pursuant to SMC 23.79. During years 2009 and 2010, DPD staff reviewed the applicant's plans and submittal materials for compliance and issued correction notices. In 2010, the applicant voluntarily put the project on hold in anticipation that the City of Seattle Sign Code would be revised to allow outright electronic reader boards at Seattle Public middle and high schools. The code revision did not occur. As a result, in February 2012, the District requested that the City recommence the Development Standard

Departure Process. Pursuant to code provision SMC 23.79, the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) conducted the formation of an Advisory Committee. As noted above, the Advisory Committee was convened at a public meeting held on June 25, 2012. After this meeting, DON prepared and submitted a report titled, "Madison Middle School-Reader Board Sign Development Standards Departure Committee Recommendations" dated August 24, 2012, to DPD for consideration. Thereafter, DPD staff continued their review of the application.

During the month of July 2012 and after the Advisory Committee meeting, an ordinance was passed by City Council (#123913) that included modifications to SMC 23.79. A key code revision was made in SMC 23.79.010 which now states that the Director of DON has final authority in determining the outcome of the Development Standard Departure decision instead of the Director of DPD. Consequently, DPD concluded its' technical review and forwarded that review to the Department of Neighborhoods for DON concurrence and formal publication.

DPD ANALYSIS – Development Standard Departure

The Development Standard Departure process is being conducted pursuant to the provisions of Seattle Municipal Code sections 23.79.002-.012. Pursuant to these provisions an Advisory Committee was convened, public comment was received, and a written recommendation to the Director of DPD was made. As previously mentioned, this analysis and decision is made pursuant to the requirements of SMC section 23.79.010 that the Director of DON determine the amount of departure to be allowed as well as mitigation measures to be imposed. The DON Director's decision shall be based on an evaluation of the factors set forth in Section 23.79.008, the majority recommendations and minority reports of the Advisory Committee, comments at the public meeting(s) and other comments from the public. If the Director of DON modifies the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the reasons for the modification shall be put forth in writing.

In reviewing the departure request, Section 23.79.008 directs the Advisory Committee to "gather and evaluate public comment", and to "recommend maximum departures which may be allowed for each development standard from which a departure has been requested". It states, "Departures shall be evaluated for consistency with the objectives and intent of the City's Land Use Code....., to ensure that the proposed facility is compatible with the character and use of its surroundings". The Advisory Committee is directed to consider and balance the interrelationships among the following factors:

- A. Relationship to Surrounding Areas:** *The advisory committee shall evaluate the acceptable or necessary level of departure according to:*
- 1. Appropriateness in relation to the character and scale of the surrounding area;*
 - 2. Presence of edges (significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features) which provide a transition in scale;*
 - 3. Location and design of structures to reduce the appearance of bulk;*
 - 4. Impacts on traffic, noise, circulation and parking in the area; and*
 - 5. Impacts on housing and open space.*

More flexibility in the development standards may be allowed if the impacts on the surrounding community are anticipated to be negligible or are reduced by mitigation; whereas, a minimal amount or no departure from development standards may be allowed if the anticipated impacts are significant and cannot be satisfactorily mitigated.

- B. Need for Departure:** *The physical requirements of the specific proposal and the project’s relationship to educational needs shall be balanced with the level of impacts on the surrounding area. Greater departures may be allowed for special facilities, such as a gymnasium, which are unique and/or integral and necessary part of the educational process; whereas, a lesser or no departure may be granted for a facility which can be accommodated within the established development standards.*

Departure Request and Advisory Committee Recommendation

In April of 2009, the Seattle School District requested the Director of DPD to initiate the departure process for a changing-image sign at Madison Middle School. Table A describes the one proposed departure request.

Table A

Development Standard	Required/Allowed	Proposed
23.55.020.B	No flashing, changing-image or message board signs shall be permitted in single-family zones.	Changing-image sign.

The Advisory Committee met on June 25, 2012. At the meeting, the Advisory Committee determined that the requested departure was MINOR in nature. During this same meeting the Advisory Committee listened to public comment and recommended APPROVAL of the above mentioned departure subject to the following conditions:

1. frequency of change no more that once every 20 seconds;
2. sign shall have no video capability, no flashing, i.e. sign that changes light intensity in a sudden transitory burst and no animation;
3. the sign shall only project static text messages, no flashing, streaming, scrolling text allowed;
4. additional imagery consisting of pictures, graphics, or video display is not allowed;
5. there shall be no incorporation of advanced technology such as video imagining capacity or rapid animation;
6. commercial advertising not be permitted on the sign;
7. local community messages, public service announcements are permitted but shall not comprise no more than 10% of messaging time;
8. the sign shall be on a timer or otherwise off between 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. on weekdays and 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. on weekends; and
9. the maximum signs size is restricted to no more than 30 square feet.

Details of the recommendations and discussion concerning the conditions were captured in

an August 2012 report prepared by the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) and forwarded to DPD for its analysis.

DPD's Analysis

The DPD Land Use Planner has reviewed the applicant's plans and other materials: as well as the Advisory Committees report and conditions. DPD concurs with the Advisory Committee's recommendation. As conditioned, DPD recommends approval of the changing-image sign.

Director's Analysis

A. Relationship to Surrounding Areas:

1. *Appropriateness in relation to the character and scale of the surrounding area;*
2. *Presence of edges (significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features) which provide a transition in scale;*
3. *Location and design of structures to reduce the appearance of bulk;*
4. *Impacts on traffic, noise, circulation and parking in the area; and*
5. *Impacts on housing and open space.*

Madison Middle School is a large campus that occupies a two square block area. The surrounding area is mainly single family composed of homes on relatively level lots. The Schmitz Park Elementary School and natural forest area is located three blocks to the west of the school site. Another Seattle Public School (West Seattle High School) and City of Seattle Parks Department property (Hiawatha Community Center and playfield) are three blocks northeast of the site. Neither multi-family nor commercial zoning is in the immediate area and the closest such development is two blocks east along California Avenue SW.

In general, public school sites are located in residential areas and identification signs are customary to other public school sites in the City. However, a changing image sign is not necessarily within the character of a single family neighborhood. Also, illuminated signs are not otherwise present in the immediate vicinity. The majority of the Committee acknowledge this and recommended specific mitigation (see above) be imposed to limit the potential impacts of the changing-image sign.

The impact of the proposed sign is expected to be minimal and the proposed sign is planned to be affixed to the gymnasium east building façade which should mitigate any increase the appearance of bulk. The sign will be setback from the school's boundary line along 45th Avenue Southwest approximately 175' and just under 300' from the fronts of the nearest homes along 45th Avenue Southwest. Additionally, there are some large mature trees situated in front of the gymnasium along 45th Avenue Southwest that should assist in minimizing light and glare impacts to the neighbors immediately east of the building.

Installation of the changing-image sign will not impact noise, circulation and parking in the area. However, impacts to driver and pedestrian safety may result

from drivers being distracted by the changing messages. In order to mitigate possible distractions, the Advisory Committee determined specific recommendations that are appropriate.

The proposed sign departure is not expected to have any impacts on existing open space and housing. The proposed sign will not result in the demolition of housing. Additionally, the proposed sign will be situated almost 300' away from the closest residential property. Thus, potential impacts associated with light and glare is expected to be minimal.

***Need for Departure:** The physical requirements of the specific proposal and the project's relationship to educational needs shall be balanced with the level of impacts on the surrounding area. Greater departures may be allowed for special facilities, such as a gymnasium, which are unique and/or integral and necessary part of the educational process; whereas, a lesser or no departure may be granted for a facility which can be accommodated within the established development standards.*

The Seattle School District and Madison Middle School PTSA identifies the need to efficiently communicate Madison Middle School events to parents and the community at-large. It is the District's experience that effective outreach to the parents and surrounding community tends to create more positive involvement and support for the school activities and organizations. A programmable, multi-message changing-image sign provides greater efficiencies and allows for broader communication of upcoming events to students, parents and the surrounding community. Potential impacts from the changing-image sign affixed to the gymnasium wall façade have been adequately mitigated and by granting the departures the educational needs as specified by Seattle Public Schools and the Madison PTSA can be reasonably met.

DECISION-DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURE

The development standard departure to allow a changing-image sign in a single-family zone is CONDITIONALLY GRANTED.

CONDITIONS-DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURE

For the Life of the Project

1. The changing image sign shall only project static text messages. No flashing, streaming or scrolling text is allowed. Additionally, imagery consisting of pictures, graphics, video displays or rapid animation is not allowed. Static text messages may cycle no more frequently than once every 20 seconds.
2. The hours of operation are restricted to: 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. on weekdays and 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. on the weekends.
3. Local community messages and public service announcements shall not comprise more than 10% of the messaging time.

Signature: 

Date: 05/13/2013