



City of Seattle  
Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

**Department of Planning and Development**  
Diane Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE  
ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE DIRECTOR  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Application Number:** 3009563  
**Applicant Name:** Seattle Department of Fleets and Facilities  
**Address of Proposal:** 7304 Greenwood Ave. N. (Fire Station 21)

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Council Land Use Action to allow a new 8,440 sq. ft., two-story fire station. Surface parking for six vehicles will be provided on the site. The existing fire station and an adjacent residential structure are to be demolished.

The following approvals are required:

**Council Land Use Action** –for concept approval and to waive or modify development standards for a City facility - (SMC Chapter 23.76.064)

**SEPA - Environmental Determination** - (SMC Chapter 25.05).

**SEPA DETERMINATION:**  Exempt  DNS  EIS  
 DNS with conditions  
 DNS involving non exempt grading or demolition  
or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

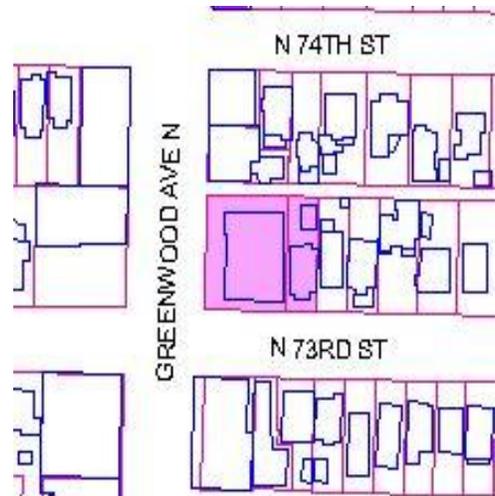
**BACKGROUND DATA**

Site and Vicinity Description

The subject site is located is the current location of Seattle Fire Station No. 21 located on the northeast corner of N. 73<sup>rd</sup> St. and Greenwood Ave. N. and is zoned NC2P-40' (Neighborhood Commercial Two with a Pedestrian designation and a 40' height limit). The site has been expanded to accommodate the proposed new fire station by the purchase of a single family residence to the east of the existing fire station site.

Greenwood Ave. N. follows the ridge of a hill with land elevation sloping down in both the east and west directions. The subject site has two main flat areas, corresponding to the existing fire station and the house, with retaining walls at the eastern edge of each. Overall site slope from west to east is approximately 4%. There are no critical area steep slopes on the site.

Greenwood Ave. is a commercially active street developed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century along a street car line. It is characterized by storefronts along sidewalk property lines with retail, restaurant and mixed-use, commercial and residential, buildings. Surface parking lots are rare along the street. A few buildings have the appearance of former residences and are setback from the street with landscaped areas in front.



The existing Station 21 was constructed in 1950-51 on the site where the original station had been constructed in 1908. The 1950 station was designed by Frederick Stephen in a modern style making use of red Roman Brick, horizontal lines with strong supporting elements, extensive glass and a flat roof.

### Proposal Description

The project would demolish the existing station and an adjacent house and replace it with a new two-story fire station of 8,440 SF. The main level would contain a two door apparatus bay with apparatus support functions on the north side set back from the right-of-way. The apparatus bay would house Engine 21 and a Multiple Casualty Unit (MCI) van. The apparatus bay would extend almost to the street right-of-way with glass on the front and part of each side. The south portion of the main floor would house offices and sleeping quarters and is set back from the street.

The second floor would be comprised of crew living quarters including, kitchen & dining, day room, workout room and laundry and storage areas. Parking for six staff vehicles would be provided on the east, accessed by the north side alley. There would be a private exterior courtyard on the southeast side for the firefighters, and artwork on a small plaza area on the southwest corner.

### Landmarks Preservation

The proposal to demolish the existing Fire Station 21 was referred to the Office of Urban Conservation in the Department of Neighborhoods for a determination of whether the building appears to meet the criteria for a City of Seattle Landmark. After reviewing information available in their files as well as information provided by the applicant, DON staff determined it is unlikely the building would meet the criteria for designation as a historic landmark.

### Design Commission Review

The proposal was presented to the Seattle Design Commission at three meetings, obtaining support for the current design. Features included in their review were an increased setback and art element at the corner of Greenwood Ave. N. and N. 73<sup>rd</sup> St. and the overall landscape plan for the site.

Public Comments

One written public comment was received. It expresses concern about the treatment of retaining walls along the property line with the house due east of the proposal site and expressed interest in being included in the design of the project and in the timeline for construction.

Project design and City staff have met with the neighbor on two occasions to share design information and seek input.

This person has been added to the notice list for the proposal. Analysis of the relationship of the proposal to the neighboring sites is found below.

**ANALYSIS — COUNCIL LAND USE ACTION**

Fire stations in commercial zones may be permitted outright when they meet the development standards for institutions. Fire stations that do not meet development standards may be permitted by City Council. In this case, the proposed station does not meet development standards related to allowing a Fire Station use along a principal pedestrian street, allowing an amount of transparency into the building which is less than required, allowing a floor to floor height for nonresidential uses at street level to be less than 13 feet, and allowing a curb cut to be wider than 30 feet.

SMC 23.76.064 includes provisions for the City Council to grant concept approval and to waive or modify applicable development standards, accessory use requirements, special use requirements or conditional use criteria for City Facilities. SMC 23.76.064 classifies this decision as a legislative action (Type V).

Section 23.47A.004.D.3 includes criteria that must be satisfied to permit a public facility that does not meet development standards within commercial zones:

1. *The project provides unique services which are not provided to the community by the private sector, such as police and fire stations; and*

The project provides a unique service as a fire station.

2. *The proposed location is required to meet specific public service delivery needs; and*

The project is located so that it can rapidly and adequately respond to emergencies which is an essential public service. The station is a neighborhood station serving the Greenwood, Northwest Green Lake and East Ballard areas.

The location of the Greenwood Fire Station No. 21 has been the same since 1908. It is situated as an integral element in the provision of fire and medical emergency services in Seattle. It is located on a City owned site in a narrow commercial area along Greenwood Ave. N. with residential areas to the east and west. The location is necessary for the seamless provision of Fire Department services in this area of the City and a modern Fire Station is necessary here. The new station would better accommodate modern equipment and provide better accommodations and work areas for fire fighters.

3. *The waiver or modification to the development standards is necessary to meet specific public service delivery needs; and*

The table below describes the modification to development standards:

Table A

<b>Development Standard</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Modification Amount</b>
SMC 23.47A.005.E2 and 23.47A.008 C1 Allowed Uses	Fire Station Use not listed for P zone	Fire Station	complete
SMC 23.47A.008.B.2 Street Frontage Transparency	60% of façade area between 2-8 feet above sidewalk	29.6%	30.4%
SMC 23.47A.008.B.3.b Floor to Floor Height	13 feet	12 feet	1 foot less than required
SMC 23. Curb Cut Width	30 foot	40 foot	10 feet

Location in Pedestrian Zone

A modification is requested to allow a Fire Station along a Principal Pedestrian Street. SMC 23.47A.005.E.1 lists 14 specific uses which are permitted. These uses are deemed to complement and encourage a highly pedestrian public area. Most of them are commercial in nature such as retail, restaurant, lodging, and theatres. Parks are allowed; as are museums, community centers and religious facilities. Fire Stations are not on this list of allowed uses in along a Pedestrian designated street.

Like the current station at the site this one would provide a pleasant pedestrian aspect with landscaping and attractive architecture. The exit and entry of emergency vehicles across the sidewalk in front will occur only intermittently, as it does currently, for the most part causing little disruption of the pedestrian environment. Non-emergency vehicles using the parking lot will access the site through the existing alley.

Modification of the provision of SMC 23.47.005.E.1 and of 23.47A.008.C.1 to include a Fire Station as an allowed use is necessary so that Station 21 can be reconstructed in its existing location and should, therefore, be approved.

Curbcut Width

A modification is requested to exceed a maximum curbcut width of 30 feet when truck and auto access are combined, and provide a 40 foot curb cut on Greenwood Ave. N. for the two apparatus bays in the new station. The existing station has a 30 foot curb cut for the apparatus bay.

The modification to allow a 40 foot wide curbcut along Greenwood Ave. N. is needed to meet operational needs and alleviate safety concerns. The requested width is the approximate width of the two apparatus bays, and allows the vehicles to pull straight out and exit without maneuvering. If a narrower curbcut was proposed then one rig would block or partially block the path of travel of

another. Designing a narrower curbcut could slow response time by creating a need for the large vehicles to maneuver when exiting the bays. A driveway and curbcut wide enough to service both apparatus bays directly would increase the ease, safety and lessen the time spent backing vehicles into the bays, thereby lessening disruption of vehicles and pedestrian traffic.

It should be noted that DPD has proposed separate legislation which amends the land use code to eliminate the maximum width required for curb cuts which provide access for emergency vehicles at fire stations. The legislation is proposed because every new station needs to have a curbcut wider than allowed by code to provide access to emergency vehicles, and this is integral to providing emergency services.

The curbcut width proposed is necessary to meet specific public service delivery needs and should be approved.

### Transparency

The proposed Fire Station does not meet the Seattle Land Code requirements for building transparency along N. 73<sup>rd</sup> Street. SMC 23.47A.008.B.2 requires a minimum of 60% of a total façade area be transparent between 2-8 feet above the sidewalk. The proposal provides 29.6% transparency along N. 73<sup>rd</sup> St., which slopes downhill to the east from Greenwood Ave. N.

In order to achieve code compliance for transparency along N. 73<sup>rd</sup> St. it would be necessary to incorporate a basement into the Fire Station with windows onto that street. Basement area cannot be used for living area as it would require firefighters to climb stairs to respond to an emergency call which is an undesirable condition. Also, a basement would add expense to the project; part of a City-wide bond measure with tight spending limits. There is no programmatic need of a basement space in the new Station 21.

Extensive landscaping is proposed along the N. 73<sup>rd</sup> St. frontage of the site between the new Fire Station and the sidewalk providing visual amenity to pedestrians in compensation for the lack of transparency into uses in the structure.

It is recommended that the requirement for building transparency along N. 73<sup>rd</sup> St. be modified to 29.6% transparency between 2-8 feet above the sidewalk.

### Floor to Floor Height

Non-residential, street-level uses are required in SMC 23.47A.008.B.3.b to have a floor-to-floor height of 13 feet. This requirement provides for high ceiling heights in commercial areas on the first floor of commercial buildings; a condition found to aide in the success of those uses. A fire station functions differently than a commercial business and has different optimal ceiling heights. The apparatus bays have a high space to house large vehicles and equipment. The second portion of the building, a two story facility known as the station house, provides living, working, and recreation areas. The structure has been designed with floor to floor height of 12 feet which is a generous height for office and living areas.

To require the new Greenwood Fire Station to provide additional floor to floor height above that proposed would add height and expense to the structures without corresponding benefit to its function as a fire station. Additional height would also have a slight negative impact on firefighter response time from the living space on the second level.

It is recommended that this departure to allow floor to floor height of 12 feet on the street level of the new Fire Station 21 be granted.

4. *The relationship of the project to the surrounding area has been considered in the design, siting, landscaping, and screening of the facility.*

The proposed new Fire Station 21 would be located on the same commercially zoned corner as the existing station. Its apparatus driveway would be toward the north end of the property, away from the street intersection. A public alley separates the site from similarly zoned neighborhood commercial areas to the north. The area of site expansion to the west (after demolition of a wood frame residential structure) also matches NC2 40' zoning across the alley to the north. In the north, south and west directions the proposal fits well with its neighborhood commercial context and is buffered by public right-of-ways.

To the east, the proposal site sits at an elevation above a single family residence which is approximately three feet from its side property line on the west. The proposal places a retaining wall four inches from the property line between this house and the new fire station. At approximately a third of the way in from N. 73<sup>rd</sup> St. this wall changes from a cast in place wall to ecology block. The height of the wall above grade as viewed from the east is approximately 2.5 feet for most of its extent with approximately 4 feet exposed near the N. 73<sup>rd</sup> St. property line. Landscaping with hedges and a fence is proposed at the top of the wall to screen the surface parking area from areas to the east. South of the parking area would be a landscaped patio area adjacent to the east property line. Existing conifers in the right-of-way are to be retained and additional street trees planted.

The relationship of the proposal to the surrounding area has been considered and landscaping and screening has been incorporated to successfully place the facility in its surrounding context.

## **RECOMMENDATION – COUNCIL APPROVALS**

DPD **recommends approval** of the proposed fire station use in the NC2P-40' zone with the requested modification to development standards as described in Table A.

## **ANALYSIS - SEPA**

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this project was made in the environmental checklist submitted by the applicant dated December 5, 2008, and annotated by the Department. The information in the checklist, supplemental information provided by the applicant, 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 23.05.665) discusses the relationship between the City's code/policies and environmental review. 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 limitation." The Overview Policy in SMC 23.05.665 D1-7, states that in limited circumstances it may be appropriate to deny or mitigate a project based on adverse environmental impacts.

The policies for specific elements of the environment (SMC 25.05.675) describe the relationship with the Overview Policy and indicate when the Overview Policy is applicable. Not all elements of the environment are subject to the Overview Policy (e.g., Traffic and Transportation, Plants and Animals and Shadows on Open Spaces). A detailed discussion of some of the specific elements of the environment and potential impacts is appropriate.

### Short-term Impacts

The following temporary or construction-related impacts are expected: decreased air quality due to suspended particulate from building activities and hydrocarbon emissions from construction vehicles and equipment; increased dust caused by construction activities; increased traffic and demand for parking from construction equipment and personnel; conflict with normal pedestrian movement adjacent to the site; increased noise; and consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources.

Several adopted City codes and/or ordinances provide mitigation for some of the identified construction related impacts. Compliance with these applicable codes and ordinances will reduce or eliminate most short-term impacts, but impacts such as air quality and noise require further discussion and may require SEPA mitigation.

### Air Quality

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) regulations require control of fugitive dust to protect air quality and will require permits for removal of asbestos (if any) during demolition. The owner and/or responsible party (ies) are required to comply with the PSCAA rules pertaining to demolition of projects with or without asbestos. This will ensure proper handling and disposal of asbestos, as well as demolition of structures without asbestos. No further SEPA conditioning is necessary.

### Greenhouse Gas

Construction activities including construction worker commutes, truck trips, the operation of construction equipment and machinery, and the manufacture of the construction materials themselves result in increases in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions which adversely impact air quality and contribute to climate change and global warming. While these impacts are adverse, they are not expected to be significant due to the relatively minor contribution of greenhouse gas emissions from this project.

### Noise

The project is expected to generate loud noise during demolition, grading and construction. These impacts would be especially adverse in the early morning, in the evening, and on weekends. The Seattle Noise Ordinance permits increases in permissible sound levels associated with construction and equipment between the hours of 7:00 AM and 10:00 PM on weekdays and 9:00 AM and 10:00 PM on weekends. The surrounding properties are developed with housing and will be impacted by

construction noise. The limitations stipulated in the Noise Ordinance are not sufficient to mitigate noise impacts; therefore, pursuant to SEPA authority, the applicant shall be required to limit periods of construction activities (including but not limited to grading, deliveries, framing, roofing, and painting) to non-holiday weekdays from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

### Long-Term Impacts

Long-term or use-related impacts are also anticipated as a result of approval of this proposal including: increased height, bulk and scale on the site; increased traffic in the area and increased demand for parking; increased demand for public services and utilities; increased light and glare; and impacts to plants and animals.

Long-term or use related impacts will likely be comparable to those already generated by the existing use. Hence, most long-term impacts are not considered significant because they are minor in scope.

Several adopted City codes and/or ordinances provide mitigation for some of the impacts. Specifically these are: the Seattle Building Code which provides prescriptive construction techniques and standards; and the Land Use Code which controls site coverage, setbacks, building height and use and contains other development and use regulations to assure compatible development. Compliance with these applicable codes and ordinances is adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation of most long term impacts.

### Height, Bulk and Scale

The SEPA Height, Bulk and Scale Policy (Section 25.06.675.G., SMC) states that *“the height, bulk and scale of development projects should be reasonably compatible with the general character of development anticipated by the goals and policies set forth in Section B of the land use element of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan regarding Land Use Categories, ...and to provide for a reasonable transition between areas of less intensive zoning and more intensive zoning.”*

The proposed fire station, 29 feet tall in its two-story element, is expected to be reasonably compatible with the character of development anticipated in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan and provide appropriate transition to surrounding properties, especially the single family area to the east and northeast. The design includes minor modifications to the land use code with respect to height, modulation and setback; however, the modifications proposed are not expected to make the design incompatible with surrounding development. Zoning to the east is single family. The mass of the proposed building is sited to the west with substantial setbacks along the eastern frontage. Zoning and uses to the east, north and south are commercial and compatible with the height, bulk and scale of the proposed structure.

In addition, design details, landscaping and finish materials will contribute towards mitigating the perception of height, bulk and scale in that these elements will break down the overall scale of the building.

No further mitigation of height, bulk and scale impacts is warranted pursuant to SEPA policy (SMC 25.06.675.G.).

Traffic and Parking

The existing fire station has two internal parking spaces for emergency vehicles and four for staff vehicles. The proposed station will have two parking spaces in the structure for emergency vehicles and six parking spaces at grade off the alley for staff vehicles. Four firefighters are expected to be present for each shift at the facility.

The number of vehicle trips, both of emergency and personal vehicles, is expected to remain unchanged from the present condition. On-site parking is expected to accommodate demand generated.

The project anticipates the addition of traffic control for southbound traffic on Greenwood Ave. N. during Fire Station emergency responses. As a part of the proposal a fire station stop light would be located on Greenwood Ave. N. to the north of the fire station and would work in conjunction with the existing stop light at N. 73<sup>rd</sup> St. to stop traffic when emergency vehicles are leaving and entering the site. This measure is expected to increase the traffic safety of vehicle operations at the station and is not expected to cause a measurable deterioration of levels of service for traffic in surrounding intersections.

No SEPA based conditioning of traffic and parking impacts is warranted.

Noise

The project is expected to generate noise very similar to that generated by the current fire station on the site. This would primarily consist of operational noise from fire alarms and sirens from emergency response vehicles (fire engines, ladder trucks and aid vehicles) when leaving the site. An emergency generator on the site would be tested periodically and otherwise operate only during power failures. The site is close to residential uses, and alarms and sirens could be especially adverse in the early morning and in the evening. The Seattle Noise Control Ordinance exempts sounds created by fire alarms and emergency vehicles. Noise associated with sirens and alarms are an essential function of a fire station and are unavoidable. The Seattle Fire Department makes an effort to be good neighbors and uses discretion about when to activate sirens late at night or in the early morning. No conditioning pursuant to SEPA authority is warranted.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Operational activities, primarily vehicular trips associated with the project and the projects' energy consumption, are expected to result in increases in carbon dioxide which adversely impact air quality and contribute to climate change and global warming. While these impacts are adverse, they are not expected to be significant due to the relatively minor contribution of greenhouse gas emissions from this project.

**RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS - SEPA**

*During Construction*

The following condition(s) to be enforced during construction shall be posted at the site in a location on the property line that is visible and accessible to the public and to construction personnel from the street right-of-way. If more than one street abuts the site, conditions shall be posted at each street. The conditions will be affixed to placards prepared by DPD. The placards will be issued along with the building permit set of plans. The placards shall be laminated with clear plastic or other waterproofing material and shall remain posted on-site for the duration of the construction.

1. All construction activities are subject to the limitations of the Noise Ordinance. Construction activities (including but not limited to grading, deliveries, framing, roofing, and painting) shall be limited to non-holiday weekdays<sup>1</sup> from 7am to 6pm. Interior work using equipment within a completely enclosed structure, such as but not limited to compressors, portable-powered and pneumatic powered equipment may be allowed on Saturdays between 9am and 6pm, provided windows and doors remain closed. Non-noisy activities, such as site security, monitoring, weather protection shall not be limited by this condition.

Construction activities outside the above-stated restrictions may be authorized by the Land Use Planner when necessitated by unforeseen construction, safety, or street-use related situations. Requests for extended construction hours or weekend days must be submitted to the Land Use Planner at least three (3) days in advance of the requested dates in order to allow DPD to evaluate the request.

<sup>1</sup> New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Junior's Birthday, President's Day, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

Signature: (signature on file)  
Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner  
Department of Planning and Development

Date: June 18, 2009