



City of Seattle
Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

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

Application Number: 3007483
Council File Number: 309402
Applicant Name: Seattle Department of Fleets and Facilities
Address of Proposal: 2931 South Mt. Baker Blvd. (Fire Station 30)

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Council Land Use Action to allow a new 9,100 sq. ft. fire station (station #30). Surface parking for six vehicles will be provided on the site. Existing fire station structure 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)

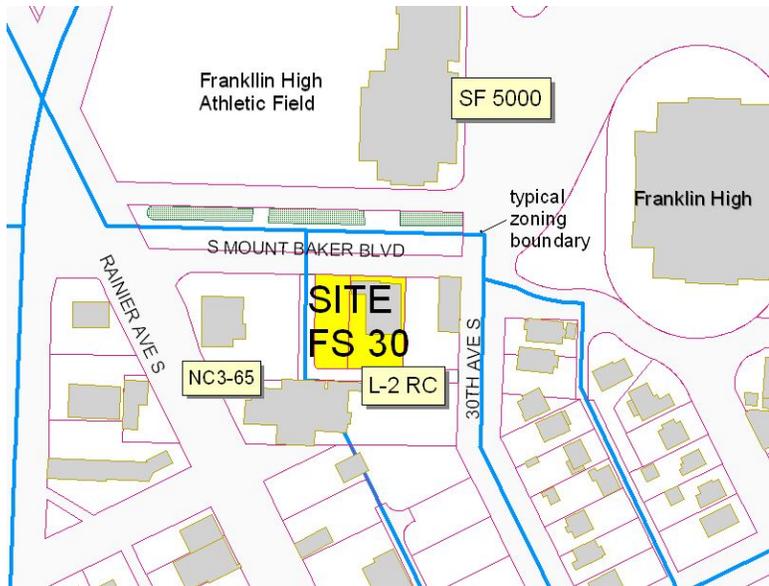
SEPA DETERMINATION: Exempt DNS EIS
 DNS with conditions

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

BACKGROUND DATA

Site and Vicinity Description

The subject site is located on the south side of South Mount Baker Blvd. between Rainier Avenue South to the west and 30th Avenue South to the east. The existing Fire Station #30 occupies the site. The site has an area of 9,480 square feet and is zoned Lowrise 2 with a Residential/Commercial overlay (L-2/RC). South Mount Baker Boulevard, part of the Olmsted plan, is a broad right-of-way with a landscaped median strip and is fully improved with curb, gutter and sidewalk. Directly across the boulevard to the north is the athletic field for Franklin High School. The McClellan Light Rail Station is across Rainier Avenue South to the west. There is small multifamily project abutting the site to the east. The site abuts an alley to the west and a bank to the west of the alley at the corner of South Mount Baker Blvd. and Rainier Avenue South. The alley forms an “L” behind the site and exits at 30th Ave. South. Across the alley to the south are several parcels that belong to the Chief Seattle Council of the Boy Scouts of America. All properties along Rainier Avenue South are zoned Neighborhood Commercial with a 65 foot height limit (NC3-65). All properties along 30th Avenue South are zoned L-2/RC. Across 30th Avenue S to the east the zoning changes to L-2 though the properties are mostly single family homes.



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The site slope falls slightly from northeast to southwest approximately 5 feet or a 7% slope. The alley side of the site is lower in elevation. There are no trees on the site but there is a 24” Ash on the planting strip to the east of the existing driveway.

The existing station was built in 1949 and serves the Mount Baker and Rainier Valley areas. The station is one story with a basement and is not earthquake safe nor does it accommodate modern fire fighting apparatus.

Proposal Description

The proposal is to demolish the existing station and build a new 9,100 sq. ft. fire station on the site. Construction is proposed to begin June of 2009 to be completed by June of 2010.

The new structure will include:

- Two apparatus bays housing an engine and a reserve.
- Living quarters for six personnel.
- Landscape plan featuring drought tolerant plantings and a bioswale.
- Parking for 6 staff vehicles.

The first floor of the building will include apparatus bays, cleaning and maintenance areas, beanery (kitchen), day room, and administrative offices and officer’s quarters. The second floor includes physical training room, living quarters, showers and storage.

Seattle Design Commission

This proposal is subject to review by the Seattle Design Commission (SDC) because it is a City Facility. The Commission’s role is to advise the project proponents in an effort to foster well-designed civic projects. The SDC reviewed the design on November 15, 2007, June 21, 2007 and March 20, 2008. The SDC supported the overall development proposal and program. For complete SDC actions and comments, the approved minutes from the meetings are available on the City of Seattle website located at http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Commission/overview/

Public Comments

No public comments were received during the public comment period which ended on May 28, 2008.

ANALYSIS — COUNCIL LAND USE ACTION

Fire stations in multifamily zones may be permitted outright when they meet the development standards for institutions. Fire stations that do not meet development standards may be permitted subject to approval by City Council. In this case, the proposed station does not meet the following development standards:

<i>Table A</i>			
Development Standard	Required/Permitted	Proposed	Modification
SMC 23.45.009 Structure Height.	25 feet permitted for flat roof.	Varies with highest at 30 feet, 11 inches.	5 feet, 11 inches increase.
SMC 23.45.094 Structure Width.	45 feet without modulation or landscape option 90 feet with modulation or landscape option.	86 feet without code modulation or landscape option.	41 feet wider than allowed with non standard modulation and landscape.
SMC 23.54.003F Curb Cuts.	Maximum curbcut width 30 feet.	38 foot for emergency vehicles.	8 foot

Section 23.76.064 of the SMC 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.

Multifamily Zone

In all multifamily zones, uses in public facilities not meeting development standards may be permitted by the Council if the following criteria are satisfied;

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 in the Rainier Valley/Mount Baker area which is an essential public service.

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

Structure Width and Modulation

In this case, the land use code requires facades to be modulated when they exceed a width of 45 feet and may reach a maximum width of 90 feet with modulation or landscaping. Width in this case is measured in an east-west direction, parallel to South Mt. Baker Blvd and the proposed width is 86 feet. The existing station has a width of 68 feet. Width of buildings may reach the maximum width without modulation but must provide a 5 foot wider front setback and generous landscaping. The intent is to mitigate façade length either by setback and landscaping or by modulation. In this case, an increased setback cannot be accomplished because of the site dimensions and program needs.

The proposed station will be setback about 60 feet from the edge of the roadway, but this width includes the wide planting strip which is part of the right of way not part of the code setback. The landscape design proposes ornamental landscape in the right of way with lawns, perennial and decorative grasses more in keeping with the historical expression along the boulevard. Additionally, there is artwork proposed in this wide planting strip.

The building facades are well articulated, are visually interesting, and provide non-code modulation with the use of modern materials and expression. A 2 foot wide by 2 ft. deep “eyelid” or frame wraps the façade around a transparent and translucent glass curtain wall element. The two red apparatus bay doors will contrast the glass and provide some modulation. A graphic with the number and name of the station is proposed for the front stairway using translucent glass and paint or a mural on the back wall to compliment the apparatus bay doors. The Seattle Design Commission (SDC) has provided support for the design concept and theme. The following rendering of the north façade depicts the design as presented to the SDC on March 20, 2008.



Source: Seattle Design Commission- minutes 3/20/2008

The code required modulation for this building is as follows:

- A minimum depth of modulation of 4 feet.
- A minimum height of modulation of 5 feet.
- A minimum width of modulation of 17 feet.
- Any un-modulated portion of the façade shall not comprise more than 50% of the total façade area.

The project does not meet the last two code required modulation standards in that the width of modulation is 2 feet shorter than required and more than 50% of the façade area is un-modulated. The public entry area (depicted with a door and person in the graphic above) measuring 4 feet by 15 feet at the west side of the façade would be modulated. Another area, measuring 8 feet by 8 feet at the east side of the façade would be modulated. The remaining un-modulated façade length is 61 feet which is more than 50% of the total façade; 43 feet of façade is required to be modulated. The other prescriptive width and modulation standards are met.

The modification request for the modulation is minor in scope, the intent of the provision is met and this flexibility is needed to meet the prescriptive program needs of the Fire Department. In light of that, the modification is needed to address the public service delivery needs.

Structure Height

A modification is requested to exceed the 25 foot base height allowed in the Lowrise 2/RC zone by up to 5 feet, 11 inches. The proposed structure varies from 2 inches to 5 feet 11 inches over the 25 foot height limit of the Lowrise 2/RC zone. The Lowrise 2/RC zone allows structures with pitched roofs (at least 4/12 pitch) to exceed the base height limit by up to 5 feet. The code allows other height exceptions but none apply to flat roofs.

The justification for the height modification requests consists of three basic premises:

1. The size of the site precludes a one story building.

2. The apparatus bay must maintain a programmatic length and clearance height; therefore, dictates the height of the first floor of the structure.
3. The structure must accommodate unique alarm and alert systems in the ceiling.

To avoid a two story structure, either the site would need to be expanded or program compromised. In this case, a two story structure is necessary to meet the program goals for this station.

The apparatus bay occupies approximately one-half of the structure (on the west side). The rear of the site is lower in elevation than the street side and the apparatus bays cannot step down in height to follow the site slope; therefore, the structure is proposed to exceed the code height limit. The apparatus bay must have enough clearance to accommodate the height of any rig at any time. Once the vehicles are inside the apparatus bay there must be adequate head room to perform various tasks. The proposed height of the apparatus bay is the full 24 foot height from the floor to the underside of the steel beams that support roof. Minimal working clearance to get on top of the ladder and engine trucks to load/unload gear and do cleaning and minor maintenance work is needed. The vehicles will be cleaned inside the apparatus bays and adequate room for this must be provided. Modern day stations have immense mechanical and infrastructure needs that take up space in the ceiling area. The ceilings will be installed with; a vehicle tailpipe exhaust system, data and electrical outlets to connect to tools and equipment, space heaters, alerting system speakers, paddle fans, light fixtures, electrical conduit, sprinkler pipes, plumbing supply and waste lines and other mechanical and infrastructure.

The east one-half of the structure that is over height is occupied by administrative offices, officer's quarters, day room and kitchen on the first floor. The second floor is occupied by five bunk rooms, restrooms, laundry, physical training room and mechanical equipment. The existing grade at this corner of the site is at its lowest point; therefore a height modification of 5 feet 11 inches is required. The height restriction and existing grade would preclude two-stories on this portion of the site.

Curbcut Width

A modification is requested to exceed the maximum curbcut width of 30 feet when truck and auto access are combined. The existing station has about a 27 foot wide curbcut on South Mt. Baker Blvd.

The proposal is for a 38 foot curbcut at Mt. Baker Blvd. The modification 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 in 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.

The curbcut width proposed is necessary to meet specific public service delivery needs. It should be noted that DPD has proposed separate legislation which amends the land use code with respect to curbcut width for fire stations. There would be no maximum width required for curb cuts intended to provide access for official emergency vehicles.

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

Adjacent property to the west and south is zoned for more intense development, NC3-65. Adjacent property to the east is zoned the same as the subject site, L-2. The Franklin High School playfield to the north and Franklin High School to the east are zoned Single Family 5000.

With the few exceptions noted in Table A above, the proposed new structure will meet the development standards for the zone in which is located. The adjacent multi-family development to the east is townhomes with a height of 35 feet to the top of the ridge of the structures. This is about five feet higher than the proposed height of the Fire station. The setbacks are all within required standards: 17 feet 4 inches on the west with an 18 inch sunshade overhang, and 10 feet 2 inches on the east adjacent to the residential development (10 feet required). The entirety of the side setbacks and a portion of the rear setback are devoted to landscaping which includes a 100 foot grass-lined bioswale for treating stormwater runoff from the parking area. Ornamental landscaping will be used along Mount Baker Blvd. to tie in with the Olmstead historical expression. The southwest corner of the site will be planted with a spring flowering canopy viewed from the beanery. The east side of the parking area will be planted with a hedge to screen the parking from the adjacent residential uses. The plant material proposed will be drought tolerant and easy to maintain. There is also proposed an artwork installation on the lawn to the west of the driveway.

The surrounding area has been considered in the design, siting, landscaping and screening of the facility. The buildings are adequately setback from the abutting property lines and appropriately landscaped and screened from neighboring property.

RECOMMENDATION – COUNCIL APPROVALS

DPD **recommends approval** of the proposed fire station use in Lowrise 2/Residential Commercial 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 April 23, 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; increase in carbon footprint 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.

Greenhouse gas emissions associated with development come from multiple sources; the extraction, processing, transportation, construction and disposal of materials and landscape disturbance (Embodied Emissions); energy demands created by the development after it is completed (Energy Emissions); and transportation demands created by the development after it is completed (Transportation Emissions). Short term impacts generated from the embodied emissions results in increases in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases thereby impacting air quality and contributing 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 specific project. The other types of emissions are considered under the use-related impacts discussed later in this document.

No SEPA conditioning is necessary to mitigate air quality impacts pursuant to SEPA policy SMC 25.05.675A.

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. Some of 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 ambient noise, increased demand on public services and utilities; increased height, bulk and scale on the site; increased light and glare; and increased energy consumption.

These impacts are mostly comparable to those already generated by the existing use. No increase in the number of apparatus bays or vehicles is projected by the Fire Department. Hence, long-term impacts are not considered significant because they are minor in scope.

Emissions from the generation of greenhouse gases due to the increased energy demand may be adverse but are not expected to be significant due to the relatively minor contribution of emissions from this project. The completed structure is expected to achieve a silver rating under the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system which is expected to alleviate some energy demand from this proposal.

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 is expected to be reasonably compatible with the character of development anticipated in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan and provide appropriate transition. The design includes minor modifications to the land use code with respect to height and modulation; however, the modifications proposed are not expected to make the design incompatible with surrounding development. The proposed two-story fire station will be located in a Lowrise 2 zone and meets most dimensional development standards of the zone, particularly setbacks. Less intense SF5000 zoning to the north is developed with the Franklin High School Athletic field and not residences. Other less intense zoning is located farther away and will not be impacted by the height of this structure. There are not topographical conditions that exacerbate the height, bulk and scale impacts of this proposal on neighboring property. 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.).

Other Impacts

The other impacts such as but not limited to, increased ambient noise, increased light and glare, and increased demand on public services and utilities are mitigated by codes and are not sufficiently adverse to warrant further mitigation by condition.

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.

- 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.

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 weekdays¹ 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.

¹ 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)
Jess Harris, Senior Land Use Planner
Department of Planning and Development

Date: September 22, 2008