



**CITY OF SEATTLE**

**ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF  
THE SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION AND INSPECTIONS**

**Project Number:** 3039297-SD  
**Applicant Name:** Brian Fabella for Seattle Public Schools  
**Address of Proposal:** 3010 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

School Departure for Alki Elementary School.

The following approvals are required:

**Establishment of Development Standard Departure for Public Schools (SMC Chapter 23.79)** to approve or condition the following departures:

1. To allow greater than allowed building height. (SMC 23.51B.002 D)
2. To allow less than required vehicular parking. (SMC 23.54.015)
3. To allow bus load and unload off site (SMC 23.51B.002 I4)
4. To allow a curb cut to a service area without parking (SMC 23.54.030F2b3)
5. To allow larger curb city width (SMC 23.54.030F2b3)
6. To allow larger curb cut flare (SMC 23.54.030F2b3)
7. To allow less than required long-term bicycle parking. (SMC 23.54.015 Table D)
8. To allow less than required weather protected bicycle parking. (SMC 23.54.015 K2)
9. To allow a changing image electronic sign. (SMC 23.55.020B)

**BACKGROUND**

**SITE AND VICINITY**

Site Zone: Lowrise 1 (M) (LR1(M))

Zoning Pattern: North: Neighborhood Residential 3 (NR3)  
South: (LR1(M))  
East: NR3  
West: (LR1(M))

Schmitz Boulevard and Alki Playground and Whale Tail Park are to the north. Alki Beach is two blocks to the north. There is one right of way which borders the school, 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW.



ECAs: Steep slope Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) are mapped along the south and east property edges and liquefaction prone area covers most of the site.

### PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Seattle Public Schools (SPS) proposes to partially demolish Alki Elementary School and construct a new school. Connections to the community center will be preserved. Project documents are available in the electronic file at <http://www.seattle.gov/SDCI/>.

### PREVIOUS SEPA RELATED ACTIONS

Prior to application for a Public School Departure Permit, the District exercised its prerogative to act as lead SEPA agency. A Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS) was issued by Seattle Public Schools. An appeal was registered. The MDNS was recommended to be affirmed by the SPS Hearing Examiner and accepted by the SPS SEPA official on March 15, 2023. The SEPA review does not affect the Public School Departure Process SMC 23.79, the subject of this decision. SEPA documents can be found on the Seattle Public Schools website.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

The Department of Neighborhoods (DON) published a notice of School Advisory Committee formation as per the School Departure Process per SMC 23.79. DON received public comments during the process. The City of Seattle does not publish a notice of application for the Public School Departure process.

### PUBLIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURE

The Seattle School District submitted a request for departures from certain Seattle Municipal Code Development Standards for the proposed school. The Department of Neighborhoods (DON) is charged with administering the School Departure process per SMC 23.79.

### *PROCESS CHANGES DUE TO COVID-19*

- *Seattle City Council approved legislation on Monday April 27, 2020 to keep key projects safely moving forward for at least 180-days.*
- *The school departure recommendation process typically requires in-person public meetings, which are prohibited due to public health mandates on social distancing and limited gatherings.*
- *While this ordinance is in effect, DON staff will accept written public comment and the Director of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods will make a recommendation to the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) taking into consideration the public's comments, in lieu of the committee holding public meetings.*

The final Development Standard Departure Recommendation is available in the public electronic file at the following link <http://www.seattle.gov/SDCI/> under the project number.

## **ANALYSIS – Development Standard Departure for Public Schools**

### **LAND USE CODE PROCESS**

The Development Standard Departure process is conducted pursuant to the provisions of Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) sections 23.79.002-012. Public comment was received by DON, and a written recommendation to the Director of SDCI prepared. The Director prepares an analysis and decision per SMC section 23.79.010. The Director will determine the amount of departure to be allowed as well as mitigation measures to be imposed. The Director’s decision shall be based on an evaluation of the factors set forth in Section 23.79.008 C and comments from the public. If the Director modifies the recommendations of the DON, the reasons for the modification shall be put forth in writing.

In reviewing the departure request, SMC Section 23.79.008 directs the Advisory Committee (DON in the Covid emergency legislation) 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 (DON) is directed to consider and balance the interrelationships among the following factors in SMC 23.79.008 C 1. Departures shall be evaluated for consistency with the general objectives and intent of the City's Land Use Code, including the rezone evaluation criteria in [Chapter 23.34](#) of the Seattle Municipal Code, to ensure that the proposed facility is compatible with the character and use of its surroundings. The code then distills the objectives and intent of the code into specific criteria to consider when assessing departures as follows:

- 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 REQUESTS AND DON DIRECTOR RECOMMENDATION**

The Seattle School District submitted a request for a departure from certain Seattle Municipal Code Development Standards to accommodate the construction of a new school addition.

The city initiated the Development Standard Departure Process, pursuant to SMC 23.45.504 and 23.79. The Code requires that the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) convene a Development Standard Advisory Committee (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) when the School District proposes a departure from the development standards identified under the Code. These standards are popularly referred to as the “zoning code.”

The purpose of the Committee is 1) to gather public comment and evaluate the proposed departures for consistency with the objectives and intent of the City’s land use policies to ensure that the proposed facility is compatible with the character and use of its surroundings; and 2) to develop a report and recommendation to the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) from DON. (SMC 23.79.008)

As noted above, due to public health mandates on social distancing and limited gatherings related to COVID-19, the Seattle City Council approved legislation on Monday, April 27, 2020 to keep key projects safely moving forward by suspending public meeting requirements.

While this ordinance is in effect, in lieu of the committee holding public meetings, DON staff will accept written public comment and the Director of DON will make a recommendation to SDCI, taking into consideration the public's comments.

Following completion of the Recommendation Report and its transmittal to SDCI, the Director of SDCI will issue a formal report and decision. The Director of SDCI will consider the recommendations and will determine the extent of departure from established development standards which may be allowed, as well as identify all mitigating measures which may be required. The Director’s decision is appealable.

In order to accommodate the educational program for this project, the district requested the following departures from development standards found in the land use code. The departure requests are further outlined in the applicant presentation found in the electronic public file under the project number.

	<b>Development Standard</b>	<b>Required / Allowed</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Departure</b>
1	SMC 23.51B.002.D Building Height	35 feet	57 feet	22 feet
2	SMC 23.54.015 Table C Vehicle Parking	48 parking spaces	0 parking spaces	48 parking spaces
3	SMC 23.51B.002.I Bus and Truck Loading and Unloading	Bus load and unload on site	Off site	Bus load and unload off site

4	SMC 23.54.030.F Curb Cut to Service Area without Vehicular Parking Spaces	Curb cuts are allowed to access off-street vehicular parking.	To allow access without vehicular parking	To allow access without vehicular parking
5	SMC 23.54.030.F.2.b Curb Cut Width	25 feet	35 feet	10 feet
6	SMC 23.54.030.F5 Curb Cut Flare Width	2.5 on each side	5 feet each side	2.5 each side
7	SMC 23.54.015 Table D Bicycle Parking (Long Term) Quantity	78 bicycle parking spaces	40 bicycle parking spaces	38 bicycle parking spaces
8	SMC 23.54.015.K.2 Bicycle Parking Performance Standards	Full weather protection is required for long-term bicycle parking spaces	To allow 22 of the 40 long-term bicycle parking spaces with weather protection	18 long-term bicycle parking spaces without weather protection
9	SMC 23.55.020B Signage	No flashing, changing-image message board signs in multifamily zones.	To allow (1) single-faced, electric, changing-image message board sign	To allow (1) single-faced, electric, changing-image message board sign

**Departure #1 for Building Height SMC 23.51B.002.D**

The code allows a maximum building height of 35' above existing average grade. SPS proposes a maximum building height of 57' above existing average grade for classrooms, mechanical penthouses and building parapet for a departure of 22'.

**Departure #2 for Parking Quantity (Automobile) SMC 23.54.015 Table C**

Vehicle parking numbers are calculated by public assembly areas in schools. The code requires 48 automobile parking spaces. SPS proposes no automobile parking spaces for a departure of 48 spaces.

**Departure #3 School Bus Load and Unload B SMC 23.51B.002 I4**

The code requires bus load and unload be on school property. SPS proposes to maintain the existing operation of bus load and unload on 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW.

**Departure #4 for a curb cut to a service area without vehicular parking SMC 23.54.030F2b3**

The code requires a curb cut lead to vehicular parking. SPS proposes a curb cut that leads to a service area with no vehicular parking.

**Departure #5 for curb cut width SMC 23.54.030 F2b**

The code allows a 25 foot wide curb cut. The departure request is to allow a 35 foot curb cut for a departure of 10 feet.

**Departure #6 for curb cut flare SMC 23.54.030 F2b3**

The code allows a 2.5 foot curb flare on each side of the curb cut. SPS proposes a 5 foot curb flare on each side for a departure of 2.5 on each side.

**Departure #7 for bicycle parking (long term) quantity SMC 23.54.015 Table D**

The code requires 78 long term bicycle parking spaces. SPS proposed 40 long term spaces for a departure of 38 spaces.

**Departure #8 for bicycle parking performance standards SMC 23.54.015K2**

The code requires weather protection for bicycle parking spaces. SPS proposes to provide weather protection for 22 spaces for a departure of 18 spaces.

**Departure # 9 for an Electric Changing Image Message Board Sign SMC 23.55.020 B**

The code does not allow changing image signs in residential zones. The departure request is to allow a changing image reader board.

DON Review and Recommendations

Public Comment

The public comment period began via a press release issued by DON on August 8, 2022. The press release was sent to media outlets, and postcards soliciting for public comments were mailed to nearby neighbors and addresses within approximately 600 feet of the school property. DON also created a webpage where the public could submit their comments and instructed SPS to post signs about the public comment period at the perimeter of the school property. The departure information and public comment notice was also published in the City's Land Use Information Bulletin Board (LUIB) at DON request. The public comment period (managed by DON) ran through September 9, 2022. The comments are included at the end of the DON recommendation posted on the DON website and this project record.

DON heard from several nearby neighbors that they did not receive the postcards and other neighbors noted the link to the presentation provided on the postcard was not accurate. DON extended the public comment period for two more weeks and updated postcards were mailed to nearby neighbors and addresses on file within approximately 600 feet of the school property.

The public comments submitted to DON expressed a range of support and concern regarding the departure requests. This includes comments received by DON that expressed opposition to all departures without further explanation. DON also received several comments that were outside the scope of the departure process and unrelated to the requested deviations from the Land Use Code.

Support included positive feedback on the need for new construction and renovation, new entry location and a favorable comment that the departures seem reasonable.

Concerns include busy student drop off and pick up on 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW, lack of onsite parking, size of the school, building height, view blockage, noise, bus load and unload, bicycle parking reduced numbers, light pollution from the electronic reader board, construction impacts, reduced bicycle weather protection.

In response to the concerns raised in the received comments, SPS and the Project Team provided a response letter to DON to clarify the potential impacts of the proposed departures on the surrounding neighborhood for DON to review.

DON Recommendation Summary:

Departure #1	Building Height	Granted
Departure #2	Vehicular Parking Quantity	Granted with conditions
Departure #3	Bus loading and unloading	Granted with conditions
Departure #4	Curb cut to service area without vehicular parking	Granted
Departure #5	Increased curb cut width	Granted
Departure #6	Increased curb cut flare	Granted
Departure #7	Bicycle parking long-term quantity	Granted
Departure #8	Bicycle Parking Performance Standards	Granted
Departure #9	Signage/Changing Image Sign	Granted with conditions

Per SMC 23.79.008.C.1.b, the DON Director has considered the need for the above departure requests. DON has determined that for the Seattle Public Schools to meet its educational specifications, the above departures are required at this site. The physical requirements of the specific proposal and the project's relationship to educational needs are balanced with the level of impacts on the surrounding area.

SDCI DIRECTOR'S ANALYSIS

The Director's decision shall be based on an evaluation of the factors set forth in Section 23.79.008 C1a and b, the majority recommendations and minority reports of the Advisory Committee, comments at the public meeting, (DON, emergency legislation) and comments from the public. Departures shall be evaluated for consistency with the general objectives and intent of the City's Land Use Code, including the rezone evaluation criteria in [Chapter 23.34](#) of the Seattle Municipal Code, to ensure that the proposed facility is compatible with the character and use of its surroundings. The code then distills the objectives and intent of the code into specific criteria to consider when assessing departures as follows:

Section 23.79.008 C1

- 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.*

SDCI's responses to the aforementioned criteria are detailed below.

**Departure #1 – To allow greater than allowed building height SMC 23.51B.002.D**

The code allows a maximum building height of 35' above existing average grade. SPS proposes a maximum building height of 57' above existing average grade for classrooms, mechanical penthouses and building parapet for a departure of 22'. The applicant request for a height departure of 22 additional feet encompasses the third floor of the building, parapet and screened and covered mechanical equipment. Some noted possible view blockage due to the extra height. Some public comments noted that the building should be no taller than two-stories and questioned the necessity for extra height.

SPS and the project team noted in their presentation and in their response letter to the public comments that the proposed design calls for this departure to meet SPS' educational program specifications. Per SPS, the new school facility for the Alki Elementary School community accommodates potential growth, provides flexibility for changing program needs and demographics, and provides students with a safe and positive learning environment.

To address the views, shadowing, and noise, the project team noted that they had progressed in the design since the departure's presentation including updating the roof plan and rotating the mechanical penthouse away from the adjacent neighbors to the south. The project team noted that the building's interior lighting will be tied to occupancy sensors as required by the Seattle Energy Code; thus, lights will not be inadvertently left on to disturb neighboring residences after hours. Also, the completed shadowing study indicated shadowing from the building will fall primarily on the playfield and will not impact the residences to the south. In addition, the mechanical penthouse will be enclosed to increase longevity and reduce mechanical noise.

After consideration, the DON recommended approval of the departure.

The increased height accommodates important classroom uses, building parapet and necessary mechanical equipment to service the building. The departure is appropriate in relation to the programmatic requirements of an elementary school and the character and scale of the surrounding area and appropriately located on the site. The over height areas will increase the appearance of bulk at the site but is commensurate with the overall scale of the school.

The Director finds that the height departure will not exacerbate existing traffic, noise, circulation, or significant impacts on housing or open space in the area. Considering the criteria, the recommendations from the Department of Neighborhoods, and public comments, the Director grants the departure request.

**Departure #2 for Parking Quantity (Automobile) SMC 23.54.015 Table C**



Vehicle parking numbers are calculated by public assembly areas in schools. The code requires 48 automobile parking spaces. SPS proposes no automobile parking spaces for a departure of 48 spaces.

DON received comments opposing the requested departure. Several individuals commented that because the project's intention is to significantly increase the school's student capacity, this will result in negatively impacting traffic, pedestrian safety, circulation, and parking in the area. Neighbors suggested that SPS should take action to encourage the number of students and staff to walk, bike, and take public transportation to reduce the use of private vehicles.

Due to the limited area of this site, providing on-site vehicular parking would result in sacrificing educational program and outdoor learning opportunities.

The Heffron Transportation Technical Report (Heffron, 2022) indicates that on-street parking space utilization is below levels considered full capacity and that there is sufficient available on-street parking to accommodate daily parking for the school schedule. However, the study found that when an event draws about 400 attendees the on-street parking demand would exceed 85%, a figure used by the City of Seattle to indicate full parking use.

SPS incorporated the following measures to reduce traffic and parking impacts and noted them in their SEPA checklist with full descriptions:

- a Construction Transportation Management plan [Construction Management Plan],
- a Large Event Plan,
- a Neighborhood Communication Plan, and
- updates to street signage in the area.

The Department of Neighborhoods recommended the following additional conditions not included in the SPS SEPA checklist:

- a Transportation Management Plan [School Transportation Management Plan], and
- to work with the Seattle School Safety Committee (a Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) committee).

In evaluating this departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements such as circulation, shared learning areas, outdoor play area and classroom spaces.

The parking departure will not significantly exacerbate existing traffic, noise, circulation, or impact housing in the area. There may be additional drop off and pick up, but not to a significant level of new impacts. Open space at the site will not be impacted by the lack of parking.

Measures were proposed by SPS to help reduce impacts of the parking reduction including, a School Transportation Management Plan to aid communication between the school and parents regarding good practices for student drop off and pick up, Communication Plan, Large Event Plan, Signage, working with the SDOT School Safety Committee, and a Construction Management Plan (CMP). The CMP will be prepared using the SDOT template and reviewed by SDOT experts for adequacy during the building permit, SEPA phase and thus is not a condition

of this project. The proposed measures are effective measures to help manage traffic and safety and communication around the school building.

The Director finds that the departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, a park and a topographic break which provides a transition in bulk and scale and the departure does not exacerbate or diminish the area character. The departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. Therefore, the Director grants the departure request with the following conditions:

- 1) School Transportation Management Plan (STMP): Prior to the school reopening each year, the District and school Principal should establish a STMP to educate families about the access load/unload procedures for the site layout. The STMP should also encourage school bus ridership, carpooling, and supervised walking (such as walking school buses). The plan should require the school to distribute information to families about drop-off and pick-up procedures, as well as travel routes for approaching and leaving the school. It should also instruct staff and parents not to block or partially block any residential driveways with parked or stopped vehicles.
- 2) Engage the Seattle School Safety Committee: The District should continue the ongoing engagement with the Seattle School Safety Committee (led by SDOT) to review the new access for pedestrian and bicycles and determine if any changes should be made to crosswalks, traffic control, crossing guard locations, or to help encourage pedestrian and non-motorized flows at designated crosswalk locations.
- 3) Develop a Neighborhood Communication Plan for School Events: The District and school administration should develop a neighborhood communication plan to inform nearby neighbors of large events each year. The plan should be updated annually (or as events are scheduled) and should provide information about the dates, times, and rough magnitude of large-attendance events. The communication would be intended to allow neighbors to plan for the occasional increase in on-street parking demand that would occur with large events.
- 4) Update right-of-way and curb-side signage: The District should work with SDOT to confirm the locations, restrictions, and durations for curb-side parking and load/unload zones adjacent to the school.
- 5) Create a Large Event Plan for events expected to attract 400 or more attendees and modifies the event to reduce total peak demand by separating it into two sessions or into two nights as occurs at other Seattle elementary schools.

### **Departure # 3 School Bus Load and Unload B SMC 23.51B.002 I4**

The code requires bus load and unload be on school property. SPS proposes to maintain the existing operation of bus load and unload on 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW.

DON received comments opposing and expressing concerns about the requested departure. These included comments that the district's request is illogical since the existing number of buses have the capacity for the anticipated growth given that the attendance area is proposed to

remain unchanged. Other comments suggest that buses should be provided with an off-street loading and unloading location that would improve vehicular traffic and be safer for students.

SPS and the Project Team noted in their presentation and in their response to public comments that the current school bus loading and unloading occurs on-street in front of the mid-block entrance along 59<sup>th</sup> Ave SW. The area is currently designated as a bus loading zone.

The proposed design maintains the existing bus loading zone along 59<sup>th</sup> Ave SW, with replacement of the curb, sidewalk, and street trees and the relocation of the speed hump to accommodate the accessible loading zone and a more efficient, safer bus staging arrangement. No change to the number of school buses that have historically served the site is anticipated with the proposed project. The existing on-street school bus load/unload is adequately sized for the demand. Due to the limited area of the site, providing on-site bus loading would either require the removal of educational programming and outdoor learning space or would require the site to expand into the surrounding residential neighborhood.

After consideration of the public comments received and SPS' response, DON recommended three conditions similar to departure #2; A School Transportation Management Plan, Engage the Seattle Safety School Committee, and update right of way signage.

In evaluating this departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements. The departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, a park and a topographic break which provides a transition in scale and the departure does not exacerbate or diminish the area character.

The school bus load and unload departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. Therefore, the Director grants the departure request with no conditions since the conditions are imposed with departure request #2.

#### **Departure #4 for a curb cut to a service area without vehicular parking SMC 23.54.030F2b3**

The code requires a curb cut lead to vehicular parking. SPS proposes a curb cut that leads to a service area with no vehicular parking.

DON received a few comments expressing concern about the requested departure. Some of the comments expressed support for either granting or denying the departure without further explanation while other comments noted that wider vehicular driveways conflict with pedestrian safety.

SPS and the project team noted in their presentation and their response to public comments that the proposal does not pose a risk to pedestrians because it would only be accessed by professional drivers for either waste collection or deliveries during non-active hours.

In evaluating this departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements. The departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, a park and a topographic break which provides a transition in scale and the departure does not exacerbate or diminish the area character.

The departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. Therefore, the Director grants the departure request with no conditions.

**Departure # 5 for curb cut width SMC 23.54.030 F2b**

The code allows a 25 foot wide curb cut. The departure request is to allow a 35 foot curb cut for a departure of 10 feet.

DON received very few comments on the curb cut departure. Some of the comments received expressed neutrality about the departure while others supported denying the departure due to pedestrian safety concerns. Others commented that a possible mitigation should include a secure gate set back from the sidewalk to allow for gate swing and transparency into the walkway from the sidewalk and the building. Pedestrian-scale lighting during hours of darkness when the preschool area is in use was also suggested.

In evaluating this departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements. The departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, a park and a topographic break which provides a transition in scale and the departure does not exacerbate or diminish the area character.

The departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. Therefore, the Director grants the departure request with no conditions.

**Departure #6 for curb cut flare SMC 23.54.030 F2b3**

The code allows a 2.5 foot curb flare on each side of the curb cut. SPS proposes a 5 foot curb flare on each side for a departure of 2.5 on each side.

DON received very few comments on this departure. Some of the comments received expressed support for denying this departure request due to pedestrian safety concerns like those noted under Departure #5. The large flare is proposed to help the trucks entering the service area enter and exit without impacting the curb and planting strip.

In evaluating this departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements. The departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, a park and a topographic break which provides a transition in scale and the departure does not exacerbate or diminish the area character.

The departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. Therefore, the Director grants the departure request with no conditions.

**Departure # 7 for bicycle parking (long term) quantity (SMC 23.54.015 Table D)**

The code requires 78 long-term bicycle parking spaces. SPS proposed 40 long-term spaces for a departure of 38 spaces.

DON received several comments that expressed concern regarding the requested departure for long-term bicycle parking quantity. One comment noted that a departure from bicycle parking requirements works against the need to minimize vehicle trips to the school and on-site car parking by making the alternative of biking less convenient and secure. Others commented that SPS and the project team should propose effective measures to increase the number of students and staff walking, biking, and taking buses to reduce the use of private vehicles.

SPS and the Project Team noted in their presentation and their response to public comments that the proposed design provides 40 long-term bicycle spaces whereas the current site does not provide any bike parking that meets the standards for long-term bike parking. SPS is in conversation with Seattle Parks & Recreation to provide additional bicycle parking stalls for joint use on the parks property north of the new main entry. The partnership intent is to increase the number of bicycle parking stalls at and around the school.

In evaluating this departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements. The departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, a park and a topographic break which provides a transition in scale and the departure does not exacerbate or diminish the area character.

The departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. Therefore, the Director grants the departure request with no conditions.

**Departure #8 for bicycle parking performance standards SMC 23.54.015K2**

The code requires weather protection for bicycle parking spaces. SPS proposes to provide weather protection for 18 spaces for a departure of 22 spaces.

DON received very few comments about this departure. The comments received expressed support for covered bike sheds as an acceptable alternative to locked bike rooms or roofed cages provided the sheds are in a secure location and observable from offices or classrooms that are normally occupied during school hours.

Weather protection is provided for a portion of the bicycle parking spaces which will help encourage bicycle usage.

In evaluating the departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements. The departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, a park and a topographic break which provides a transition in scale and the departure does not exacerbate or diminish the area character.

The departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. Therefore, the Director grants the departure request with no conditions.

**Departure # 9 for an Electric Changing Image Message Board Sign SMC 23.55.020 B**

The code does not allow changing image signs in residential zones. The departure request is to allow a changing image reader board.

DON received several comments that expressed concern about or opposition to the departure to allow an electric changing-image sign. These comments stated the sign would be unnecessary and/or intrusive, and out of character with the residential neighborhood.

SPS and the design team noted the use of the proposed message board sign is to alert families and community to events taking place at the school. Messages could be displayed in multiple languages, which a fixed message cannot accomplish. This is also an equitable way to communicate since access to technology is not universal.

The proposed location of the sign faces north towards the park, therefore there are no direct lines of sight between it and the surrounding residences. Street trees along 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW are between the sign and the LR1, multifamily zone residences.

In evaluating the departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements. The departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, a park and a topographic break which provides a transition in scale. A lit message board can appear to be intrusive in a residential area therefore the Director will condition the departure request as noted below.

The departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. The Director grants the departure request with the following conditions:

1. Limited to one single-faced sign.
2. Time of use is restricted to 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. weekdays and weekends.
3. The sign is limited to being lit using one color with a dark background.
4. No video, flashing, scrolling, rolling, tumbling, or moving images are allowed. The message may change, however.

*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 departure may be allowed for special facilities, such as a gymnasium, which are unique and/or an 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 Department of Neighborhoods considered the overall need for the departures (SMC 23.79.008C1b) as part of its deliberations. The Seattle Municipal Code provides for granting departures from the requirements of the Municipal Code to accommodate educational needs of school programs. In this case, the Seattle School District stated that both the need for the new school and the need to meet educational standards present site planning challenges. SPS notes that without departures to development standards the educational program could not be met. Without the departures, reasonable alternatives could be reductions in important open play and sport space.

The Director balances departure requests through criteria based on the relationship to surrounding areas with need for development standards departures to meet educational program

requirements and finds that there is a need for the departure requests and that they are in balance with the level of impacts on the surrounding area.

### **DECISION-PUBLIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

The school development standard departure requests two and nine are **GRANTED with conditions**. The remaining departure requests are **GRANTED**.

### **CONDITIONS –PUBLIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

#### *For the life of the project*

- 1) **School Transportation Management Plan (STMP):** Prior to the school reopening each year, SPS and the principal of Alki Elementary will establish a School Transportation Management Plan (STMP) to educate families about access load/unload procedures for the site and distribute information to families about travel routes for approaching and leaving the school. Staff and parents should also be instructed not to block or partially block any residential driveways with parked or stopped vehicles.
- 2) **Engage Seattle School Safety Committee:** SPS will continue ongoing engagement with the Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee (led by SDOT) to review crossing paths with school buses or traffic control to help encourage pedestrian and non-motorized flows at designated crosswalk locations.
- 3) **Neighborhood Communication Plan for School Events:** SPS and Alki Elementary's administration will develop a neighborhood communication plan to inform nearby neighbors of large events each year. The plan will be updated annually (or as events are scheduled) and provide information about the dates, times, and magnitude of large-attendance events. The communication would be intended to allow neighbors to plan for occasional increases in on-street parking demand that would occur with large events.
- 4) **Update right-of-way and curb-side signage:** SPS will work with SDOT to confirm locations, extents, and signage (such as times of restrictions) of the school bus and/or school load zones established or eliminated on adjacent streets.
- 5) **Large Event Plan:** For the one or two largest events each year expected to attract 400 or more attendees the school will develop a large event plan that modifies the event to reduce total peak parking demand by separating it into two sessions or into two nights based on grade levels as occurs at some other Seattle elementary schools.
- 6) **The electric changing image message board sign** will be operated as follows:
  - a) Limited to one single-faced sign.
  - b) Time of use is restricted to 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. weekdays and weekends.
  - c) The sign is limited to being lit using one color with a dark background.
  - d) No video, flashing, scrolling, rolling, tumbling, or moving images are allowed. The message may change, however.

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Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

Date: May 8, 2023

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