



Approved MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Bruce A. Harrell
Mayor

Rico Quirindongo
Interim Director, OPCD

Vinita Sidhu, Chair

Elaine Wine, Vice Chair

Matt Aalfs

Adam Amrhein

Erica Bush

Amalia Leighton-Cody

Elizabeth Conner

Jill Crary

Puja Shaw

Molly Spetalnick

Michael Jenkins
Executive Director

Valerie Kinast
Strategic Advisor

Windy Bandekar
Planner

Juliet Acevedo
Administrative Staff

July 21, 2022

Convened: 10:00 am

Ended: 12:25 pm

Agenda Items

Fire Station 31

Commissioners Present

Vinita Sidhu, Chair

Elaine Wine, Vice Chair

Matt Aalfs

Adam Amrhein

Erica Bush

Amalia Leighton-Cody

Elizabeth Conner

Jill Crary

Puja Shaw

Commissioners Excused

Molly Spetalnick

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins

Windy Bandekar

Juliet Acevedo

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July 21, 2022

Project: Fire Station 31
Type: CIP
Phase: Design Development
Previous Reviews: January 20, 2022, May 20, 2021
Presenters: Andy Ishizaki, FAS
Scott Wolf, Miller Hull
Zubin Rao, Miller Hull
Marina Wirtl, Osborne Consulting
Kate Spitzer, FAS
Chief Daniel Murray, SFD

Attendees: Peter Cornue
Rader, Glenda
Johnson, Rebecca
Jake LaBarre
Elana Darnell - Miller Hull
Akshay Srinivas
Freeman, Ketil
Keenan-Koch, Jackson
Damon Brown
Aebischer, Ellen
Pyle, Osmant
Jacobson, Joy
Emma Hinchliffe

Recusals and Disclosures:

None

Project Description

The City of Seattle’s Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) has proposed construction of a new Fire Station 31, located at Meridian Ave N and N 113th Streets, in the Northgate neighborhood. The station will replace the existing Fire Station 31 located along N Northgate Way. The new 22,000 square foot facility will accommodate one engine company, a ladder unit, a medic unit, one aid car, and room for reserve vehicles. A total of 13 active-duty personnel per shift are anticipated. Design for this station began in March 2021 and continues into design through 2022. Outreach will include design open houses in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022.

Meeting Summary

This is the Seattle Design Commission’s (SDC) third review of the Fire Station 31 project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the design development (90%) design phase. The SDC voted, 7-0, to approve

the design development plans for the Fire Station 31 project with one condition and several recommendations.

Summary of Presentation

The presentation was presented by Scott Wolf and Zubin Rao of Miller Hull, Martina Wirtl of Osborne Consulting, Andy Ishizaki and Kate Spitzer of FAS, and Chief Daniel Murray of Seattle Fire Department. The presentation addressed changes to the overall program and refinements to the proposed development standard waivers that will be sought as part of the City Council approval process. No date has been set for Council review. The presentation included an update and overview on items that included:

- Project overview
- Community open house & neighbor outreach
- Stakeholder engagement
- Agency updates
- Response to SDC recommendations
- Neighborhood & site context
- Departures
- Design updates
- Materials, plants, furnishings, and lighting selections
- Art concept and integration
- Perimeter fencing

FAS identifies the following departures from development standards that require City Council approval for the proposed design:

SMC 23.45.570.F.3 - Side Setbacks at North property line and South property line – the proposal includes locating a portion of the structure directly along the north property line abutting an adjacent single-family zone as well as reducing setbacks between 2 and 4 feet along the south property line.

SMC 23.54.030.F.2.b.4 - Curb Cut Widths – A 70-foot-wide curb cut on Meridian Ave N is proposed; a 30-foot maximum is currently allowed

SMC 25.11.070 - Tree Protection – the proposal assumes the removal of three trees classified as Exceptional in the land use code. Relief is proposed from onsite planting and replacement requirements.

City or Agency Comments

Jackson Keenan-Koch, SDOT commented that the SIP review is underway. He is supportive of the design and sees no major concerns at this point in review. He reported that it would not be possible to get two feet of clearance between the retaining wall and sidewalk because of the space needed for roadway for fire apparatus.

Joy Jacobsen, FAS commented that she is following the project's designs and their compliance with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

Public Comments

None

Summary of Commission deliberation and discussion

Commissioners deliberated on the topics below.

1. Departures, side setbacks, curb cuts, tree retention.

Commissioners were generally supportive of the departures from development standards. They questioned the choice of dark, opaque fencing along the perimeter and suggested the neighbors be consulted on final outcomes. The Commission believed that wood fencing may be more appropriate for adjacent residential uses than metal fencing.

Commissioners also asked to consider the value of the replacement trees in the location at the North Precinct and explore locations closer to the site on public land where trees might add more value.

2. Art integration

Commissioners discussed integration of art for the facility. They encouraged the project team to work with the artist so that the art is developed and integrated three dimensionally, powerfully, and effectively with the details and structure of the building. They asked the team to consider the relationship between the shou sugi ban building material on the upper building facades and the art. To achieve the dynamism shown in the artist drawings Commissioners suggested extending the artwork and its relationship to the building by dissolving the rigid frame provided within the south and west facades. Eliminating the “frame” is one way to provide space for the artwork’s conceptual power and dynamic sense of movement to fully integrate with, and animate, the building.

3. Experiential quality building and public realm, SE corner, SW corner seat wall, retaining wall and stairs, northern edge.

The building expression was discussed. Commissioners were happy with the refinements to the building envelope, especially the entrance and balcony areas. While the cover over the front balcony facing Meridian Ave N was appreciated, Commissioners wanted the team to think about how it would look over time with debris on it. Commissioners found the use of shou sugi ban for a fire station thoughtful and exciting.

Changes to the retaining wall along N 113th were appreciated. Commissioners applauded the shift of the stair and stronger articulation in response to their earlier concerns. They asked the team to consider adding pedestrian lighting along the sidewalk because the trees and wall might obstruct ambient light from the building reaching the sidewalk.

There was discussion about the seat wall at the southwest corner of the site. While Commissioners supported the scale and arrangement of the planter and other elements in the foreground of the station, there was worry that people shouldn’t be encouraged to sit so close to a busy arterial. Commissioners asked the team to consider adjustments to the design in that area.

Commissioners discussed the impacts of the building scale and program on residential neighbors to the north of the project. The Commissioners discussed the perimeter fencing along the north property line and suggested replacing the proposed dark opaque fencing with a wood material to

make the fencing more residential in appearance. They asked the team to follow input from the neighbors on it.

4. Equity outreach

Commissioners were glad to see that the team had spent time on neighboring properties discussing the design with neighbors. They expressed understanding for the challenges the project has had with outreach in the time of COVID.

5. Sustainability

Commissioners applauded the team for including solar panels and for their thoughtful and innovative choice of sustainable materials.

6. Access and Circulation

Commissioners discussed the street improvements of the project. Given the tight site and amount of program it needed to accommodate, commissioners questioned whether enough thought had been given to how the ROW space was allocated. There was also concern about the timing of potential development to the south of the proposed station and its impact on truck and apparatus operations. Commissioners were concerned that if new development across the street was delayed, along with any required street improvements, it would negatively impact access by service vehicles.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation on the design development phase for the Fire Station 31 replacement project. The Commission applauded the team for providing a successful response to a very challenging site and demanding program. Commissioners appreciated the beautiful materiality of the building and in particular the use of shou sugi ban wood, which is charred for preservation, on a fire station. The extent of sustainable features and material selections was commended.

The SDC voted, 7-0, to recommend to the City Council the approval of the deviations from development standards. The SDC also approved the design development phase for the Fire Station 31 Replacement project with the following condition:

1. Present a response to these three art integration recommendations to a subcommittee of the SDC after the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) has reviewed the art and its integration has been further developed:
 - Work meticulously, as you did with the building volume cut outs, to integrate the art three dimensionally.
 - Consider the presence and force of both the art and the shou sugi ban along the south façade and southwest corner of the building and establish clarity of the relationship.
 - Continue to refine the building design to support the energy, sense of movement, and images of the art.

The Commission also had these recommendations:

1. If the development to the south of 113th is not built in a timely way, address the SDC concern that fire apparatus access movements are maintained if street improvements on the south portion of 113th are delayed or not implemented.

2. Explore raising the canopy on the balcony on Meridian Ave N so the edge is more aligned with the parapet in order to maintain the cut out as one volume.
3. Consider how the glass awning canopy over the balcony will appear with leaves and debris on it, and how it will be maintained.
4. Refine the design of the southwest corner where pedestrians will be near arterial traffic and fire vehicles that are backing up. Consider reversing the direction people would sit on the seat wall and providing more sidewalk space. Alternately, retain the current configuration but refine the design to discourage people from sitting on the seat wall closest to Meridian Ave N. Improve how the space relates and connects to the entrance.
5. Consider providing lighting along the N 113th Street sidewalk, because the retaining wall and trees will obstruct the building light.
6. Reconsider the dark color, opacity, and metal material of the fence along the east and north property lines and consult with the neighbors on the final selection.
7. Consider visibility of the art for pedestrians on N 113th Street when you select the trees.
8. Continue to explore locations for tree replacement. Examine whether the trees are providing the most value they can at the north precinct wetlands. Consult with experts on the need for them at this location. Look for opportunities on City property, where you can support community projects.