



International Special Review District

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

ISRD 77/22

Staff Report

Address: 214 5th Ave S.

Applicant Representatives: Scott Douglas, Link Design Group

Project Summary: Proposed Use and Final Design of an 8-story mixed-use residential development consisting of 184 apartments and 4,625 sq ft of commercial space. A loading dock will accessible off the alley. No parking is proposed. The proposal includes removal of three trees in the right-of-way. A new landscaping plan, including tree replacement, is proposed.

The proposal includes demolition of the existing building, which was constructed in 1968.

See attached historic property report by Studio TJP, arborist report, photos, plans, renderings, specifications and cut sheets.

Departures requested:

Departure 1 – Upper Level Setback

SMC 23.49.242.D.1a – International District Residential, Development Standards – Setbacks

The applicant requests a departure from the required green street upper level building setback at 45'-0" along the eastern ½-block of S Main St. to allow the building to be developed within the required setback space.

Departure 2 – Upper Floor Lot Coverage

SMC 23.49.242.C.1 – International District Residential, Development, Development Standards – Coverage Limits

SMC 23.49.242.C.2. – International District Residential, Development Standards Coverage Limits

The applicant requests a departure from the required coverage limits of 75% on the 8th floor of the building which is above 65 feet.

Departure 3 – Structural Building Overhangs

SMC 23.53.035.B.7 – Structural Building Overhangs and Minor Architectural Encroachments:
Length

SMC 23.53.035.B.9 - Structural Building Overhangs and Minor Architectural Encroachments: Separation

The applicant requests a departure to exceed the maximum bay length by 10” for two units, and to reduce the minimum horizontal separation between 2 bay windows to zero at the Southeast corner of the building.

Proposed Alley Exception: PER SMC 23.53.030.G.5, The director may modify or waive the requirements for dedication if it is determined that the widening would be detrimental to the character and goals of the district.

As part of this proposal, the applicants are asking for ISRD Board support for an Alley Exception application to SDOT, to allow a waiver of the alley width requirement under **SMC 23.53.030F.1. – Minimum width for existing alleys**. A 2’ dedication will be provided for the height of the finished level at the alley (L1 to L3) with an approximate 12’-6” MINIMUM pinch point above alley grade. This is less than the recommended 26’ but more than the 8’ approved for the development abutting our development to the north (exception granted by the ISRD for the adjacent project on 10/27/2020). The alley slopes over 16’ from north to south. Above the proposed alley setback heights, the building will extend back two feet to the current alley property line.

Staff analysis:

Typically, a design team will conduct a series of briefings before the Board to show how the evolution of proposed new construction responds to Board and community input. However, in this instance, the applicants decided to forgo briefings and instead present a complete application to the Board, without Board input and without input from a range of community stakeholders within Japantown/Nihonmachi neighborhood to help inform the final design. Staff expressed concern about the design of the façade composition of the preferred alternative in Correction Notices provided to the applicant, during the review of the application. Those concerns are unresolved.

It is staff’s opinion that the Board could benefit from additional discussion and presentation of design studies to show how the façade composition of the final design proposal better meets the intent of SMC 23.66.336 A—specifically, how the proposed final design “retain(s) and enhance(s) the visual order of the District” and, how the design composition of the south façade “respects the architectural and structural integrity...though sympathetic use of colors, materials and style.” Further, it is staff’s opinion that the proposed window proportions, cornice line, street elevations and other elements of the building’s south façade do not relate to the scale and visual order of the existing buildings in the immediate area.

Chronology

November 2020	Submittal of an application for a Certificate of Approval for Demolition, Use and Design.
June 2022	Staff determined that the application is complete.

Additional information

a) General

- This site is located outside the National Register District. It is inside the Asian Design Character District/Retail Core.
- The existing building was constructed in 1968.
- This project does not trigger the SEPA.

b) Demolition Analysis:

When reviewing a proposal for demolition of building or buildings located outside of the Seattle Chinatown National Register District, the Board and DON must make a determination as to whether or not a building is a contributing structure by reviewing a historic property report and taking into account the provisions in SMC 23.66.032 – Contributing structures; determination of architectural or historic significance and SMC 23.66.318 – Demolition.

It is staff's opinion that this is a non-contributing building within the ISRD. The building, constructed in 1968, outside of the period of significance for the National Register District, does not convey architectural or historic character of the District worthy of contributing status.

c) Use Analysis:

Criteria for Review: The Board must review applications based upon the consistency of the proposed action with the requirements of the ordinance, the district use and development standards, and the purposes for creating the district. Please review the ISRD goals and objectives – SMC 23.66.302 and International District Residential (IDR) goals and objectives – SMC 23.66.306.

- Since the ISRD ordinance SMC 23.66 is a zoning overlay, the underlying downtown zoning code SMC 23.49 still applies unless the ISRD ordinance specifically address a particular issue. The ISRD Board reviews for compliance with SMC 23.66; SDCI reviews for compliance with SMC 23.49 – Downtown Zoning, and other code requirements such as the ADA.

What does the Board review:

- *Type of use:* Uses are permitted, prohibited or subject to special review. Please review SMC 23.66.320, .322, .326 and .328. The applicant is seeking use approval for housing on the upper levels and commercial use or uses accessory to the upper-story residential use at the ground floor. Since the applicant has not defined specific retail tenant uses, the Board can grant general approval for commercial uses that are neither prohibited or subject to special review. Specific proposed uses for individual commercial spaces shall come back before the Board before occupancy.
- *Public Rights of way (ROW):* Location of access to the site and building. This site also includes landscaping and decorative paving in the ROW.

Exterior Design Review

- *General Requirements 23.66.336 A.* – The Board reviews proposed preliminary design including window proportions, floor height, and cornice height for compatibility of scale, bulk, height, and style of buildings in the immediate area, surrounding structures.

B. Asian Design Character District, sections 1-5.

- *Height:* SMC 23.66.332, The zone is IDR (International District Residential), Maximum height is 45/125-270
- *Rooftop features:* SMC 23.66.332 including rooftop mechanical equipment.
- *Views:* - The Board consider impacts on views from Kobe Terrace Park.

PROPOSED MOTION TO TABLE

I move that the International Special Review District Board table the application, in accordance with SMC 23.66.030.C.4. The Board does not have sufficient information to make a recommendation.

The following additional information/studies are needed from the applicant:

- ...

In the alternative, the Board could approve the application:

PROPOSED MOTION TO APPROVE – Demolition, Use and Final Design

I move that the International Special Review District Board recommend approval of a Certificate of Approval for Demolition, Use, Street Use and Final Design at 214 5th Ave. S.

The Board directs staff to prepare a written recommendation of approval, based on consideration of the application submittal and Board discussion at the June 28, 2022 public meeting, and forward this written recommendation to the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

The Board has also reviewed the proposed the following departures and recommends that the Director of the Department of Construction and Inspections approve the Departures, as proposed.

Departure 1 – Upper Level Setback

SMC 23.49.242.D.1a – International District Residential, Development Standards – Setbacks

Departure 2 – Upper Floor Lot Coverage

SMC 23.49.242.C.1 – International District Residential, Development, Development Standards – Coverage Limits

SMC 23.49.242.C.2. – International District Residential, Development Standards Coverage Limits

Departure 3 – Structural Building Overhangs

SMC 23.53.035.B.7 – Structural Building Overhangs and Minor Architectural Encroachments: Length

SMC 23.53.035.B.9 - Structural Building Overhangs and Minor Architectural Encroachments: Separation

The Board has also reviewed the proposed Alley Exception and recommends that the Director of the Department of Transportation approve the Exception, as proposed.

Alley Setback Exception

SMC 23.53.030 F1 - Minimum width required for existing alleys

The Board acknowledges the conditions on the north end of the alley make it unlikely that the alley connection to S. Washington Street will be restored due to the steep grade. Granting this exception will not alter spatial relationships or the historic character of the district

This action is based on the **following applicable sections of the International Special Review District Ordinance:**

SMC 23.66.030 - Certificates of approval - Application, review and appeals

SMC 23.66.032 – Contributing structures; determination of architectural or historic significance

SMC 23.66.302 – International Special Review District goals and objectives

SMC 23.66.306 – International District Residential (IDR) Zone goals and objectives

SMC 23.66.318 - Demolition

SMC 23.66.320 - Permitted uses

SMC 23.66.326 – Street level uses

SMC 23.66.328 – Uses above street level

SMC 23.66.332 – Height

SMC 23.66.336 – Exterior building finishes

- A. General Requirements.** To retain and enhance the visual order of the District, which is created by existing older buildings that provide unique character and form through their subtle detailing and quarter-block and half-block coverage, new development, including exterior remodeling, should respect the architectural and structural integrity of the building in which the work is undertaken, through sympathetic use of colors, material and style. Exterior building facades shall be of a scale compatible with surrounding structures. Window proportions, floor height, cornice line, street elevations and other elements of the building facades shall relate to the scale of the existing buildings in the immediate area.

B. Asian Design Character District

SMC 23.66.342 – Parking and access

This action is also based on the **following applicable sections of the Secretary of the Interior Standards:**

- 2.** The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

This is a non-contributing building. Removal will not adversely impact the integrity of the International Special Review District.

- 9.** New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

Here, the new work is differentiated from the old and is compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the surrounding environment, because the Board has determined that the scale, massing, materials/colors and proportions respond to the surrounding context and do not adversely impact the character of the International Special Review District.