City of Seattle
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Seattle Department of Neighborhoods
Kathy Nyland, Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 30, 2016

TO: Councilmember Tim Burgess, Chair of Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods, and Finance Committee
Councilmember Lisa Herbold, Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods, and Finance Committee
Councilmember Rob Johnson, Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods, and Finance Committee

FROM: Kathy Nyland, Director

RE: Statement of Legislative Intent 19-1-A-1 Historic Preservation Improvements

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Department of Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Program SLI 19-1-A-1
Council requested that the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) work with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) and the Seattle Information Technology Department (Seattle IT) to develop a plan for software and process improvements to enable Department of Neighborhoods (DON)'s Historic Preservation program to accept and review applications on-line, to post staff recommendations and board decisions on the web proximate to meetings, and to implement any other process improvements that the Department identifies. The plan should include software and hardware requirements and costs, process improvements identified by the department, training needs and any additional staffing required to implement the plan. The Council requests the plan be submitted to the Council's Seattle Public Utilities and Neighborhoods Committee by no later than June 30, 2016.

This response provides information on the Historic Preservation Program and its application process as well as options for posting materials online and accepting applications electronically. We will be reviewing these options in the context of the budget and may include a more specific proposal in the Proposed Budget.

Background
The Historic Preservation Program oversees individually designated City Landmarks and eight historic districts: Pioneer Square, Pike Place Market, International District, Ballard Avenue, Columbia City, Harvard-Belmont, Fort Lawton, and Sand Point Naval Air Station. The program's primary objectives are

to encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of historic properties for public and private use; to promote the recognition, protection and enhancement of landmark buildings, objects and sites of historic, architectural and cultural significance in Seattle; and to identify, protect, preserve and perpetuate the cultural, economic, historical and architectural qualities of historic landmarks and districts throughout the City. Program staff support the Landmarks Preservation Board and the boards and commissions tied to the eight preservation districts. They also assist in developing and implementing the City's historic preservation policies and programs.

The program's goal in regulating changes proposed to historic buildings, sites and objects is to manage change, not to eliminate or prevent change. Protection is provided by review and approval of Certificates of Approval for proposed modifications to the exteriors and, in some cases, the interiors of buildings, as well as modifications to sites and objects. In other cases, use is also reviewed. In addition to the Landmarks Preservation Board, there are eight other Boards, Committees and a Commission that review Certificates of Approval in the eight historic districts. There are approximately 90 volunteer Board members and over 180 regular Board/Commission/Committee public meetings per year.

The following are examples of changes that require a Certificate of Approval before work can begin, even if no permit from the Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) is required:

- Any change to the exterior of any building or structure
- Installation of any new sign or awning or changes to existing signs and awnings
- A change in the color the building or structure is painted
- Any change in a public right-of-way or other public space, including parks and sidewalks, whichmay include sidewalk displays, street lights etc.
- New construction in an historic district or associated with a individually designated landmark
- Demolition of any building or structure, either a designated landmark or within an historic district
- Changes to the interior that show from the street (such as seismic bracing and signage), changes to the interiors of individual business spaces in the Pike Place Market, and changes to the interior of some individually designated landmark buildings
- Site alterations in some cases
- A proposed new business or service or an expansion of current use (Pioneer Square, International Special Review District, and Pike Place Market)

<u>Certificate of Approval Application Process</u>

The following steps outline the application process:

Step 1: The applicant completes an application for a Certificate of Approval. Landmarks and preservation districts have separate application forms since requirements vary.

Step 2: The applicant submits the original of the completed application, any other required application submittal materials, and a check to cover the application fee. *Currently electronic submittals are not accepted given that the Boards or Commission need the hard copy to review at the public meetings.*

Step 3: The Historic Preservation Program Coordinator checks the application for completeness and compliance with guidelines and the applicable Seattle Municipal Code (SMC). The SMC requires that staff review the initial application submittal within 28 days of receipt. *(Our goal is to review 80% of applications within 10 days of submittal, which we have met or exceeded since the goal was put into place in 2012)*. After the application is determined complete, the coordinator places it on the agenda for the next public meeting of the Board or Commission responsible for overseeing the property. In some cases, the coordinator will also schedule the applicant to meet with a Design Review, Architectural Review or Use Review Committee. These committees meet prior to the full Board meeting and make a recommendation to the full Board.

Step 4: At the full meeting of the Board, the applicant presents their application and the Board members vote on it. Based on the vote, the application is approved, approved with conditions, or denied. Board staff then issues a Certificate of Approval or a Letter of Denial within 14 days of the Board or Commission meeting.

Note: *Every individually designated landmark has its own Controls and Incentives agreement, which is codified in a designating Ordinance and is unique and tailored to the landmark. This agreement outlines what changes require Board review, what can be reviewed administratively by staff, and what changes do not require review at all. Administrative review follows the same steps above, except it does not require review by the Board or Commission at a public meeting. The review time for administrative review is 14 days from initial application submittal.*

Application Fee

The application fee schedule for a Certificate of Approval is as follows, for physical alterations to the exterior and interior of building, and for alterations to sites and object, the fee is $10.00 for the first $1,500 of construction costs and $10.00 for each additional $5,000 of construction costs up to a maximum fee of $1,000. The fee for administrative review and for use review is a flat $10.00.

Options Analysis

Option 1: Require applicants to submit a PDF in addition to the hard copies

Staff could begin posting application documents, briefing packets, staff reports and Board decisions on the Historic Preservation Program web site. We could utilize a model similar to the Seattle Transportation Benefit District whereby links to documents are embedded in the agenda for a particular meeting.

As previously noted, we currently require hard copy submittal documents for Certificate of Approval applications; however, we could make it a requirement that applicants submit PDFs of the application materials in addition to the hard copies that are necessary for the Board to review at the public meetings.

One note of caution is that some of our applicants, many of whom are small business owners, may not have either access to technology or enough language proficiency to submit electronic application materials, which means more staff time will be necessary to assist applicants. We could also modify the

application form to include instructions and tips for submitting electronic documents. Based on a cursory review of the submittals from 2015, it is likely that approximately 30-40% of applicants (approximately 160 applicants) within the historic districts and approximately 10% of applicants (approximately 10 applicants) representing individually designated landmarks would need assistance scanning their applications.

Costs
The costs associated with this options would include upgrading equipment to scan documents efficiently, as well as additional staff time and training for scanning and posting numerous documents in a timely manner on a daily basis. The additional posting of documents would also presumably impact CityWeb staff time.

Item	Cost
Additional DON staff time: 0.25 - 0.5 FTE (Administrative Specialist)	$30,500-$46,500
Equipment cost: large format scanner	$500 - $2000

Pros
- Increase accessibility to documents, for the public, other City staff and Board members.

Cons
- Increase workload to post documents online as well as scanning documents that were not submitted electronically.
- This options does not meet the larger task of developing an electronic application submittal and review process, but is a shorter term solution to accessibility of documents.

Option 2: Develop system for online acceptance and review of applications
This option would address the design and development of a system for online acceptance and review of applications as stated in the SLI. This system could either be a custom in-house built system or using existing software (such as Accela which will be used by SDCI). This option would again provide a benefit in terms of accessibility to documents, but also have a long term plan for accepting and review applications on-line.

Costs
For this option the costs would be those costs associated with option 1 as well as the costs for software design and implementation and ongoing staff support of the system.

Item	Cost
Design, development and implementation of online system (assuming Accela)	$150,000
Additional DON Staff time : .25 to .5 FTE (Administrative Specialist)	$30,500-$46,500

Equipment cost: 10 large monitors	$2,500
Equipment cost: scanning equipment	$500-$2,000
*Seattle IT Business Analyst not factored into these costs	

Pros

- Increase public accessibility to Certificate of Approval documents via a public portal.
- Certificate of Approval materials could be viewed online by Board members prior to meetings.
- Staff could review Certificate of Approval application and supporting materials via computer.
- If Accela was chosen, external and internal applicants would have a one stop shop for permitting.
- Communications regarding Certificate of Approval correction notices and other communications with the applicant could be automated.
- Internal review stop alerts could be automated to ensure timely processing of application.
- Reports and metrics on Certificate of Approval Application forms can be automated.

Cons

- Each reviewer would need a computing device to perform duties. Requires large monitors for viewing documents provided by larger architectural firms and construction companies.
- Paper copies of Certificate of Approval application materials would still need to be available to Board members for review during public meetings.