



**City of Seattle**  
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

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

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

**Application Number:** 3014980  
**Council File Number:** 314125  
**Applicant Name:** Mark Adams for Finance and Administrative Service  
Department  
**Address of Proposal:** 4700 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW (Fire Station 32)

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Council Land Use Action to allow a new three-story, 20,000 sq. ft. public facility (City of Seattle, Fire Station 32). Parking for eleven vehicles will be provided on the site. Review includes demolition of existing structure (9,000). Project also includes 1,734 cu. yds. of grading.

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)

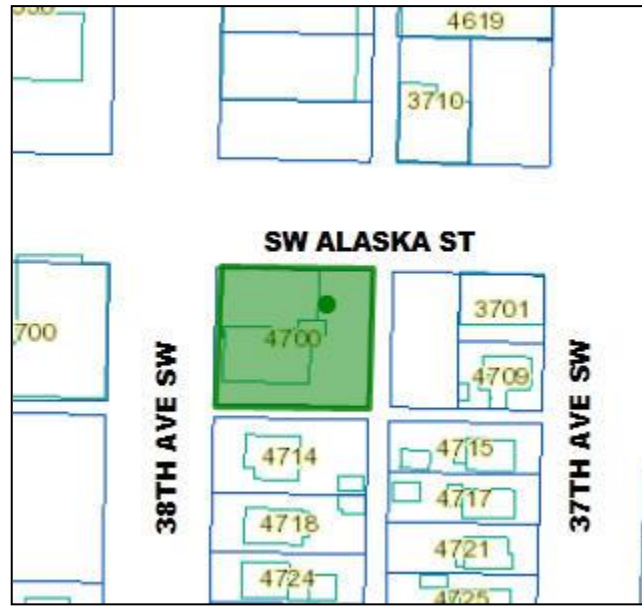
**SEPA DETERMINATION:**  Exempt  DNS  EIS  
 DNS with conditions  
 DNS involving non exempt grading or demolition or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

**BACKGROUND DATA**

Site and Vicinity Description

The 11,220 square foot site is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of SW Alaska Street and 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW within the West Seattle Junction. The site is zoned Neighborhood Commercial with a Pedestrian Overlay (NC3P-40). The site is currently developed with an existing two-story fire station (number 32) which has remained in operation since 1967.

The subject site and adjacent sites along SW Alaska Street are zoned Neighborhood Commercial with height ranging from 40 feet at the subject site to 85 feet to the west. Lots to the south of the subject lot are zoned single family (SF5000). A single family home is located directly south of the subject lot across the platted, improved alley. To the west of the lot is an existing two story commercial development. To the north across SW Alaska Street is a newer six story mixed used development. To the east, across a platted, improved alley, is a one story commercial structure with a surface parking lot along the alley.



The development pattern along SW Alaska Street is largely small-scale one and two story commercial structures with a few newer multistory mixed use developments. Single family residential development prevails to the south of the subject property.

SW Alaska Street and 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW are improved with a roadway, curb, gutter and sidewalk. The alleys located along the south and east property line are also improved with a concrete driving surface. SW Alaska Street is also designated as a principal pedestrian street by the Seattle Land Use Code.

The site contains approximately seven feet of grade change from the northwest corner of the lot to the southeast corner of the site. While the SW Alaska Street property line is mostly flat, the east and west property lines along 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW and the west alley contain between 5-7 feet of slope along the length of the lot line.

### Proposal Description

The project includes the demolition of the existing fire station and replaces it with a new 18,600 square foot fire station building. The proposed fire station will include four apparatus bays containing two fire trucks, a medic unit and a battalion chief. The two fire trucks will enter the building from the alley located along SW Alaska Street and exit by way of 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW. The two smaller pieces of apparatus, the medic unit and battalion chief, will both enter and exit from 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW. The apparatus bay would extend almost to the SW Alaska Street right-of-way with glass on the front and part of each side. In addition to the apparatus bays the main level will also the public entry, bunker gear storage and equipment cleaning stations and maintenance rooms. The partial second floor will contain the station office, training rooms, the battalion chief office and living quarters. These support functions will be located to the south setback from the SW Alaska street right-of-way. The third floor would be comprised of crew living quarters including, kitchen & dining, day room, laundry and storage areas. Parking for 11 vehicles will be provided in a two story parking garage accessed from the east alley and the south alley.

The project includes dedication of additional alley right-of-way for the alleys along the east and south property line.

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 in August 2013 and May of this year. 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/](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Commission/overview/)

Public Comments

One public comment was received during the public comment period which ended on November 2, 2014. The commenter expressed concern regarding the anticipated construction noise and noise generated from the fire trucks.

**ANALYSIS — COUNCIL CONCEPT APPROVAL**

Public facilities, including fire stations, may be permitted in commercial zones as a council conditional use when not meeting development standards pursuant to Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) section 23.47A.004 A3. Development standards for public facilities in commercial zones are found in SMC 23.47A. Section 23.76.064 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. SMC 23.76.064 classifies this decision as a legislative action (Type V). The Finance and Administrative Services Department seeks a Council Concept Approval under SMC 23.76.064 to modify two development standards, as follows:

<b>Table A</b>		
<b>Development Standard</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
SMC 23.47A.005 D1 and SMC 23.47A.008 C1	Fire Station Use is not listed as one of the required uses in a pedestrian zone.	A Fire Station is proposed in a pedestrian zone.
SMC 23.47A.032 B1b	Parking must be separated from the street by another permitted use.	Surface parking is proposed along SW Alaska Street.

SMC 23.76.050 requires the DPD Director to prepare a written report on Type V application, which includes the following analysis and information:

- 1. The written recommendations or comments of any affected City departments and other governmental agencies having an interest in the application;***

No written recommendations or comments were received from affected City departments and/or other governmental agencies have an interest in the application.

**2. Responses to written comments submitted by interested citizens;**

As noted previously one public comment was received during the public comment period which ended on November 2, 2014. The commenter expressed concern regarding the anticipated construction noise and noise generated from the fire trucks.

City staff has conversed by email with the neighbor on several occasions to clarify the design proposal and Seattle Land Use Code requirements.

This person has been added to the notice list for the proposal. Analysis of the relationship of the proposal to the neighboring sites is found below.

**3. An evaluation of the proposal based on the standards and criteria for the approval sought and consistency with applicable City policies;**

Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 23.47A.004 D3 includes standards and criteria for the proposed public facility use.

*In all NC zones and C zones, uses in public facilities not meeting development standards may be permitted by the Council, and the Council may waive or grant departures from development standards, if the following criteria are satisfied:*

*a. The project provides unique services that are not provided to the community by the private sector, such as police and fire stations;*

The project provides a unique service as a fire station.

*b. The proposed location is required to meet specific public service delivery needs;*

The project is located so that it can rapidly and adequately respond to emergencies, which is an essential public service. The station is a neighborhood station serving the West Seattle Junction.

The location of Fire Station No. 32 has been the same since 1976. It is situated as an integral element in the provision of fire and medical emergency services in Seattle. It is located on a City owned site in a narrow commercial area along SW Alaska Street with residential areas to the east and west. The location is necessary for the seamless provision of Fire Department services in this area of the City and a modern Fire Station is necessary here. The new station would better accommodate modern equipment and provide better accommodations and work areas for fire fighters.

*c. The waiver of or departure from the development standards is necessary to meet specific public service delivery needs; and*

Location in Pedestrian Zone

A modification is requested to allow a Fire Station along a Principal Pedestrian Street. SMC 23.47A.005.E.1 lists 14 specific uses which are permitted along the SW Alaska Street right-of-way. These uses are deemed to complement and encourage a highly pedestrian public area. Most of them are commercial in nature such as retail, restaurant, lodging, and theatres. Parks are

allowed; as are museums, community centers and religious facilities. Fire Stations are not on this list of allowed uses in along a Pedestrian designated street.

Like the current station at the site this one would provide a pleasant pedestrian aspect with landscaping and attractive architecture along SW Alaska Street. The SW Alaska Street building façade includes a two story transparent façade allowing pedestrian and vehicles to see directly into the apparatus bay.

Emergency vehicle exists have been located on 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW to minimize impacts to the pedestrian environment along SW Alaska Street. Non-emergency vehicles using the parking lot will access the site through the existing alleys.

Modification of the provision of SMC 23.47.005.E.1 and of 23.47A.008.C.1 to include a Fire Station as an allowed use is necessary so that Station 32 can be reconstructed in its existing location and should, therefore, be approved.

### Location of Parking

A modification is requested to allow the fire fighter vehicular parking adjacent to the SW Alaska Street right-of-way. SMC 23.47A.032 B1b states that street level parking shall be separated from the street-level, street-facing façade by another permitted use. The requirement to locate parking behind another permitted use is intended to encourage an active, highly pedestrian street façade. The requirement intends to eliminate pedestrian, vehicular conflicts by locating parking away from the sidewalk.

As noted above, the proposed fire station will provide a pleasant pedestrian aspect with landscaping and attractive architecture along SW Alaska Street. The SW Alaska Street building façade includes a two story transparent façade allowing pedestrian and vehicles to see directly into the apparatus bay. The proposed fire fighter parking is located 47 feet from the SW Alaska Street property line. Extensive landscaping has been provided within the street right-of-way and between the sidewalk and the apparatus apron to screen the parking from pedestrian views. Vehicular access to the parking area is provided by way of an existing alley located off SW Alaska Street to remove the need for any additional curbcuts along the pedestrian sidewalk.

The staff parking for Fire Station 32 is necessary for on-duty firefighters to park their vehicles at the beginning of their 24 hr. shift. Two levels are parking are provided: the upper parking is screened from view by a 5'-4" height concrete and metal screen wall, while the lower parking area is visible from SW Alaska Street.

The rear parking apron of the fire station, an exterior open program area, occupies the 47 foot setback space between the parking and SW Alaska Street. The visibility of the parking from SW Alaska Street is a result of the very tight site area relative to program area that this project has had to resolve. Efficient organization of the site features was required with exterior spaces being used for multiple functions, and uses stacked vertically to conserve space. The rear apron, an extension of the fire station apparatus bay to the exterior, typically provides rear door access for returning fire apparatus and space for equipment checks, hose washing, and drilling exercises. For efficiency, the rear apron at this station also provides vehicle access to the lower parking area and access to the trash/recycling storage for collection. The staff parking arrangement is the most efficient possible with two levels of tandem parking spaces (one car parking behind

another) stacked vertically, one on top of the other. The upper parking level is accessed from the south alley, making use of the 7.5 feet of grade change across the site. This arrangement reduced the overall parking space footprint by half, and eliminated the need for dedicated parking circulation aisles since, in this configuration, the alleys and rear apron provide the circulation space for parking.

Modification of the provision of SMC 23.47A.032 B1b to allow parking that is not separated from the street facing façade by another permitted use is necessary so that Station 39 can be reconstructed in its existing location and should, therefore, be approved.

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

The proposed Fire Station 32 would be located on the same commercially zoned corner as the existing station. The fire station has been designed to locate the most impactful fire station program requirements, the apparatus bay, to the north adjacent to the commercially zoned uses and the arterial street. The more impactful fire truck operations are separated from adjacent single family zones to the south by the lower impact crew office and sleeping quarters. A public alley separates the site from single family zoned neighborhood to the south. In the north, west and east directions, the proposal fits well with its neighborhood commercial context and is buffered by public right-of-ways.

The subject lot is located 12 feet from the single family zoned lot, across an improved concrete alley. The fire station will be located between 1-4 feet from the property line. In total the cumulative setback between the new building and the adjacent single family residence is approximately 26-30 feet. The fire station is located to the north of the existing single family residence so there will be no shadow impact to the existing residence. The fire station locates the circulation stair, office and bunk rooms along the south façade to minimize noise impacts to the adjacent single family residence. Limited windows have been incorporated into the south façade to maximize privacy for the adjacent single family residence. The existing fire station locates six angled parking stalls directly off the alley. The new facility will locate six parking stalls in a parking garage off of the alley which will minimize visual and circulation impacts within the alley.

The façade facing the single family home will include a variety of high quality materials to minimize the scale of the structure and add texture. Architectural concrete will be used for the circulation stair and first story. Metal panels will be used for the second story.

The relationship of the proposal to the surrounding area has been considered the building and program siting has been designed to successfully place the facility in its surrounding context.

#### ***4. All environmental documentation, including any checklist, EIS or DNS;***

The proposed public facility is subject to a SEPA threshold determination and EIS requirements according to SMC 25.05.800 A2c Table B, because the project proposal includes the construction of a new building that exceeds 4,000 square feet gross floor area in a neighborhood commercial zone. The SEPA analysis follows.

5. *The Director's recommendation to approve, approve with conditions, or deny a proposal.*

Based on the analysis provided, above, DPD recommends approval of the proposed fire station in a commercial zone with the requested modification to development standards as described in Table A.

### **RECOMMENDATION – COUNCIL APPROVALS**

DPD **recommends approval** of the proposed fire station use in a Neighborhood Commercial zone.

### **ANALYSIS - SEPA**

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this project was made in the environmental checklist submitted by the applicant dated March 24, 2014 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; 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.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Construction activities including construction worker commutes, truck trips, the operation of construction equipment and machinery, and the manufacture of the construction materials themselves result in increases in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions which adversely impact air quality and contribute to climate change and global warming. While these impacts are adverse, they are not expected to be significant.

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 7:00 PM on weekdays and 9:00 AM and 7:00 PM on weekends. If extended construction hours are desired, the applicant may seek approval from DPD through a Noise Variance request. The applicant's environmental checklist does not indicate that extended hours are anticipated. The limitations stipulated in the Noise Ordinance are sufficient to mitigate noise impacts; therefore no additional SEPA conditioning is necessary to mitigation noise impacts.

Long-Term Impacts

Long-term or use related impacts should be mostly comparable to those already generated by the existing use. The existing fire station contains three apparatus bays and the new fire station will include four bays. A new Battalion Chief will be located on site increasing the crew by one person. Hence, long-term impacts are not considered significant because they are minor in scope.

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."*

Less intensive zoning is present to the south; however, the proposed building meets land use code setbacks and is under height based on the allowed zone height limit of 40 feet. The station will be located 1-4 feet away from the south property line which abuts an alley and SF5000 zone. In total the cumulative setback between the new fire station and the existing single family



residence is between 26-30 feet. The station will reach a height of 34 feet along the south property line. No mitigation for height, bulk and scale is warranted per SEPA policy.

Noise

The project is expected to generate operational noise from fire alarms, radios, emergency generator and sirens. Emergency response vehicles (fire engines, ladder trucks and aid vehicles) will use sirens when leaving the site. The site is close to residential uses and these operational noises will likely be heard and could be especially adverse in the early morning and in the evening. The Seattle Noise Control Ordinance exempts sounds created by fire alarms and emergency vehicles in that they are essential for a fire station. The emergency generator will be tested monthly for approximately ten minutes during regular business hours. The generator will have a sound attenuated, weatherproof enclosure that will be located below grade to minimize noise impact on the neighborhood during month testing or in event of an emergency. All these noises will be intermittent and of short duration, and are unavoidable; therefore, SEPA mitigation is not appropriate.

**RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS – COUNCIL LAND USE ACTION**

None.

**RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS - SEPA**

None.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (signature on file) Date: November 13, 2014  
Lindsay King, Senior Land Use Planner  
Department of Planning and Development

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