



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

Project Number: 3035787-SD
Applicant Name: Matt Rumbaugh, NAC Architects for Seattle Public Schools
Address of Proposal: 11725 1st Ave NE

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Public School Departure to construct an approximately 93,000 sf elementary school. (Northgate 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 D1c)
2. To allow less than required parking. (SMC 23.54.015)
3. To allow on street bus loading (SMC 23.51B.002I4b)
4. To allow a changing image electronic sign. (SMC 23.55.020B)
5. To allow less than code required long term bicycle parking (SMC 23.54.015K)

SITE AND VICINITY

Site Zone: Single Family (SF 7200)

Nearby Zones: Surrounded by Single Family 7200 zoning.

ECAs: Steep slope Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) are mapped at the site.

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Project Description

Seattle Public Schools (SPS) proposes to construct a new 93,000 square foot elementary school. Project documents are available in the city 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 agency. A Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) was issued by Seattle Public Schools on November 3, 2020. An appeal was registered. On February 11, 2021, the DNS was recommended to be affirmed by the SPS Hearing Examiner with no revisions or additions and accepted by the SPS SEPA official on February 16, 2021.

Public Comment

The Department of Neighborhoods (DON) published a notice of DON processes 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.

Development Standard Departure

The Seattle School District submitted a request for several departures from certain Seattle Municipal Code Development Standards (SMC 23.51B) for the proposed elementary 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 DON holding public meetings.

The final Development Standard Departure Report 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

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 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 recommendation, 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:

- a. *Relationship to Surrounding Areas: The Advisory Committee (DON) 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 Request and Advisory Committee (DON) 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 elementary school.

The City initiated the Development Standard Departure Process, pursuant to SMC 23.44.017 and SMC 23.79. The code requires that the Department of Neighborhoods convene an Advisory Committee (DON) when the School District proposes a departure from the development standards identified under the code.

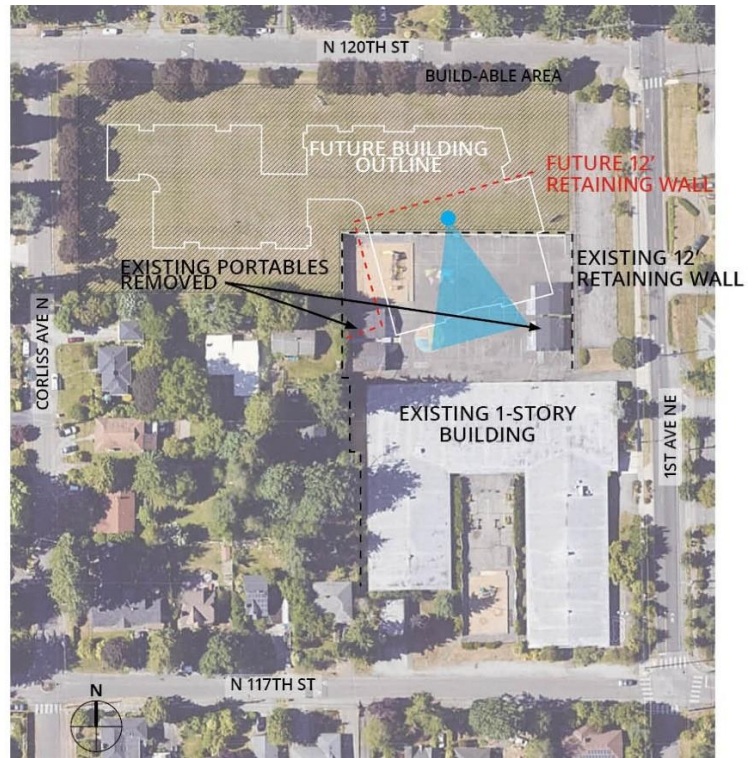
The purposes of the Development Standard Departure Advisory Committee (DON) are: 1) to gather public comment and evaluate the proposed departures for consistency with the objectives and intent of the City’s land use policies to ensure that the proposed facility is compatible with the character and use of its surroundings; and 2) to develop a report and recommendation to the City Department of Construction and Inspections from the Department of Neighborhoods.

Following completion of the Recommendation Report and its transmittal to the City’s Department of Construction and Inspections, SDCI, will publish the Director’s decision. The Director of the Department of Construction and Inspections (SCDI) 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. This decision is appealable to the City hearing examiner.

The Department of Neighborhoods sent notices to residents within 600 feet of the proposed new school and to a list of individuals and organizations that had shown interest in other community issues in the vicinity.

In order to accommodate the educational program for this project, the District requested the following departures from the development standards found in SMC 23.51B.002.

On November 22, 2019, Seattle Public Schools submitted a request for departures from (5) five Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) development standards to accommodate the construction of a new school building and demolition of the existing school building located at 11725 1st Ave NE, Seattle.



Northgate Elementary School has a current enrollment of approximately 250 students with a historical maximum student population of 494. A new school building with a capacity of 650 students is proposed for the site to address current and future enrollment growth in the area. The new school building is planned to be constructed while students are occupying the existing school building. Therefore, the new building will be located on the northern portion of the site (currently a grass field) since the existing school building is located on the southern portion of the site. After construction of the new school building, students/staff will move in and occupy that building so that the old school building can be demolished. The new playground and playfield will be constructed at the location of the old school building.

The existing site for Northgate Elementary School has been developed so that the existing school building and play areas are located at the southern portion of the site with a retaining wall (approximately 12 feet tall) separating the school area from the grass playfield above. Since this grass field is 12 feet above the rest of the school area, it is difficult to supervise and is therefore a highly underutilized part of the school property. The proposed design straddles the upper and lower plateaus of the site with the 2-story academic portion of the building on the upper area with the commons/cafeteria and gymnasium located on the lower area. This allows the commons/cafeteria and gymnasium areas to be located on the same level as the playground and field allowing the students to fully utilize the property during the school day.

The existing school building was nominated by Seattle Public School for consideration by the Landmarks Preservation Board. After review by the Landmarks Preservation Board on March 4, 2020, the Board did not approve the nomination and therefore the building is not considered historic and can be demolished.

Neighborhood Characteristics

The existing site is approximately 5.77 acres (251,365 sf), within the Northgate area of Seattle and bounded by N. 120th Street, 1st Avenue NE, N. 117th Street, and Corliss Ave N. The property is located within the SF 7200 zoning and is surrounded by SF7200 zoning. All adjacent properties are single family residences except for a church located across 1st Ave NE.

Access to the site occurs from any of the 4 street frontages. This will remain the case after construction of the new school. Primary access to the site will be on N. 120th St. and 1st Ave NE. A public plaza at the corner of N. 120th and 1st Ave NE allows pedestrians to enter the building from either street frontage. Curb-side parking will be reserved along N. 120th Street for parent drop-off and pick-up of students. Bus drop-off will be provided along 1st Ave NE in a pull-out lane with potential to have buses on N. 120th Street if needed. A parking area is provided along 1st Ave NE that includes accessible stalls and provides access to the main entry at the property corner.

Requests for Departure and Process

The City initiated the Development Standard Departure Process, pursuant to SMC 23.44.006F and 23.79. The Code requires that the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) convene a Development Standard Advisory DON (hereinafter as the DON) when the School District proposes a departure from development standards identified in the Land Use Code. These standards are commonly referred to as the “zoning code.”

The purpose of the DON process 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) (SMC 23.79.008).

Due to public health mandates on social distancing and limited gatherings related to COVID-19, the Seattle City Council approved legislation on April 27, 2020 to keep key projects safely moving forward by suspending public meeting requirements. The legislation was extended. While this ordinance is in effect, in lieu of the DON holding public meetings, 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.

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.

District Departure Requests

The Northgate Elementary School is proposed to be replaced with a new building and site development to accommodate up to 650 students. The total building area will be approximately

93,500 sf of useable school area not including approximately 3,500 sf of a covered play area and covered bike parking.

To accommodate the education program for this project, the District requested the following



five departures from provisions of the SMC 23.51B.

Departure #1 – Greater than Allowed Building Height (SMC 23.51B.002.D.1.b)

For new public school construction on existing public school sites, the maximum permitted height is 35 feet plus 15 feet for a pitched roof. All parts of the roof above the height limit must be pitched at a rate of not less than 4:12. No portion of a shed roof is permitted to extend beyond the 35-foot height limit under this provision.



North Building Elevation at N 120th St



East Building Elevation at 1st Ave NE

KEY

- 35'-0" (MAX. HEIGHT) -----
- AVG. EXISTING GRADE - - - - -
- AREA ABOVE 35'-0" LIMIT [Red Box]

Departure Requested: 12 feet above the height limit or 47 feet.

Departure #2 – Less than Required Off-street Parking SMC 23.54.015

Code requires one parking space for each 80 square feet of all auditoria or public assembly rooms, or one space for every eight fixed seats in auditoria or public assembly rooms containing fixed seats, for new public schools on a new or existing public school site.

Departure Requested: to allow for 110 parking spaces less than the code required parking to be provided on-site. (140 required stalls – 30 proposed stalls = 110 stall departure)

30 Proposed Parking Spaces

26 proposed parking stalls in the main lot

4 additional parking stalls to be located in the service yard



Departure #3 – Off-street Bus Loading (SMC 23.51B.002.I.4.b)

When a public school is remodeled or rebuilt at the same site, an existing on-street bus loading area is allowed if the following conditions are met:

- a. The school site is not proposed to be expanded.
- b. The student capacity of the school is not being expanded by more than 25 percent; and
- c. The location of the current on-street bus loading remains the same.

Departure Requested: On-Street Bus Loading on both 1st Ave NE and N. 117th Street.



Departure #4 – Double-Sided, Electronic, Changing Image Message Board (SMC 23.55.020.B)

The land use code states that in single family zones no flashing, changing image or message board signs shall be permitted. A departure is requested to install a double-sided, electronic, changing image sign.

Departure Requested: To install a double-sided, electronic, changing image message board.

Departure #5 –Long Term Bicycle Parking Quantity (SMC 23.54.015.K)

Long-term parking for bicycles shall be for bicycles parked four or more hours (three per classroom).

Departure Requested: to allow for 72 bicycle parking spaces less than the code required parking to be provided on-site. [108 required stalls – 36 proposed stalls = 72 stall departure requested]

DON Review and Recommendations

Public Comment

The public comment period opened on May 27, 2020. A press release was sent out directly to media outlets and shared in the Northgate newsletter and staff bulletin on 5/29, sent out to a project distribution list of approximately 80 individuals and postcards sent to addresses within approximately 600 ft of the school. Signs were posted at the perimeter of the school requesting public comment and shared in the Land Use Information Bulletin (LUIB).

A total of 16 public comments were received. These are discussed below.

Review Criteria

Section 23.79 of the Code directs the DON to evaluate the requested departures for consistency with the general objectives and intent of the Code, and to balance the interrelationships among the following factors:

- a. Relationship to Surrounding Areas:
 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.
- 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.

Application of Review Criteria to Requested Departures and DON Recommendations

The Seattle Municipal Code intent is to grant departures from the requirements of the Municipal Code to accommodate the educational needs of the programs in single family zoned neighborhoods. The Seattle School District has demonstrated that it cannot accommodate the program necessary for this area without granting departures for: 1) height, 2) parking, 3) long term bicycle parking, and 5) a double-sided, electronic, changing image message board.

Need for Departures.

The community expressed concern that the proposed project did not adequately mitigate the impacts of this project on the neighborhood, such as parking and the reduced size of the play field. There were no comments suggesting that a new school was not needed, or that play space be scarified for more parking, or parking scarified for play space. Ten comments cards were received expressing concern that the project would have impacts on the neighborhood, and there were comments expressing support and excitement for a needed new school.

DEPARTURE #1 – GREATER THAN ALLOWED BUILDING HEIGHT

- 1) Appropriateness in relation to the character and scale of the surrounding area were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about the school's increased height having an impact on its relationship to the surrounding neighborhood.
- 2) Presence of edges (significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features) which provide a transition in scale were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about the school's increased height having an impact on the transition in scale.
- 3) Location and design of structures to reduce the appearance of bulk were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about the school's increased height having an impact on the appearance of bulk.
- 4) Impacts on traffic, noise, circulation and parking in the area were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about the school's increased height having an impact on traffic, circulation and parking in the neighborhood.
- 5) Impacts on housing and open space were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about the school's increased height having an impact on housing and open space.

Comments critical of the requested departure felt that the increased height of the school should equate to preservation or increase in size of the playfield used heavily by the community.

Others saw the increased height as necessary in order to locate the mechanical spaces on the roof and designed to be setback from the buildings edge to minimize their visibility from the street level.

After consideration of the above, the Department of Neighborhoods recommends:

Recommendation #1 – That the departure to allow greater than allowed building height be GRANTED as requested by Seattle Public Schools.

DEPARTURE #2 – LESS THAN REQUIRED OFF-STREET PARKING

- 1) Appropriateness in relation to the character and scale of the surrounding area were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about less than require off- street parking having an impact on its relationship to the surrounding area.
- 2) Presence of edges (significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features) which provide a transition in scale were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about less than require off-street parking having an impact on the transition in scale.
- 3) Location and design of structures to reduce the appearance of bulk were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about less than require off-street parking having an impact on the appearance of bulk.

- 4) Impacts on traffic, noise, circulation, and parking in the area were considered by the community, and they did have concerns about less than required off-street parking having an impact on traffic, circulation and parking the neighborhood, which were addressed in the recommended conditions.
- 5) Impacts on housing and open space were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about less than require off-street parking having an impact on housing and open space.

Most comments received were in response to the number of on-site parking spaces in relation to the growing size of the school and the impacts of parking on city streets will have on the neighborhood. This is a common discussion during Seattle Public School project proposals due to their urban locations. Active school communication and enforcement of the School Transportation Plan will help the proposed amount of parking meet the needs of the school and neighborhood.

Others voiced support for providing play space rather than additional parking. The Transportation Technical Report showed there to be a low utilization of street parking around the school, allowing for both residents and school staff to park on the street if needed.

After consideration of the above, the Department of Neighborhoods recommends:

Recommendation #2—That the departure to allow less than required off-street parking be GRANTED as requested by Seattle Public Schools without modification and with the following conditions:

- 1) School Transportation Plan: Prior to the school reopening, the District and school Principal should establish a School Transportation Plan to educate families about the access load/unload procedures for the site layout. The Plan 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 Seattle School Safety DON: The District should continue the ongoing engagement with the Seattle School Safety DON (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 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. As part of the informal shared parking-facility use with the church, the school Principal would continue to coordinate event schedules to avoid concurrent large evening events at both sites.
- 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.

DEPARTURE #3 – ON-STREET BUS LOADING

- 1) Appropriateness in relation to the character and scale of the surrounding area were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about on-street bus loading having an impact on the surrounding area.
- 2) Presence of edges (significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features) which provide a transition in scale were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about on-street bus loading having an impact on the transition in scale.
- 3) Location and design of structures to reduce the appearance of bulk were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about on-street bus loading having an impact on the appearance of bulk.
- 4) Impacts on traffic, noise, circulation and parking in the area were considered by the community, and they did have concerns about on-street bus loading having an impact on traffic, circulation and parking the neighborhood.
- 5) Impacts on housing and open space were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about on-street bus loading having an impact on housing and open space.

One comment was received saying buses parked on the street would cause difficulty for passing cars. There were several comments in support of the requested departure. In an effort to preserve the school site for educational purposes, locating bus loading off site is a reasonable solution considering the limited time buses will be occupying this space on 1st Ave NE and N 117th St.

After consideration of the above, the Department of Neighborhoods recommends:

Recommendation #3 – That the departure to allow on-street bus loading be GRANTED as requested by the Seattle Public Schools without modification.

DEPARTURE #4 – DOUBLE-SIDED, ELECTRONIC, CHANGING IMAGE MESSAGE BOARD

- 1) Appropriateness in relation to the character and scale of the surrounding area were considered by the community, and they did have concerns about a message board having an impact on the surrounding area. The community discussed a variety of mitigation measures for the sign design and use and recommended conditions listed below.
- 2) Presence of edges (significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features) which provide a transition in scale were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about a message board having an impact on the transition in scale.
- 3) Location and design of structures to reduce the appearance of bulk were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about a message board having an impact on the appearance of bulk.
- 4) Impacts on traffic, noise, circulation and parking in the area were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about a message board having an impact on traffic, circulation and parking the neighborhood.
- 5) Impacts on housing and open space were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about a message board having an impact on housing and open space.

There was a concern from a neighbor that the sign would be “Las Vegas style.” The conditions listed below would prevent this concern materializing. Use of this sign could benefit families

who speak languages other than English, notify the community of upcoming events, as well as notify families if there is an emergency.

After consideration of the above, the Department of Neighborhoods recommends:

Recommendation #4—That the departure to allow an electronic message board be GRANTED as requested by the Seattle Public Schools without modification and with the following conditions:

- 1) The sign must use a monochromatic color scheme.
- 2) The images on the sign must be non-flashing.
- 3) Time of use is restricted to 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

DEPARTURE #5 – LONG TERM BIKE STORAGE QUANTITY

- 1) Appropriateness in relation to the character and scale of the surrounding area were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about less than required long term bike storage quantity having an impact on its relationship to the surrounding area.
- 2) Presence of edges (significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features) which provide a transition in scale were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about less than required long term bike storage quantity having an impact on the transition in scale.
- 3) Location and design of structures to reduce the appearance of bulk were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about less than required long term bike storage quantity having an impact on the appearance of bulk.
- 4) Impacts on traffic, noise, circulation, and parking in the area were considered by the community, and they did have concerns about less than required long term bike storage quantity having an impact on traffic, circulation and parking the neighborhood, which were addressed in the recommended conditions.
- 5) Impacts on housing and open space were considered by the community, and they did not have concerns about less than required long term bike storage quantity having an impact on housing and open space.

Access to safe, secure, long-term bicycle parking is something the city and community value. The community wants to encourage bicycle parking and having a place to park bikes during the day is believed to be essential in encouraging that.

After consideration of the above, the Department of Neighborhoods recommends:

Recommendation #5—That the departure to allow about less than required long term bike storage quantity be GRANTED as requested by the Seattle Public Schools with the following condition:

- 1) Seattle Public Schools provide at a minimum 50% of the code required number of long-term bike parking stalls.

Director's Analysis

The Director's decision shall be based on an evaluation of the factors set forth in Section 23.79.008 C1, the majority recommendations and minority reports of the DON, (DON, emergency legislation) and comments from the public.

Section 23.79.008 C1 criteria are the following:

a. Relationship to Surrounding Areas: The Advisory DON 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.*

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.

a. Relationship to Surrounding Areas:

Departure #1 – To allow greater than allowed building height. (SMC 23.51B.002 D1c)

For new public schools on existing public school sites, the maximum height permitted is 35 feet plus 15 feet for a pitched roof. The District requested a departure to allow 12 feet above the height limit. The over height area is screened and covered mechanical equipment located in two areas on the rooftop. The over height areas are setback 23 feet from the nearest building edge and approximately 75 feet from the north property line.

The additional height requested by SPS was met with a mix of concern and support. The concern was that outdoor open play space was not increased. After consideration, the DON recommended approval of the departure without conditions.

The departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the surrounding area. The over height area will be the mechanical equipment rooms which are centralized within the building footprint and limited in area. A transition in scale is achieved in part by the topography of the sloping site, the elevation drop along 120th Street, width of the existing rights of way, and existing vegetation. The over height areas will increase the appearance of bulk but is commensurate with the overall scale of the proposal.

The Director finds that the height departure will not exacerbate existing traffic, noise, circulation or significant impacts on housing in the area. The areas of additional height are interior to the site and not at the edge of the school or near property lines.

Considering the criteria, the recommendations from the Department of Neighborhoods, and public comments, the Director grants the departure request with no conditions.

Departure #2 – To allow less than required parking. (SMC 23.54.015)

Departure #2 is a School District request to allow less than the Code required parking. The zoning code requires 140 parking stalls. The school district requested a departure to allow for 110 parking spaces fewer than the code required parking. 30 parking stalls are proposed.

After consideration, the DON recommended that the departure to allow less than required parking be granted as requested by the Seattle Public Schools with conditions. In evaluating this departure request, the Director has reviewed the District required school program, 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 amount will help fill needs of parking for staff and visitors.

There is existing parking at the school. The departure will not significantly exacerbate existing traffic, noise, circulation, or impact housing in the area. Open space at the site will be impacted by the additional parking since some play area will be dedicated to parking.

A site plan with a configuration showing the full required parking of 140 spaces was included in the departure analysis. Parking for 140 parking stalls would consume most of the outdoor open space and play area. Considering the criteria, the recommendations from the DON, and public comments, the Director grants the departure request with the following suggested conditions to provide planning and communication to the neighborhood regarding transportation to and from school, communication, and right of way signage.

- 1) **Create a School Transportation Plan:** Prior to school opening, the District and school principal should create a School Transportation Plan to educate parents and students about preferred access and circulation. The effort should encourage supervised walking (such as walking school buses), carpooling, and school bus ridership for those eligible. The plan should define clear procedures and travel routes and preferred load/unload locations. The Plan should be posted on the school website and updated each school year.
- 2) **Engage Seattle School Safety Committee:** The District should engage with the Seattle School Safety Committee (led by SDOT) to review walk routes and determine if any changes should be made to crosswalk locations, signage, pavement markings, school zone speed limits, or crossing guard locations and the school should make improvements as possible.
- 3) **Develop Neighborhood Communication Report for School Events:** The District and school administration should develop a neighborhood communication report to inform nearby neighbors of events scheduled for each school year. The plan should be updated annually (or as events are scheduled) and should provide information about the dates, times, and rough magnitude of attendance. 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. The Report should be posted on the school website and updated each school year.
- 4) **Update right-of-way and curb-side signage:** The District should work with SDOT to confirm the locations, extent, and signage of school-bus and passenger-vehicle load/unload zones adjacent to the school site.

DEPARTURE #3 – on street bus loading (SMC 23.51b.002i)

Departure #3 is a School District request to allow school bus load and unload to occur on street rather than on the school property. The Land Use Code requires that bus loading and unloading occur on site and not on the street. Section 23.51B I (1) allows yards and setbacks to be used and

23.51B I (3) stipulates that departures from the requirements and standards for bus and truck loading and unloading areas and berths may be granted or required pursuant to the procedures and criteria set forth in Chapter 23.79 only when departure would contribute to reduced demolition of residential structures.

Currently bus load and unload occur on North 117th Street. The proposal team worked with SDOT to determine the optimum location for bus load and unload along the school property line. The Seattle School District requested that bus loading and unloading occur along both 1st Avenue NE and occasionally along North 117th Street. The DON discussed the departure request.

The DON balanced the effects of allowing on-street bus loading and unloading against the need to preserve critical school open space. The District noted that open space is already below the amount recommended in educational standards. The DON noted that on-site bus load and unload area and retaining the open space might so constrain the site that purchase of adjacent property might be required to accommodate the combination of required on-site parking and bus load and unload. In consideration of the above, the DON recommends that the departure for on-street bus load and unload be approved with no conditions.

The Director finds that the departure to be appropriate for the conditions. There is enough space in both 1st Avenue NE and North 117th Street rights of way to accommodate bus load and unload as well as traffic lanes for travel. The departure will not exacerbate existing traffic, noise, circulation, or impact housing in the area.

Considering the criteria, the recommendations from the DON, and public comments, the Director agrees with the recommendation and approves the departure with no conditions.

DEPARTURE #4 – double-sided, electronic, changing image message board (SMC 23.55.020b)

Departure #4 is a School District request to allow a changing image electronic message board in the single-family zone. Changing image message boards are not allowed in single family zones.

The DON considered the changing image development standard and understood the School District's desire to provide a way to communicate to the community and school, students and staff. The DON was favorable to the benefits of a changing image message board to post school information, post in multiple languages, provide a means of information for those who do not have internet or mobile devices, and to be used in emergencies for neighborhood communication.

After consideration, the DON recommended that the departure be granted as requested by Seattle Public Schools with conditions.

The Director finds that the departure will not impact the character and scale of the surrounding area, presence of edges, or exacerbate existing traffic, noise, circulation, or housing in the area. The departure request does not have impacts on housing. The departure request does not impact the appearance of bulk or open space at the site. Considering the criteria, the recommendations from the DON and public comments, the Director grants the departure request with the conditions as follows:

1. The message board must use a monochromatic color scheme.

2. The images on the message board must not be flashing, scrolling, tumbling or use other moving graphics.
3. Time of use is restricted to 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

DEPARTURE #5 – bike storage quantity (SMC 23.54.015K)

Departure #5 is a School District request to allow less than code required long term bicycle storage per SMC 23.54.015K.

The zoning code requires 108 long term parking stalls defined as bicycle parking for four hours or longer. The school district requested a departure to allow for 36 parking spaces, 72 fewer than the code required parking.

Bicycle parking development standards are not specific development standards to public schools. Public schools use the same development standards for bicycle and vehicle parking as other developments in the city per standards found in Seattle Municipal Code 23.54.015K, Table D. The code requires both long- and short-term bicycle parking. Long term bicycle parking is generally aimed at bicycle parking for users who need it longer than four hours. Short term bicycle parking is defined as parking less than four hours. It is anticipated that long-term parking will be use by staff, teachers, and students. Short term bicycle parking would better suit the needs of half day volunteers, visitors, and those who drop off materials, lunches, etc.

After consideration, DON recommended that the departure to allow less than required parking be approved as requested by the Seattle Public Schools with a condition to provide 50% of the code required long term bicycle parking or 54 spaces.

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

The Director finds that the departure as recommended and conditioned by the DON to be appropriate for the conditions. Fifty percent of the required long-term bicycle parking would be 54 long term bicycle parking spaces. The departure of bicycle parking spaces will not exacerbate existing traffic, noise, circulation, or impact housing in the area. Open space at the site will be impacted by the additional parking since some outdoor area will be dedicated to bicycle parking.

Considering the criteria, the recommendations from the DON, and public comments, the Director agrees with the DON recommendation and condition to provide 50% of the required long-term bicycle parking.

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 DON considered the overall need for 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 programs to be located in proposed buildings and school sites. In this case, the Seattle School District stated that both the need for the departures 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 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-DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The public school development standard departures 2, 4, and 5 are **GRANTED WITH CONDITIONS**. Departure requests 1 and 3 are GRANTED.

CONDITIONS –SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

Prior to building occupancy

1. 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.

For the life of the project

2. School Transportation Plan: Prior to the school reopening, the District and school Principal should establish a School Transportation Plan to educate families about the access load/unload procedures for the site layout. The plan 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.
3. 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.
4. Develop 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. As part of the informal

shared parking-facility use with the church, the school Principal would continue to coordinate event schedules to avoid concurrent large evening events at both sites.

5. The double-sided, electronic, changing image message board is allowed with the following conditions:
 - 1) The sign must use a monochromatic color scheme.
 - 2) The images on the sign must be non-flashing.
 - 3) Time of use is restricted to 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

6. Provide a minimum 50% of the code required number of long-term bike parking stalls.

Holly J. Godard, Senior Land Use Planner
Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

Date: March 22, 2021

HG:drm

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ISSUANCE OF YOUR MASTER USE PERMIT

Master Use Permit Expiration and Issuance

The appealable land use decision on your Master Use Permit (MUP) application has now been published. At the conclusion of the appeal period, your permit will be considered “approved for issuance”. (If your decision is appealed, your permit will be considered “approved for issuance” on the fourth day following the City Hearing Examiner’s decision.) Projects requiring a Council land use action shall be considered “approved for issuance” following the Council’s decision.

The “approved for issuance” date marks the beginning of the three-year life of the MUP approval, whether or not there are outstanding corrections to be made or pre-issuance conditions to be met. The permit must be issued by SDCI within that three years or it will expire and be cancelled (SMC 23-76-028). (Projects with a shoreline component have a two-year life. Additional information regarding the effective date of shoreline permits may be found at 23.60.074.)

All outstanding corrections must be made, any pre-issuance conditions met, and all outstanding fees paid before the permit is issued. You will be notified when your permit has issued.

Questions regarding the issuance and expiration of your permit may be addressed to the Public Resource Center at prc@seattle.gov or to our message line at 206-684-8467.