



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

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

ISRD 185/23

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, November 14, 2023

Time: 4:30pm
Place: Remote Meeting

Board Members Present

Ryan Gilbert
Heather Hargesheimer
Adrian Lam
Ming Zhang

Staff

Rebecca Frestedt
Melinda Bloom

Absent

Nella Kwan
Michael Le
Andy Yip

Chair Adrian Lam called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

111423.1 APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

September 12, 2023

MM/SC/HH/MZ 3:0:1 Minutes approved. Mr. Lam abstained.

111423.2 PUBLIC COMMENT

Krista Thomas spoke on the proposed banner project. She said she originally wrote the grant to help fund the work and expressed concern that the artwork changed from what the Selection Committee had seen. She said color was not publicly reviewed. She said the art has changed 180° without additional outreach, but in a better direction.

Ms. Frestedt said that comments have been forwarded to Board and applicant. She summarized the scope of what the Board reviews when considering artwork.

111423.3 CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

111423.31 Multiple locations in the right-of-way

Administered by The Historic Preservation Program
The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

"Printed on Recycled Paper"

(between north side of S. Jackson and S. Main St.)

Applicant: Aya Bisbee

Record #: DONH-COA-00799

Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed installation of a series of placemaking banners on existing light poles and utility poles.

Binko Chiong-Bisbee introduced the committee.

Erin Shigaki explained the process. She said the Japantown Banner Advisory Committee (JBAC) was formed. She said the process was community-centered and multi-generational.

Ms. Chiong-Bisbee said they received a grant to celebrate the neighborhood, its history and heritage.

Aya Chiong-Bisbee said Japantown Neighbors is directing a City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods grant funded project to develop pole banners to strengthen the identity of Japantown and celebrate its unique history and community. This project will strengthen the Japantown community, support local businesses, and highlight Japantown as an important cultural asset to greater Seattle. Japantown Neighbors is a group of business owners and community members engaging in projects to support the neighborhood. Over 40 supporters sent in letters in support of this project, including local businesses, property owners, and community members at large. Japantown Neighbors seeks to create banners which will have artwork that will honor the legacy of Japantown - past, present, and future. The purpose of the Japantown banner project is to honor and preserve the Japanese American history of the area, to help develop the neighborhood's identity, and to geographically define the current Japantown area. Banners would be installed on South Jackson, South Main, and South Washington Streets, and on 5th, 6th, Maynard, and 7th Avenues, and Yesler Way. The banners will be installed on existing red lantern poles in the neighborhood, as well as selected cobra street light poles, and one wooden Seattle City Light pole.

Ms. Bisbee provided an overview of the community process from the creation of the JBAC in March 2022, community outreach in August 2022, December 2022 through January 2023.

Michelle Kumata, Wing Luke Museum, said the type size was bumped up for readability and a website was added below for people to learn more about the banner artwork and the neighborhood. She said there are five designs plus three designs for the cobra poles.

Kenji Hamai Stoll, artist, talked about the importance of the project to the community and getting the art right. He said there was a feedback process with over 100 responses received. He said the work is deeply connected to the community and its history which inspired it. He said themes called for included past, present and future specific to Japantown history. He said there are multiple design iterations and he found a nice middle ground between all designs.

Paul Murakami, owner of the Jackson Building, said the work was incredible and encompasses the history. He said his family built Higo and spoke about their forced departure and return, following the incarceration during World War II. He said people still

don't know where Japantown is. He applauded the vibrancy in the artwork. He said the work would help to identify Japantown and better define it. He hoped to see more in the future.

Ms. Kumata said Mr. Stoll has much experience developing community exhibits in the district. She said the work was developed and shaped by people with strong ties to the community. She appreciated working with Mr. Stoll who was selected by community members. She said images were created from community input. She said they will contribute to community pride and sense of ownership. She said the banners will capture the attention of visitors and physically define the neighborhood as well as teach history and culture.

Mr. Lam said it is an exciting project. He asked if public comment was addressed with the evolution of the design.

Ms. Kumata said Mr. Stoll went through three iterations with JBAC and over 100 comments from the public. She said the comments were distilled and then main ideas were prioritized and integrated. The art represents community and different aspects of it; references are local so it relates to this place. She said the images are bold.

Mr. Zhang said it is a great project to celebrate and enrich a diversified history. He asked if the project has been shared with the broader community.

Ms. Chiong-Bisbee referenced the groups they reached out to.

Responding to clarifying questions Ms. Chiong-Bisbee said many of the cobra-neck poles are not eligible due to lights or wiring.

Mr. Lam asked what drove the banner placement.

Ms. Chiong-Bisbee said the cobra banners are double sided and viewable from further away. She said banners on red lantern poles are much smaller and geared toward pedestrians. She said the banners work well together and noted the intentionality and randomness of placement. She said banners were strategically placed where they made sense. She said the design background was taken from the bathhouse.

Mr. Gilbert commented on the great presentation and project. He said the art is beautiful and he supported the application.

Ms. Hargesheimer said the project is wonderful and adds more representation of Japanese art in Japantown.

Mr. Lam said lots of thought went into the design; he noted the subtlety of the background imagery.

Ms. Frestedt said there was some community concern about color and legibility at night. She said the Board might consider adding language in the motion to allow minor revision by staff for final determination if tweaks are needed.

Ms. Kumata said they will take the comment about the blue color into consideration; she noted the white type will be legible. She said the Japanese community has used “never again is now” for years relating to the incarceration of Japanese American citizens. She said they are cognizant of Netanyahu’s use of the “never again is now” phrase and are discussing whether to use it or to perhaps use “let it not happen again” in Japanese instead.

Mr. Gilbert said the work is meant to be evocative.

Ms. Hargesheimer noted the need to be true to the neighborhood and the history.

Action: I move that the International Special Review District Board recommend approval of a Certificate of Approval for design – banners, with the locations as identified on the applicant’s site plan and per the submitted application materials with the caveat minor tweaks to phrasing or color will be reviewed administratively by staff.

The Board directs staff to prepare a written recommendation of approval, based on considering the application submittal and Board discussion at the November 14, 2023 public meeting, and forward this written recommendation to the Department of Neighborhoods Director., with the caveat that if the applicant decides to make minor changes to phrasing or colors, the changes could be reviewed by staff, without coming back to the full Board.

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

Seattle Municipal Code (SMC)

SMC 23.66.338 - Signs

Secretary of the Interior Standard #9

MM/SC/HH/RG 4:0:0 Motion carried.

Mr. Lam commented it is a wonderful project for the district.

Ms. Frestedt noted the value of public art being reviewed in a public meeting and being documented for future project the value of community process and involvement

111423.4 STAFF SUMMARY and BOARD BUSINESS

Administrative approvals since October 24, 2023

Ms. Frestedt went over administrative approvals.

Ms. Frestedt went over election process updates. She said the first meeting in December will be the first meeting for new board members. She said there is a Sharepoint site that would be shared with incoming board members so they can review minutes and recordings of meetings.

Adjourn 5:57 pm.

Rebecca Frestedt, Board Coordinator
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