



International Special Review District

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

ISRD 95/23

Staff Report

Address: 611 12th Ave S. – Leschi Center

Applicant Representatives: Jen Creighton, Be Partners NW, *on behalf of Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB)*

Site alteration: Proposed removal of an historic brick archway, from the original Bailey Gatzert Elementary School, from the eastern entry of the property. The area of the arch footings are proposed to be replaced with ground-level, culturally-relevant plantings.

See attached plans, historical summary and photographs.

The following is the Statement of Reason for Demolition within the online application:

“The Seattle Indian Health Board is requesting the approval to remove the existing historic arch representing the old Bailey Gatzert Elementary School at the entrance to the main medical facility. The arch contains ornamentation depicting owls. In many Native American cultures, owls are a representation of death and are culturally inappropriate at the entrance of a medical clinic. SIHB is proposing to replace the arch with a commemorative plaque.”

Additional information:

- The site is located east of I-5 in Little Saigon, outside of the Asian Design Character District and Retail Core.
- The Leschi Center was constructed in 1988. The masonry archway, which was part of the original Bailey Gatzert Elementary School, was constructed between 1920-1929. The school building was demolished in 1987, prior to construction of the school’s current location further north.
- In 1986, as part of the demolition approval there was an agreement that included a caveat to “*reuse bricks and architecturally significant elements in the new development*”. The arch was retained in response.

Staff comments:

Prior to coming before the ISRD Board, staff recommended that the SIHB conduct outreach within in the community regarding the proposal to remove the arch, given the historical connections of the original Bailey Gatzert location to the surrounding neighborhood. Staff also recommended that the SIHB reach out to

cultural and historical organizations to inquire if there was interest in retaining any portion of the arch, if removal is approved.

It is the staff opinion that, despite the fact that the arch is an historic artifact, the symbolism and forms contained within the arch have a deep cultural meaning within the Native community and current property owners that is significant. Given that the CID community stakeholders that the SIHB has reached out to are not opposed to the proposal, the history of the archway has been well-documented and the form of the original building has been irreversibly altered, it is the staff perspective that removal of the archway would be appropriate in this instance.

PROPOSED MOTION

I move that the International Special Review District Board recommend approval of a Certificate of Approval for site alterations at 611 12th Ave S.

The Board directs staff to prepare a written recommendation of approval, based on considering the application submittal and Board discussion at the July 25, 2023 public meeting, and forward this written recommendation to the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

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

Secretary of the Interior Standards

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

It is the staff opinion that the original architectural integrity has been lost and the placement of the arch is out of context with the site and the history of the school and not consistent with the intentions of Standard #3.

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

The proposed plantings and treatment upon removal would be appropriate for the site and not have an adverse impact on the District.