

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTMENTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RAINIER BEACH HIGH SCHOOL DESIGN DEPARTMENTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

August 2008

This report is produced pursuant to the City of Seattle Municipal Code 23.44.17. The intent and purpose of this report is to document public testimony and make recommendations to the City for modifications to land use code development standards to facilitate installation of a sign at Rainier Beach High School in the Southeast District of Seattle.



City of Seattle

Department of Neighborhoods

Stella Chao, *Director*

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Rainier Beach High School Design Departure Advisory Committee Report

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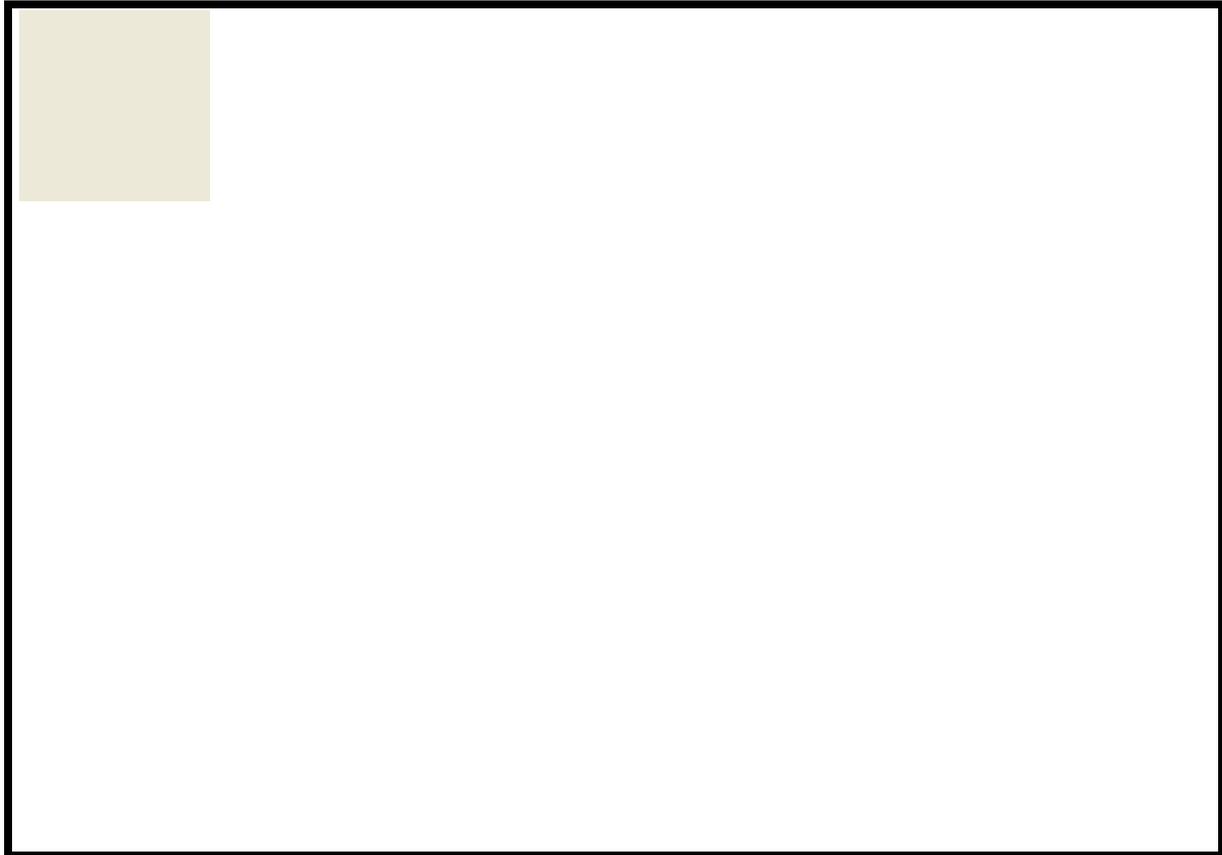
Rainier Beach High School Design Departure Advisory Committee

Final Report and Findings

Section 1. Background

1.1 General Departure Proposal

In January 2008, the Seattle School District No. 1 made application on behalf of the Rainier Beach High School PTSA for a departure from certain Seattle



Municipal Code Development Standards to accommodate the future installation of a double-faced illuminated reader board (reader board sign) to be located on South Henderson Street.

	Map No. 1. Vicinity Map	Rainier Beach High School
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The reader board sign would be located on the south side of NE 75th Street, approximately 300 feet west of the centerline of 33rd Avenue NE.

1.2 Neighborhood Characteristics

Development surrounding the school is uniformly single family residential. The general area is very stable. Homes are well maintained and it can be assumed that the pre-dominate use will remain in single family use for the foreseeable future.

1.3 Requests for Departure and Committee Formation

The City initiated the Development Standard Departure Process, pursuant to SMC 23.44.17. Those ordinances require that the Department of Neighborhoods convene an Advisory Committee (Development Standard Advisory Committee) when the School District proposes a departure from development standards.

The purposes of the Development Standard Departure Advisory Committee 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 of Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use from the Department of Neighborhoods.

In April 2008, the Department of Planning and Development and the Department of Neighborhoods sent notices to residents within 600 feet of the proposed sign and to a list of individuals and organizations that had shown interest in other community issues in the vicinity of Rainier Beach High School requesting self-nominations for membership on the Development Standard Departure Advisory Committee. After receiving nominations, the committee was appointed as follows:

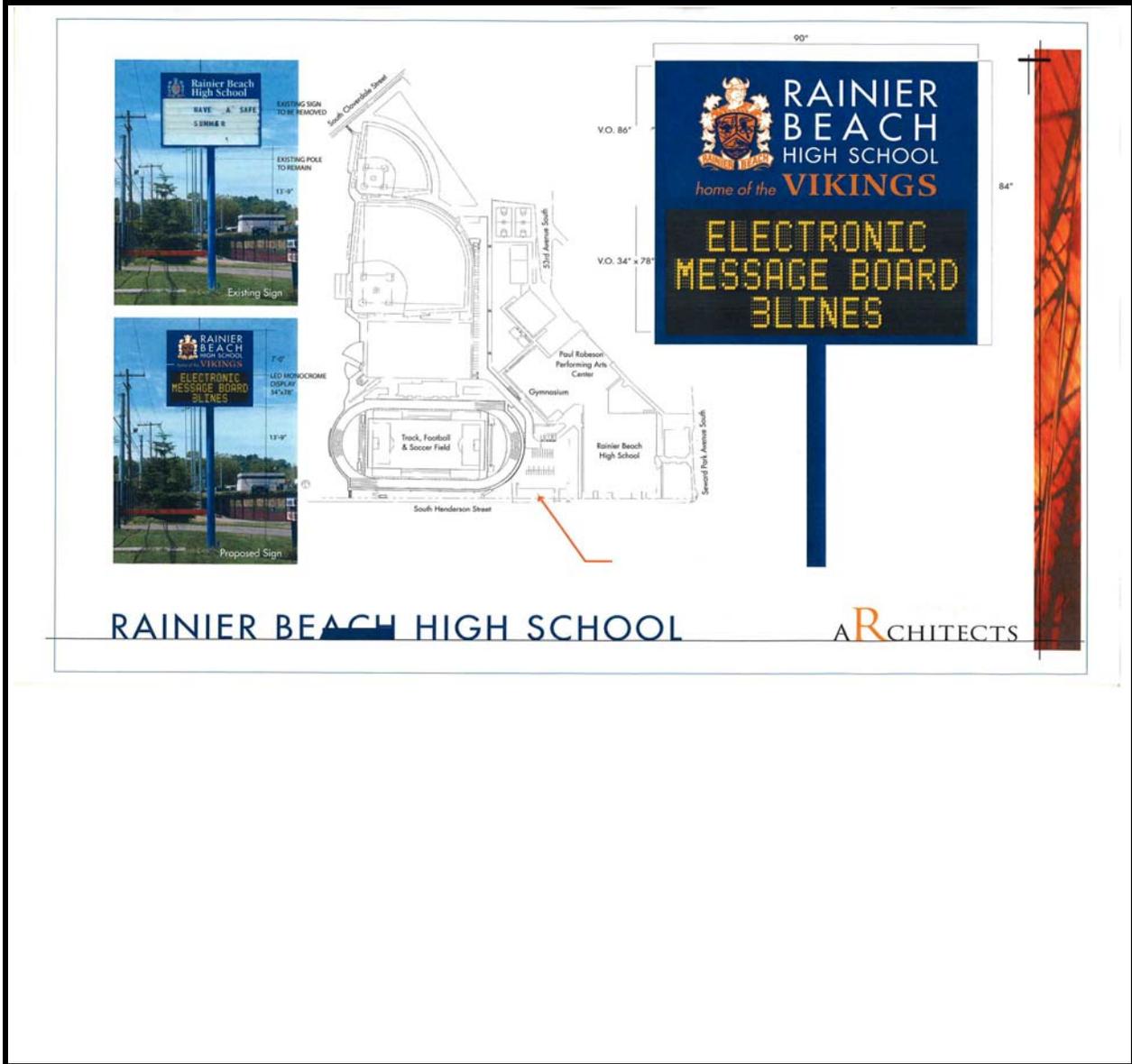
	Name	Code Mandated Category
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1	Mike Skutack	Representative of the Seattle School District
2.	Stella Powell	Person residing within six hundred (600) feet of the site of the school and any adjoining publicly owned property
3.	Laverne Andrews	Representative of the parents of the school
4.	Rita Green	Representative of the parents of the school
5.	Raymond Anderson	Representatives of the neighborhood
6.	Gregory Davis	Representatives of the neighborhood
7.	Greg Anderson	Representative at large
8.	Thao Tran	A representative of the City selected by the Director of DON, to act as nonvoting chairperson ;
9.	Tamara Garrett	DPD Representative

Section 2. Departures

2.1 Specific District Requests

The Seattle School District is requesting a waiver (departure) to replace an existing backlit sign with an electronic reader board at Rainier Beach High School located at 8815 Seward Park Ave. South. The proposed new sign would be a 7-ft X 7.5-ft double faced electronic, changing-image sign on an existing monopole that supports an existing back lit style sign. The design height of the new sign will remain at the same height of the existing sign and the school seeks a continuance of this height allowance and non-conforming use in a single family zone. The sign will be facing East and West on South Henderson Street. The new sign will enhance the ability of the school to advertise school events to their surrounding community.



RAINIER BEACH HIGH SCHOOL

ARCHITECTS

Proposed Sign Dimensions

Under the provisions of the zoning code only 15 square foot signs are allowed within single family zones. Therefore a departure from this requirement is being requested.

2.2 Criteria for Committee Review

In reviewing the departures, the committee is to evaluate:

- a. Relationship to the surrounding areas. The acceptable or necessary level of departure shall be evaluated according to:

- (1) Appropriateness in relationship 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 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.

Under the provisions of the code, the committee may determine that a departure is major (requiring a minimum of three public meetings) or minor (requiring only one public meeting).

2.3 Committee Review and Recommendations

2.3.1 Determination that the Departure is Minor

The committee was convened in a public meeting held on June 26, 2008 at the Rainier Beach High School cafeteria. After a full review of the departure request and consideration of all public testimony and correspondence received, the committee determined that the issue was not overly complex, no additional technical information was needed, and that additional public testimony would simply re-enforce already known positions. Therefore, the committee concluded that the requested sign departure should be considered a minor departure request and that only one meeting need be held.

2.3.2 Review of Departure Request in Relationship to Approval Criteria

The committee reviewed the departure request against the approval criteria and in light of their combined experience concerning the neighborhood. The analysis is as follows:

Relationship to the surrounding areas:

(1) **Appropriateness in relationship to the character and scale of the surrounding area** - In reviewing the sign departure request, committee members acknowledged that the school itself is a dramatically different scale and character to the surrounding neighborhood. The school property straddles

between a single family zone on the North and East (8815 Seward Park Avenue South) of the school and multi-family/commercial zone to the West and South (South Henderson Street) of the school.

In reviewing the sign against this criterion the committee concluded that the general size and proportions of the sign were appropriate in respect to character of the adjacent neighborhood.

The bigger problem appears to be the illumination of the sign. Illuminated advertising signs are not allowed within single family zones. Because of this the sign is not necessarily compatible with the character of the adjacent neighborhood. However, it is possible that some light and glare impacts can easily be mitigated. The committee concluded that the level of lighting disturbance could be controlled through limits on hours of operation, and since the sign be pointed East and West on South Henderson Street, the impacts of glare and lighting will not impact residents across the street.

(2) Presence of edges, significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features which provide a transition in scale – The impact of the proposed sign is not likely to increase since it replaces the existing sign. The sign will be facing East and West on South Henderson Street with setbacks of over 10 feet from the sidewalk curb and at least 90 feet from residents across the street.

(3) Location and design of structure to reduce the appearance of bulk – The committee concluded that the size of the new sign is similar to the old one and thus does not increase the appearance of bulk. In fact the new sign is standard to ones used typical in other schools. This represents a reasonable effort by the Seattle School District to control the appearance of bulk.

(4) Impacts on housing and open space – The committee concluded that the sign will not significantly impact existing open space especially since the sign faces East and West which is perpendicular to the residents across South Henderson Street. The committee concluded that to ensure impacts on housing, reasonable efforts should be made to reduce light and glare impacts by controlling the signs hours of operation.

Need for Departure:

The reason for the departure is due to the fact that Rainier Beach encompasses a residential and commercial land use zone that does not allow for electronic signs. Therefore, this is a departure request for the establishment of an electronic sign. In addition, the departure request will enable the school to address the fact that the current reader board is outdated and does not provide for multiple messages given the small amount of space that is available. Also, the existing sign has to physically be placed and removed daily. This is not an

efficient method for getting messages out to the public. The backlit sign will make it simpler and more convenient for operation. Finally, an updated backlit sign is regarded as a better way for the school to stay in touch with the community and advertise community events that are held at the school.

2.3.3 Committee Recommendations and Conclusions

The Rainier Beach High School Design Departure Committee formally concluded that the overriding need for better communication coupled with the need for an upgrade sign constituted a clear and compelling rationale to allow the granting of the departure request.

The committee had thoughtful concerns about the potential factors and impacts of the sign such as glares and reflections, maintenance and costs. In the end, the committee concluded that there were not sufficient reasons to be concerned about any potential impacts of the new replacement backlit sign. The committee also determined that they would like the school to have total control of how they want to use the sign and did not want to impose any conditions. Therefore, the committee chose not to set any recommendations or conditions for use. The approval of the Departure was passed with a unanimous vote.

Section 3 Appendices

3.1 Appendix 1 Committee Meeting Summary

Rainier Beach High School Departure
June 26, 2008
7:00pm - 8:30pm

Attendees:

Stella Powell
Raymond Anderson
Rita Green
Bryon Tello
Greg Anderson
Sandra Fillmore
Gregory Davis
LaVerne Andrews
Michael Skutack

City Staff

Thao Tran
Tamara Garrett
Sharon Star

Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened at 7:18pm. Thao Tran welcomed all in attendance and request that everyone provide a quick self-introduction. He proceeded with stating that he is a non-voting member and Tamara Garrett said she too was a non-voting member.

Overview of School Departure Process

Thao Tran distributed a two page handout of information describing the school departure process that also explained the responsibilities of the committee members. He said the meeting would be recorded and minutes taken which will be part of the public record and incorporated into the final report.

The key responsibility of the committee members is to listen to the overall project and the proposed renovations but more importantly to listen to the departure request before making a recommendation. Rolluda Architects will give more details. Here to address a request from Seattle Public Schools to Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to replace the outdoor sign. The current sign is currently outdated and will be replaced with a modern backlit. There are not a lot of changes other than the technology. We are keeping the same height and frame.

Overview of Proposed Departure to Rainier High School

Michael Skutack gave a brief description of the school and what is happening to it now. Proceeded to speak about the current reader board is outdated and does not provide for multiple messages given the amount of space that they have and the letters are being physically placed and removed daily. It is not very efficient for getting messages out to the public. Currently we have on our agenda a proposal to install a new electric backlit reader board and are working on getting the permit through DPD to get the installation permit. The sign is a backlit fixed light bulb reader board that will utilize the same existing pole. It is located on Henderson Street and our intent is to switch out the electronic reader board with the new board by pulling out the old one and placing the new one in its place. Conduit will be installed to the reader board to feed back to the office area. The principle will be able to type in quickly the messages he wants to get out to community. We think it's a good way for the school to stay in touch with the community and advertise community events that are held at school.

Sandra Fillmore spoke about replacement and that what they have is more current, efficient, and user friendly. In addition, she said the new sign comes with user friendly software – the school can program the software so that the sign can be turned off at night while different messages can be displayed with controlled shut off time. The new sign has the same dimensions of the current sign if not a little smaller, it's 7ft by 7.5ft. The school and community will be very pleased with it.

Rita Green asked about the shut off time. Sandra Fillmore said that it has a shut off feature around 9:00 or 10:00. Michael Skutack also stated that other schools have it set for 10:00pm.

Gregory Anderson asked if the message would be blinking? Bryon Tello stated that it could be either as it can relay messages seven different ways much like a PowerPoint. The board can even do video type information and automatically dims from day to night using the most efficient power light source. The board will not be distracting to drivers or nearby residents. It is not 100% bright at 10:00am when it doesn't need to be.

LaVerne Andrews asked about the cost for this item? Is this being donated to us? Michael Skutack answered that it is part of the Building, Technology and Academics Levy (BTA). All the upgrades done now are included and this is just one part of it.

Ray Anderson asked what is meant by the statement that “they wanted it”? Michael Skutack answered that the capital levy group convened with the principal, teachers, administration and one student. The group initially went to other schools and looked at different upgrades that had been done, whether it was signs, classrooms, or culinary arts. They took pictures of what they liked to see in their own school and when our next meeting was convened they talked about the improvements that they would like to see at Rainier Beach. Our group had seven meetings over a seven or eight month period. We moved down to a long range plan for the school. The plan may be presented at the next BEX Capital Project Levy and as well as the scope of work happening today. There has been good effort and response from staff and teachers here at the school.

Ray Anderson also asked about who was responsible for the maintenance of the sign? Michael said that the school would be responsible for the sign, we have a low voltage, electrical staff, roofers, and we have a full complement of maintenance staff to handle any problems. Bryon Tello stated that the sign comes with a five year warranty and the average expectancy of LED is 11,000 hours which is 11 years of continuous running which demonstrates that the light is very efficient on longevity.

Greg Anderson asked about keeping the shell of the existing sign. Mike Skutack said the pole stays and the inside will be replaced. Conduit will run from building to pole.

Sandra Fillmore gave the measurements of the new one to be 7 x 7.5 ft and the old is 7 x 8.6 ft.

A question was asked why is it smaller than the old one? Mike Skutack said it scrolls across and not limited by the footprint of the sign and that many messages can be displayed at once.

Gregory Anderson asked about the departure? Thao Tran replied Seattle Municipal code doesn't have a zone just for schools. Schools are located in residential neighborhoods, they have a built in process that if you want to do a change with the school you have to get community input with advisory comments to document and incorporate community concerns and participation. Tamara Garrett stated why departures are required for this particular sign is that this school is located in two different zones, one is the residential zone and this allows for electronic reader sign and they are a lot smaller.

Gregory Anderson asked if this reader board was maintenance free and what is the maintenance time? If it needs maintenance, Rainier Beach High School (RB) has staff that will look at it as well as call it in to have it repaired. Bryon Tello said that they have a response time under three days.

Gregory Anderson asked about the brightness of the sign and that some might not like it? Mike Skutack responded that the sign is East to West and does not face community housing. Bryon Tello added it is not like a flood light, it glows and is smaller with less impact. Because the sign is perpendicular to the community, residents across the street

will not see the sign. Mike Skutack said that in regards to operation time, they will be turned on at 6:45 am and off at 10:00 pm.

A general question to attendees is what people think? Most like it a lot better than what is there now. Mike said that time was spent on making sure that it has the RB logo. Mike stated that you can rapidly change the message and have different events at the same time. It enhances the community connection between the school and neighborhood.

Ray Anderson asked about the covering over the sign. Bryon Tello said this sign has a polycarbonate plastic, which is technically unbreakable. It is very durable. This unit communicates with only one computer and it has a lock. The principal has control of it.

Question was asked about how easily replace if damaged? Bryon Tello said that if broken LED come in panels 18 x 18 and they are replaced so they plug and play. A booklet was passed around to see what Bryon Tello was speaking about.

Committee Decision

Rita Green motioned to approve the Rainier Beach High School departure and Stella Powell seconded the motion.

Motion:

Pass – Unanimous

Objections - None

Tamara Garrett reminded that they needed to decide whether it is a minor or a major departure.

Ray Anderson motion for the Rainier Beach Departure to be a minor departure and LaVerne Andrews seconded the motion.

Motion:

Pass - All

Objections – None

Thao Tran then asked about if they wanted any conditions to be included. Gregory asked if there have been other negative issues with this. Mike Skutack stated that the 10:00pm cut-off time. Biggest concern is the sign flashing all night long. Stella Powell stated that this should be open to school decisions.

Discussion on what if this is exclusive use only for the school. Mike Skutack stated that no commercial advertisements are allowed. Open to community events and school events.

Thao Tran spoke about the value of the sign for the school outweighs the impacts to the neighborhoods which they agreed upon.

Ray Anderson asked if other schools with comparable signs if the costs are equal or are you over extending for this school alone? Is there a report of the research done with

costs to the other signs and approved by the School Board. Mike Skutack stated that they tried to match the existing sign to be comparable to other high schools. Bryon Tello said this can run one message at one time. Thao asked if the cost of the sign is the same to other schools. Mike answered that Foster High School was done two years ago with relatively the same cost.

Thao Tran then asked if there were comments from the public. Seeing that there was no public comment the meeting adjourned at 7:56pm.