



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

Project Number: 3040025-SD
Applicant Name: Steven Lee for Seattle Public Schools
Address of Proposal: 3000 California Avenue SW

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

School Departure for West Seattle High 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 less than required vehicular parking. (SMC 23.54.015)
2. To allow less than required weather protected bicycle parking. (SMC 23.54.015 K2)

BACKGROUND

SITE AND VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Residential 3 (NR3)
Zoning Pattern: North: Neighborhood Residential 3 (NR3)
South: Multifamily, Lowrise 2 (LR2(M)), Neighborhood Commercial 2 (NC2-55 (M))
East: NR3
West: Neighborhood Commercial 2 Pedestrian (NC2P-55(M))

ECAs: No Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) are mapped at the site.

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

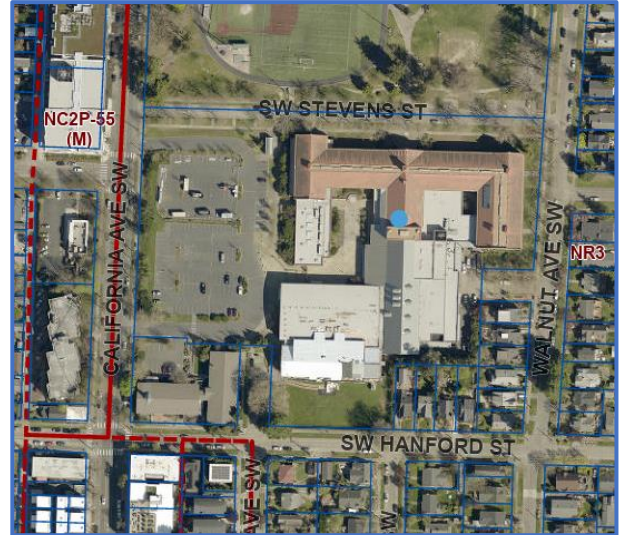
Seattle Public Schools (SPS) proposes to install 4 portable classrooms in the existing parking lot. Project documents are available in the electronic file at <http://www.seattle.gov/SDCI/>.

PREVIOUS SEPA RELATED ACTIONS

Prior to application for a Public School Departure Permit, the District exercised its prerogative to act as lead SEPA agency. No SEPA review was conducted. The SEPA process does not affect the Public School Departure Process SMC 23.79, the subject of this decision.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Department of Neighborhoods (DON) published a notice of School Advisory Committee formation 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.



PUBLIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURE

The Seattle School District submitted a request for departures from certain Seattle Municipal Code Development Standards for the proposed 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 committee holding public meetings.*

The final Development Standard Departure Recommendation 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

LAND USE CODE PROCESS

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 by DON, 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 DON, 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. Departures shall be evaluated for consistency with the general objectives and intent of the City's Land Use Code, including the rezone evaluation criteria in [Chapter 23.34](#) of the Seattle Municipal Code, to ensure that the proposed facility is compatible with the character and use of its surroundings. The code then distills the objectives and intent of the code into specific criteria to consider when assessing departures as follows:

- a. *Relationship to Surrounding Areas: The Advisory Committee 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 REQUESTS AND DON DIRECTOR RECOMMENDATION

The Seattle School District submitted a request for a departure from certain Seattle Municipal Code Development Standards to accommodate the construction/placement of 4 portable classrooms.

The city initiated the Development Standard Departure Process, pursuant to SMC 23.45.504 and 23.79. The Code requires that the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) convene a Development Standard Advisory Committee (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) when the School District proposes a departure from the development standards identified under the Code. These standards are popularly referred to as the “zoning code.”

The purpose of the Committee 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) from DON. (SMC 23.79.008)

As noted above, due to public health mandates on social distancing and limited gatherings related to COVID-19, the Seattle City Council approved legislation on Monday, April 27, 2020 to keep key projects safely moving forward by suspending public meeting requirements.

While this ordinance is in effect, in lieu of the committee holding public meetings, DON staff will accept written public comment and the Director of DON will make a recommendation to 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 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.

In order to accommodate the educational program for this project, the district requested the following departures from development standards found in the land use code. The departure requests are further outlined in the applicant presentation found in the electronic public file under the project number.

	Development Standard	Required / Allowed	Proposed	Departure
1	SMC 23.54.015 Table C Vehicle Parking	191 parking spaces	161 parking spaces	30 parking spaces
2	SMC 23.54.015.K.2 Bicycle Parking Performance Standards	Full weather protection is required for 12 long-term bicycle parking spaces	To allow bicycle parking spaces without weather protection	12 uncovered bicycle spaces

Departure #1 for Parking Quantity (Automobile) SMC 23.54.015 Table C

Vehicle parking numbers are calculated by public assembly areas in schools. The code and previous SDCI decision requires 191 automobile parking spaces. SPS proposes 161 automobile parking spaces for a departure of 30 spaces.

Departure #2 for bicycle parking performance standards SMC 23.54.015K2

The code requires weather protection for bicycle parking spaces. SPS proposes to provide 12 new bicycle parking spaces without weather protection for a departure of 12 uncovered spaces.

DON Review and Recommendations

Public Comment

The public comment period began via a press release issued by DON on January 19, 2023. The press release was sent to media outlets, and postcards soliciting for public comments were mailed to nearby neighbors and addresses within approximately 600 feet of the school property. DON also created a webpage where the public could submit their comments and instructed SPS to post signs about the public comment period at the perimeter of the school property. The departure information and public comment notice was also published in the City's Land Use Information Bulletin (LUIB) at DON request. The public comment period ran through February 17, 2023. The comments are included at the end of the DON recommendation posted on the DON website and this project record.

Departure #1 for Parking Quantity (Automobile) SMC 23.54.015 Table C

Vehicle parking numbers are calculated by public assembly areas in schools. The code and previous SDCI decision require 191 automobile parking spaces. SPS proposes 161 automobile parking spaces for a departure of 30 spaces.

DON received several comments opposing or expressing concern about this requested departure. Nearby neighbors raised concerns over the potential increased demand for on-street parking due to the displacement of on-site parking if four new portable classrooms are installed. SPS noted in their response letter to the public comments that they hired Heffron Transportation to perform and document a detailed on-street parking study (Heffron, 2023) using the City of Seattle's methodology. The city recommends use of this methodology to document the number and type of on-street parking spaces that may exist within a defined study area.

The study area for the on-street parking utilization analysis included all roadways within an 800-foot walking distance from the school site, which is the study area typically required by the city for analyses of this type. The parking supply was inventoried for three representative weekday periods: early morning (7:00 am) when residents are typically home and some school staff may begin arriving, but before most students arrive; mid-morning (10:30 am) when students and staff are at school; and evening (7:30 pm) when some school events may occur.

The study area showed a parking utilization rate of 54% to 61%, confirming there is ample on street parking capacity available to accommodate demand resulting from increased enrollment and displacement of on-site parking spaces due to the addition of portable classrooms. A utilization rate above 80% begins to indicate that parking is heavily used.

DON also received comments suggesting an alternative location for the portable classrooms, including the grass field to the south of the school. SPS noted in their response letter that the Land Use decision dated March 23, 2000, (the Master Use Permit (MUP) application for the 2002 expansion of West Seattle High School) states the playfield (open space) located at the southernmost portion of the site shall be retained indefinitely; thus, this location is not an option to place portable classrooms.

And finally, DON received several comments expressing concerns related to parking access for the disabled, elderly and service providers, specifically in front of the residential structures where they live or provide services. SPS noted in their response letter that residents may request Residential Disabled Parking Zone permits from SDOT. SPS also stated it would not object to

neighbors petitioning SDOT to establish new parking restrictions (for example, short-term parking limits for some curbside spaces during school hours) for certain locations, and/or to designate some spaces for commercial load/unload purposes only.

The Transportation Technical Report by Heffron Transportation (Heffron, 2023) and the Director's Decision (March 2000) concerning a Master Use Permit application for the West Seattle High School project are in the project file as appendices to the DON recommendation.

After consideration of the public comments received and SPS' response, DON recommends:

Recommendation #1 – That the departure to allow reduced vehicular parking quantity be GRANTED as requested by Seattle Public Schools with the following conditions:

- 1) **Transportation Management Plan (TMP): [School Transportation Management Plan]** SPS and the principal of West Seattle High School should establish a TMP [STMP] to educate families about the challenges of parking, and encourage faculty, students, and staff to travel to and from school by walking, biking, carpooling, or taking public transportation. Staff and students should also be considerate not to block or partially block any residential driveways with parked or stopped vehicles.
- 2) **Residential Disabled Parking Zone:** SPS should encourage homeowners to consider requesting a Residential Disabled Parking Zone permit from SDOT and petitioning SDOT to establish appropriate new parking restrictions.
- 3) **Neighborhood Communication Plan for School Events:** SPS and West Seattle High 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 provide information about the dates, times, and magnitude of large-attendance events. The communication would be intended to allow neighbors to plan for occasional increases in on-street parking demand that would occur with large events.

Departure #2 for bicycle parking performance standards SMC 23.54.015K2

The code requires weather protection for bicycle parking. SPS proposes to provide 12 new bicycle parking spaces without weather protection for a departure of 12 uncovered spaces.

DON did not receive many comments about this requested departure. There were comments that having a secured fence for bicycle parking would be more reasonable.

After consideration of the public comments received, DON recommends:

Recommendation #2 – That the departure to allow less than required weather protected bicycle parking be GRANTED as requested by Seattle Public Schools.

DON Recommendation Summary:

Departure #1	Vehicle Parking Quantity	Granted with conditions.
Departure #2	Bicycle Parking Performance Standards	Granted.

Per SMC 23.79.008.C.1.b, the DON Director has considered the need for the above departure requests. DON has determined that for the Seattle Public Schools to meet its educational specifications, the above departures are required at this site. The physical requirements of the specific proposal and the project's relationship to educational needs are balanced with the level of impacts on the surrounding area.

SDCI DIRECTOR'S ANALYSIS

The Director's decision shall be based on an evaluation of the factors set forth in Section 23.79.008 C1a and b, the majority recommendations and minority reports of the Advisory Committee, comments at the public meeting, (DON, emergency legislation) and comments from the public. Departures shall be evaluated for consistency with the general objectives and intent of the City's Land Use Code, including the rezone evaluation criteria in Chapter 23.34 of the Seattle Municipal Code, to ensure that the proposed facility is compatible with the character and use of its surroundings. The code then distills the objectives and intent of the code into specific criteria to consider when assessing departures as follows:

Section 23.79.008 C1

- a. *Relationship to Surrounding Areas: The Advisory Committee 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 #1 for Parking Quantity (Automobile) SMC 23.54.015 Table C

Vehicle parking numbers are calculated by public assembly areas in schools. The code and prior permitting requires 191 automobile parking spaces. SPS proposes 161 automobile parking spaces for a departure of 30 spaces. The portable classrooms are proposed to be sited in the parking area thus covering the parking spaces.

DON received several comments opposing or expressing concern about this requested departure. Nearby neighbors raised concerns over the potential increased demand for on-street parking due to the displacement of on-site parking if four new portable classrooms are installed. SPS noted in their response letter to the public comments that they hired Heffron Transportation to perform

and document a detailed on-street parking study (Heffron, 2023) using the City of Seattle's methodology. The city recommends use of this methodology to document the number and type of on-street parking spaces that may exist within a defined study area. The study included parking spaces made available to the school, but which are partially on Parks property (Hiawatha Playfield). SDCI omits these parking spaces in the parking count due to the shared ownership.

The study found that there is available on street parking in the nearby area. The Heffron Transportation Technical Report (Heffron, 2023) indicates that on-street parking space utilization is below levels considered full capacity and that there is sufficient available on-street parking to accommodate daily parking for the school schedule. No mitigation measures were suggested in the Transportation Technical Report.

After consideration and study of the public comments the Department of Neighborhoods suggested conditions to the project recommendation to help mitigate the parking reduction and address impacts on the neighborhood. A School Transportation Management Plan (STMP) is recommended to organize and educate families, students, and staff about parking, access, and alternative ways to get to the school. DON recommended that SPS and SDOT educate and encourage homeowners to consider a Residential Disabled Parking Zone where needed and consider signage in the area to manage areas where there is high parking pressure for curbside sites. Lastly, DON suggest a Neighborhood Communication Plan be prepared annually to inform neighbors of large events. Per DON, the proposed measures are effective measures to help manage traffic and safety and communication around the school building.

In evaluating this departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, the previous MUP decision, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements. The previous Master Use Permit from 2000, *for the life of the project* conditions are the following:

Permanent for the Life of the Project

6. The Seattle School District and City of Seattle Department of Parks and Recreate shall continue to seek a mutual agreement to allow bus loading and vehicular parking within the vacated Stevens Street SW right of way.
7. The playfield located at the Sothern most portion of the site, east of 42nd Avenue SW, south of the new building addition, and west of adjoining SF 5000 zoned property shall be retained indefinitely.
8. The gymnasium and theater auditorium shall not be used simultaneously for major events defined as those expected to utilize more than 70 percent of all available seats, until such time that additional parking to the full amount required by the Land Use Code be obtained.

These conditions remain in effect. The SW Stevens vacated right of way is used for parking and the bus load and unload area as well as Walnut Avenue, the playfield is retained, gymnasium and theater auditorium use is monitored by the school.

The proposed conditions appear to be reasonable measures and have proven to be effective at other schools in Seattle to relieve parking pressures.

The Director finds that the departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, a park, and protected open space to the south of the building which provides a transition in bulk and scale and the departure does not exacerbate or diminish the area character. The departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. However, conditions are warranted to address public comments and the reduction of parking on site.

Therefore, the Director grants the departure request with the following conditions:

- 1) **School Transportation Management Plan (STMP):** Prior to the school reopening each year, the District and school Principal should establish a STMP to educate families about the access load/unload procedures for the site layout. The STMP should also encourage school bus ridership, carpooling, and use of public transportation. 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, students, and parents not to block or partially block any residential driveways with parked or stopped vehicles.
- 2) **Update right-of-way and curb-side signage:** SPS should work with SDOT to confirm locations, extents, and signage (such as times of restrictions) responsive to curbside disabled parking needs and parking rules especially along Walnut Avenue SW and SW Hanford Street.
- 3) **Develop a 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.

Departure #2 for bicycle parking performance standards SMC 23.54.015K2

The code requires weather protection for bicycle parking spaces. SPS proposes to provide 12 new bicycle parking spaces with no weather protection for a departure of 12 spaces without weather protection.

DON received comments about this departure, mostly in support of encouraging bicycling by providing new spaces and not concerned that they are without weather protection.

In evaluating the departure request, the Director has reviewed the district required school program, the DON recommendation, public comment, the proposed site plan, and location of the programmatic elements. The departure is appropriate in relation to the character and scale of the area. There is a presence of edges, a right of way, and a park which provides a transition in scale and the departure does not exacerbate or diminish the area character.

The departure will not significantly exacerbate traffic, noise, circulation, parking or impact housing or open space in the area. Therefore, the Director grants the departure request with no conditions.

- 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 Department of Neighborhoods considered the overall need for the two 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 school programs. In this case, the Seattle School District stated that both the need for the new portable classrooms 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 and sport 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-PUBLIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The school development standard departure request number one is **GRANTED with conditions**. Departure request number two is **GRANTED with no conditions**.

CONDITIONS –PUBLIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

For the life of the project

- 1) **School Transportation Management Plan (STMP):** Prior to the school reopening each year, the District and school Principal should establish a STMP to educate families about the access load/unload procedures for the site layout. The STMP should also educate and encourage school bus ridership, carpooling, and use of public transportation. 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, students, and parents not to block or partially block any residential driveways with parked or stopped vehicles.
- 2) **Update right-of-way and curb-side signage:** SPS should work with SDOT to confirm locations, extents, and signage (such as times of restrictions) responsive to curbside disabled parking needs and parking rules especially along Walnut Avenue SW and SW Hanford Street.
- 3) **Develop a 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.

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

Date: May 11, 2023

HJG:bg

Godard/3040025-SD Decision