



The City of Seattle

## International Special Review District

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649  
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ISRD 119/24

### MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, June 11, 2024

Time: 4:30pm

Place: Hybrid Meeting

#### **Board Members Present**

Heather Hargesheimer

Nella Kwan

Kyle Jacobson

Gary Lee

Samantha Wong

#### **Staff**

Rebecca Frestedt

Melinda Bloom

#### **Absent**

Adrian Lam

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

#### **ROLL CALL**

**061124.1**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**061124.2**

#### **MEETING MINUTES**

March 12, 2024

MM/SC/GL/KJ

4:0:0 Minutes approved.

March 26, 2024

MM/SC/GL/KJ

4:0:0 Minutes approved.

**061124.4**

#### **BOARD BRIEFING**

**061124.41**

Nihonmachi Alley right-of-way between S. Main St. and S. Jackson St.

Presenters: Brice Maryman, MxM Landscape Arch., and Julie Yuan, SCIDpda

**Administered by The Historic Preservation Program  
The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

"Printed on Recycled Paper"

Ben Han, BERK Consulting, presented preferred design concept for alley right of way. He provided historic context of the area and alleyway noting Chiyo's Garden and the alley murals. He explained the movement to activate the alleyways noting safety issues and also the way historically alleys shaped neighborhoods. He said Nihonmachi Alley is a site of cultural place keeping and intergenerational legacy keeping with casual interactions and formal events. He said the authenticity of the alleyway lies in its historical design and character. Nihonmachi Alley is a connection between the neighborhood's open spaces. Respondents would love to see the alley as a regional cultural hub for the greater APIA community. He went over outreach efforts and early themes. He said public safety remains a top priority issue for businesses, with trash and cleanliness as common concerns. Many were concerned about moving trash in front of businesses with current infrequent trash pick-up. Plantings should be easy to maintain, keeping sanitation in mind (such as hanging options). Lighting is a critical component to provide a sense of cleanliness and safety in the alley. There is interest in the paving to be level for accessibility.

Brice Maryman, MxM, explained the exploration of gateway concepts and noted the Chinatown Gate, Hing Hay Park Gate, Nihonmachi Alley on up to Danny Woo Garden Gate. He said the Nihonmachi Alley gateway would act as its own gateway or as one in a series of gateways in a temporal and legacy sense. He noted the lit terrace seating in Hing Hay Park, Japanese joinery and wood working, tory gate patterning, vertical wood elements with horizontal elements in different wood. He said wood is an important feature and noted traditional Japanese Yellow Cedar (used in Japanese crafts) and Shou Sugi Ban wood burning. He said the Western Red Cedar lives in the Pacific Northwest. He said they will recognize the alley is on twice-stolen land -- from the Native Americans and from Japanese American incarceration during WWII.

He proposed inviting Native American groups into the project noting carving or adzing (a method of shaping wood) surfaces. He said there would be no impact to existing architecture, given the alley's blank walls and said there are no appurtenances there. He proposed a Japanese paving tradition that is textural and also functional and adaptable and resilient. He proposed re-use of alley brick in tatami mat patterns. He noted the functioning alley in the middle of a big city. He said there is a large tatami room close to the alley. He provided examples of how they might do this, using the alley edges as textural areas. He indicated Chiyo's Garden on the site plan and noted it is a special place and a nice respite off the alley. He proposed glowing gateway post lights with cut out pattern. He said greenery might be a future add on. He went over next steps and said they anticipate 2027 construction.

Ms. Hargesheimer said it is an exciting project.

Mr. Jacobson appreciated the great job detailing outreach and feedback. He noted the importance of community voice and said he would defer to the community input on design. He asked if any particular input from the Board would be helpful for the applicants.

In response to a question from the presenters about preferences for the location of lighting (high or low placement), Mr. Lee said bollard height would be better for walking and safety; it would expose anyone sleeping on the ground.

Ms. Wong concurred and said bollard height would be better for the elderly or sight impaired. She said lower lighting that floods out to floor would be better. She asked if backlighting the post was explored. She asked what protective measures have been considered, given truck movement through the alley.

Mr. Maryman proposed stone plinths to distance vehicles away from elements; they would be thinner than the thickest appurtenances there now to help avoid damage. Durability will continue to be part of the discussion.

Ms. Hargesheimer said durability should be considered. She said the stone plinths being taller and bigger, like curb height or higher, would help. She said lights placed low would focus light on brick patterning.

Ms. Kwan said it will be nice to see the art on an evening stroll.

Mr. Jacobsen shared durability concerns. He said perforated metal may be easily damaged and lighting from the top-down might be ominous. He said SCIDpda are good stewards to help guide discussion.

Mr. Maryman said they would explore moving light lower and will work with a lighting designer to keep the character and the quality of light good.

Ms. Wong said it is a great opportunity for lighting as it would change the whole feel of the alley. She said she hopes they can incorporate lighting now rather than later.

Mr. Maryman said they are exploring planting elements and said responsibility for maintenance must be determined.

Ms. Hargesheimer asked if the building owners had been involved in discussions. She noted possibility of repositioning the existing mural panels in lighting discussions/design.

Mr. Han said they have been in contact with building owner.

Ms. Frestedt said board review will require attachment detail, scale, shop drawings, materials etc.

Ms. Yuan said the project has been well-received by Japantown community.

**061124.5 Staff Summary and Board Business**

Ms. Frestedt noted that she realized after the meeting minutes were initially reviewed that members who were absent at the meeting(s) participated in the vote. She asked that the prior approvals be withdrawn and a new set of motions were made. The Board agreed. The two sets of minutes were reviewed again and new motions made, as follows:

March 12, 2024 Minutes

MM/SC/KJ/NK

3:0:2

Minutes approved. Mr. Lee and Ms. Wong abstained.

March 26, 2024 Minutes

MM/SC/GL/KJ

4:0:1

Minutes approved. Ms. Wong abstained.

Ms. Frestedt reported administrative approvals completed since last meeting.

Mr. Jacobson corrected restaurant name to Chengdu Memory.

Ms. Frestedt said interviews for the vacation position #1 had concluded, with selections forwarded to the mayor's office for review.

She provided information about racial equity training for city board and commission members.

There was discussion about scheduling a Board retreat once the vacancy is filled.

There was discussion about the Viet Wah building fire and extent of damage.

Ms. Frestedt confirmed redevelopment of the site had been approved, which included removal of the building. She said clearing of the site will not require additional board review. The Fire Department has the authority to expedite removal of the buildings.

Meeting adjourned.