



December 7, 2022

Via E-mail

Seattle City Council
Neighborhoods, Education, Civil Rights & Culture Committee
600 Fourth Avenue, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: Support for CB 120312 - Landmark Designating Ordinance for Seattle-First National Bank Building (566 Denny Way)

Dear Committee Chair Morales, Vice Chair Sawant, and Members Lewis, Nelson, and Strauss:

Historic Seattle and the Queen Anne Historical Society strongly support CB 120312, an ordinance relating to historic preservation, specifying controls and any economic incentives for the Seattle-First National Bank (SFNB) building, a landmark designated in 2006 by the Landmarks Preservation Board (LPB) under SMC 25.12.

We previously sent you a letter of support on May 17, 2022. CB 120312 is scheduled for your Committee meeting of December 9. **We urge this committee to recommend adoption of controls and incentives for this designated Seattle landmark to the full City Council.**

Why it's Important to Pass CB 123012 with Controls and Incentives

The December 5, 2022 Central Staff Memorandum prepared by Analyst Lish Whitson does an outstanding job of laying out the process for nomination, designation, controls and incentives, and other relevant considerations and issues. Landmark designation is, in and of itself, a public benefit. Historic preservation contributes to the long-term aesthetic, cultural, sustainability, and economic strength of Seattle.

We'd like to highlight why it's important for City Council to adopt controls and incentives for the Seattle-First National Bank building:

The Significance of This Designated Landmark is Not Up for Debate

The Seattle-First National Bank building, now known as Walgreens, was designated under four (out of six) designation standards, a strong statement by the LPB in recognizing the significance of the property. The exterior and the site were included in the designation. It is typical for a property's site to be included in the designation, not just the building. We trust the nomination/designation process and respect the Landmarks Preservation Board's decision to designate based on rigorous review in a public meeting and a public hearing in 2006.

The Property Owner (Walgreens) Has the Signed the Controls and Incentives Agreement

The importance of this fact cannot be overstated. While the process may have taken years, we are happy to see that the City of Seattle and Walgreens have signed a controls and incentives agreement and that the Landmarks Preservation Board approved the agreement in November 2021. Again, we trust the process and thank the Board, Landmarks Staff, and Walgreens for reaching an agreement. There is no controversy here.

A Win-Win for Preservation AND Housing

Because it is located in the Uptown neighborhood of Queen Anne, the Seattle-First National Bank building is also eligible as a landmark sending site for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). This is an important financial incentive that became available for Uptown only in the last few years. The owner will be able to sell TDRs and use the money to maintain the landmark building. A developer who owns a property in Uptown that qualifies as a receiving site can purchase the TDRs to benefit their housing project by increasing FAR (and therefore, additional units). This is a win-win for preservation AND housing. It's both/and, not either/or.

Adopting Controls and Incentives is a Sound Decision that Respects the Process

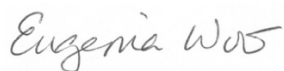
Amending or rejecting the controls and incentives for the Seattle-First National Bank building could be viewed as *arbitrary and capricious* if the reasoning for such a decision is not documented and justified. Additionally, the City of Seattle's Certified Local Government status could be jeopardized as a result. As noted in Central Staff's Memorandum, the controls and incentives recommended by the Landmarks Preservation Board for SFNB are consistent with other recently approved controls and incentives agreements.

We wish to highlight an important section and recommendation contained in Central Staff's Memorandum:

Under SMC 25.12.650, the Council has the authority to adopt, amend, or reject CB 120312. In the last 30 years, the Council has only amended one Controls and Incentives ordinance, which was for the Seattle Monorail. Because CB 120312 would codify a negotiated agreement between the LPB and the owner of the Landmark, the Council should consult with interested parties before making changes to the controls and incentives. To protect the City's designation as a Certified Local Government, if the Council wishes to amend or reject the Controls and Incentives for the SFNB, Central Staff recommends that Councilmembers ensure that the Council's decision is not arbitrary and capricious, and its reasoning is thoroughly documented and justified.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important (and final) part of the landmark designation process for the Seattle-First National Bank building. We respectfully ask the Committee to recommend that the full Council adopt CB 120312. If you have any questions, please contact Eugenia Woo, Director of Preservation Services, Historic Seattle at eugeniaw@historicseattle.org.

Sincerely,



Eugenia Woo
Director of Preservation Services
Historic Seattle



Maureen Elenga
President, Board of Trustees
Queen Anne Historical Society