

Swedish First Hill Alley Vacation

Edward B. Murray
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Shannon Loew, Chair

Ellen Sollod, Vice Chair

Brodie Bain

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Rachel Gleeson

Grant Hromas

Martin Regge

John Savo

Ross Tilghman

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Aaron Hursey
Planner

Joan Nieman
Administrative Staff

**Department of Planning
and Development**
700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000
PO Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

TEL 206-615-1349
FAX 206-233-7883
seattle.gov/dpd

Commissioners Present

Ellen Sollod, Vice Chair
Lee Copeland
Thaddeus Egging
Rachel Gleeson
Grant Hromas
Martin Regge
John Savo (excused until 12:30)

Non-Voting Commissioners

Theo Lim (excused until 12:00)

Commissioners Excused

Shannon Loew, Chair
Brodie Bain
Ross Tilghman

Project Description

Swedish is proposing to vacate the alley in the block bounded by Boren Ave, Minor Ave, Columbia St. and Cherry St. The vacation would allow the development of a new medical office tower and central support facility for Swedish First Hill. The proposed development would include below grade parking, truck loading and kitchens to serve the entire campus, along with medical offices, laboratories and related building functions. Specifics of the proposed development include:

- A 240 ft (15 story) building on the east half of the block, stepping down to 90 ft (5 story) on the west half of the block;
- Street level café, lobby, and open space on Minor Ave;
- Patient drop off and pick up within the building;
- Approximately 700-800 stalls of below grade parking;
- Below grade loading docks with a service tunnel connection across Minor¹
- Skybridge from the second level across Minor²

Swedish's Major Institution Master Plan (MIMP) identifies this block for a medical office, building, central support services, and parking. Approved by City Council in 2005, the MIMP states that a Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) will advise on the design of this project. While projects developed under a MIMP are not subject to the City's Design Review process, City staff review them projects for MIMP compliance.

DPD and SDOT recently completed the First Hill Public Realm Action Plan. Their work built on the 1998 Neighborhood Plan and an in-depth park planning analysis [completed in 2005](#).

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) second review of the urban design merit. On July 16, 2015, the SDC provided initial feedback for the proposed package, which included several conditions and recommendations for the design team to meet prior to today's meeting. At this meeting, the SDC voted 5-2 in favor of urban design merit, with three recommendations.

¹The below grade tunnel approval will not involve the Seattle Design Commission

²A separate skybridge permit has been submitted to SDOT for review (submitted on August 26); the SDC will review this proposal at a later date.

September 3, 2015

2:00 - 4:00 pm

Type

Street Vacation

Phase

Urban Design Merit

Location

Block bounded by Boren Ave, Columbia St, Minor Ave, and Cherry St on First Hill

Previous Reviews

[7/16/15](#)

Presenters

Brad Hinthorne

Perkins + Will

Mark Brands

Site Workshop

Attendees

Beverly Barnett

SDOT

Marjorie Brown

Perkins + Will

Jim Erickson

First Hill Improvement Association

Karen Gordon

DON

Stefanie Herzstein

Transpo Group

Vincent Kuefer

SEIU 1199 NW

Chris Lampkin

SEIU 1199 NW

Xochitl Maykovich

Washington CAN!

Troy Meyers

Citizen

Nancy Rogers

Cairncross & Hempelmann

Michele Sarlitto

EA Engineering, Science, Technology

Maureen Sheehan

DON

Daria Supp

Perkins + Will

Mike Swenson

Transpo Group

Darby Watson

SDOT

Recusals and Disclosures

Ellen Sollod disclosed that she lives in the vicinity of the Swedish Cherry Hill campus. She indicated that this would not influence her review of this project.

Ross Tilghman disclosed that he is testifying in support of the appeal of Swedish Cherry Hill MIMP but is not involved in the First Hill project. He stated that his involvement with Cherry Hill would not influence his review of the First Hill project.



Figure 1. Site Context Map

Summary of Presentation

Brad Hinthorne began the presentation by providing background and context for the project, which included plans for the alley vacation in Swedish First Hill's MIMP. Mr. Hinthorne then stated that the alley does not fit in with the surrounding context, as it no longer connects due to the previous vacation of alleys to the north and south of the project site.

The applicant's plan for redeveloping the project site includes the consolidation of all loading areas for the Swedish First Hill campus into one central location. The project site will include facilities for a loading zone to accommodate small and large truck deliveries, which will occur with or without an alley vacation. As with the previous meeting, the presentation included an evaluation of vacation and no vacation alternatives. The no vacation alternative includes two separate buildings built out to the property line. The no vacation alternative would include a wider alley to accommodate large trucks as well as a loading dock located within the proposed building along Minor Ave. Mr. Hinthorne suggested that an alley vacation would allow the design to take advantage of topography with an ingress and egress at the bottom of the hill on the project site, which would



Figure 2. Proposed Site Plan with Alley Vacation

result in the majority of access and loading occurring primarily underground instead of at street level (see figure 2).

Transpo Group developed a traffic study on behalf of the applicant, which includes data on present and future pedestrian and vehicular traffic along Boren Ave, Minor Ave., Columbia St., and Cherry St. The report includes high volumes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic along Boren Ave., Cherry St., and Minor Ave. The report also includes present and future counts for hospital truck deliveries. On average, the campus receives 134 truck deliveries per day, nine of which are from large trucks that generally exceed 45 feet in length. It is projected the number will increase to 164 truck deliveries per day, with 11 being from large trucks. The study noted that there is no designated time frame for delivery trucks, resulting in trucks arriving with deliveries throughout the day. While providing on site access for smaller trucks presents very few design issues, providing on site access for larger trucks includes several issues.

The design team presented four options for providing on site access for both large small truck deliveries (see figure 3):

- Option A: truck access along Columbia St.
- Option B: truck access along Cherry St.
- Option C: large truck access along Boren St.; small truck access along Cherry St.
- Option D: no alley vacation; truck access along Cherry St.

The design team and SDOT preferred option B, as it utilizes non-arterial streets. This option includes large trucks traveling south along Minor Ave. to access the entrance on Cherry St., while small trucks travel along north Boren Ave. to access the entrance on Cherry St. To accommodate large truck access and circulation, on street parking along portions of Cherry and Columbia St. would be eliminated. Under both vacation and no vacation scenarios large trucks will temporarily block traffic in all directions while executing a turn, potentially affecting adjacent curbs and sidewalk areas, while turning right onto Cherry St. from Minor Ave. as well as turning left from Columbia St. after exiting the parking garage.

Mr. Hinthorne suggested there would be a high concentration of vehicular traffic entering and exiting the alley under a no vacation alternative, which would affect the pedestrian environment and eliminate a portion of the on street parking on Cherry and Columbia. The no vacation alternative would also separate the parking garage from the adjacent building, causing patients and visitors to walk outside and uphill in order to enter the building. The vacation alternative would allow for the design to include open space in the northeast and southwest corners of the project site as well as improved streetscape amenities along Minor Ave. Under both vacation and no vacation alternatives, significant improvements will be made to pedestrian open space along Boren Ave. Improvements include pedestrian crosswalks proposed along the northwest and southwest corners of the project site, and the potential to work with a local artist(s) to activate the building façade along Boren Ave.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), commented that the presentation fails to show how the project complies with the MIMP. The MIMP requires the team to present vacation and no vacation alternatives; it is still unclear how the project complies with those alternatives. Although the SAC has been formed, Ms. Barnett is concerned that it is unclear when the SAC first looked at the project. In a key project such as this, the commission needs to know how the surrounding community feels.

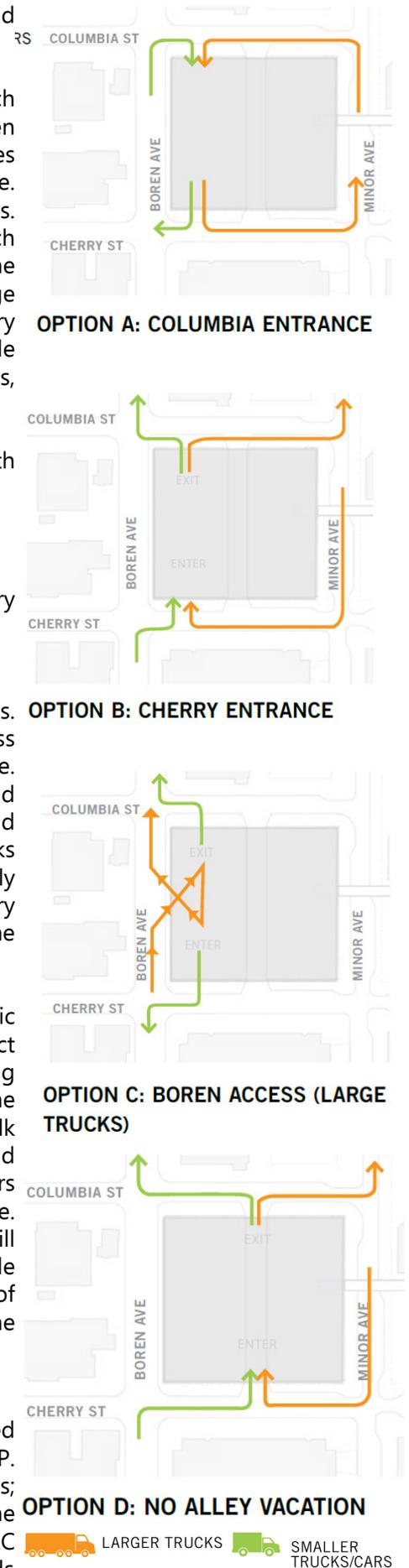


Figure 3. Proposed Options for Site Access

Darby Watson, SDOT, commented that after speaking with city traffic engineers and looking at current zoning code, alleys are the preferred choice for access to parking garages. Ms. Watson explained that using local streets to access parking garages is not desirable, while accessing garages from arterial streets is the least desirable option. Because of this, accessing the parking garage from Boren Ave. is our last option. Ms. Watson commented that there are several issues with options A and C, with option C including large curb cuts on Boren, which could negatively affect the pedestrian environment. Ms. Watson stated that, from a transportation standpoint, It is okay to vacate the alley.

Maureen Sheehan, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, commented that, overall, the community is supportive of the project, although few details have been presented.

Public Comments

Troy Myers, A resident of First Hill, does not have an issue with the alley vacation, but suggests the public benefits are thin and should be improved. Minor St. and Boren Ave. are already congested and will only get worse in the future. The design of the plaza along Minor Ave. looks great, but what about Boren Ave.?

Jim Erickson, First Hill Improvement Association, stated the installation of pedestrian activated crosswalks across Boren Ave., near Columbia and Cherry St., is an important feature. Mr. Erickson said it is also important to include raised pedestrian crosswalks along Minor Ave.

Xochitl Maykovich, from Washington Community Access Network (CAN), states the mission of Washington CAN is to achieve economic fairness. Ms. Maykovich, speaking on behalf of Washington CAN, believes the Swedish First Hill MIMP's Standing Advisory Committee must reconvene before the project moves forward. Ms. Maykovich agrees with the SDC that more details are needed regarding vehicular and truck traffic pattern changes, housing, and open space. She also stated that Washington CAN believes public benefit must be clearly expressed, including a time of completion. Ms. Maykovich is concerned that the language used by the applicant to describe public benefit is non-committal.

Summary of Discussion

Overall, the commission was concerned with the level of detail in the applicant's presentation. While two alternatives were presented, there was not a distinct difference between the plans. However, the commission organized its discussion into two major categories - circulation and service, and light, air, and open space.

Circulation and Service

The commission expressed concern about delivery times, proposed circulation, and points of egress for large trucks. SDOT specified that the downtown area has time restrictions for large delivery trucks, but that restrictions are only

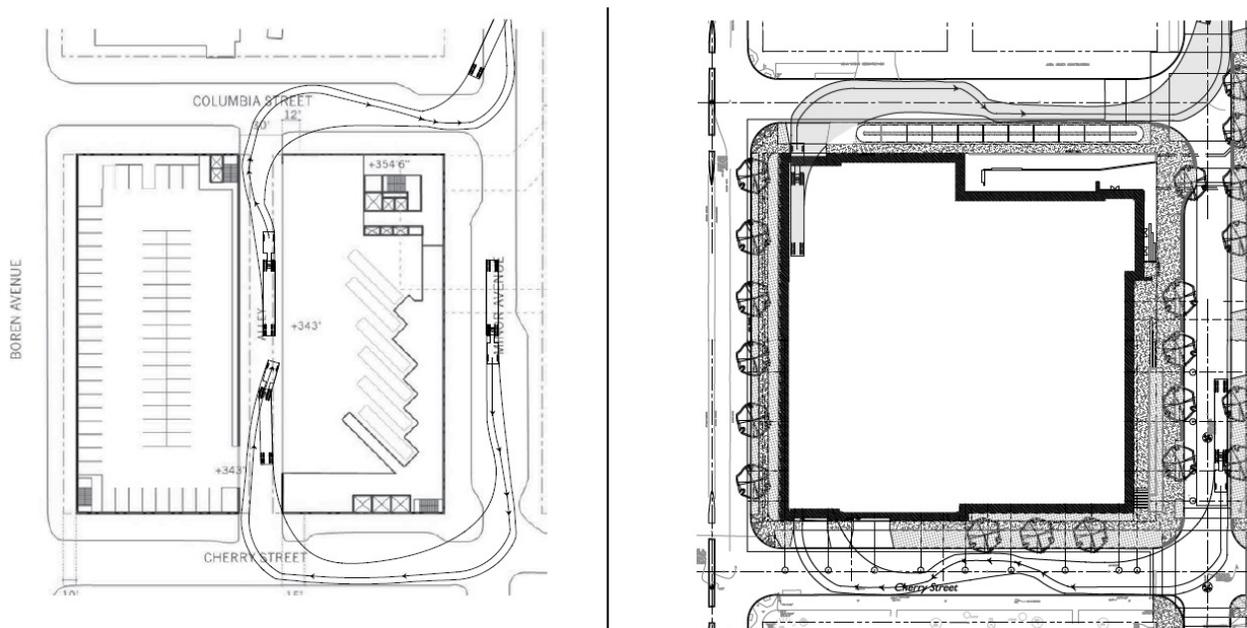


Figure 4. Proposed Access and Circulation for large Trucks under No-Vacation (Left) and Vacation (Right) Scenarios

required for areas west of I-5. SDOT also informed the commission that special permits can also be issued for loading at specific times throughout the day.

The commission was also concerned with the circulation of large delivery trucks along Minor Ave., Columbia St., and Cherry St. Minor Ave. was designated in the MIMP as a major pedestrian street, while Columbia and Cherry St. also experience a high volume of pedestrian traffic. Establishing Minor Ave. as a service route for large truck deliveries could limit the design of the streetscape and surrounding public space, having negative affect on the pedestrian realm (see figure 4).

The commission then discussed the benefits and drawbacks of locating service entrances along Boren Ave. and Cherry St. SDOT did not recommend placing an entrance along Boren Ave., which is an arterial street. The commission recognized SDOT's concern with locating service access along Boren Ave. but also pointed out the current design includes a building façade along Boren Ave. Because of the proposed design and low pedestrian traffic, the commission believes placing service access on Boren Ave. will have a minimal impact on the pedestrian realm. Both SDOT and the applicant believe locating service access for large truck deliveries along Cherry St. is the best alternative. Although locating access along Cherry St. will allow the design team to take advantage of the large grade change, the commission is concerned with how the presence of large trucks and extended curb cuts will negatively affect the pedestrian realm. Because SDOT recommended not using Boren Ave. as a point of access, the commission decided to focus on analyzing providing service access along Cherry St.

Light, air, and open space

The commission discussed the design of open space throughout the project site, which includes public spaces and enhanced streetscapes. The commission recognized the significant amount of open space along the northeastern edge of Columbia St. and Minor Ave., but stated the design fails to show how open space and streetscape amenities will be developed along Boren Ave (see figures 5-7). The commission also expressed concern with the design of open space at the corner of Cherry St. and Boren Ave, which is not accessible from the street. The commission questions whether space that is accessible only from within the building can be considered part of the public realm.



Figure 5. Proposed streetscape - Minor Ave.

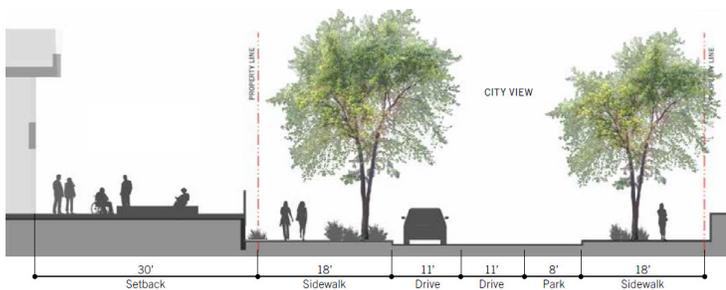


Figure 6. Proposed streetscape - Columbia St.

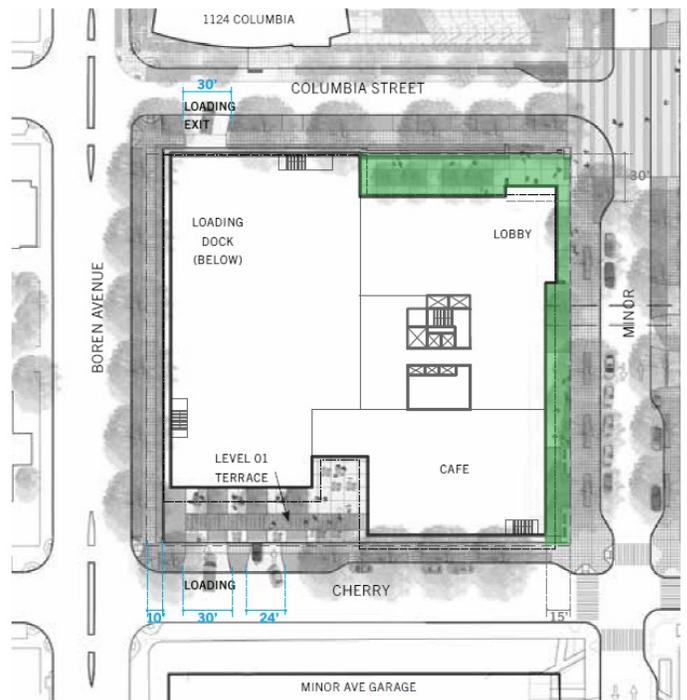


Figure 7. Proposed Open Space along Columbia St. and Minor Ave.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for presenting the urban design merit of the Swedish First Hill alley vacation. The commission appreciated the analysis of the different loading options and coordinating with SDOT. The commission appreciated additional building setbacks along Minor to uphold the idea of creating a pedestrian street, as set by the MIMP. We remain concerned though at the impact of large trucks moving through the corridor.

With a vote of 5-2 the SDC recommended approval of the Swedish First Hill alley vacation urban design merit with the following recommendations:

1. Review parking and service driveways on Cherry and Columbia regarding pedestrian safety. Consider driveway widths, locations and design to avoid conflicts.
2. Pay special attention to the building façade along Boren Ave. in order to enhance the pedestrian experience.
3. Continue to explore limiting large truck deliveries to off peak hours.

Urban design merit is the first of two phases in the Design Commission's review of a vacation petition. Given today's approval, the petition will advance to the second phase of review, public benefit. Approval of both urban design merit and public benefit constitutes the Design Commission's recommendation to SDOT that the vacation be approved. The final decision whether to vacate the right-of-way lies with the City Council.

The reasons for the votes against were as follows:

Rachel Gleeson: I'm convinced the arrangement you're proposing is the best option if the alley is vacated, but I'm not convinced that it is not creating problems of its own making that would not exist if the alley was not vacated

Ellen Sollod: I appreciate efforts made to analyze various options. I do not feel confident that managing loading times will resolve impacts. I believe it is very important that, as the city grows, solutions that have been applied to other parts of the city outside of downtown are expanded to other neighborhoods that are becoming extremely dense. SDOT should take the lead in analyzing truck impacts outside of downtown and place appropriate restrictions to manage impacts in urban villages. The hospitals should come together to require vendors to either coordinate deliveries at specific times or to require vendors to use smaller trucks. Swedish should lead the way on this.