**Project Description**

The petitioner proposes to vacate the alley in the block bounded by 8th Avenue, Bell Street, 7th Avenue, and Blanchard Street to facilitate a full-block commercial development. The 77,000-square-foot site is zoned DMC 340/290-400. In three buildings, the proposed development would include:

- 835,200 gross square feet of office space
- 23,000 square feet of street-level retail
- Below-grade parking for 880 vehicles

In the vacation proposal, building services would be located below grade, with primary automobile and truck access provided via two 24-foot-wide curb cuts on 8th Ave and a second parking egress on Bell St. The subject alley is 16 feet wide and 5,700 square feet in area and runs approximately northwest-southeast through the site between Bell St and Blanchard St, both of which are Green Streets. The alley network terminates at the block to the northwest; the alley network to the south was vacated as part of the adjacent Amazon Rufus 2.0 project.

**Meeting Summary**

The Design Commission took two separate actions:

1. **Compliance with condition from urban design merit approval**

   The petitioner presented updated drawings to show compliance with the following condition that the Commission adopted March 5, 2015, in its approval of the urban design merit of the vacation:

   “Prior to a review of public benefit, the petitioner shall return for a detailed examination of the characteristics of the public realm on 8th Ave, Bell St, and Blanchard St, independent of any public benefit discussion.”

   At the May 7, 2015, meeting, the petitioner presented initial designs to comply with the condition. The Commission voted 2 to 3 against the initial proposal. At the June 4, 2015, meeting, the petitioner presented an updated design including the following features:

   1. Revised and narrowed curb cuts on 8th Ave
   2. Widened sidewalk on 8th Ave
Recusals and Disclosures
John Savo disclosed that he has worked on projects for the petitioner but is not involved in this project.

Urban Design Merit — review of conditions
Summary of Presentation
John Schoettler described Amazon’s goals to develop a neighborhood that is inclusive and welcoming to all people, not just Amazon employees. Peter Krech introduced the outline for the presentation, which is available on the Design Commission website. First, Mr. Krech addressed the outstanding condition from the Commission’s March 5 approval of urban design merit. Mr. Krech showed an update to the proposed curb cuts for vehicle and loading access on 8th Ave, as shown in Figure 1. The two 24-foot-wide curb cuts proposed on May 7 were narrowed to 20 feet for vehicles and 18 feet for loading. Mr. Krech explained that the automobile access is located away from the property line to improve the pedestrian experience, as shown in Figure 3.

Mark Brands showed changes to the proposed curb line compared to the May 7 presentation. Mr. Brands described how narrowing 8th Ave to one lane north- and southbound allows for the improvements to pedestrian safety near the vehicle and loading access. Mr. Brands also described changes to Bell St and Blanchard St and the petitioner’s coordination with DPD and SDOT on the design of these streets.

Agency Comments
Lyle Bicknell stated that the proposal was a vast improvement from the previous design. Mr. Bicknell saw clear and substantial public realm improvements in the plan, particularly in the right-of-way. He said the improvements to Bell St are more consistent with the aspirations of the City and public. Mr. Bicknell then stated that the onus is now on the City to fully permit the innovative and nonstandard design shown in the presentation and requested the Commission’s support.

John Marek stated that he liked the petitioner’s approach to 8th Ave and Bell St. However, he acknowledged that some uncertainty remained about traffic operations in this area. Mr. Marek explained that King County Metro’s proposed changes to Westlake Ave could push traffic to 9th Ave and alter traffic circulation near the project site. Mr. Marek said that, while he likes the concept of additional pedestrian and green space along 8th Ave, SDOT has not yet determined if one lane north- and southbound on 8th Ave is feasible.

Action
The Design Commission thanked the petitioner for addressing the condition of its March 5, 2015, approval of urban design merit. The Commission saw substantial improvement to the public realm design.

With a vote of 8 to 0, the Design Commission determined that the petitioner had fulfilled the outstanding condition. This constitutes final approval of the urban design merit phase of the Commission’s review of the petition to vacate the alley in the block bounded by 8th Ave, Bell St, 7th Ave, and Blanchard St.

The Commission emphasized its support of the proposed curb line on 8th Ave, as shown in Figure 2, and encouraged SDOT to follow through in permitting this design.
Summary of Discussion

The Commissioners discussed each category of public benefit. The Commissioners were supportive of the 8th Ave Hillclimb, particularly the proposed ramps that provide an accessible route to the 7th Ave plaza. They encouraged the design team to explore other opportunities along this route to accommodate additional standing or seating areas, provided that it does not affect ADA compliance. The Commission identified the landscaping in the mid-block connection as an area for further attention to ensure members of the public feel invited into and through this space.

The Commissioners also supported the proposed public benefits in the right-of-way and appreciated the petitioner’s responsiveness to previous comments about the design of the Bell St Green Street. They appreciated that the protected bike lane on Bell St would extend from 7th Ave past the project site to Denny Way and commended the inclusion of a planted buffer. The Commissioners also discussed opportunities for the proposed display window on 8th Ave and encouraged the team to explore programming or design enhancements for this space.

Finally, the Commission was pleased with the development of the Bell Street Concept Plan and encouraged the team to develop as bold a vision as possible in order to encourage continuity along Bell St from 1st Ave to Denny. The Commissioners praised the petitioner for coordinating with relevant agencies to enhance these concept designs. Additionally, the Commissioners noted that the concept plan did not address stormwater management. The Commissioners also supported the proposed public benefits in the right-of-way and appreciated the petitioner’s responsiveness to previous comments about the design of the Bell St Green Street. They appreciated that the protected bike lane on Bell St would extend from 7th Ave past the project site to Denny Way and commended the inclusion of a planted buffer. The Commissioners also discussed opportunities for the proposed display window on 8th Ave and encouraged the team to explore programming or design enhancements for this space.

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sion encouraged the petitioner to consider using the street grade to express stormwater and incorporate it into the proposed plantings.

**Action**

The Design Commission thanked the petitioner again for presenting the public benefit package for the Block 21 alley vacation petition. The Commission commended the petitioner for working closely with DPD and SDOT on the Bell Street Concept Plan. The Commission also appreciated the petitioner’s consistent responsiveness to previous recommendations regarding the public spaces throughout the project site.

With a **vote of 8 to 0**, the Design Commission approved the public benefit package for the petitioner to vacate the alley in the block bounded by 8th Ave, Bell St, 7th Ave, and Blanchard St. The Commission recognized the following public benefit items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public benefit item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Area (sq ft)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8th Ave Hillclimb</td>
<td>Provide accessible ramp from corner of 8th Ave and Bell St to mid-block plaza, native landscape, seating elements, lighting, and overhead soffit element.</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanchard St Setback</td>
<td>Provide 10-foot-wide building setback along Green Street for landscaping and seating elements.</td>
<td>1,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell St Setback</td>
<td>Provide 10-foot-wide building setback along Green Street for landscaping and seating elements.</td>
<td>1,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Ave improvements and protected bike lane</td>
<td>Provide expanded pedestrian streetscape, including landscaping, lighting, elevated two-way protected bike lane, double alley of street trees, seating elements, bus stop, and enhanced curb bulbs at corners of Bell St and Blanchard St.</td>
<td>4,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Ave improvements</td>
<td>Provide expanded pedestrian streetscape through curb alignment and bulb-outs at intersections, enhanced landscaping, lighting, and seating elements.</td>
<td>4,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanchard St improvements</td>
<td>Provide expanded pedestrian streetscape through curb alignment and bulb-outs at intersections, enhanced landscaping, lighting, and seating elements.</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell St improvements</td>
<td>Provide expanded pedestrian streetscape through curb alignment and bulb-outs at intersections, enhanced landscaping, lighting, and seating elements.</td>
<td>1,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Ave &amp; Bell St intersection</td>
<td>Provide raised intersection and crosswalks to enhance pedestrian safety. Improve curb bulbs on adjacent lots.</td>
<td>5,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell St protected bike lane</td>
<td>Provide in-street, separated two-way protected bike lane from 7th Ave to Denny Way.</td>
<td>4,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell Street Concept Plan</td>
<td>Provide conceptual street plan from 5th Ave to Denny Way to continue Bell Street Park design character.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Commission offered the following comments concerning the public benefit package:

1. The Commission encourages SDOT and King County Metro to eliminate bus layovers on Bell St. The Commission recommends the City explore storing buses on City land, not on public right-of-way.
2. The Commission recommends that the DRB consider and encourage the integration and continuation of the landscape plan throughout the site, particularly as a way to welcome the public into and through the internalized public spaces and mid-block connection (see Figure 6).
3. The Commission asks that the petitioner and SDOT explore ways to retain the proposed curb line on 8th Ave as shown in the presentation (see Figure 2).
4. The Commission encourages the petitioner to be as forward-thinking as possible with the Bell Street Concept Plan, shown in Figure 7 below, so that it integrates the frontages of future development projects towards a facility as successful for pedestrians and bicycles as Bell Street Park. Consider opportunities to include raised intersections beyond 7th Ave and 8th Ave, narrow the roadway to one travel lane, and use the topography of the street to integrate stormwater into the proposed plantings.

This is the final time the Commission expects to review the Block 21 alley vacation petition. Approval of both urban design merit and public benefit constitutes the Commission’s recommendation to SDOT that the vacation be granted. Ultimately the City Council makes the final decision whether to vacate the right-of-way.