

WSCC Capital Project Funding Update

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Commissioners Present

Brianna Holan, Vice Chair
Justin Clark
Laura Haddad
Rick Krochalis
Amalia Leighton
Vinita Sidhu
Lucas Whitesell
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused

Ben de Rubertis, Chair
Mark Johnson

Project Description

In 2018, Seattle City Council approved the request for 5 street and alley vacations to construct an expansion facility for the Washington State Convention Center (WSCC). As part of the vacation request, the project was required to develop of public benefits package to offset the loss of the public right-of-way (ROW). The Washington State Convention Center's (WSCC) expansion project's approved public benefit package includes providing \$37.5 million in funding to the following four capital projects:

- Freeway Park Improvements- The project builds upon previous work conducted by community organizations to repair, restore, and enhance infrastructure and design elements within Freeway Park.
- Pike Pine Renaissance- The project will focus on providing street enhancements, opportunities for activation and programming as well as improving east-west connections for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles between 1st Ave and Melrose Ave.
- Lid I-5- Study to explore the feasibility of building a new lid, or lids, across Interstate 5 in the core of Seattle's downtown, expanding from the existing lids of Freeway Park and the Washington State Convention Center.
- Bike Master Plan Implementation

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first briefing of the CIP projects receiving funding as part of the approval of the WSCC expansion project street and alley vacation request. The purpose of this meeting was to receive a briefing from City departments on how the Freeway Park, Pike Pine Renaissance, and Lid I-5 projects are proceeding. The Commission did not take an action during today's meeting, rather the SDC used the meeting as an opportunity to understand each project and to provide feedback and recommendations to be considered as each project develops. The SDC will continue to review each CIP project individually as they continue to develop.

December 19, 2019

2:30 - 4:30 pm

Type

CIP

Phase

Briefing

Previous Reviews

[11/16/17](#) - Public benefit approval

Presenters

Katie Bang
SPR

Lyle Bicknell
OPCD

David Graves
SPR

Steve Pearce
Office of Waterfront

Attendees

Beverly Barnett
SDOT

Riisa Conklin
Freeway Park Association

Zan McPherson
FIX

Recusals and Disclosures

Justin Clark recused himself for the Lid I-5 presentation as his employer is working on the project.

Brianna Holan disclosed that her previous employer worked on the WSCC expansion project.

Amalia Leighton recused herself for the Pike Pine Renaissance project as her employer is working on the project.

Vinita Sidhu disclosed that her employer previously worked on the Finding Freeway Park phase of the Freeway Park improvement project.

Summary of Presentation

Freeway park Improvements

Katie Bang and David Graves, of SPR, briefed the commission on the Freeway Park Improvements Project. The presentation included information on the project scope, budget, and schedule as well as an overview of the original design intent and current state of the park. Both the park and the Downtown/First Hill area have evolved since the park was constructed in 1976. Trees and park vegetation have matured within the park boundaries while high rise development has occurred around the park's edges, which has led to many challenges.

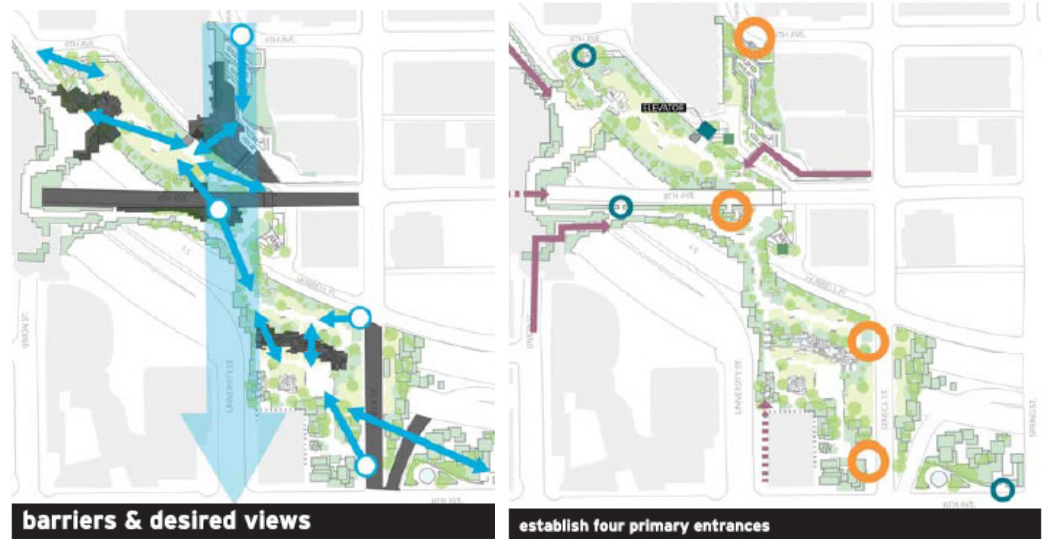


Figure 1: Primary spaces identified for improvement (top), existing views (bottom left), and hierarchy of park entrances (bottom right)

- primary entrance
- minor entrance
- access through other property
- service access only

The total project budget is \$10 Million, all of which is funded by the WSCC expansion project, which will be used to address challenges related to the existing condition of the park. The goal of the improvement project is to 1) preserve and restore original character defining features within the park, 2) repair or replace broken elements while adapting other elements to today's context, and 3) remove features that detract from the original design. Within these overarching goals for the project include objectives such as clarifying park entrances and creating a sense of hierarchy pathways through the park, creating legible wayfinding, implement a new lighting strategy, and opening the park to views to increase visibility, orientation and safety.

The presentation then focused primary spaces within the park – Seneca Plaza, The Canyon, Upper Seneca, Upper Lawns, Pigott Corridor, Park Center, and Box Gardens, identifying the original design intent, current design challenges, and potential design solutions for each space.

Pike Pine Renaissance

Steve Pearce, of the Office of the Waterfront, briefed the Commission on the Pike Pine Renaissance project. The stated goals for the project are to increase the safety and connectivity for pedestrians through the addition of wider sidewalks, visible crosswalks, active street frontages, and vegetation between Capitol Hill, Downtown, and the Waterfront. The project boundary extends along the Pike St and Pine St Corridors from 1st Ave to Melrose Ave (see figure 2)

The proposed project will include both elements of continuity, design features that will be present throughout the corridor, as well as design elements that are specific to distinct areas along the corridor. Elements of continuity include pedestrian lighting, street trees, sidewalk paving materials. Funding provided by the WSCC expansion public benefit

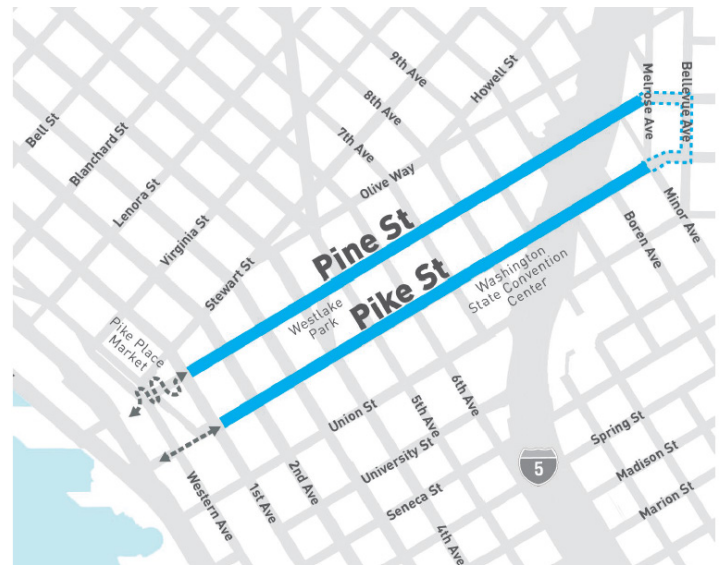


Figure 2: Pike Pine Renaissance project boundaries

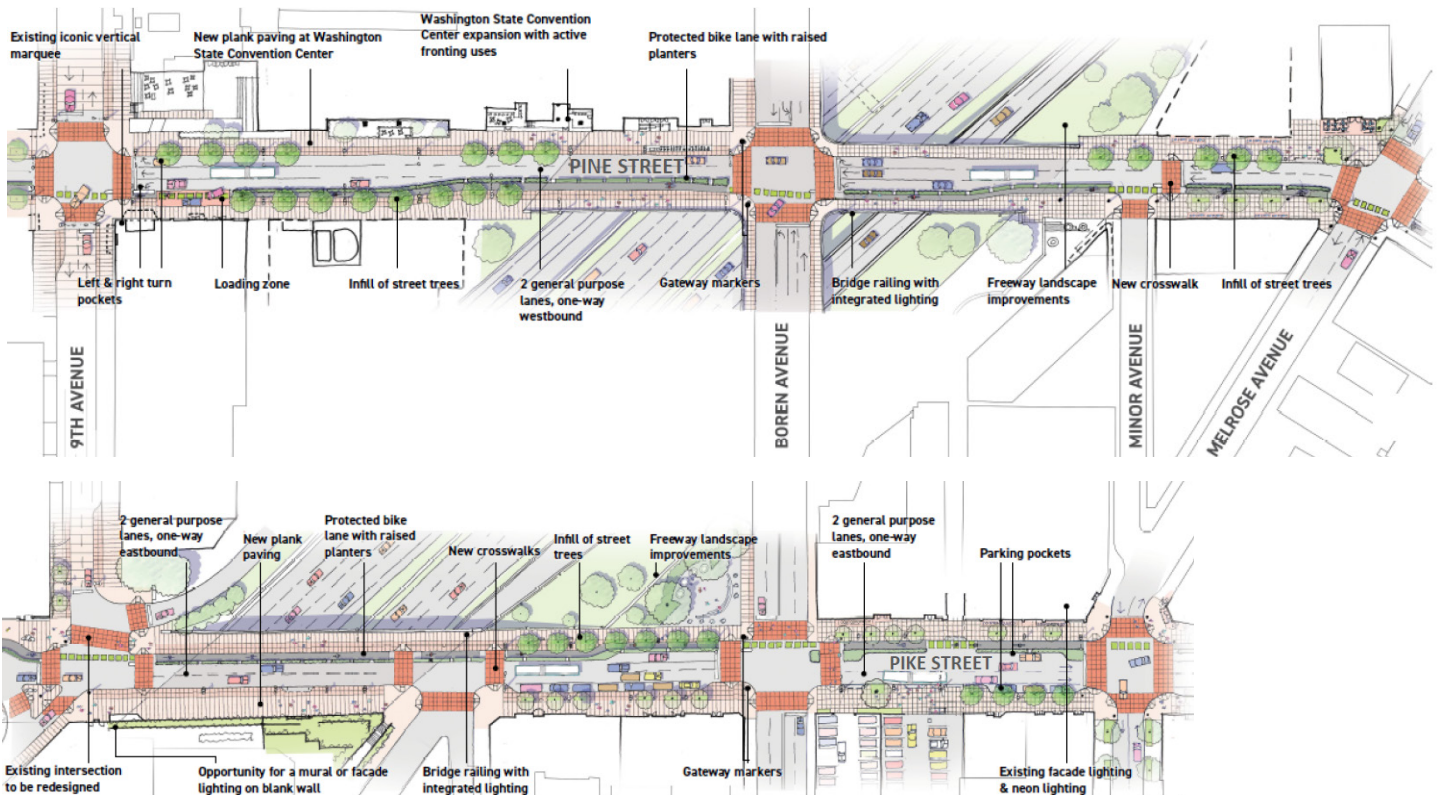


Figure 3: Area funded by approved WSCC Expansion Public Benefit Package

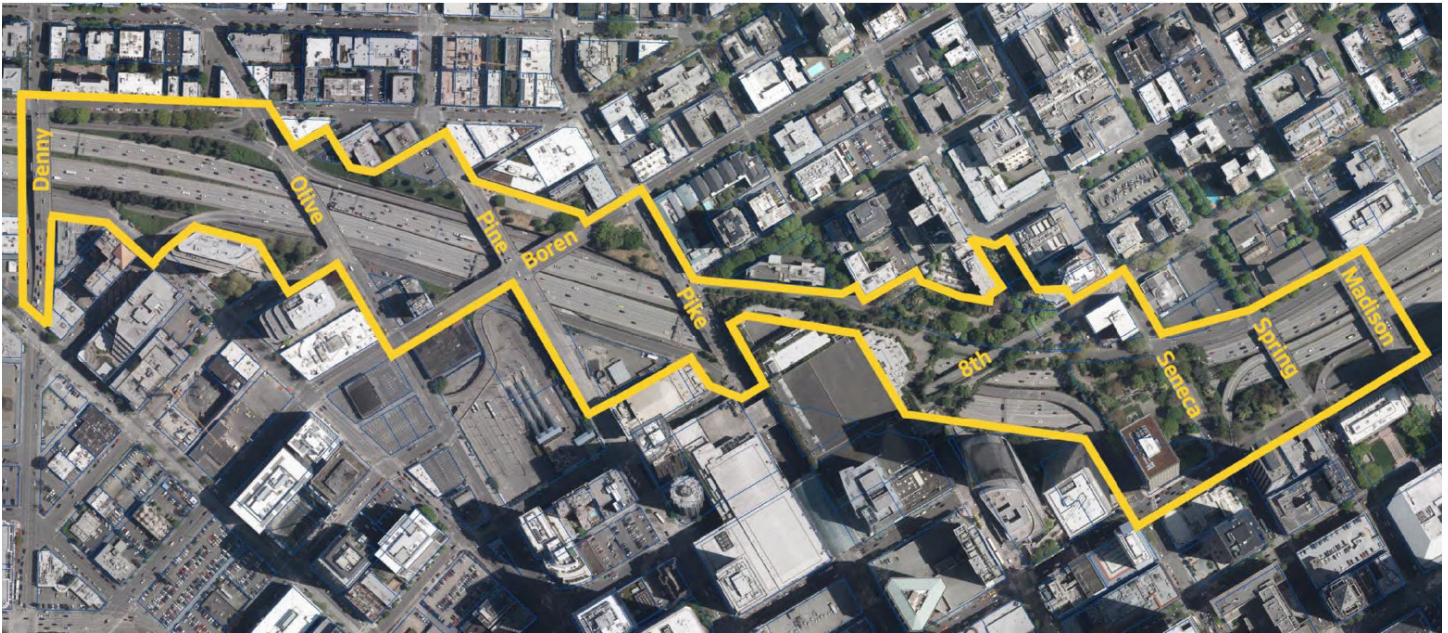


Figure 4: Lid I-5 Study Area

package will be used on the redesign of Pike St and Pine St corridors between 9th Ave and Melrose Ave (see figure 3). The proposed design will include railings with integrated lighting, gateway markers, increased sidewalk widths, protected bike lanes, and additional street trees and vegetation. The project team plans to include a public artist moving forward with the proposed design concepts.

Lid I-5

Lyle Bicknell, of OPCD, briefed the Commission on the Lid I-5 Feasibility Study (see image 4 for study area). The presentation focused on providing information on three different design scenarios – 1) Park Lid – provides a lid at the lowest cost and achieved the core benefit of providing central green space and connecting Downtown with the Capitol Hill and First Hill neighborhoods, 2) maximum private investment – is the most expensive option but provides the opportunity for the maximum redevelopment of areas reclaimed, 3) mid-density hybrid – is a combination of the first two scenarios, providing a scenario that is context sensitive and provides a mix of public and private development. The next step for the project team is to analyze the technical details and cost of each scenario.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, stated that the WSCC Expansion team is obligated to provide financial resources for the projects presented during today's meeting and that they have made all of their payments on time to each project. Beverly then mentioned that she is participating in the review process and is interested in seeing how the planned projects develop.

Public Comments

Riisa Conklin, Freeway Park Association, stated that SPR has covered high goals set by the Freeway Park Association and that they are hoping this will help in reconnecting the park with the City. Riisa then mentioned that Freeway Park Association is working with SPR to make sure that the proposed park elements from the presentation can stay as long as possible. Riisa then stated that this is a huge infrastructure project, and as a community group, they understand that major structural updates such as electrical work need to be addressed before other design elements are addressed, but that they are excited that proposed design elements will include updates to the comfort stations and redeveloping of the upper lawn.

Summary of Discussion

Freeway Park

The SDC thanked the project team for their briefing of the Freeway Park Improvement project. The Commission focused its discussion and questions on the original design intent and proposed improvements of each area within Freeway Park, connectivity and access, and long-term maintenance as well as the integration of the park with WSCC open space. The SDC encouraged the project team to create a balance between thinning the landscape to improve site lines, visibility, and safety with preserving the existing tree canopy.

Commissioners then recognized the Box Gardens as a gateway and marker to help users locate the park. They encouraged the team to think about ways to enhance the Box Gardens through a modern-day interpretation of Lawrence Halprin's original design intent. The SDC then strongly encouraged the project team to think about long term maintenance and to ensure there is a sustainable use of funds. The Commission then encouraged the project team to continue working with the WSCC to coordinate on the integration of the park and WSCC owned open space.

Pike Pine Renaissance

The SDC thanked the project team for their briefing of the Pike Pine Renaissance project. Commissioners expressed their excitement with the overall design concept. The Commission encouraged the project team to study existing protected bike lanes and cycle tracks within the Downtown area before specifying a type or design for the protected bike lanes proposed on Pike St and Pine St. Specifically, Commissioners recommended the team provide a consistent design approach along the corridors. The Commission appreciated that the design concept included elements of continuity as well as design elements that are specific to different districts or blocks throughout the corridor. The Commission then encouraged the project team to continue to think about the unique design of each district and recommended the team include a diverse planting palette that responded to each district or block.

Lid I-5

The SDC thanked the project team for their briefing on the Lid I-5 study. The Commission focused its discussions and questions around proposed design concepts, project boundaries, and the effects on the surrounding neighborhoods and affordable housing. The Commission expressed its concern with effects the lidding project will have on affordable housing units within the area. Commissioners recognized how the project might reduce the amount of naturally affordable housing within the neighborhood and encouraged the team to think about how to leverage development on the lid, as well as increasing density around the project boundary, to increase the amount of affordable housing. Commissioners cautioned the team from developing affordable housing on the lid, which is assumed to include expensive land values, but encouraged the team to think about how to increase affordable housing in the surrounding area.

The SDC then encouraged the team to continue to think about how the lid can provide additional open space and connectivity for Downtown, Capitol Hill, and First Hill Neighborhoods, while also integrating within existing Freeway Park. The commission also encourage the team to think about how the lid can serve as a gateway.

Action

The Commission did not take an action during today's briefing. The SDC looks forward to reviewing each project as it continues to develop.