



Seattle
Design
Commission

Approved
MINUTES OF THE MEETING
3rd November 2005

Gregory J. Nickels
Mayor

David Spiker
Chair

Charles Anderson

Pam Beyette

Adam Christiansen

Karen Kiest

Anindita Mitra

Sheri Olson

Nic Rossouw

Dennis Ryan

Darrell Vange

Guillermo Romano
Executive Director

Layne Cubell
Senior Staff

Projects Reviewed

318 Westlake Avenue North Skybridge
Mount Baker Housing
Magnolia Elementary Playfield Improvements

Convened: 9:30am

Adjourned: 3:00pm

Commissioners Present

David Spiker, Chair
Pam Beyette
Adam Christiansen
Karen Kiest
Anindita Mitra
Sheri Olson
Nic Rossouw
Dennis Ryan
Darrell Vange

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Layne Cubell
Tom Iurino
Alison Maitland Scheetz



Department of Planning and
Development

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03 Nov 2005 Project: 318 Westlake Avenue North Skybridge

Phase: Skybridge Petition

Previous Reviews: 6th October 2005 (Skybridge Petition)

Presenters: Sharon Coleman, Vulcan Development
Jim Rothwell, Callison Architecture
Kris Snider, Hewitt Architects
Pablo Schugurensky, Vulcan Consultant
Claudia Fitch, Artist

Attendees: Nancy Dunn, Trammell Crow Company
Jim McDonald, City of Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs
Jess Harris, Department of Planning and Development
Keith Miller, Seattle Department of Transportation
Susan Mueller, Seattle Department of Transportation
Tracy Krawczyk, Seattle Department of Transportation
Ethan Mewone, Seattle Department of Transportation

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 170)

Action

The Commission recommends the approval of the 318 Westlake Avenue North Skybridge project, with an 8:1 vote, under the following conditions. Firstly, it requests the proponents conform to the Terry Avenue Design Guidelines and other neighborhood plans. Secondly, it asks the proponents to return, when appropriate, to present more detailed plans for the artwork, the sidewalk and landscape program, as well as more design details with regards to the skybridge itself. The Commission also

- **appreciates the significant design modifications in response to their earlier comments.**
- **values the continued emphasis on the through block connection at-grade and feels this is still an important element of the overall plan.**
- **recognizes the proponent's willingness to participate in the greater neighborhood art program, likes the initial art concepts proposed on site and commends the team for developing a scheme that complements and supports the streetcar system, which would extend the public benefit across the neighborhood.**
- **reinforces its earlier support to retain the alley system in the neighborhood as a whole, because they feel that the alleys are an important element of the neighborhood.**
- **understands that in the latest plans both the art and landscape plans are still very conceptual and need to be developed further.**
- **appreciates that the design for the skybridge is clean and minimal, but they recommend and encourage the proponents to make the skybridge design a little more distinct from the buildings on either side and request that they pay attention to the underside of the skybridge, as well.**

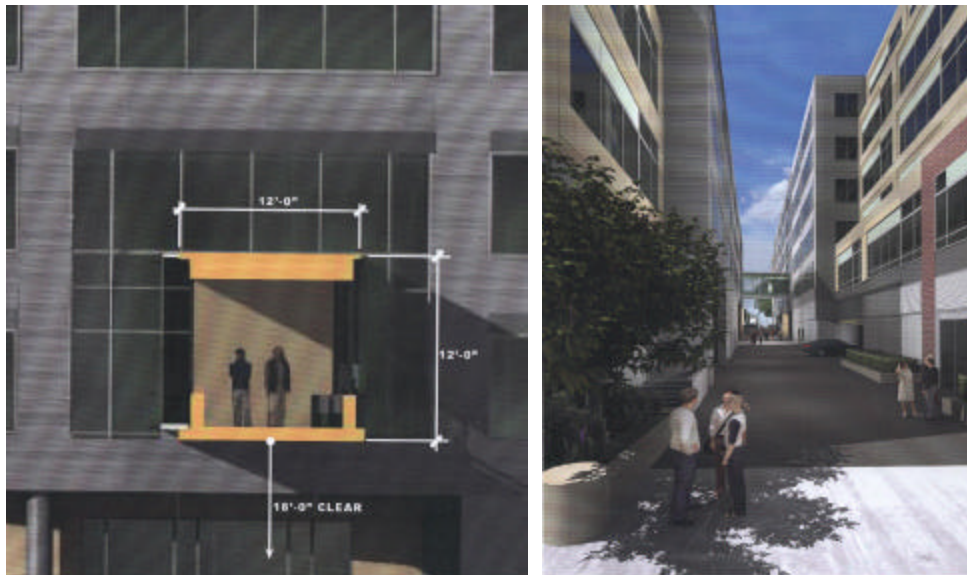
- questions the appropriateness of the mid-block curb bulb at either end of the alley as this suggests a mid-block crossing, when in fact it is a vehicular entrance.
- acknowledges that the skybridge itself has little or no public benefit, but the majority feels that the project as a whole does have a sufficient public benefit component to offset the impact on the street from the skybridge.
- expresses a desire to keep open the larger city wide policy discussion of skybridges over alleys because the Commission has not met consensus on this matter.

Proponents Presentation

In response to comments heard last time this project was presented to the commission, this presentation aimed to describe the design on the bridge itself and explain the public benefits.

The primary use of the alley is service, providing access to both loading docks and parking garages. The idea of full alley vacation was reconsidered. However, the preferred design proposal continues to recommend a mid-block skybridge, on a slight diagonal, connecting the second floors and stairwells of the two buildings. The proponents feel this is the right approach because it maintains the scale of the surrounding vernacular environment.

The skybridge design

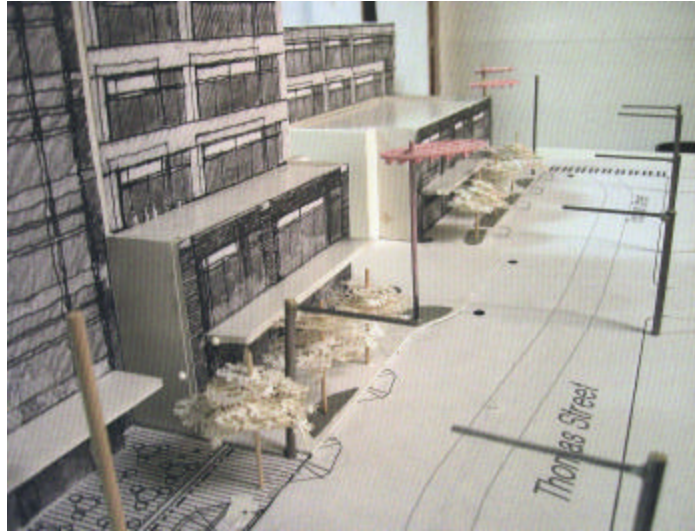


The bridge, which will be 12' high and 12' wide, will span the full 20' of the alley at 18' clearance. It will be a minimal structure with aluminum beams and clear glass walls, set out by 8"-1'. Proponents investigated the options of allowing pedestrians to cross on top of the bridge but the extra support and railings required would make the more imposing than they intended. The proponents are still exploring lighting options and hope to emphasize planes with light, such as the ground and ceiling planes beneath the skybridge, rather than have direct sources of light.

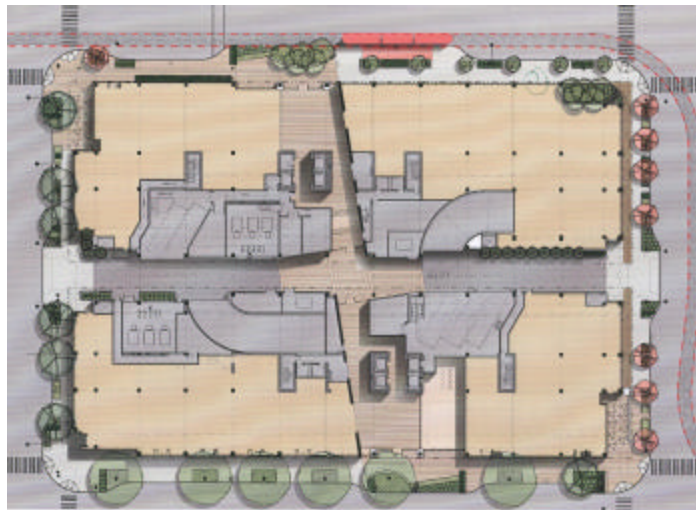
Public benefits

The proponents presented three public benefit gestures:

1. Wider sidewalks on Thomas Street - The buildings on the south side of the block will be set back 5', thus allowing for greater pedestrian movement and opportunities for outdoor seating areas.



2. Art on Thomas Street to help define this area. - A public artist, Claudia Fitch, will concentrate much of her work in this part of the site. Her initial ideas are abstracted landscape elements inspired by the industrial vernacular and remnant trees in the area. Her early concepts involve suspended oval elements to provide a counter point to the grid of the buildings and the lines of the street cars. The rhythm and scale of these elements aim to play to the tram, vehicular and pedestrian audiences, especially at the tram turn before the stop.



3. Landscaping to provide a sense of place within the neighborhood – working with the artist, the landscape architect will also focus on this south side. Paving and plantings will underplay and intermix with the trees to provide a rich pedestrian

experience. Other areas to be addressed include the entrance to the surface connection, the alley entrances and the southeast corner of Thomas near the tram stop.

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- SDOT expressed support and excitement for an art project that is integrated with the street car. Is interested in exploring the possibility of extending this to the larger neighborhood.
- Arts Office commends the art project's relationship to the street car and is currently exploring funding support for this project.
- Asks if the art work will be lit.
 - No, currently just by the street lights and the up light from the buildings
- Questions if Vulcan will own and maintain the art work.
 - Yes, it will be part of the building project
- Asks if a street use permit is required
 - Yes
- Asks if the 5' set back is new.
 - Yes
- Confirms that Terry Avenue is one way.
 - Yes, at this corner
- Clarifies that the 5' set back, the art installation and landscape opportunities are presented as the public benefits.
 - Yes
- Asks if the alley is still two way.
 - Yes, the alley will continue to be two way and will allow for car turns and truck access
- Inquires if the proposed activities for the ground floor on Thomas have changed.
 - No, still intending this to be retail or Group Health.
- Asks if the doors open on to the street.
 - Yes
- Inquires what the current alley width is.
 - 16' but will be 20' as required
- Expresses concern over the limited skybridge design and asks for clarification of lighting and materials.
 - Ground plane lighting, under the bridge lighting
 - Minimal impact – glass and aluminum
- Expresses concern regarding the future maintenance of the skybridge.

- Feels that the extra 5', the adoption of the street car line and the commitment to art supports approval of the skybridge
- Appreciates the strong public benefit gestures that the art project and the 5' set back brings , but feels that they are still being worked out and do not fully contribute yet.
- Strongly recommends that skybridges should be seen as an anomaly.
- Worries that approval of this skybridge would set a precedent for other projects
- Understands the need to hold on to city employers and densify the urban core.
- Appreciates that the skybridge is clean and minimal.
- Feels that the ground plane has not been developed enough and encourages the proponents to design it to be as open, generous, active and strong as possible.
- Appreciates the intention of linking the design to the whole area, especially the transit system.
- Underscores the Commissions struggle with the issue of skybridges, but appreciates the efforts made to present a more compelling argument.
- Is encouraged to see the connection to the street car, which is a huge public benefit to the area and suggests proponents to extend further beyond this project.
- Feels that a cross walk on top of the bridge is still an important feature that should not be overlooked.
- Questions the appropriateness of the mid-block curb bulb at alley entrance because this is still a service entrance.
- Strongly feels that the design presented is self serving and thinks that the 5' set back does not make this area a public space.
- Fears that approval sets a precedent and lowers the standard of the city of Seattle.
- Does not believe that the skybridge offers any public benefit.
- Reiterates that the skybridge itself is not a public benefit.
- Underscores the benefit of the alley network to the neighborhood as a whole.
- Wishes to make clear that approval does not set precedent for future alleys.

03 Nov 2005 Project: Mount Baker Housing

Phase: Street Vacation

Previous Reviews: none

Presenters: Tory Laughlin Taylor, AF Evans Development
Geoff Spelman, Mount Baker Housing Association
Susan Jones, Atelier Jones Architect

Attendees: Bruce Rips, Department of Planning and Development
Moira Gray, Seattle Department of Transportation

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 170)

Action

The Commission recommends approval of the street vacation proposal, based on urban design considerations, but wishes to see a more detailed landscape design and greater definition of the public benefits and would like to see this project again, and

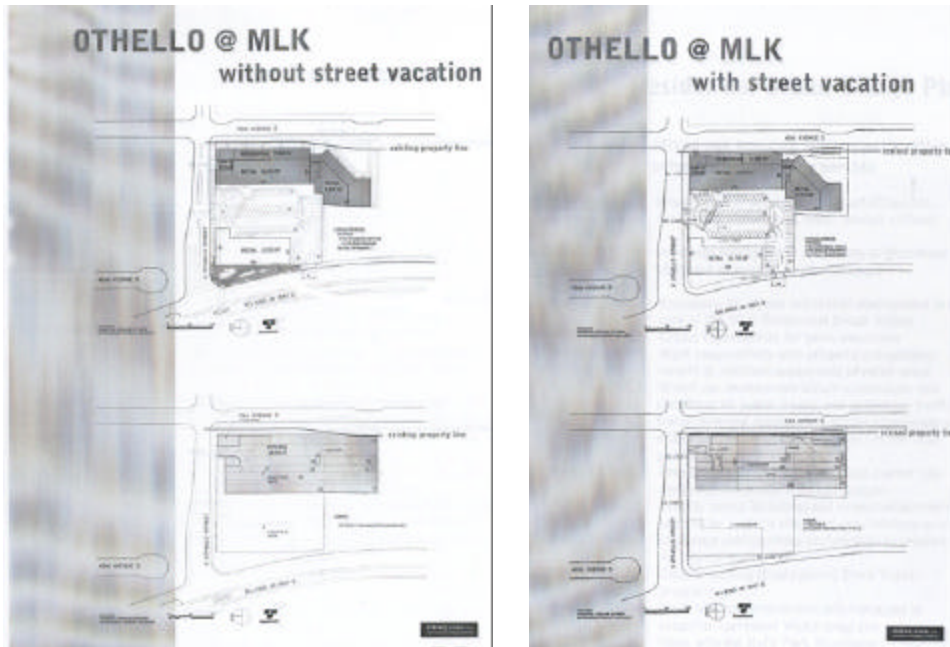
- **acknowledges the unusual nature of this street vacation; however they feel the public benefits are not tangible.**
- **generally approves of the row housing and the idea that this would bring eyes on to the park, but would like to see how this project relates to the larger urban context, especially the Sound Transit Station and other retail developments, as well as a finer grain of design.**
- **is keen to see details of the at-grade enhancements and a more unified vision of the property as a whole.**

Proponents Presentation

The petitioner proposes to vacate a small arc-shaped piece of 43rd Ave S that extends outside the improved right-of-way in the direction of the Mt. Baker Housing property. The arc-shaped portion of the right-of-way proposed for vacation is 20 feet at its widest point and 375 feet in length. The width and appearance of the improved portion of 43rd Ave S would not change.

Project Description

Mt Baker Housing Proposes to develop the site with affordable housing and some retail uses. The 141,571 square foot structure will house 90-95 units of mixed income, for-sale housing units, of which one fifth are identified as affordable units for first-time homebuyers. The street level units facing 43rd are 2-story townhouses with 4-stories of flats above the townhouses. An underground residential parking will hold 132 parking stalls. The 13,800 square foot retail space will face west, overlooking the internal surface parking lot that holds 78 parking stalls.



Reason for Vacation

The proponents feel that incorporating the proposed vacation into the project would eliminate the need to construct housing around the arc-shaped piece of right-of-way that intrudes into the site. While they could design around it, this is not the preferred alternative and not what they feel would be best for the site. The vacation would provide flexibility in the design of the residential unit façade, reduce setbacks, and optimize placement of the building structures. Mount Baker Housing proposes to landscape and engage the street scape.

Public Benefits

The public benefit proposed by Mt. Baker Housing focuses on Othello Park. The proponents propose that the street vacation will optimize the connection between the residential units and the park, as well as bring eyes to the street, thus increasing safety and security in Othello Park.

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- SDOT feel that this is a modest proposal and acknowledges that there are no unusual circumstances.
- DPD expressed no concern over the request.
- Clarifies the design of the project if the vacation is approved.
 - Confirmed that angled building is only in response to the dog-leg
- Asks if vacation provides the opportunity for more units.
 - No, but does allow for better configuration of the underground parking
- Suggests reconfiguring the position of the retail buildings on MLK Jr. Way
 - Unfortunately no, because of limited parking space and internal sidewalks

- Asks if the proponents are offering to make a financial commitment to improving the park and working with local groups.
 - Unfortunately no, but feel that the project itself brings significant benefits to strengthen the neighborhood.
- Appreciates the presentation at such an early stage in the project, but is not convinced that straitening the grid is an urban design improvement.
- Feels that a finer grain of analysis and design is required and requests to see greater connectivity to the park and transit station.
- Doesn't see the street vacation as an improvement, but acknowledges how the configuration would benefit the proponents.
- Is concerned that there is no overall vision for the neighborhood and suggests that proponents need to fully understand the amenities that are desired by the community.
- Would like to hear how this project relates to the larger urban context, especially the Sound Transit Station and other retail developments.

03 Nov 2005 Project: Magnolia Elementary Playfield Improvements

Phase: Design Development

Previous Reviews: 18th Aug 2005 (Schematic Design)

Presenters: Mark Brands, Site Workshop
Cathy Tuttle, Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Attendees: Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation
Tom Early, Site Workshop
Carolyn Salisbury, Site Workshop

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 169)

Action

The Commission unanimously approves the design development plans presented today for Magnolia Elementary Playfield Improvements projects. They assume that the drawings are truly representational of the final design and do not wish to see the project again;

- **commend the simple clarity of the design and the creative use of the slopes.**
- **recognize that there have only been minor changes to the design since it was last presented and note the new location of the playground and understand its priority status within the overall design.**
- **welcome the accommodation of skateboard users and also appreciate the wheelchair accessibility throughout a major portion of this park.**
- **suggest widening an area of the path by the outlook to enable wheelchair viewing.**
- **express concern over the proximity of the shelter to edge of the southern slope and recommend buffering it with a path, which would allow for maintenance access.**
- **strongly urge the proponents to pursue the use of temporary fencing to protect the plants on the embankment rather than investing in a permanent fence composed of an environmentally damaging material like vinyl.**
- **ask the proponents to consider placing a bench at the north east corner in order to take advantage of the views.**

Proponents Presentation

The development of Magnolia Elementary Playfield is supported through a Pro Parks Levy of \$1.4 million. The design capitalizes on the scenery with countless viewpoints from picnic and play areas, sloping lawns, walking paths, low seat walls, and a view pavilion that can be reserved for community events. The design also includes a playground and hard court area that be used by the Seattle School District in the future.



The design of this project has changed little from the initial schematic design; this presentation outlined the minor amendments since August.

- i. The ramp scheduled for the eastern slope was deemed too expensive and has been replaced with a stair case at the southeast corner.
- ii. Through a community meeting held in September, the play ground has been identified as a key element and has funding precedent over the shelter.
- iii. The location of the playground has changed slightly from the original design and is now largely positioned within the oval.
- iv. Neighborhood concerns that the shelter would block views have been negated by a beam study completed by the proponents. The shelter is open and simple with four picnic tables. The Parks Department considers this element as a real public benefit and asset to the park.
- v. The Port-o-let is now located in a less prominent position on the south side of the park along McGraw St.
- vi. The ADA parking stall will be accessed from the east side of the vehicular drop off route.
- vii. Proponents are still exploring the cost of hydro seed verses planting of the 2:1 eastern embankment. They have applied for a S.P.U. water quality grant.
- viii. Per the request of Parks, a chain linked fence will edge the embankment. The purpose of this fence is to aid maintenance and keep people off the slope, and not for safety reasons.

- ix. A number of low seating walls, instead of benches, circumscribe some of the edges of the view lawn and play area. These will be skateboard friendly with reinforce edges of either metal or plastic.

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Asks for clarification of changes since the last presentation
- Asks if the proponents are dealing with the slope in the southwest corner above the hard courts.
 - No
- Questions type of fence above the eastern slope.
 - Chain linked black vinyl
 - The slope is not steep but Parks wish to keep people off the landscaping.
- Wonders if the shelter is too close for comfort to the edge of the slope.
- Asks if the play area is larger than in previous presentations and questions if it needs to be of this size.
 - Yes it is a little bigger.
- Understands how the restroom is less prominent on the southern edge, but is concerned about the distance from the pavilion and playground.
- Appreciates the simplicity of the design and likes the use of the slopes.
- Commends the proponents for embracing skateboarders.
- Reiterates enjoyment of the design.
- Questions ADA accessibility
 - Anywhere. In the park there are 2-5% slopes
- Strongly requests that proponents think of sustainable materials for the fence.
- Recommends the use of a temporary fence, as safety is not an issue.
 - Agrees
- Recommends a bench is placed at the northeast entrance to the park, to take advantage of the extensive views over the park and back to the city.