

SCL Broad Street Substation Vacation

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor

Samuel Asefa
Director, OPCD

Ross Tilghman, Chair

John Savo, Vice Chair

Justin Clark

Ben de Rubertis

Evan Fowler

Rachel Gleeson

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Commissioners Present

Ross Tilghman, Chair
John Savo, Vice Chair
Justin Clark
Ben de Rubertis
Rachel Gleeson
Mark Johnson

Commissioners Excused

Evan Fowler
Laura Haddad
Brianna Holan
Rick Krochalis

Project Description

The project team is proposing to vacate a portion of the Broad Street right-of-way (ROW) at the corner Harrison St and Taylor Ave to provide improvements for the Broad Street Substation. This section of Broad Street between 5th Ave N and Ninth Ave N was permanently closed in 2014 to allow for additional construction of the Mercer Corridor Project and SR 99 tunnel. The vacation proposal includes the development of the previously closed ROW to house additional equipment for the Broad Street Substation as well as street improvements along Taylor Ave and Thomas St.

Meeting Summary

This is the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the Seattle City Light (SCL) Broad Street Substation Vacation. The purpose of this meeting was to review the urban design merit for the project. The SDC did not take an action at this meeting. The SDC will review the updated urban design merit proposal and public benefit package at a future meeting.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures

March 15, 2018

1:30 - 3:30 pm

Type

Street Vacation

Phase

Urban Design Merit

Previous Reviews

None

Presenters

Mark Brands
SiteWorkshop

Rebecca Ossa
Seattle City Light

Matt Boyd
Electric Power Systems

Chris Hoffman
Stepherson Associates

Attendees

Beverly Barnett
Seattle Dept. of Transportation

Biruk Belay
SiteWorkshop

Karlee Gaskill
Seattle City Light

Bikas Pande
Seattle City Light

Rajinder Rai
Seattle City Light

Ruri Yampolsky
Office of Arts and Culture

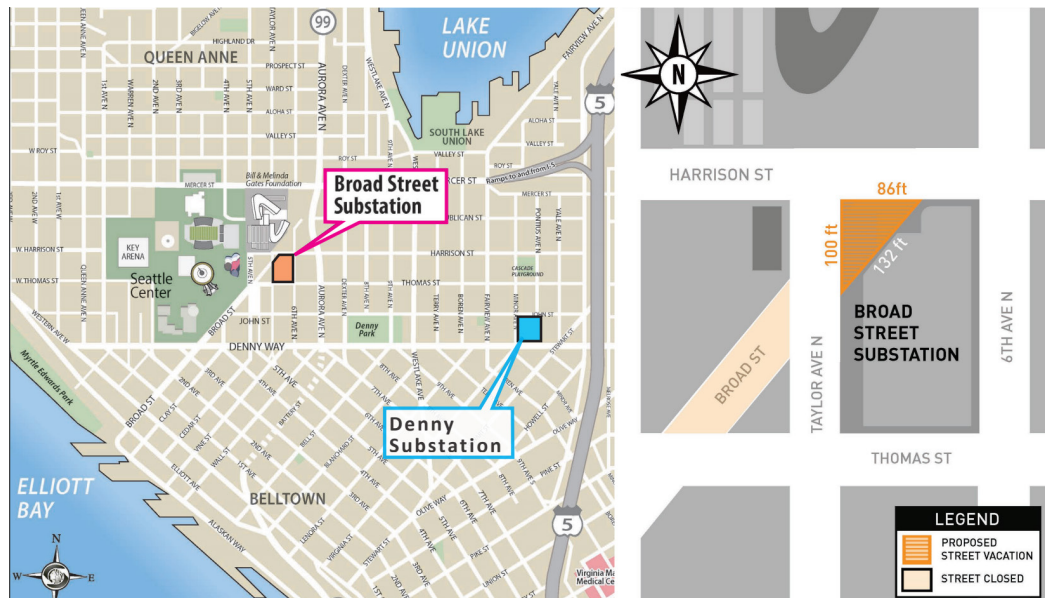


Figure 1: Project location (left) and proposed street vacation location (right)

Summary of Presentation

Mark Brands, of SiteWorkshop, Rebecca Ossa, of SCL, Matt Boyd, of Electric Power Systems, and Chris Hoffman, of Stepherson Associates presented the urban design merit proposal for the project. The presentation included a brief description of existing Broad Street Substation as well as an overview of the surrounding neighborhood context (see figure 1), existing plans, and community outreach for the project. The remainder of the presentation focused on the urban design merit of the proposed vacation and no-vacation scenarios.

Improvements to the Broad Street Substation include the addition of electrical equipment, which must be located on site and cannot be located below grade. The electrical equipment requirements and design safety standards are the same for both the vacation and no vacation scenario. Both the vacation and no-vacation scenarios will include a protective fire wall along the perimeter of the site. The proposed wall, which must be taller than the proposed oil filled equipment to meet design safety standards, code requirements and recommendations, will range from 17-22 feet in height and is being proposed along the property line along part of Harrison St and Taylor Ave. See figure 2 for more detail.

In the vacation scenario, the proposed equipment will be located near or within the vacated Broad Street ROW. The equipment will require the installation of a 17-22 ft. fire wall around the perimeter of this portion of the site, which will connect with the existing wall surrounding the remaining perimeter of the site. The vacation proposal will also include street improvements along Taylor Ave N and Thomas St as well as a separated bicycle facility along Thomas St. between Taylor Ave N and 6th Ave N. The proposed vacation scenario includes a limited use service access, facing Harrison St., for the long-term service/maintenance of the proposed equipment.

The no-vacation scenario includes locating the proposed equipment within the existing footprint of the substation. Note that the new capacitors will be located on top of the crane building. This structure is a city landmark, which will make it difficult to impossible to attach additional equipment to

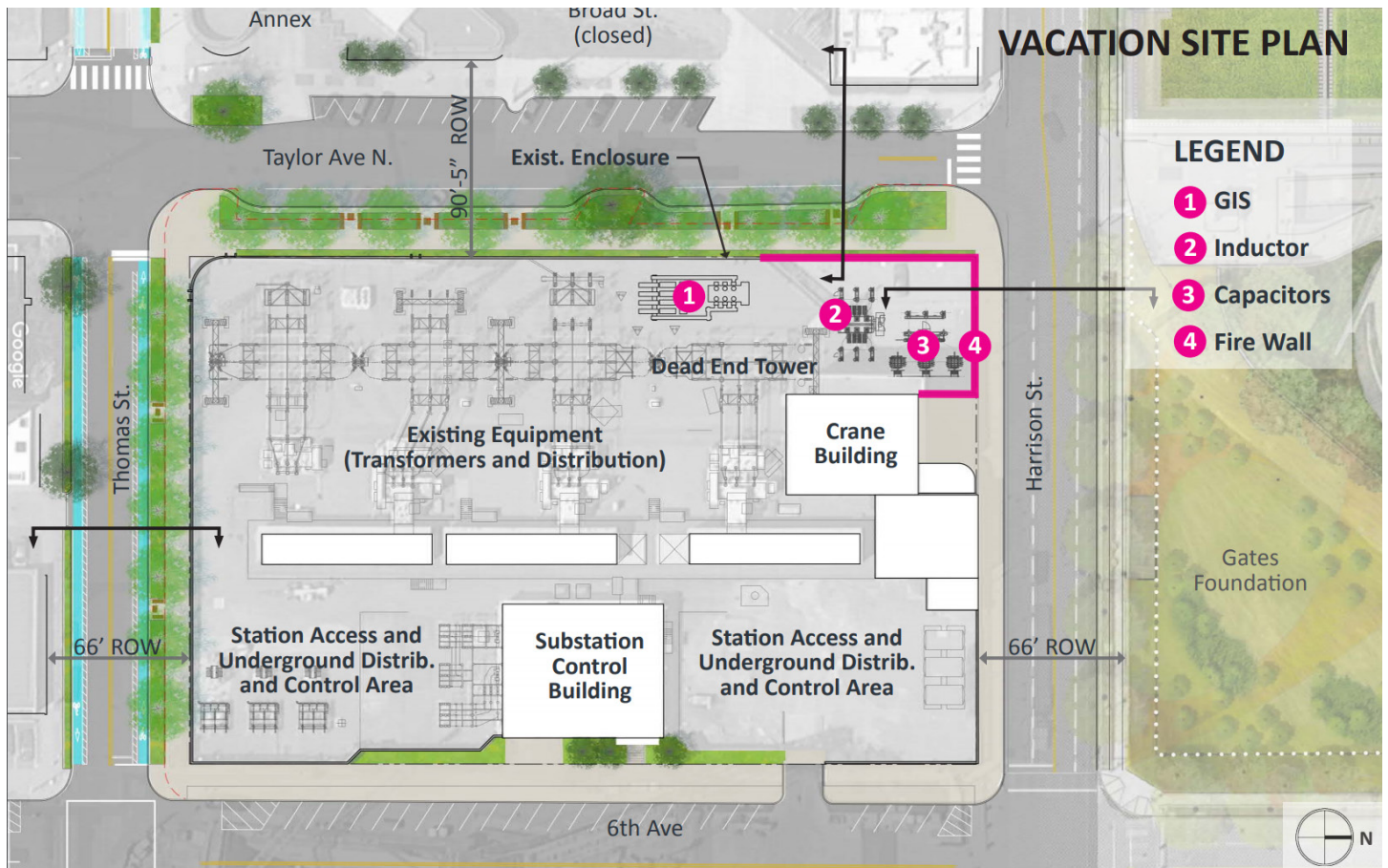


Figure 2: Vacation scenario - proposed site plan

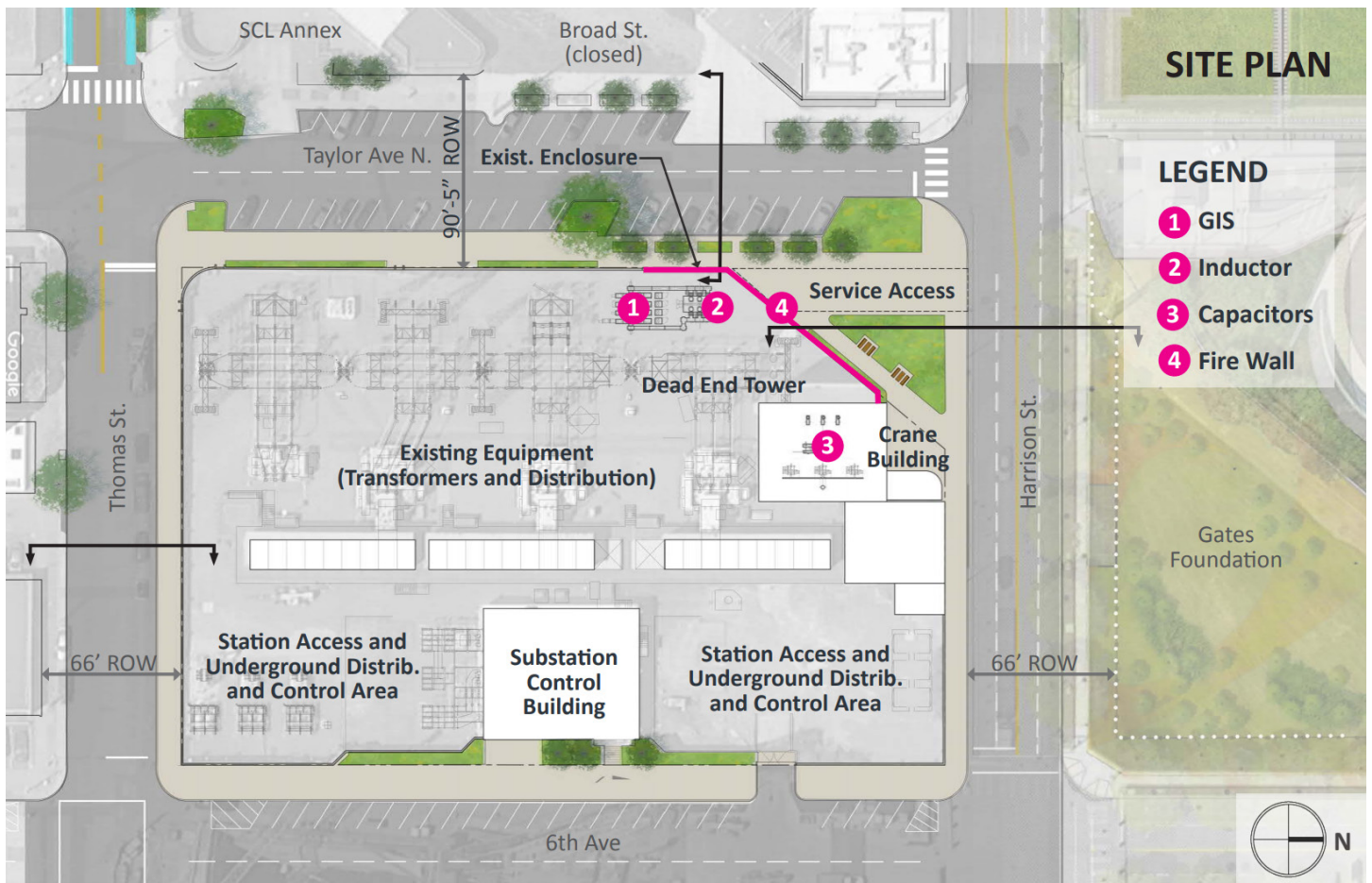


Figure 3: No vacation scenario - proposed site plan

the building. The crane building would also require significant structural improvements to support this configuration. A 20-22 ft. fire wall will be located between this portion of the facility and the adjacent Broad Street ROW. The Broad Street ROW will be developed to include open space as well as service access drive for the long-term service/maintenance of the proposed equipment. *See figure 3 for more detail.*

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, mentioned that SDOT did not find any major issues with the vacation request. Ms. Barnett stated they will continue to analyze the context of the project site and surrounding area. Ms. Barnett then said that, given the growth and character of the area, they will analyze what the streetscape should look like. Ms. Barnett then said SCL has been careful in explaining their purpose and connectivity with developments in the surrounding area.

Ruri Yampolsky, OAC, recognized that the artwork along the SCL substation annex has been there for a long time and then encouraged the project team to consult with the same artist the current project.

Public Comments

None

Summary of Discussion

The commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Access, circulation, and pedestrian experience
- Vertical architectural elements
- ROW and landscape improvements

Access, circulation, and pedestrian experience

The SDC recognized that most of the positive improvements made by the project are related to the public benefit package rather than urban design merit. Commissioners then expressed concern over 1) the vacation scenario not providing a better environment than what currently exist due to the proposed wall and 2) the credibility of the non-vacation scenario. The SDC then recommended the project team return for a subcommittee to review studies and design alternatives for the vacation and no vacation scenarios to better understand how the project team came up with the current proposal. The subcommittee will also review the quality of the public realm that will result from the design, specifically the placement, height, and materiality of the wall at the northwestern corner of the site.

Although the SDC appreciated the enhancements made to the pedestrian realm in the vacation scenario, commissioners are concerned with the proposed wall as it relates to the pedestrian experience and associated views along Harrison St. Commissioners recognized that if the proposed wall was built at the sidewalk edge it would cast a large shadow and reduce views to the space needle. The commission encouraged the project team to explore ways to preserve a portion of the view to the space needle. The commission also acknowledged the character and design of the proposed wall will greatly impact the surrounding area.

Commissioners then expressed their concern with the elimination of on street parking along Thomas St.

Vertical architectural elements

The SDC discussed the transition between existing and proposed architectural elements. The commission discussed the possibility of integrating the proposed wall with either the Crane Building or existing fence. Commissioners agreed it would be easier to integrate the wall with the Crane Building but cautioned the design team from replicating the building design. The commission recommended the wall be integrated in such a way to allow the Crane Building to be visually prominent along Harrison St, while the wall serves as a secondary element.

ROW and landscape improvements

The SDC recognized the proposed ROW and landscape improvements will be proposed as public

benefit elements but agreed with the design direction of the proposed improvements. The commission appreciated the proposed design along Taylor Ave N. Specifically, commissioners appreciated how the proposed bench seating provided a visual and physical break along the street edge. The SDC then questioned how many of the proposed trees could be planted along Taylor Ave N due to the large amount of underground utilities beneath Taylor Ave N.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for its presentation on urban design merit for the Seattle City Light – Broad Street Substation Vacation project. Overall, the Commission appreciated the proposed ROW and landscape improvements along Thomas St. and Taylor Ave N. The SDC did not take an action during today's meeting. The Commission will review the project at the subcommittee level prior to reviewing the project again at a commission meeting to address the following concerns:

1. Underdeveloped scenario for how SCL could meet the purpose of the project in the absence of a vacation
2. Providing flexibility in the placement of the proposed equipment at the northwest corner of the site
3. The quality of the public realm that will result from the design, in particular placement, height, and materiality of the wall at the northwestern corner of the site in relation to its context