

Diagonal Ave S Street Vacation

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Director, OPCD

Ben de Rubertis, Chair

Brianna Holan, Vice Chair

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Commissioners Present

Brianna Holan, Vice Chair
Justin Clark
Laura Haddad
Mark Johnson
Amalia Leighton
Vinita Sidhu
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused

Ben de Rubertis, Chair
Rick Krochalis

Project Description

Seattle City Light (SCL) is petitioning to vacate a segment of Diagonal Ave S between 4th Ave S and the BNSF railroad tracks in the SODO neighborhood. This segment is adjacent to SCL's South Service center and is currently used for storage under a previously approved street use permit. The project team is proposing to use the vacated ROW to make improvements to the existing South Service Center. The public benefit proposal includes providing additional open space within the Georgetown neighborhood that will integrate with the Georgetown to South Park Trail.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the SCL - Diagonal Ave S Street Vacation project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the vacation pre-petition and CIP pre-concept design (15% design) phase for the project. After the presentation and discussion, the SDC voted, 8-0, to approve the CIP 15% design. The SDC is not required to take an action on the vacation pre-petition review but did provide recommendations to be addressed prior to the Commission's formal review of the vacation petition.

Recusals and Disclosures

None

October 3, 2019

1:00-2:30 pm

Type

Street Vacation & CIP

Phase

Vacation pre-petition & CIP 15% design

Previous Reviews

None

PresentersAnindita Mitra
CREA Affiliates LLC**Attendees**

Beverly Barnett
SDOT

Timothy Croll
SCL

Patty Foley
Georgetown Open Space
Committee

Amy Gray
SDOT

David Goldberg
OPCD

Kate Kohler
Georgetown Resident

Danyal Lofti
SPR

Ruth Meraz-Caron
Resident

Jesse Moore
Georgetown Open Space
Committee

Chip Nevins
SPR

Hallie O'Brien
SDOT

Lish Whitson
Seattle Central Staff



Figure 1: Project location (left) and proposed public benefit location (right)

Summary of Presentation

Anindita Mitra presented the CIP pre-concept design and vacation pre-petition for the SCL – Diagonal Ave S street vacation project. The presentation began with a brief overview of the project area and background information (*see figure 1*). SCL currently has a permit to use the ROW for the storage of equipment. The area is fenced off from the public as well as the larger SCL facility. The CIP proposal would integrate the area into the existing SCL operating area, provide weather protection for stored materials and equipment while improving stormwater runoff quality into the Duwamish River. The CIP proposal would construct an underground stormwater treatment area, remove internal fencing between the area and the existing SCL facility, and construct new security fencing around the site. The proposed covered area would be constructed out of post and canvas material. Existing underground utilities will prevent SCL from constructing a larger facility.

The proposed public benefit package for the vacation alternative includes transferring SCL's Flume property in Georgetown to Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) to be developed as an off-leash area (*see figure 1*). A portion of the donated site would also be integrated into the Georgetown to South Park multiuse trail.

The no vacation alternative presented would include continuing to operate and use the area as it currently does today.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, Reminded the SDC that SDOT is reviewing the project as a CIP project as the vacation petition has not been received. Beverly mentioned that SCL currently has a permit to use space, but that they are starting to see a compelling argument for the necessity of vacating this portion of the street. Beverly then reminded the SDC that they are also beginning to review the proposed public benefit and that they are still understanding City agency and community commitments for the public park proposal.

David Goldberg, OPCD, thanked different parties who spent time in figuring out their priorities. David mentioned that SCL approached other city agencies early in the process to develop the project and to partner with the community to create a public benefit. Partnering with SPR is a great way to show how collaboration on public projects should be done.

Danyal Lofti, SPR, mentioned that the previous plans have also documented the community's desire to have an off leash area in Georgetown. They stated that the proposed open space will benefit the community and that cost sharing between different departments will help make this project a reality.

Chip Nevins, SPR, stated that SPR is working with SCL on this project. Chip mentioned that the community wants more open space, off-leash areas, and bike connection in this area and that this is an opportunity to start providing those benefits. Chip then stated that SCL will convey they Flume property to SPR, will reserve space for SDOT to develop a trail and then develop an off leash area as quickly as possible. SCL will also provide some funds to help develop the site. Chip then mentioned that SPR is supportive of this project and that it is a creative way to provide open space in an area that desires it.

Hallie O'Brien, SDOT, stated that SDOT doesn't have construction funding yet for the trail but that they do have funding for the design. Hallie then mentioned that SDOT has conducted outreach this summer and have spoken with community who is supportive of the project.

Public Comments

Patty Foley, Georgetown open space committee, stated that Georgetown residents are looking for improvements to tree canopy and areas to walk and bike in an area that currently lacks open space, clean air, and trees. Patty then mentioned that they could activate this space and create a sense of ownership and safety while adding an off-leash area, which many neighbors are in favor of having. Patty also stated that the FLUM site is one of the few open parcels in the area to create public space. They then thank SCL and other departments for their proposal to include accessible open space.

Kate Kholer, Georgetown resident, stated that people do want a dog park in Georgetown. Kate then mentioned that feedback from additional community outreach indicated that many people wanted either a dog park or multi use trail. Kate then expressed their appreciation for SCL proactively reaching out to involve community in the planning of the proposed public benefit.

Jesse Moore, Georgetown open space committee, stated that they are interested in SCL making lasting investments and then voiced their support for the vacation request. Jesse then mentioned that people have been using the site to walk through as an alternative to traveling along E Marginal Way and that community members have worked with SCL to clean up the project site. Jesse then stated that both SPR and SDOT have documented the development of this site as a community priority and that this vacation proposal is an opportunity to create a public park and public multiuse path.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion on the CIP pre-concept design around the following issues:

- Site use
- Access

Site use

The SDC recognized that SCL currently uses the ROW and agreed the site use is reasonable given the lack of connectivity of the ROW to the street grid as well as the location of SPU infrastructure beneath the ROW.

Access

The SDC understood that the current configuration of the ROW isn't accessible to the public. As the project continues to develop, commissioners recommended the project team clarify what is required by code for improving the project site, specifically the commission asked if the project would require any pedestrian improvements. The SDC then recommended the project team review the quality and materiality of the fencing as the project continues to evolve.

The Commission organized its discussion on the vacation pre-petition around the following issues:

- Necessity of vacation
- Public trust considerations
- Public benefit considerations

Necessity of the vacation

The Commission understood the rationale for the vacation. Commissioners acknowledged the current agreement between SPU and SDOT and agreed that if SPU wants to invest in the site then they need to maintain ownership.

Public trust considerations

The SDC agreed that the current proposal accommodates access to SPU's infrastructure located below grade. The SDC encouraged that partner agencies such as SPU attend the next meeting to show that communications have occurred between the departments.

Public benefit consideration

The SDC commended the project team for providing open space in an area that does not currently include a significant amount of open space. The commission is concerned with the proposed implementation of the public benefit proposal. Specifically, commissioners are concerned with the use of all of the available funding to gravel the entire area of the Flume site, knowing that portions of the site will need to renovate for future use. The Commission strongly recommended the project team provide a design proposal for the site to create a balance between green space, off-leash area, and trail. Commissioners agreed that a design proposal would provide a realistic cost estimate for the overall project as well as a long term vision for the neighborhood to advocate for additional funding. The SDC then recommended the project team understand how partnerships between SDOT, SCL, and SPR can be used to strategically fund and maximize benefits for the Flume site.

Action

The Commission thanked the project team for their presentation on the CIP pre-concept design and vacation petition for the SCL Diagonal Ave Street Vacation. The SDC voted, 8-0, to approve CIP pre-concept design with the following recommendations:

1. Review the quality and materiality of the fencing as the project continues to evolve
2. Clarify what is required by code for street improvements abutting the project site, specifically provide information on any required pedestrian improvements

The SDC is not required to take an action on the vacation pre-petition review. At this meeting the Commission provided several recommendations to be addressed during future reviews of the public trust analysis and public benefit proposal. At this time the SDC sees justification for supporting vacation of the ROW in order to accomplish the program goals and is in support of transferring the Flume property in Georgetown for the purpose of creating public open space. The SDC recognizes that the vacation will better meet the security needs of SPU while rectifying a previous agreement made between SPU and SDOT. The Commission provided the following recommendations for the Public Trust and Public Benefit aspects of the vacation proposal:

1. Provide a site design for the long term, full development of the Flume property as a public park. Provide a construction budget estimate for full build out of a fully developed public park.
2. Understand how the partnership between SDOT, SCL, SPR can be used to strategically fund and maximize benefits for the Flume site.