

APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Mike McGinn
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Tom Nelson, Chair

Osama Quotah, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Megan Groth

Laurel Kunkler

Shannon Loew

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Joan Nieman
Administrative staff

**Department of Planning
and Development**
700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000
PO Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

TEL 206-615-1349
FAX 206-233-7883
seattle.gov/dpd

November 7, 2013

Convened 8:30 am

Adjourned 4:30 pm

Projects Reviewed

Arena vacation

Denny Substation

LRRP Northgate art

Commissioners Present

Tom Nelson, Chair

Osama Quotah, Vice Chair

Brodie Bain (arrived at 9:30 am)

Megan Groth

Shannon Loew (arrived at 9:45 am)

Ellen Sollod

Commissioners Excused

Bernie Alonzo

Martin Regge

Laurel Kunkler

Unconfirmed Commissioner Present

Ross Tilghman

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins

Valerie Kinast

Joan Nieman



November 7, 2013
1:30 – 3:00 pm

Project: Denny Substation
Review Type: Vacation and CIP
Phase: Urban Design Merit
Previous Reviews: 6/6/13; 10/18/12

Presenters: Jose Sama NBBJ
Michael Clark Seattle City Light
Marni Heffron Heffron Transportation

Attendees: Matt Ayer Seattle City Light
Beverly Barnett SDOT
Jenifer Clapham KPFF
Shane DeWald SDOT
Lloyd Douglas Cascade Neighborhood Council
Kathy Fendt Seattle City Light
Blake Fisher NBBJ
Chris Hoffman Stepherson Associates
Jason Huff Office of Arts & Culture
Brad Lange Capitol Hill Housing
Sandra Lorentzen Cascade Area Property Owners
Jared Moore Jacobs
John Pehrson community member
Jack Schwaegler Jacobs
Greg Stamatiou Seattle City Light
Annaliese Stelzer-Terminello community member
Louis John Terminello Cascade Substation Task Force
Pat Thenell community member
Carl Tully NBBJ
Juliet Vong HBB
Loretta Vosk South Lake Union Dog Park
Josephine Wong Capitol Hill Housing

Recusals and Disclosures

Brodie Bain disclosed that her father lives in the Mirabella adjacent to the site and is present at the meeting.

Purpose of Review

The purpose of this meeting was to review the urban design merit of Denny Substation for the first time. The Design Commission will review this project as an alley vacation and as a Capital Improvement Project. The 30% design was approved at the last review on June 6, 2013. At future meetings, the public benefit and 60% and 90% designs will be reviewed. Approval of two aspects of the vacation and three stages of CIP will result in the Design Commission recommending approval of the vacation to the SDOT director. The ultimate approval of the vacation lies with the City Council.

Summary of Proposal

Seattle City Light is proposing to build a substation on one full block bordered by Denny Way, Minor Ave N, John St, and Yale Ave N and bisected by Pontius Ave N and a north–south alley. In an area of about nine blocks around the project, network improvements will be made in the ROW in phases. The station will also be connected to the Massachusetts substation via underground and in SODO via overhead lines.

City Light has proposed to vacate Pontius north of Denny and south of John to optimize the functional design of the substation. Early public benefit ideas are open space west of the structure and green street improvements along John.

Substation technology has changed. This substation is a gas-insulated substation (GIS), which allows for a smaller footprint and integration into neighborhood. All that is visible above grade now are big metal boxes on a concrete slab.

Summary of Presentation

Jose Sama of NBBJ gave the presentation dated November 7, 2013, and available on the [Design Commission website](#).

Michael Clark, Seattle City Light, explained the type of facility being planned and the complete system, beyond the site. There will be no overhead lines coming out of or going into the substation. Michael showed images of the equipment components. Will need to cross all parcels City Light owns with distribution circuits except the one at the corner of Yale and John St.

Summary of Discussion

Overall, the Commission felt they did not have adequate information on several project elements, specifically the proposed ramps and why someone would be drawn to go up them, the impacts on pedestrian and vehicle circulation associated with removing Pontius Ave N from the street grid, the thought process behind the arrangement and location of buildings and how people will move through the site, and art integration.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett of SDOT said she finds it compelling that the vacation benefits utility and stated that the team must consider neighboring properties.

Public Comments

Loretta Vosk said that 1000 dogs need a place to be dogs and stay out of inappropriate areas. That's important to health of community. Cancer Care Alliance and Mirabella support idea. Increases safety of community because dogs are walked all times of day.

John Pehrson thanked City Light for reaching out to community. He is glad postponing decision until the EIS is complete. He sees significant impacts—industrial use, 1500 feet of blank wall along perimeter, unmanned and empty, etc.—and encouraged the Commission to look at it as if it were a private company. He said the design needs active façades, unique sides, public facilities, and benefits beyond the site.

Louis John Terminello believed that this will be gateway to community that already has many social services and mix of far end of range housing types, both high rises and low income. Cascade is one of

oldest neighborhoods in Seattle. Given its location adjacent to the freeway, Pontius was an easy way to enter neighborhood.

Jim Goodspeed, representing several community groups, voiced three concerns:

1. Horizontally oriented creates a linear pedestrian experience. He finds the length to be “scale-less” and wants the team to explore punctuation and address arterial, street, alley, and park in different ways.
2. Ramps invite illicit behavior, given no critical mass to prevent it.
3. Dog park may help with that. Scale and security.

Brad Lange of Capitol Hill Housing and owner of Brewster, said a large industrial project like this is out of scale with the rest of the buildings in the neighborhood. EIS incomplete, unknown health effects. Access is an issue. Parking reduced on street. Security if open space not patrolled. Locating a large industrial facility adjacent to affordable housing not socially equitable.

Action

The Design Commission did not vote on the Urban Design Merit of the proposal to vacate a segment of Pontius Ave N. It will review both the Urban Design Merit and Public Benefit package of the vacation at a future meeting. The Commission is also completing a capital project review and will review the 60% design at a future meeting.

The Design Commission provided the following recommendations for the next review:

- The diagrammatic and traffic information was especially useful.
- Please provide more information on pedestrian movements.
- In future presentations, explain in greater detail each of the facades and the “roof” of the structure.
- Provide a clearer explanation of how the elevated walkways function within their proximate and larger context. Be aware that generally the Commission questions taking people away from street level.
- Provide additional information on shading of the open spaces.
- Reexamine the narrowness of the triangular open space at the point where it reaches Denny and Minor.
- Present how the art is integrated into the project.
- At each presentation, explain how previous recommendations of the commission were addressed.