



**Seattle
Design
Commission**

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

4 December 2003

Gregory J. Nickels,
Mayor

David Spiker
Chair

Charles Anderson

Pam Beyette

Frances Nelson

Iain M. Robertson

Nic Rossouw

Donald Royse

Sharon E. Sutton

Tory Laughlin Taylor

John Rahaim,
Executive Director

Layne Cubell,
Commission Coordinator

Projects Reviewed

Montlake Library
2040 East Madison Street
City Monorail Implementation Team

Convened: 8:30am

Adjourned: 2:00pm

Commissioners Present

David Spiker, Chair
Charles Anderson
Pam Beyette
Frances Nelson
Iain M. Robertson
Nic Rossouw
Sharon E. Sutton
Tory Laughlin Taylor

Staff Present

Layne Cubell
Lisa Baker



Department of Planning and
Development

700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98104-5070
phone 206/233-7911
fax 206/386-4039

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4 Dec 2003 Project: 2040 East Madison Street**Phase:** Alley Vacation**Previous Review:** 21 August 2003(Alley Vacation), 1 May 2003(Alley Vacation)**Presenters:** Ron Jelaco, Sclater Partners Architects

Jay Reeves, Sclater Partners Architects

Attendees: Beverly Barnett, SDOT

Marilyn Senour, City of Seattle

Andrew Taylor, Miller Park Neighborhood

Sheila Weir, Community Member

Barry Lamb, Barry J. Lamb Inc.

Time: 1 hour

(SDC Ref. # 170 | DC00304)

Action: The Commission thanks the team for their great presentation and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.

- Based on the urban design analysis presented, feels that the proposed alley vacation is justified, given the size of the existing alley, that it is not required to provide the utilities and services to the building, which are provided by the alley to the west, and also because the proposed development responds to the pattern and scale of the existing alley;
- assumes that the services that would be handled by a traditional alley will not be handled on the street, but will be handled in the adjacent north-south alley to the west of the site;
- Feels that the public benefits of widening the sidewalks, creating additional public space in the courtyard, and creating additional retail space that faces the courtyard are appropriate;
- notes that this will be a hard building to develop, but feels that the team is moving in the right direction in terms of creating a community asset and one that has the potential to have good eyes on the street;
- recognizes that the success of this scheme rests with the courtyard and will be dependent on the quality of the retail and ensuring that the rear doors between the retail space and the courtyard are permanent;
- challenges the team to develop design details that will increase people's perception, as they pass by the site, that something is happening in the courtyard, and encourages the team to consider the public quality of what is at the end of the axis as one enters the courtyard, through the transparency of the retail area or through the location of the central element in the courtyard;
- Suggests that the team consider leaving a trace of the existing alley as an historical reference;
- And recommends approval of the alley vacation.

This is the third review of this project by the Design Commission. This project is also being reviewed concurrently by the Design Review Board. At the previous meeting the Design Commission felt that they could not recommend approval of the alley vacation. The design team and the owner have gone back to the drawing board.

The design team's approach to this project is that the neighborhood will have more impact on the building



2040 East Madison Site Plan

than the building will have on the neighborhood. The site for this project is at a critical point in the neighborhood where Madison St changes its angle in order to go down the hill. It is a very idiosyncratic site. It sits at the southern edge of the Capitol Hill housing district and on Madison St which is a classic high street with lots of traffic and lots of activity on the street.

In changing the design the team didn't want to lose the sense of a courtyard. They feel that the façade on Madison should be dignified. The sides of the façade bookending the courtyard should match so that you feel like you are walking into the building not around it. There will be a clear distinction between the retail and the residential portions of the building. This should help articulate that the building is occupied 24

hours a day. The building could potentially reconnect over the entrance to the courtyard on the third or fourth level like the Smith Tower.

The corner of Denny Way and Madison St is an acute angle that is highly visible. This is a critical corner which needs to be architecturally significant as it serves as the gateway into the Capitol Hill residential district. There is also a long visual axis down 21st St that terminates on the site, very close to the northern end of the alley which is proposed to be vacated. This is an important axis which terminates on the other end with the Meany School. The southwest corner of the site is difficult to work with because it is an extremely acute angle. Part of this corner might be dedicated as public space.



2040 East Madison South Elevation

In the previous design there was a courtyard one level above the street, which was a private courtyard. The courtyard is now proposed on grade as a public space. Access to the courtyard would be controlled between midnight and 6am but otherwise would be open to the

public. The team would like to have retail cafes that spill out into this courtyard. Parking would be underground, and the courtyard would be surrounded by double sided residential with one side facing the street and one side facing into the courtyard. The design team has been looking at precedents for this courtyard from Seattle and from other cities around the world. The area of the alley which would be



2040 East Madison North-South Section

vacated would be given back to the public as a wider sidewalk along Madison St. The portion of the new building facing the residential development across Denny Way will be lower than the rest of the building and will include semi-private stoops facing the street.

The size of the existing alley is too small to provide the usual services of an alley. There has never been any utility service in the alley. Currently the alley is closed between 6pm and

6am. The design team feels that the alley was badly designed when it was initially laid out.

Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns

- Wonders if the courtyard space is open to the southwest to connect to the north-south alley.
 - Proponents feel that it would be a bad idea for the courtyard to open onto this alley. They feel that there is a safety issue with pedestrians walking into traffic, and also a security issue. There may be a gate on this side of the courtyard so that it can be used for service access, but not as a pedestrian connection.
- Notes that the critical issues in an alley vacation are access and services.
 - Proponents reiterated that the alley is not currently serving these functions. They further explained that the north-south alley to the west of the site will be used for access and services to the site.
- Is pleased that the scale and building orientation creates a visual break where the alley currently is. This divides the building into a retail zone and a residential zone.
- Feels that the design team has been very responsive to the odd shaped lot and the odd alley connection.
- Commends the team on how far they have come in changing their approach.
- Appreciates the intention to move the public space from the alley to the outside of the site along the sidewalk.
- Thinks that the urban design analysis is excellent. It includes all of the elements that the Commission likes to see, but doesn't often see. Feels that this analysis has lead to a scheme that takes advantage of a quirky site.
- Wonders if there is any history of pedestrian use of the alley.
 - Proponents stated that there isn't.
- Wonders what will draw people into the courtyard and let them know it is a public space.
 - Proponents stated that people may not discover the courtyard the first time they pass it. It might take them two or three times before they notice it.
- Suggests that the courtyard could be distinguished through paving or art that would draw people into the space.
 - Proponents explained that they want the courtyard to feel like a continuation of the residential space.
- Feels that the team has created a scheme that has great potential as a public space. Notes that things beyond paving could be done to activate the space. Suggests that the water element could be brought forward closer to the entrance of the courtyard.
- Remarks the apartments that face onto the entry to the courtyard could intimidate people and not encourage them to see it as a public space. Recommends that the transparency of the retail spaces could wrap into the courtyard.
- Notes that it is always a challenge to draw the public into spaces that are essentially on private property.
- Is reassured that this project will have a vested interest in making sure that they create a viable public space.
- Would like assurance that access from the retail space to the courtyard will be maintained.

- Suggests that a cultural trace of the alley could remain which would read through the design.

Key Visitor Comments and Concerns

- Is pleased with the development of the project, but is concerned that the traffic study being conducted will not be accurate. Notes that there are a lot of new projects being developed in the area which will dramatically change the amount of traffic. Explains that a traffic study done now will not capture what the traffic will be like in the future. Remarks that there is an alley to the north of the site which historically wasn't in use, but now has begun to be used.
- Thinks it would be a great asset to the proposed retail and the neighborhood if they alley could be used for delivery to the new building.
- Is worried about parking and traffic. Would also like to see retail on the opposite side of the courtyard.
 - Proponents noted that the current zoning will not allow retail on that side of the courtyard.