

Hing Hay Park Alley Vacation

Ed Murray
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Osama Quotah, Chair

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Grant Hromas

Martin Regge

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Commissioners Present

Osama Quotah, Chair
Shannon Loew, Vice Chair
Lee Copeland
Grant Hromas
Martin Regge
Ellen Sollod
Ross Tilghman

Commissioners Excused

Bernie Alonzo
Brodie Bain
Thaddeus Egging

Project Description

Seattle Parks and Recreation proposes to vacate the southern half of the north-south alley in the block bounded by S Jackson St, Maynard Ave S, S King St, and 6th Ave S. The vacation will facilitate the redevelopment of the International District Station Post Office site into parkland that will serve as an extension of the existing Hing Hay Park at 423 Maynard Ave S. The northern half of the alley does not continue through to S Jackson St; it was previously vacated and currently has a structure on it.

The park design aims to integrate the new site with the existing park to create a single seamless park. Potential site elements include lighting, seating, special paving, planting, ADA access, and signage. Funding for site acquisition and design work came from the 2000 Pro Parks Levy and the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy, respectively.

Meeting Summary

The Design Commission unanimously approved the urban design merit of the proposed alley vacation. The discussion and recommendations centered on 1) the formal relationship among the gateway structure, the ground plane, and the vocabulary of the existing park and 2) the porosity and openness of the park edges, particularly along S King St.

Because the park is located in the International Special Review District (ISRD), the Design Commission will not review the public benefit package for the vacation. Furthermore, the Commission did not review the park as a capital improvement program (CIP) project. Both the public benefit items and the overall park design fall under the purview of the ISRD.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

January 15, 2015**3:00 – 4:30 pm****Type**

Alley Vacation

Phase

Urban Design Merit

Location

A north-south alley in the southern half of the block bounded by S King St, 6th Ave S, S Jackson St, and Maynard Ave S.

The project is located in the International Special Review District (ISRD).

Previous Reviews

none

Project Team Present**Kim Baldwin**

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Nate Cormier

SvR Design Company

Melanie Davies

SvR Design Company

Chip Nevins

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Attendees**Beverly Barnett**

SDOT

Misa Carter

University of Washington

Ching Chan

SCIDpda

Rebecca Frestedt

Department of Neighborhoods

Jeff Hou

University of Washington

Joshua Janet

University of Washington

Gary Johnson

DPD

January 15, 2015

Summary of Presentation

Kim Baldwin introduced the effort to expand Hing Hay Park and summarized the team's extensive community engagement, particularly with Friends of Hing Hay Park. Ms. Baldwin described the International Special Review District's role in reviewing both the overall design of the park and the proposed public benefit items for the alley vacation. The presentation is available on the [Design Commission website](#).

Nate Cormier presented the rationale for vacating the alley. He oriented the Commissioners to the neighborhood and identified the current park, the area of expansion, and the adjacent Bush Hotel. He stated that the northern half of the alley is already vacated and built on and the southern half of the alley is not currently used for vehicle access. Mr. Cormier described existing utilities in the alley right-of-way (electrical, communications, steam, water, and gas) and showed a utility box that will remain in its current location. He explained that Parks will work out maintenance of these utilities with SDOT.



Looking north from S King St along the alley right-of-way at the existing utility box

A slide summarized the following benefits of vacating the alley:

- Makes an accessible connection between upper park and lower park
- Provides accessible connection to Bush Hotel programs and public restrooms
- Allows programming, maintenance and management by single entity
- Triggers Title 18 of Seattle Municipal Code (SMC), which allows for enhanced safety and enforcement only in parks
- Triggers Title 42 of SMC, which would keep the property in public open space use in perpetuity
- Unifies old and new, upper and lower, east and west, as a central gathering space for the community

For context, a series of photographs showed the existing park and other open spaces in the neighborhood. A plan illustrated the challenging topography of the site. Mr. Cormier argued that vacating the alley allows the design team to create a more accessible and functional gathering space for the expanded park.

Mr. Cormier then summarized the overall design concept — terraces and theater — as an approach that solves important site challenges, reflects the cultural associations of the park, and creates a stage for celebrating culture. Several images showed the evolution of this design concept. He argued that the existing pavilion is the logical “knuckle” between the existing and future park and showed how the alley right-of-way would inhibit their integration.

A series of slides showed details of the design, including lighting, planting, and paving. Mr. Cormier particularly noted the evolution of the gateway element and the role Martin Regge had.

Agency Comments

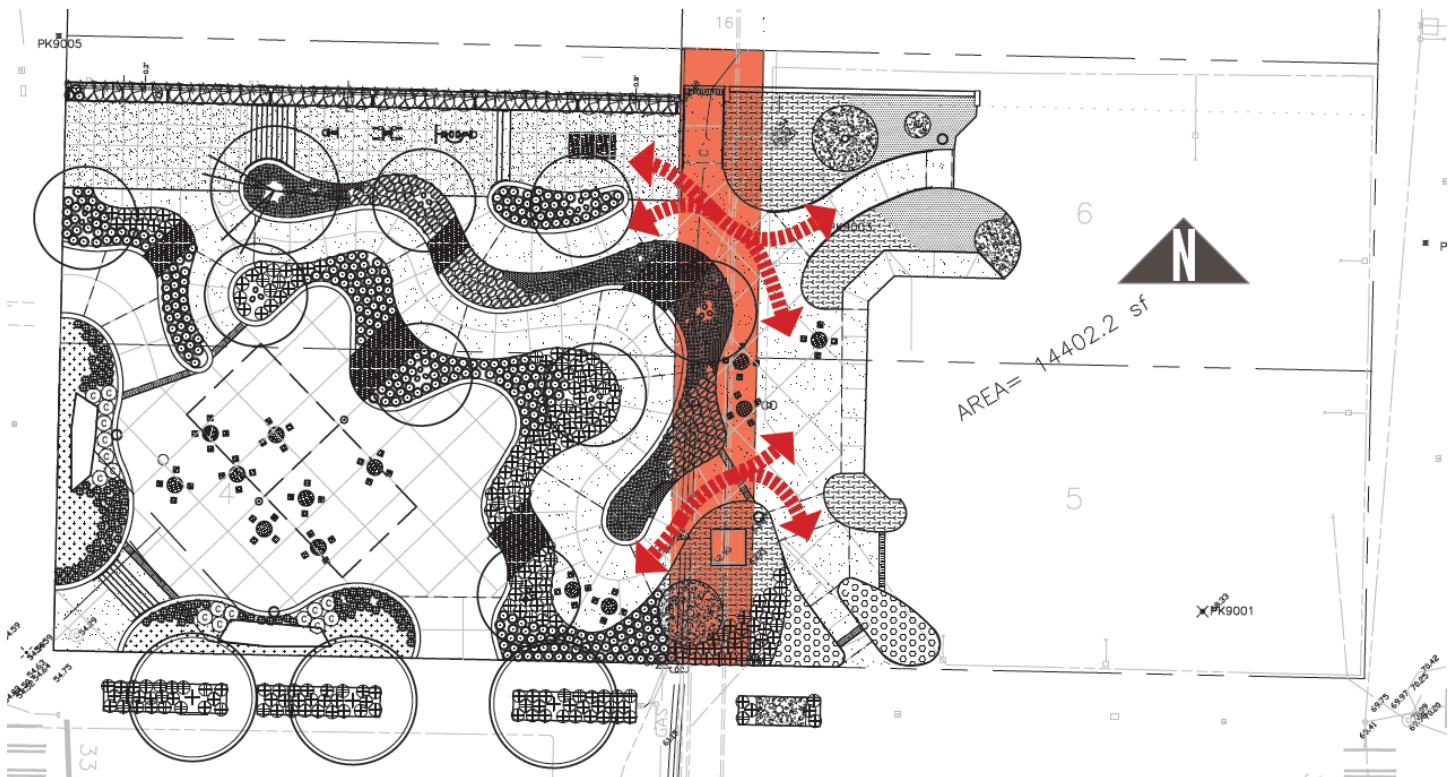
Beverly Barnett explained how parkland and right-of-way are both public property but have different regulations regarding policing, allowed activities, and hours of operation. Streets are “open” 24 hours a day; parks close at night. When right-of-way runs through a park, it poses challenge for Parks management and permitting

of their site. The City and Council have previously supported vacations for Parks in order to unify the nature of the real property and allow it to be managed and regulated consistently by Parks. Ms. Barnett noted that the existing utility box in the alley, though unattractive, will remain and be part of the urban reality. SDOT has not identified any issues with the vacation and believes it sensible for Parks to manage the site uniformly. In terms of design, Ms. Barnett said SDOT will look to the guidance of the ISRD and noted the excellent work Parks has done in coordination with Friends of Hing Hay Park to ensure the park is a contextual and special part of the community.

Rebecca Frestedt stated that the team has given several briefings to the ISRD and believes the design has evolved in a positive way. She said there are no significant issues and only minor details to resolve regarding materials and placement of a few items. The overall concept, approach, and palette received strong support from the ISRD. Ms. Frestedt commended the team for addressing early on one of the most significant issues—the gateway structure. This was a sticking point that could have been an obstacle; instead the proposed solution has widespread support.

Public Comments

Ching Chan spoke on behalf of SCIDpda and thanked the team for working closely with Friends of Hing Hay Park and other community groups. Ms. Chan said she believes that the vacation will allow safer access for seniors going between the park and the Bush Hotel for whom the existing ADA ramp is not in fact ADA compliant. She said connecting the old and new park with the Bush Hotel is the best option.



According to the project team, the alley (shown in red above) is crucial to creating a unified and accessible park.

Summary of Discussion

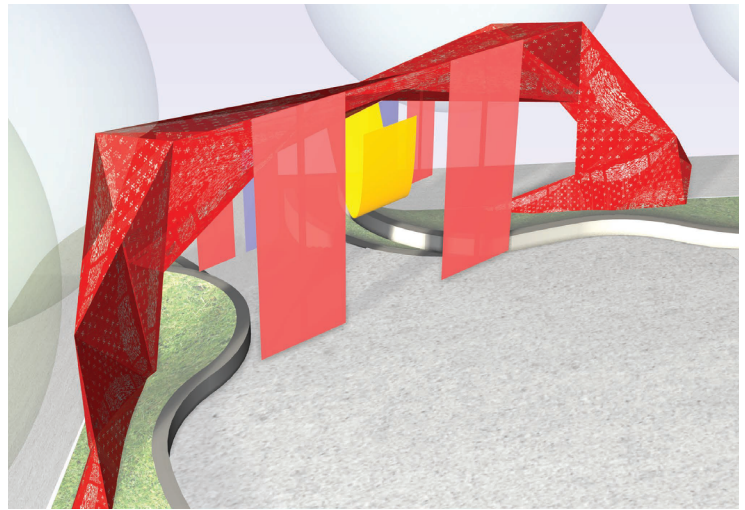
The Commission asked the design team for further explanation of the utilities in the alley and the current and future access to the Bush Hotel. They considered the potential for redevelopment at nearby sites, such as the bank at the southeast corner of S Jackson St and 6th Ave S. That the alley in question has not been functional for a long time was reassuring to the Commissioners, who found its removal from the right-of-way network unlikely to negatively affect circulation. In fact, the Commission saw great potential for the expansion of the park at this site to create a sort of traditional public square for the neighborhood.

The Commissioners made recommendations on three primary aspects of the project. First, the Commission encouraged the team to be mindful of potential future redevelopment at adjacent sites as they envision the edges of the project. Second, they recommended continued study of the park boundaries, particularly along S King St. There was concern that the park could become less porous and open in the proposed design, and the Commission suggested finding ways to integrate it into the urban environment. Finally, some Commissioners struggled to reconcile the re-

relationship among the gateway structure, the curvilinear forms of the terracing, and the vocabulary of the existing Hing Hay Park. Others, however, commended how the proposed design respected the existing park without creating a dividing line between old and new. There was consensus that the team should continue to study how to handle the several geometries and forms in the park.

Action

The Design Commission thanked the team for a clear and thorough presentation of the urban design merit for the Hing Hay Park alley vacation. The Commission recognizes the opportunity to make an accessible connection between the current and expanded park parcels and to create a unified community gathering space.



The Commissioners discussed the relationship between the folded metal forms of the gateway structure and the curvilinear forms of the ground plane.

The Commission also appreciates the tremendous, comprehensive community outreach and the integration of community input into the design. The Commission also recognizes that the proposed vacation facilitates the creation of a sort of traditional park square for the neighborhood by expanding the presence of Hing Hay Park into the focal point of the neighborhood. The concept as illustrated succeeds in connecting the neighborhood by facilitating movement through and negotiating the topography of the site.

With a **vote of 7 to 0**, the Design Commission approved the urban design merit for the petition to vacate the southern half of the alley in the block bounded by S Jackson St, Maynard Ave S, S King St, and 6th Ave S with the following recommendations:

1. Refine the external sidewalks and plaza areas in order to create a greater sense of openness, accessibility, and connection between the old and new park spaces.
2. Continue to study, refine, and/or reconcile the yin-yang approach to how the geometric form of the gateway relates to the organic flow of the ground plane. The Commission generally agrees that some tension between these forms is desirable.

This is the last time the Commission anticipates reviewing the alley vacation petition. The Commission recognizes that the ISRD will review the public benefit items for the proposed vacation. This is a very important park in the city, and the Commission is excited to see the proposed design shine as a beacon for the International District.

