

2020 5th Ave Skybridge

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Ben de Rubertis

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Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Chair
Ross Tilghman, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Thaddeus Egging
Laura Haddad
Theo Lim

Commissioners Excused

Ben de Rubertis
Rachel Gleeson
John Savo

Project Description

In 2011, the Seattle Design Commission (SDC) reviewed the 2020 5th Ave skybridge proposal. The public benefit package for the original proposal included pedestrian enhancements along Lenora St and at the north end of the adjacent alley. The SDC approved the skybridge to serve as a pedestrian connection between the Westin Building and 2020 5th Ave. The approval did not include the addition of utility connections across the skybridge.

In 2012, the Department of Planning and Development approved a permit to allow a utility crossing on this skybridge to make a connection between the Westin Building and 2020 5th Avenue and its tenant Active Voice. Because skybridges are approved with the understanding that they can be removed following the end of the term of approval by the City Council, using the skybridge for permanent utility crossings is generally not permitted unless the request is made as part of the skybridge approval. Since the utility approvals came after the skybridge was authorized and constructed, the applicant has returned to SDOT to seek approval for this utility connection.

The applicant is seeking approval for the following existing utility crossings:

- Three 4" communication conduits from the Westin Building to 2020 5th Ave

The team is also seeking approval for the following proposed utility crossings:

- Two 10" insulated water pipes from the Westin Building to the Westin Building Garage
- Six 2" communications conduits
- Six 4" communications conduits
- 4,000 amp cable busways

Meeting Summary

This was the SDC's first review of the public benefit mitigation package for existing and proposed utility connections on 2020 5th Ave skybridge. The SDC did not take an action at today's meeting. The SDC will review the public benefit again once the Skybridge Review Committee (SRC) has provided their recommendation.

June 2, 2016

1:00 - 2:30 pm

Type

ROW

Phase

Skybridge

Previous Reviews[4/21/11](#), [03/17/11](#)**Presenters**

Lance Forgey

Westin Building

Jaime Page

Westin Building

Attendees

Beverly Barnett

SDOT

Jessica Clawson

McCullough Hill Leary, PS

Amy Gray

SDOT

June 2, 2016

Recusals and Disclosures

John Savo recused himself. He is an employee of NBBJ, which has consulted with the applicant on a related project

Shannon Loew disclosed that has consulted with McCullough Hill Leary on matters unrelated to this project

Summary of Presentation

Jaime Page, of the Westin Building, presented the proposal. Ms. Page provided background and site context for the skybridge. The applicant is requesting that the SDC approve the three previously installed utility crossings as well as fourteen new utility crossings and the 4,000 amp cable busways across the existing 2020 5th Ave skybridge. The utility crossings will connect electrical, water, and communication lines between the Westin Building and 2020 5th Ave building (See *figures 3 & 4 for more detail*). The existing and proposed utility crossings serve as primary and auxiliary electrical and communication connections to power supplies and operations housed in the Westin Building. In addition to its role as the home for multiple internet service providers, the Westin Building plays a vital role in an Eco District loop in the Denny Triangle area. The excess heating and cooling provided by the Westin Building is shared with the adjacent Amazon campus. Although not vital to the operation of the Eco District, existing and proposed utility crossings above the skybridge will allow the Westin Building to maximize the amount of heat contributing to the Eco District loop.

The proposal included an analysis of three possible below grade alternatives for providing the proposed utility connections. Because of existing public and private utility facilities and infrastructure at this alley, below grade connections are not feasible. This stated lack of feasibility for these below grade connections is why the

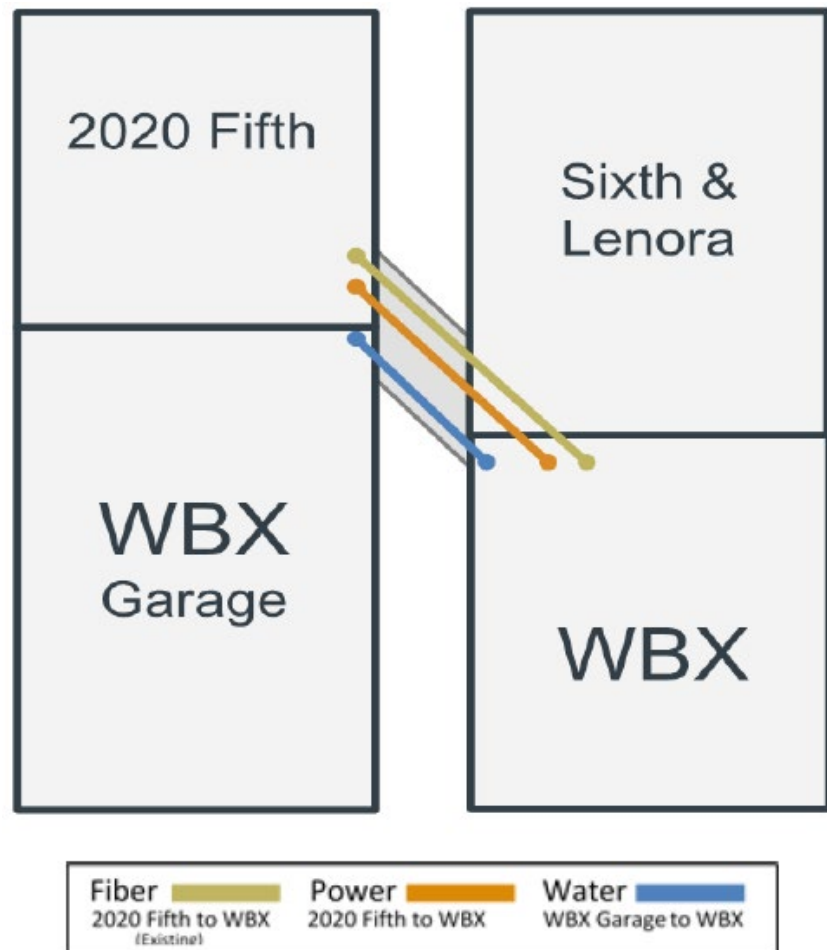


Figure 1: Existing and proposed utility crossings



Figure 2: Proposed utility crossings covered (left) and uncovered (right)

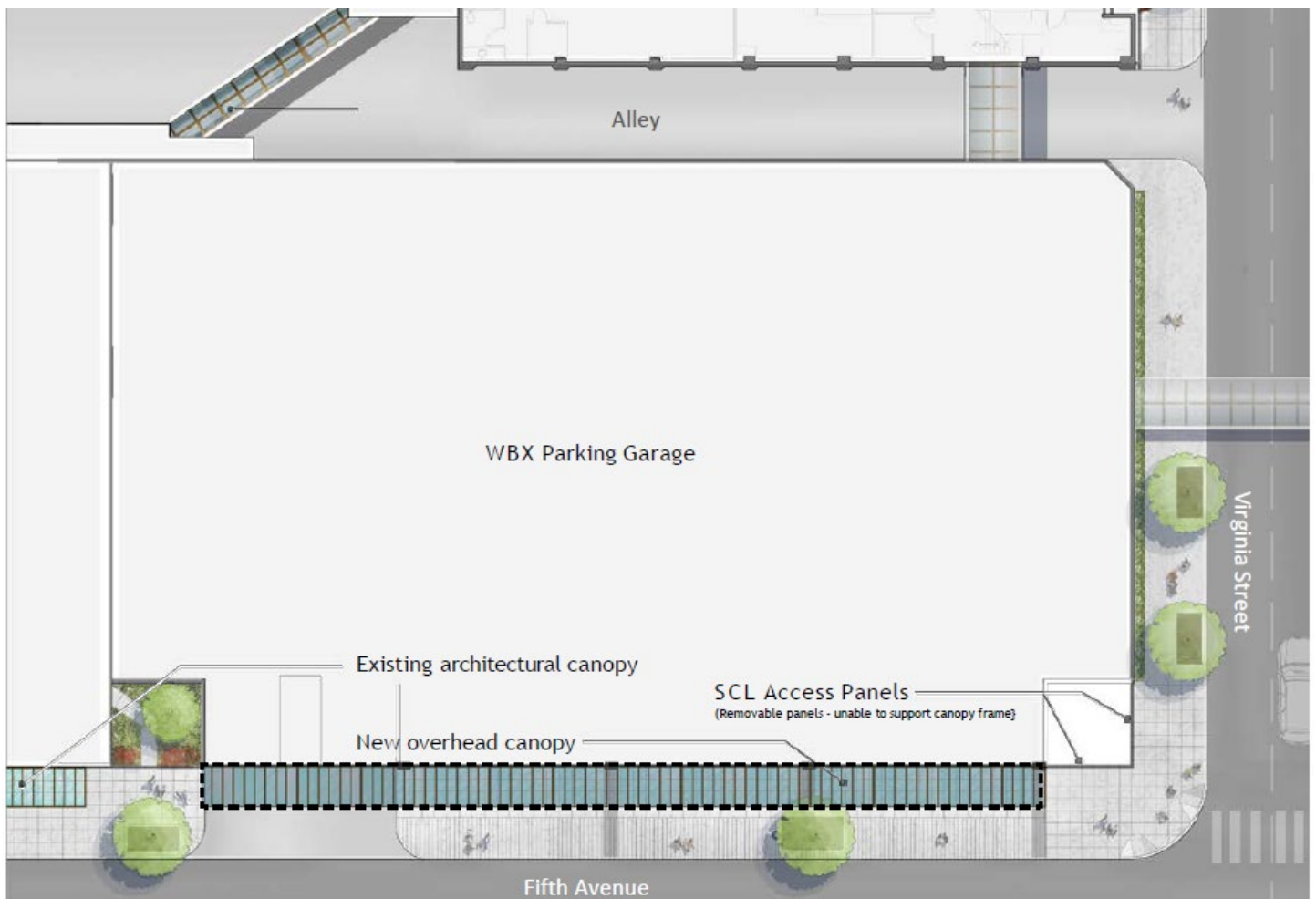


Figure 3: Plan of proposed public benefit

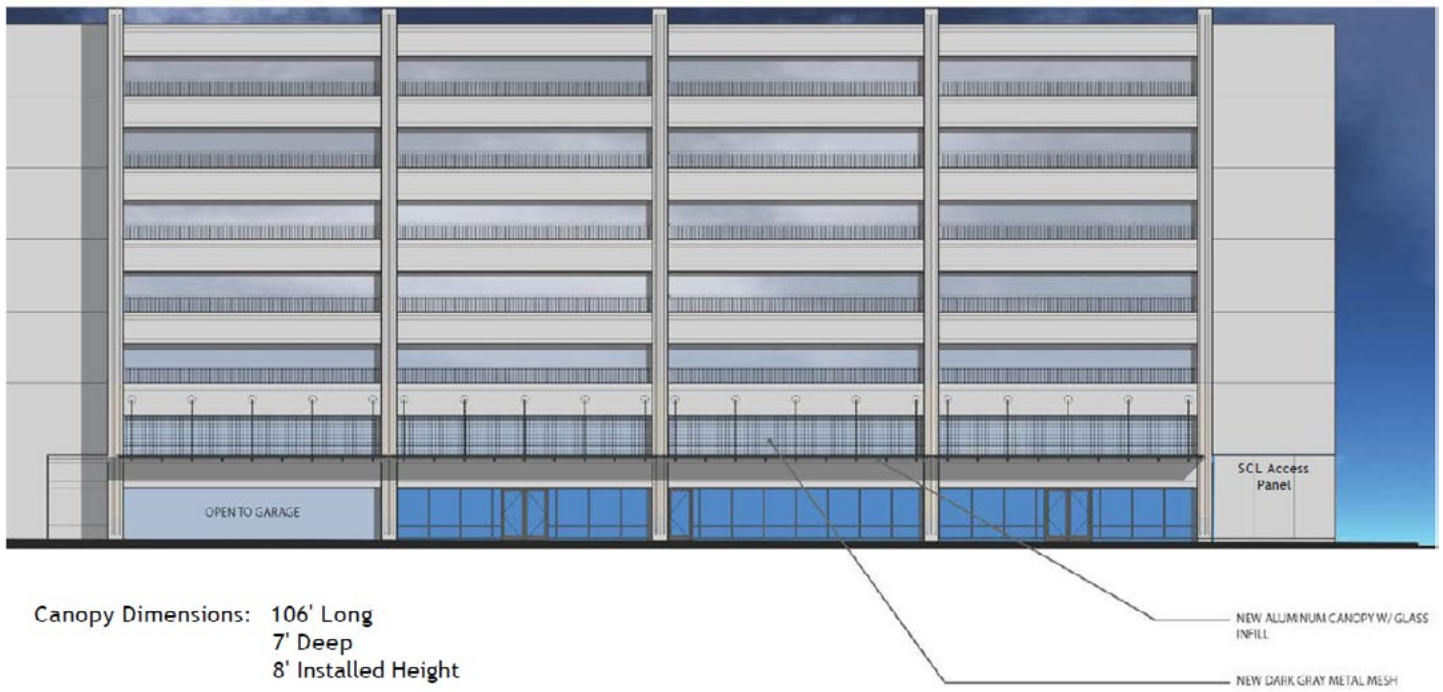


Figure 4: Section of proposed benefit along 5th Ave

applicant has sought approval of the expanded utility corridor along with retroactive approval of the 2012 utility installation.

The proposed public benefit includes the addition of a glass and aluminum canopy on the 5th Ave façade of the Westin Building Garage. The proposed canopy would be installed 8 feet above the ground plane and extend 7 feet from the façade. The canopy would match the existing canopy design found elsewhere on the block bound by 5th Ave, Virginia St, 6th Ave, and Lenora St. due to the need for access at the corner of 5th Ave and Virginia St by Seattle City Light, the proposed canopy design would not extend to the intersection of 5th Ave and Virginia St. The proposed public benefit would complete block improvements that have served as mitigation measures for skybridges located elsewhere on site. See figures 3 & 4 for more detail.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, of SDOT, reminded the commission that all skybridge permits are revocable. She stated that due to the addition of permanent utility connections the skybridge no longer becomes a temporary entity. We have seen that there is not a good alternative. Although this is a unique situation, Ms. Barnett stated that it does not mean SDOT will simply accommodate the skybridge permit as is. She further stated that the department needs to fully understand what it will receive in return for accommodating this permanent use. Ms. Barnett also said the department would also look at previously approved public benefits associated with the original skybridge proposal that no longer work well. She said that while SDOT is reviewing the skybridge permit it will recommend previously installed public benefit elements be upgraded to be consistent with design features found elsewhere on the block.

Amy Gray, of SDOT, spoke on behalf of the Skybridge Review Committee (SRC) regarding the proposed public benefit. Although the SRC has not released a formal decision, Ms. Gray stated that the SRC would like to see a consistent approach to the aesthetic design of the entire block. The SRC recommended public benefit elements approved for original permit granted in 2011, specifically related to the awning, trees, and landscaping, be upgraded to match the aesthetic quality found elsewhere on the block. Ms. Gray also stated that the SRC recommends the sidewalks along the block be upgraded to standards consistent with the ROW improvement manual. The SRC also recommends having an artist trellis along the blank façade located on Virginia St as well as replacing the existing canopy at the intersection of 6th Ave and Lenora St with an upgraded canopy that matches canopy in other areas on the block.

Public Comments

None

Summary of Discussion

The SDC is concerned because the value the utility connections will provide the project was not fully defined by the project team. Until the project team provides clarity regarding the value the connections add to both the uses within Westin Building and the related Ecodistrict, the Commission cannot assess the proposed public benefit elements.

Commissioners recommend the project team consider the SRC preliminary recommendations to expand the public benefit package. The additional public benefits include landscape and canopy updates along Lenora Ave as well as sidewalk improvements that meet current standards in SDOT's right of way manual. The SDC agrees that the SRC's suggested updates will provide a consistent design throughout the entire block.

The SDC also recommended the project team consider providing an educational opportunity for the public by highlighting the concept of creating an Ecodistrict. Commissioners agree that an educational opportunity has the possibility to transform the functional programming of the surrounding block as a result of the proposed utility connection.

Action

The SDC did not take an action during today's meeting. The Commission recommended the project team continue to communicate with the SDC and SRC by providing the following:

1. Provide greater detail on the feasibility, or lack thereof, for each below grade alternative
2. Request assistance from SDOT when determining feasibility of alternatives with Seattle City Light
3. Provide details showing the feasibility of applying a similar canopy system along Lenora St and 6th Ave
4. Explore public benefits that can significantly improve the pedestrian ROW