



APPROVED

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
April 17, 2008**

**Seattle
Design
Commission**

Convened: 8:30am
Adjourned: 4:30pm

Greg Nickels
Mayor

Karen Kiest
Chair

Tasha Atchison

Brendan Connolly

John Hoffman

Mary Johnston

Juanita LaFond

Dennis Ryan

Norie Sato

Darrell Vange

Darby Watson

Guillermo Romano
Executive Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Projects Reviewed

Fire Station 21 – Greenwood
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen
Rainier Vista at University of Washington
Blume Yale Campus Woonerf & Swale
West Seattle Wayfinding System
Street and Alley Vacation Process
Greenwood Avenue North Improvements

Design Commissioners Present

Karen Kiest, Chair
Tasha Atchison
Brendan Connolly
John Hoffman
Mary Johnston
Juanita LaFond
Dennis Ryan
Norie Sato
Darrell Vange
Darby Watson

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino
Ian Macek



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17 April 2008 **Project: Blume Yale Campus Woonerf and Swale**

Phase: Street Use Permit

Last Reviews:

Presenters: Barry Aaronson, NBBJ
Melanie Davis, SvR Design Company
Kate Diamond, NBBJ
Nick McDaniel, NBBJ

Attendees: Tom Bendeak, The Blume Company
Bruce Blume, The Blume Company
Greg Blume, The Blume Company
Michael Dorcy, DPD
Ethan Kushner, NBBJ
Brice Maryman, SvR Design Company
Tara Raymond, The Blume Company
Peg Staeheli, SvR Design Company
Bradley Wilburn, DPD

Time: 1.0 hours

(SR 170/RS0606)

ACTION

The Design Commission thanks the team for their presentation and approves the proposed street use permit with a vote of 9-1 and offers the following comments:

- **The Commission would like the team to provide more refinement of the dimensions, traffic flow and engineering elements of the street dimensions and the travel lanes, as well as the design of the public ROW.**
- **Commend the team on challenging the typical Seattle sidewalk specifications and engaging SDOT in exploring such alternatives.**
- **The environmental aspects set a new standard in the public ROW. However, some of the richness and diversity may reduce the public character of sidewalks and spaces.**
- **Concern about the 26 ft street section, appreciate that it slows traffic but defer the evaluation to SDOT.**
- **Encourage the team to ensure that the sidewalk dimensions and public spaces are adequate for comfortable pedestrian flow.**
- **Suggest the north end of woonerf have more public elements and focus so it clearly becomes the terminus for the street and is more inviting.**
- **Encourage additional activation of the Pontius Street edge, perhaps by adding parking along the building façade with no entrances.**
- **Consider simplifying the woonerf design. There may be too much going on from a design perspective.**
- **Simplification may make the street look more public, which could be achieved by having some of the elements match City standards occurring in the neighborhood.**
- **The swale in the south block may need periodic crossings rather than a continuous swale.**

- Encourage using light fixtures from the neighborhood rather than creating a complicated lighting plan.
- Encourage merging elements from the two parts of the campus for more continuity of public space.
- Explore public art as way to enliven the end of the woonerf.

Dissenting vote based on the opinion that the sidewalks are too narrow.

Proponent’s Presentation

Project Background

Yale Ave dead-ends north of Mercer Street at the Interstate-5 onramps. The project proposes turning this dead end into a public amenity that would serve cars, pedestrians, and the environment by creating a woonerf, as well as continuing the swales on Yale Ave and Pontius Ave between Republican and Mercer.

A woonerf is a public plaza that mixes vehicles and pedestrians, popular in The Netherlands and Scandinavia. Currently, the only woonerf in Seattle is located at the Four Seasons. The design team has envisioned a space rich with greenery and retail proceeding to a public overlook at the end of Yale. The overlook has the potential to become a quite respite for the neighborhood and is a terminus to the retail core starting at the south end of Yale at REI and Alley 24. Within the plaza will be a series of runnels and bioswales that filter the runoff from the buildings and the plaza.

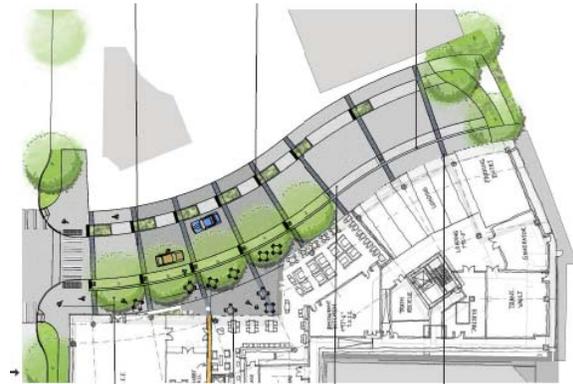


Figure 3: Yale Ave Woonerf

As vehicles enter the street they will rise up to signalize movement into the pedestrian space. The rise will also need to accommodate accessibility requirements. The plaza will feel public through element detailing, lighting etc. Surface changes will indicate what zones one is coming into. Seating will be provided for restaurant patrons as well as others. Stormwater requirements will be met while also using pedestrian friendly detailing. The geometry of buildings and street will tie together to denote a public space. The elevation slopes downward as one heads north, so the entrance area will be flattened to create the plaza. The treatment at the dead end will be a lush environment of the same plantings used in the stormwater area. Commission support as a public benefit is appreciated. The team is working with SDOT on the turnaround and with SPU on garbage collection.

The City of Seattle’s *Swale on Yale* project is part of the overall infrastructure investment to filter stormwater runoff coming from Capitol Hill/First Hill. The project proposes continuing the swale north along Yale and Pontius for the block between Republican St and Mercer St. The project would maintain the same roadway width as the *Swale on Yale*,

thus eliminating on-street parking along Yale and Pontius. The swale creates a wider green zone and a pedestrian buffer. The swales would be filtering runoff from the surrounding streets, the Yale Campus site and the Yale Campus rooftops. The process is unusual for the City of Seattle, so Design Commission support is appreciated. The runnels are formed into the hard surface area and will have a steel cover that is ADA compliant. Puyallup has used this method which has proven to work well. The stormwater planters will also function as seating.

Standard street sections will need to be amended by taking out one lane of parking for stormwater planters along Yale and Pontius. The 26 ft ROW will allow two traffic lanes. It is an unusual width, so the team is working with SDOT to resolve the issues. Standup vertical elements and bollards are also proposed, and the team is in discussion with SDOT.

Although there is a zoning advantage for mixed use, the client would rather not include residential. The courtyard at the center of the full block development will include a quasi public plaza.

A brick industrial building is currently located on the site that has no architectural or historic value, so it will be removed. Ground floor retail doesn't always work, which is shown by the vacant retail space in the apartment building on Pontius. Therefore, the project focuses its retail on Yale. The primary entrances will be internal to site. The project is looking to achieve LEED Gold. Some of the techniques being explored are external solar shading and stormwater treatment. Lighting will be used to create a sense of place at night that will be both connective and celebratory. The swale, in combination with the *Swale on Yale* and the plazas and parks creates a whole zone in the city dedicated to clean water for lakes and streams.

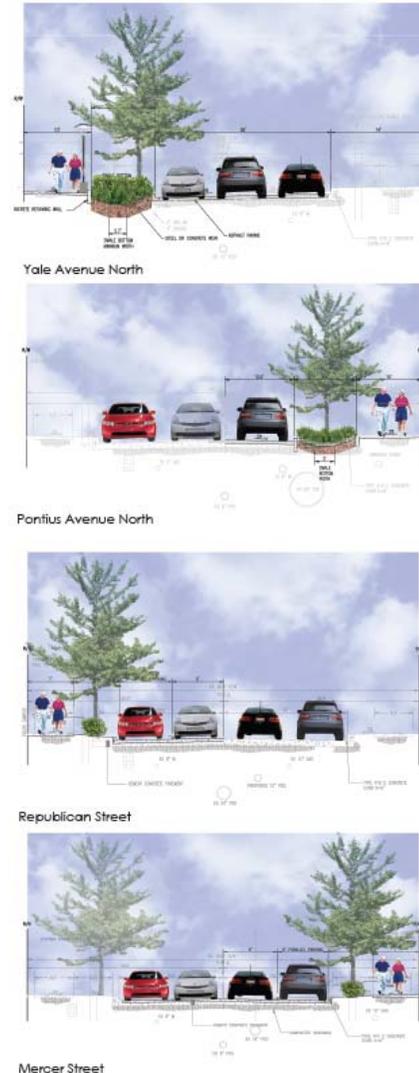


Figure 4: Swale street sections

Public Comments

Michael Dorcy, DPD

- Both sites have gone through the design process and have been seen by the Design Review Board (DRB) for early guidance. The projects will be going back for recommendation meetings on May 7th. DRB is generally pleased and likely will be when they see the project again. The North and South Campuses are separate projects but are being seen at the same time.

Can the team speak on what SDOT has to say about the project?

- The runnels and stormwater planters used as seating are issues. There are concerns because the project is varying from SDOT standards. A maintenance agreement is important as is coordinating with the fire department. The loss of on-street parking is also an issue. SDOT is generally supportive, but the team needs to work out the details of safety issues like curbs and trip hazards. SDOT hasn't supported or denied the 26 ft street width.
- The team has spoken with the fire department who will be satisfied if the changes SDOT is bringing up are addressed. Materials will be looked at for accessibility issues and maintenance concerns. Tammy Fredericks is the SDOT reviewer and Leo Kaarrekoski is the main contact.

Commissioners' Comments

- Concern over lane widths.
 - The existing face of curb to face of curb on Yale Ave N is 26 ft wide, and will not change. The traffic lanes are 9 ft with an 8 ft parking lane. There will be a 14 ft sidewalk and planter area. The traffic area on Pontius Ave N has two 11 ft lanes and one 10.5 ft lane.
- The widths are tight, more residential. There will be loading at the end of Yale which will need a wider lane.
- How is this project matching the *Swale on Yale*?
 - Yale Ave takes the water from the full width of the street into the swale. Only half of the street's water will go into the swale on Pontius. Between Mercer and Republican.
- Why does the road slightly swerve at Yale and Republican?
 - Not sure, that is the proposal from SPU on the road configuration.
 - The *Swale on Yale* project is taking water from Capitol Hill, unlike this one which is only taking water from the surrounding streets and buildings. The *Swale on Yale* will have narrower sidewalks.
- Why not continue the woonerf treatment to the block to the south?
 - The proposed woonerf is located in an area where Blume owns both sides of the block. This is not the case to the south. In addition, there is more traffic south due to the parking located in the buildings on either side. Mercer will be dead-ended at Fairview as part of the two-way Mercer project and will be much quieter.
- Why are Tulip trees proposed?
 - Still need to talk to Bill Ames at SDOT about them. There are no street trees now so the difference will be great.
- Look at 33rd Ave and see what they do to the sidewalk. Although they are good with water.
- How are pedestrians protected from vehicles in the woonerf?
 - Not fully segregated because the paving is at the same grade level. Traffic will be slowed (by runnels and other things) so they are co-mingling with pedestrians in different ways. There are also tactile stripes that warn pedestrians they are entering a vehicular area.
- Will the future tenants see the narrower lanes as an advantage? It seems very tight.

- There are two 9 ft lanes and an 8 ft parking lane. Smaller but there have been many conversations about this width and we do want to slow traffic along this block, as planned in block to south of this where City is doing the *Swale on Yale* project.
- This is a residential area but the team is proposing an office building. The parking and loading entrances are placed at the end of the woonerf so the tenant vehicles are going through the woonerf area.
- How many people are driving through here? Is there a pedestrian hierarchy? Are sidewalks scaled to pedestrian flows? How are pedestrians getting to their destination?
 - A study was conducted at the beginning. Pedestrians are coming up Republican and Mercer. This project gives multiple circulation possibilities and addresses how pedestrians walk to and through the project, not just the woonerf.
- Will the woonerf feel public? A lot of design attention has been at the front area with street furniture and blending people, traffic and water, but it disappears toward the end next to the freeway. Need to resolve end issue.
- With the closure of Mercer and added development in the neighborhood, Republican will have increased use by cars.
 - Republican has a 40 ft ROW with 12 ft lanes.
- The presentation has conflicting information.
 - The team is responding to this issue.
- With the removal of parking and the exclusion of retail on Pontius, there are no entrances to the building creating a loss of activity. Greening is nice but will the space be safe?
- Parking goes with informal users. Parking could animate certain areas of the project.
- Using *Swale on Yale* before it's been tested.
- Simplify the design of the woonerf and encourage the continuity of pedestrian space. The Barney Rubble is very loose and not related to building style.
- Why is this project adding an alley when other projects are vacating them?
 - Proposed for loading.
- The alley looks like it might not be refined enough to look private. No attention has been paid to the alley. There needs to be a balance of what's going on in the woonerf and what in the private alley.
- Laud sustainable goals, but focusing on some things too much at cost of pedestrian environment.
- The Commission has seen a lot of the Mercer project and worked to keep the lighting cohesive. It could be carried through this project too. Look adjacent to the site and in SLU to see what type of lighting is being used and what could work in this project.
- It may be better to reduce the elements that need to be maintained in order to reach a maintenance agreement. A variety of fixtures and materials could make this more difficult. Great sites, fortunate place to do this.
- Applaud company for looking at ROW as shared space for pedestrians.

- Don't think woonerf will read as public because of the materials that are related to the private buildings. The street is a dead end and will mostly be used by tenants.
- Don't see dumbing it down so it doesn't look too nice.
- Should look at materials and simplification to get a more public feel. Look at public lexicon, such as dimensions of paving and such, without dumbing it down.
- Since the woonerf is an extension of what's going on to the south, draw some elements up into this project.
 - There are retail uses that show clear terminus of the street and read as public.
- Retail area is not a public use; would someone who isn't spending money feel like entering the woonerf space?
- Elements such as more common street pavements, carrying things up from the south, street lighting not just building lighting, adding a public art element, and signage can be combined to create a rich Yale Street.
- Have any traffic issues or any other issues come up with the owners of the buildings to the east?
 - They're taller and uphill from site. No issues have been brought up.