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**Commissioners
Present**

Shannon Loew, Chair
Ellen Sollod, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Grant Hromas
Martin Regge
Ross Tilghman
John Savo

**Incoming Non-Voting
Commissioners**

Rachel Gleeson

**Commissioners
Excused**

Thaddeus Egging

Project Description

The petitioner proposes to vacate Occidental Ave S between S Massachusetts St and S Holgate St in the SoDo neighborhood to facilitate development of a 750,000-square-foot, 18,000-20,000-seat multi-purpose arena for NBA basketball, NHL hockey, other sporting events, concerts, and shows.

The project site is bounded by S Massachusetts St to the north, 1st Ave S to the west, S Holgate St to the south, and the BNSF Railway right-of-way to the east. The vacation of Occidental Ave S would increase the developable area of the project site by roughly 17.5%. The proposed development includes a plaza space at the northwest corner of the site and widened sidewalks along 1st Ave S and S Holgate St.

Meeting Summary

The Design Commission unanimously approved the urban design merit of the proposal to vacate Occidental Ave S with several conditions. The Commission's approval is contingent on the petitioner constructing a pedestrian and bicycle bridge in the S Holgate St right-of-way and finalizing an agreement with the Seattle Mariners for use of the proposed access road. The Commission will review a pedestrian bridge or new Arena parking garage in a separate review; this urban design merit approval does endorse any design details for either facility. Refer to the action on page 6 for the full list of conditions and recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

May 21, 2015**9:00 am – 12:00 pm****Type** Street Vacation**Phase** Urban Design Merit**Location** Full block bounded by S Massachusetts St, 1st Ave S, S Holgate St, and the BNSF Railway right-of-way**Previous Reviews**[12/6/12](#), [1/17/13](#), [4/4/13](#), [5/2/13](#), [11/7/13](#), [4/16/15](#)**Project Team Present****Brian Bishop** Site Workshop**Mark Brands** Site Workshop**Cale Doornbos** HOK**Rollin Fatland** Rollin Fatland & Associates**Anton Foss** HOK**Brook Jacksha** Magnusson Klemencic Associates**Jack McCullough** McCullough Hill Leary, PS**Zach Mednelsohn** Magnusson Klemencic Associates**Dave Perez** ArenaCo**Fong Wu** Site Workshop**Attendees****Tom Backer** Washington State Major League Baseball Stadium Public Facilities District**Brad Baker** KOMO News**Beverly Barnett** SDOT**Kris Brannon** resident**Chris Daniels** KING-TV**Chris Eaves** SDOT**Kurt Gahnberg** Transpo Group**Joseph Gellings** Port of Seattle**Peter Goldman** International Longshore and Warehouse Union**Gary James** resident**Melody McCutcheon** Hillis Clark Martin & Peterson, P.S.**John Odland** MacMillan-Piper**Susan Ranf** Seattle Mariners**Jordan Royer** Pacific Merchant Shipping Association**John Shaw** DPD**Bryan Stevens** DPD**Mike Swenson** Transpo Group**Cristina Vanvalkenburgh** SDOT**Lish Whitson** Council Central Staff**Summary of Presentation**

Jack McCullough introduced the project team. Mark Brands reviewed the outline for the presentation, which is available on the Design Commission website, and described the proposed vacation and Arena. Mr. McCullough stated that since the previous review no agreements have been made with the Seattle Mariners concerning shared use of the Safeco Field garage.

Mr. McCullough also summarized various findings from the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) as it pertains to the vacation petition and distributed copies of a letter from First & Goal Inc. and the Washington State Public Stadium Authority, the owner and tenant of CenturyLink Field, stating their interest in developing a shared parking agreement. Mr. Brands showed multiple scenarios for how the petitioner could fulfill code-required parking through a combination of 1) constructing of a new 1,754-space parking garage south of S Holgate St and 2) utilizing existing parking facilities in the area via parking lease agreements; the presentation identified the latter as the petitioner's preferred scenario.

Several slides showed the proposed realignment of S Holgate St at the project site and on adjacent blocks and introduced performance criteria for the proposed 820-foot-long concrete girder pedestrian and bicycle bridge in the S Holgate St right-of-way over the BNSF Railway railroad tracks. As shown in Figure 1, the petitioner's preferred alignment would include an east landing on the south side of S Holgate St at 3rd Ave S and a west landing on the north side of S Holgate St at Occidental Ave S. The presentation included three scenarios for the west landing of the bridge and options for direct pedestrian connections to the Arena facility. Mr. McCullough referred to meetings with Amtrak and BNSF Railway, whose long-term goal is the closure of S Holgate St; BNSF Railway supports the bridge for that reason.

A site plan showed the proposed route for a potential interim shuttle that would connect event attendees with transit facilities in the event the pedestrian bridge is not constructed. Mr. Brands stated that it is not intended to be a long-term solution.

Mr. Brands then presented the proposed plaza at the northwest corner of the site and two options for the design and realignment of S Massachusetts St; one option would raise the street level to sidewalk grade and create curbless, pedestrian-oriented environment with special paving and finishes.

Mr. Brands showed another excerpt from the aforementioned Street Concept Plan calling for a 16-foot-wide pedestrian zone along 1st Ave S between S Massachusetts St and S Holgate St. An image of the proposed Arena design showed a proposed setback between four and eight feet in width. Mr. Brands stated that the proposed retail space along 1st Ave S would be open to the public year round.

Finally, Mr. Brands described the design and anticipated function of the proposed 35,000-square-foot plaza at the northwest corner of the project site. According to Mr. Brands, potential activities in this space included hosting an existing food truck program that operates in the SoDo area, farmer's markets, and 3-on-3 basketball.

Agency Comments

John Shaw stated that the FEIS identified a range of impacts and mitigation measures that can ameliorate those impacts. He emphasized that the purpose of the FEIS is to disclose impacts to inform decision makers as they consid-

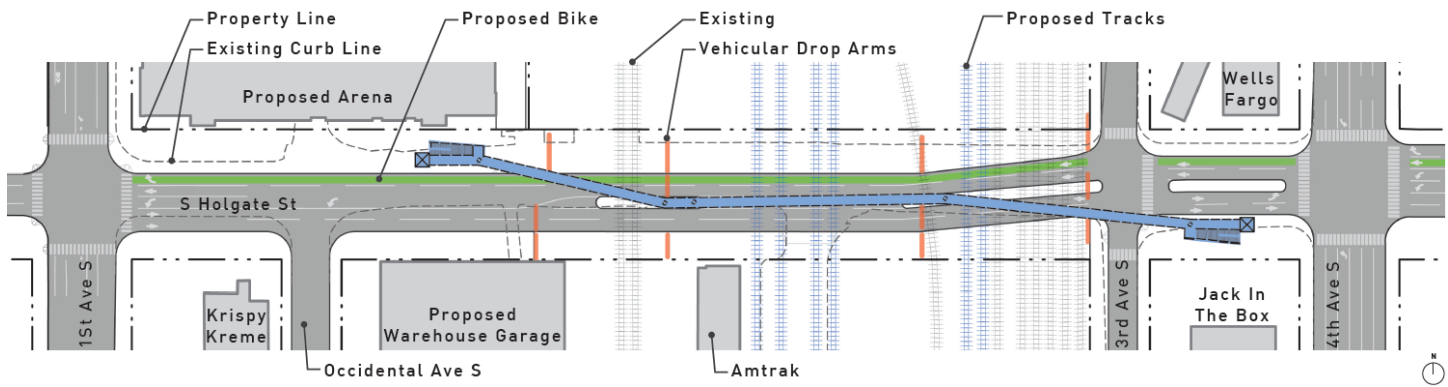


Figure 1. The petitioner's preferred alignment for a pedestrian and bicycle bridge in the S Holgate St right-of-way

er permits. Mr. Shaw stated that the FEIS does not require anything in and of itself. He also said the presentation appropriately draws on and reports information from the FEIS. Mr. Shaw stated that he did not hear anything in the presentation that misinterpreted information from the FEIS

Beverly Barnett stated that SDOT is actively engaged in reviewing the FEIS and working closely with DPD. Ms. Barnett noted that SDOT is reviewing not only the proposed street vacation but broader project impacts as well. Ms. Barnett said that SDOT does not yet have specific conclusions because the review is ongoing and that she is eager to hear from everyone affected in order to inform how SDOT might condition project going forward.

Public Comments

John Odland read the following statement:

Occidental Ave S fulfills four important transportation system functions on the segment that is proposed to be vacated:

1. *Occidental Ave S is the "relief valve" for congestion on 1st Ave S at S Atlantic St. Loss of Occidental Ave S will exacerbate congestion on 1st Ave S and at the intersection of 1st Ave S and S Atlantic St. That impact will be irrevocable and will affect conditions seven days a week, 24 hours a day. That intersection already operates at Level of Service F.*
2. *Vacating Occidental Ave S has regional implications. The 1st Ave S and S Atlantic St corridor is the most critical connection for traffic entering or exiting downtown at its southern edge, affecting access to the freeway system from the Duwamish MIC and downtown. This includes trucks moving between the region's freeways and the Port or the BNSF Railway intermodal yard.*
3. *Occidental Ave S provides an escape route for vehicles block by long trains on S Holgate St. It provides the route that vehicles can use to access Edgar Martinez Dr S to pass over the railroad tracks between 1st Ave S and 4th Ave S.*
4. *Occidental Ave S is an important southbound egress route for pedestrians after sporting events. If it is vacated, those pedestrians would be forced to 1st Ave S, where sidewalks cannot feasibly be widened to accommodate the load without eliminating vehicular capacity.*

It is unfathomable that the Design Commission can conclude the proposal reaches a standard for approval of urban design merit when the project seeks to eliminate a critical part of the street network in a neighborhood that already has too many obstacles to a functional street grid. The mainline rail lines and BNSF Railway railyard disrupt the east-west grid, and now this project wants to disconnect the north-south grid. Both the land use incursion and the street grid impacts will further threaten the industrial base of this city.

Jordan Royer echoed Mr. Odland's comments about the technical aspects of the vacation. Mr. Royer said his comments were about industry and the Seaport Alliance, in which he said the Port of Seattle plays a big role. Mr. Royer said the first and last mile in and out of the Port is already bad. He suggested the Commission look at the Container Port Element of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, which includes policies about supporting Port operations. Mr. Royer said the Port of Portland has struggled with retaining container port operators. He said every import is an export opportunity and cautioned that without infrastructure Seattle could lose all Port operations. He described how this could affect not only Seattle but eastern Washington farmers, who know the Mariner's schedule because of the impacts games have on getting their products to market.

Melody McCutcheon spoke on behalf of the Seattle Mariners. Ms. McCutcheon stated that the issues of access and parking have not yet been resolved. She made four points:

1. According to Ms. McCutcheon, the Arena proposes to vacate a street that provides critical access to the Safeco Field garage and the service road that serves all back-of-house functions for the stadium. While they continue to support efforts to bring NBA and NHL teams to Seattle, Ms. McCutcheon said the Mariners must be vigilant in supporting garage access for fans and in maintaining daily operations for the Stadium.
2. Ms. McCutcheon stated that loss of Occidental Ave S, an important street, requires mitigation; whether the proposed access road functions as mitigation depends on details not included in the presentation or the FEIS. She also stated that S Massachusetts St must be open at all times in order to empty out the garage and for pedestrians.
3. According to Ms. McCutcheon, Occidental Ave S is a critical “relief valve” given the congestion on 1st Ave S. Without this street, the Mariners urge the City to look carefully at changes to signal timing and other improvements where S Atlantic St and Edgar Martinez Dr S intersect 1st Ave S.
4. Finally, Ms. McCutcheon stated that the FEIS overestimates the availability of parking. She explained that the Safeco Field garage and the CenturyLink Field garage and parking lot are already committed to events and permit conditions require these locations be available for a certain portion of the year for events there. For that reason she argued it is essential that the petitioner build a garage.

Peter Goldman stated that International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 19 continues to oppose the proposed vacation for construction of the Arena for three reasons:

1. The probable impact on vehicle and Port operations and viability.
2. Upward pressure on property values and rents and negative impact on businesses that support Port operations in the SoDo area.
3. Public safety concerns resulting from another sports facility. Mr. Goldman warned of traffic not only from events at the Arena but from the SR 99 tunnel, which will not have exits or entrances in downtown.

Mr. Goldman stated that the Arena is not in the public interest and will increase traffic. He warned that a shipper’s mere perception that traffic is increasing can cause them to leave the Port. He asked the Commission what it envisions for the future of SoDo: another South Lake Union with office buildings an upper-middle-class people or a neighborhood that preserves Seattle’s industrial and maritime heritage.

Joseph Gellings described the Arena site as the front door to the Port terminals. On behalf of the Port, Mr. Gellings echoed the previous statements about the critical function of the intersection of 1st Ave S and S Atlantic St to the city, the region, and the Port. He said the City should do everything to maximize grid connectivity surrounding that critical intersection. Mr. Gellings referred to the no vacation alternative evaluated in the FEIS, which would include 800,000 square feet of development and preserve Occidental Ave S. He stated that in that scenario, the street grid performs better. He also said the FEIS did not establish the scale of mitigation necessary.

Kris Brannon spoke on behalf of himself and millions of sports fans that like the Sonics and hockey. Mr. Brannon said the FEIS has been approved and praise the presentation. He said he has attended over 2,500 events, and this project needs to move forward. According to Mr. Brannon, 90% of people want to bring basketball back — and the other 10% want hockey. He said that sports are a true unifier and that everyone — whether white, black, gay, straight, liberal, or conservative — likes sports. He reminded the Seattle Mariners that Mariners fans are also basketball fans. Because Tukwila has been in the news as a potential location for an arena, Mr. Brannon said if Seattle wants the team it needs to act. He said he has confidence the project will go through the proper review process, will provide good family-wage jobs, and will bring a sense of community back to the region.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

Circulation and access

- The loss of Occidental Ave S and its impacts on circulation
- Improvements to 1st Ave, including widened sidewalks and activating street level uses, and the extent to which they implement the Stadium District Study Street Concept Plan
- Improvements to S Holgate St

- The location and performance criteria of the proposed pedestrian bridge
- The role, route, and stops of the proposed interim shuttle
- The realignment of S Massachusetts St
- The Access road between S Holgate St and S Massachusetts St/Safeco Field garage

Parking

- The location of the proposed parking garage
- The advisability of market or third-party solutions to parking, including surface parking lots and use of nearby parking facilities

Utilities

- Conceptual plans for the S Massachusetts St substation

Open space

- The role of the northwest plaza for crowd control and potential for nonevent day use

Circulation and access

The Commissioners began their discussion of urban design merit with circulation and access. They agreed that an essential component of the proposed circulation scheme was an agreement among stakeholders outlining shared use of the proposed access road east of the Arena. The Commissioners appreciated the widened sidewalks, voluntary setbacks, other efforts to implement the vision of the Stadium District Study Street Concept Plan. They also supported the proposal to table S Massachusetts St between 1st Ave S and Occidental Ave S to create a curbsless, pedestrian-oriented environment. Due to lingering concern about pedestrian safety along S Holgate St and at the railroad tracks, the Commissioners adopted a condition requiring construction of the proposed pedestrian bridge and recommended other pedestrian improvements in the vicinity.

Parking and utilities

The Commissioners also discussed the proposed parking scheme as shown in the presentation. They continued to support a parking solution that uses existing parking facilities instead of construction a new parking garage. However, should a parking facility be constructed, the Commissioners agreed that incorporating an appropriate mix of uses, including potential industrial uses that complement the surrounding businesses, should be an essential part of the garage. The Commission also discussed utilities and expressed their preference for undergrounding utilities wherever possible in order to improve the pedestrian experience at and around the project site. The Commission continued to applaud the proposed approach to managing stormwater on-site and encouraged the petitioner to develop this strategy as much as possible.

Open space

Finally, the Commission considered the open space proposed at the northwest corner of the project site. They agreed that, from an urban design merit perspective, this open space serves to accommodate the pedestrian volumes that the Arena will generate. Should this plaza be included as part of a public benefit package, the Commissioners emphasized that it should benefit all people equitably and encouraged a variety of programming and activities to achieve that. They also identified lighting on non-event days as a key determinant of whether the plaza is a successful public space outside of its role accommodating pedestrian volumes on event days.

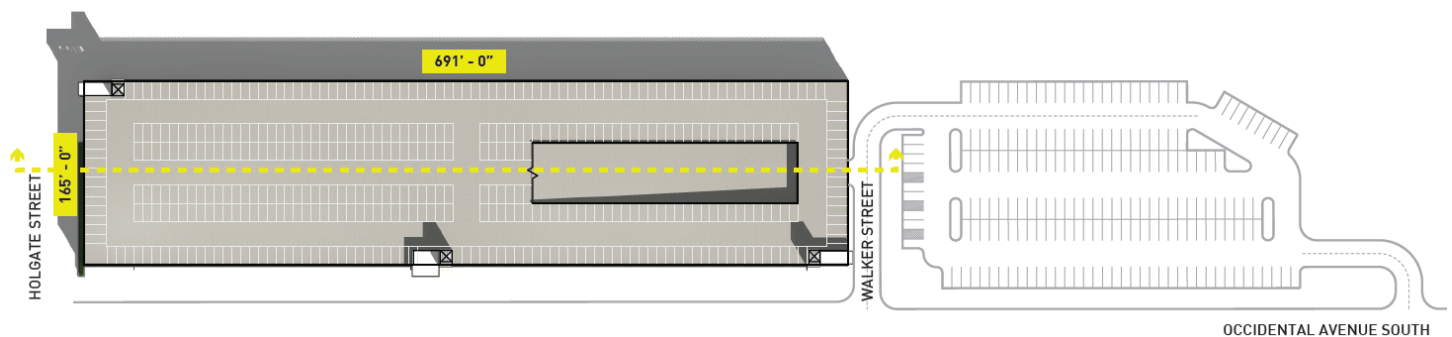


Figure 2. The proposed parking structure would be located at S Holgate St and Occidental Ave S south of the Arena facility.

Action

The Design Commission thanked the project team for the urban design merit presentation. The Commission particularly recognized the attention given to the pedestrian realm, notably the sidewalk widening and landscaping proposed on 1st Ave S, and appreciated that the plaza and restaurant would be accessible to the public year-round.

With a **vote of 8 to 0**, the Commission approved the urban design merit of the petition to vacate Occidental Ave S between S Massachusetts St and S Holgate St. The Commission's approval of urban design merit is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the Seattle Arena, the proposed pedestrian and bicycle bridge in the S Holgate St right-of-way shall be constructed and available for use by Arena attendees.
2. The petitioner shall finalize a shared-use agreement with the Public Facilities District that allows Safeco Field event attendees to use the proposed access road east of the Arena, in order to support the urban design vision of a) Occidental Ave S as a shared use street and b) the proposed design for S Massachusetts St between 1st Ave S and Occidental Ave S.
3. While the Commission continues to support a parking solution that uses existing parking facilities instead of construction of a new parking garage, if the petitioner proceeds with development of a parking structure at S Holgate St and Occidental Ave S as shown in Figure 2, the Design Commission shall review and approve its exterior design prior to the issuance of a Master Use Permit.
4. If the petitioner proceeds with development of a parking structure at S Holgate St and Occidental Ave S as shown in Figure 2, the ground floor of the parking structure shall include ground-level uses that are a) independent of any uses needed to support Arena functions and b) designed to accommodate the range of uses permitted in its zone.

The Commission also recommended that the City Council adopt the following conditions if it grants concept approval for the vacation petition:

5. If a shuttle system implemented for Arena attendees, the shuttle shall not be an interim measure but a permanent project element in order to provide greater access to King Street Station and other transit facilities, particularly for mobility-impaired attendees.
6. If a shuttle system is implemented for Arena attendees and becomes a permanent project element, an evaluation of shuttle performance shall be required within three years of commencing operations and the results provided to the City Council. The evaluation shall indicate the extent to which the service should be adjust or modified to reflect or meet rider demand.

Should the petitioner determine that any of conditions 1-4 is infeasible, or if any changes occur to the site plan or components of the urban design merit review as presented today, the Commission requests that SDOT re-refer the petition to the Commission for additional review of urban design merit. Because the Commission will review any proposal for construction of a new skybridge in the S Holgate St right-of-way, this urban design merit approval does not constitute approval of any particular bridge design elements shown in the presentation.

The Commission also provided the following recommendations to the petitioner:

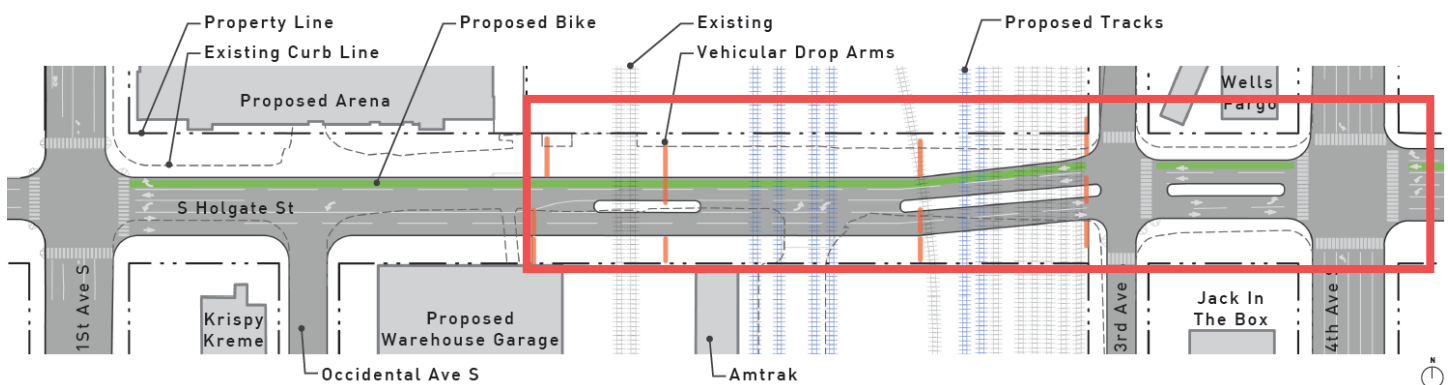


Figure 3. The Commission recommended the petitioner improve sidewalks east of the Arena given the anticipated pedestrian volumes there.

1. Explore opportunities to improve the sidewalks and pedestrian environment on S Holgate St east of the Arena facility towards 4th Ave S, as outlined in Figure 3, given the anticipated increase in pedestrian volumes throughout this area.
2. Remain flexible about the optimal widths for the sidewalk, travel lanes, and planting strip on the proposed access road east of the Arena in order to increase the likelihood of use agreement with the Seattle Mariners.
3. Should a new parking facility be constructed south of the Arena across S Holgate St, consider and study a skybridge connection to provide direct pedestrian access to the Arena.

Urban design merit is the first of two phases in the Design Commission's review of a vacation petition. Given today's approval, the petition will advance to the second phase of review, public benefit. Approval of both urban design merit and public benefit constitutes the Design Commission's recommendation to SDOT that the vacation be approved. The final decision whether to vacate the right-of-way lies with the City Council.

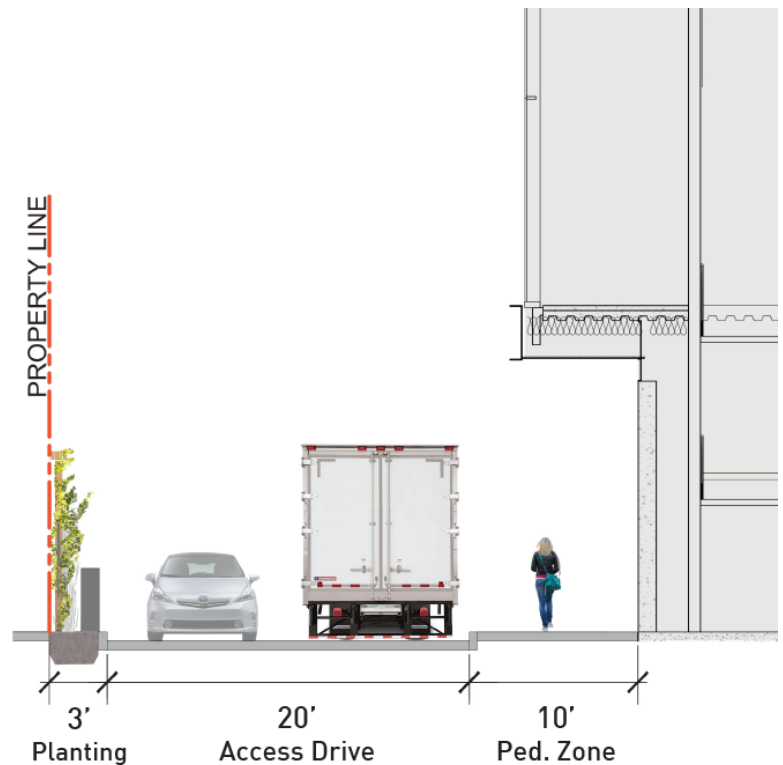


Figure 4. The Commission suggested flexibility about the design of the access road to facilitate an agreement with the Mariners for shared use of the road.