

Seattle Center Arena

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Ross Tilghman, Chair

John Savo, Vice Chair

Lee Copeland

Ben de Rubertis

Thaddeus Egging

Rachel Gleeson

Laura Haddad

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Commissioners Present

Ross Tilghman, Chair
John Savo, Vice Chair
Lee Copeland
Rachel Gleeson
Evan Fowler
Brianna Holan
Laura Haddad

Commissioners Excused

Thaddeus Egging
Ben de Rubertis
Rick Krochalis

Project Description

The project team is proposing to redevelop the existing arena located within Seattle Center for existing and future professional sports team, other sporting events, concerts, and shows. The redevelopment site includes the area surrounding the existing arena as well as the block bounded by 1st Ave N, Thomas St, Warren Ave, and John St. The existing arena, which is a designated landmark, will be expanded below grade to increase overall seating capacity. The current loading area and truck access along Thomas St. will be redeveloped into an atrium and pedestrian plaza with parking and loading services located below grade.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the Seattle Center Arena project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the pre-concept phase of the project. The Commission did not take an action during today's meeting. The SDC provided the project team with several recommendations that should be address prior to the next meeting.

Recusals and Disclosures

Thaddeus Egging recused himself because his employer, KPFF, is working on the project.

Laura Haddad disclosed that her firm was asked to submit qualifications to be the design team art consultant for the project.

John Savo disclosed that his employer, NBBJ, worked on the 1995 renovation of Key Arena but did not work on the project.

October 5, 2017

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Type

CIP

Phase

Pre-concept Design

Previous Reviews

None

Presenters

Chris Bell | DLR Group

Geoff Cheong | Populous

Jill Crary | Seattle Center

Brian Surratt | OED

Barbara Swift | Swift Company

Attendees

Lyle Bicknell | OPCD

Robert Cardona | Uptown Alliance

Evan Clifthorne | Project Belltown

Deborah Frausto | Uptown Alliance

Vicki Ha | DLR Group

Joey Hersheway | DLR Group

Jackie Kirn | OPCD

Jae Lee | Seattle Center

Julia Levitt | Seattle Center

Lance Lopes | Oak View Group

Gareth Loveridge | Swift Company

Shaun Mason | CAA Icon

Steve Mattson | Oak View Group

Jeff Miller | J. Miller & Company, Inc.

Rico Quirindongo | DLR Group

Jessica Roe | McCullough Hill Leary

John Shaw | SDCI

Elizabeth Sheldon | SDOT

Kristine Wilson | Perkins Coie

Ruri Yampolsky | OAC

October 5, 2017

Summary of Presentation

Brian Surratt, of the Office of Economic Development, presented the background information for the project and how it relates to the City of Seattle review process. Jill Crary, of Seattle Center, presented the Center’s process for selection of the arena’s developer and goals the center has for its renovation. Chris Bell and Rico Quirindongo, of DLR Group presented the urban analysis of the buildings context. Barbara Swift, of Swift Company, presented the site analysis, and Geoff Cheong, of Populous presented the concept design for the redeveloped Seattle Center Arena.

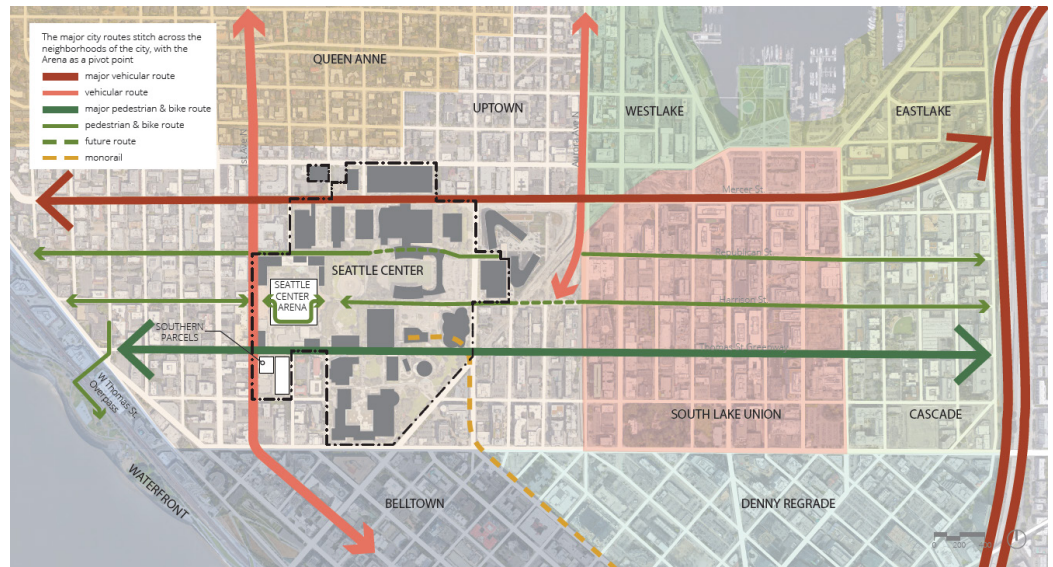


Figure 1: Project location and neighborhood connections

The existing arena facility was originally developed in 1962 for the Seattle World’s Fair. The original site provided a west edge between the fair grounds and surrounding neighborhood and also served as a main entrance for fair attendees. The project site is located along 1st Ave on the eastern edge of Seattle Center. The site is adjacent to major vehicular, pedestrian, and cyclist routes as well as many neighborhood greenways.

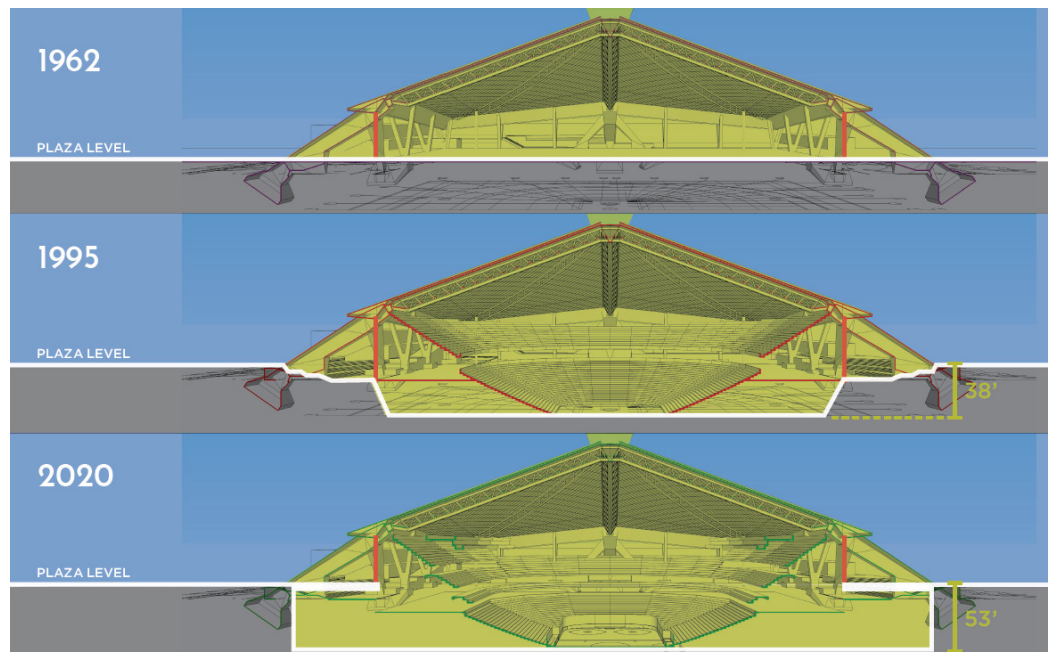


Figure 2: Arena expansion timeline

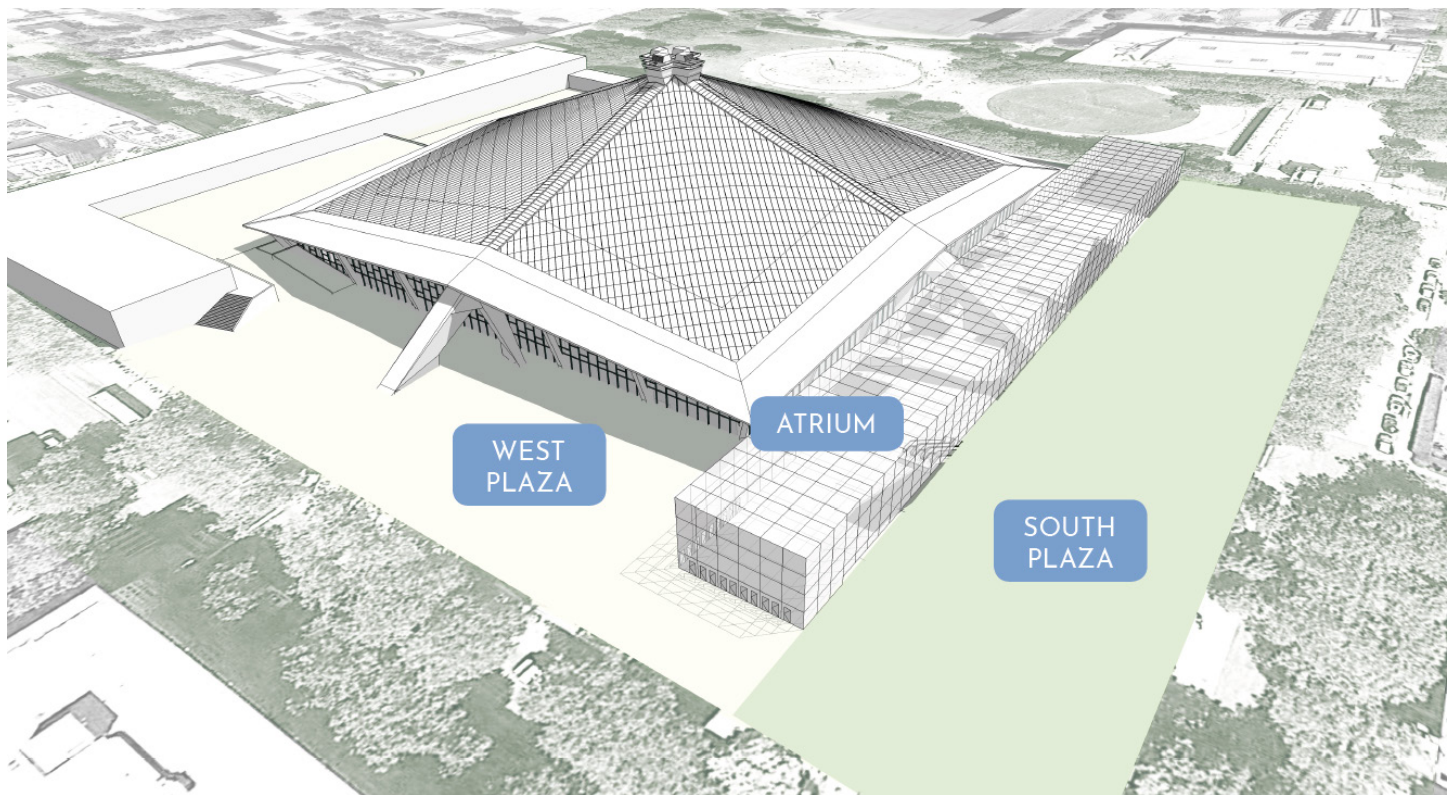


Figure 3: Proposed site diagram

The project proposal assumes the development of the arena under the existing roofline. The proposal includes the redevelopment of the east and west plaza as well as the addition of an atrium and south plaza on the southern edge of the arena. Loading services and below grade parking will be located below the south plaza and will include an entrance ramp west of the existing parking deck along Thomas St. Two main entrances will be located on the west and east side of the proposed atrium. The plazas are designed to facilitate daily uses as well as larger events such as festivals, concerts, and game day activities.

The project team includes desires LEED Gold certification for the facility and anticipates incorporating sustainability in the surrounding landscape and open space.

Agency Comments

Lyle Bicknell, OPCD, briefly reminded the project team of the importance of integrating the expanded Arena into the surrounding context. He also stated his concern about providing vehicle access off of Thomas St.

Ruri Yampolsky, OAC, stated that the project owners have committed to allocating 1% in funding for artwork. Ms. Yampolsky then said the funding will be divided between integrated and sited public art projects and an art activation program. The Office of Arts and Culture and working with the project team and Seattle Center to develop a list of artists to for consideration to join the project team. The selected artist will work with project designers to develop an art plan, provide input for integrated design ideas, and identify locations for additional artists to create site specific art.

Public Comments

Deborah Frausto, Uptown Alliance, stated that it is important to remember that the arena is located in a residential neighborhood. She then mentioned that the scale of the proposed design should integrated with the surrounding neighborhood.

Evan Clifthorne, Project Belltown, stated that the project scoping should include a review of peak traffic times from events at the arena to understand potential impacts impact on those peak traffic hour would be. Mr. Clifthorne then suggested the EIS should consider as mitigation the direct support for business development, or other community and economic development activities, that could serve to reduce the potential transportation impact of peak traffic hours at the start and end of major events at a redeveloped arena.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Preferred alternative
- Site access & circulation
- Urban context
- Sustainability & equity

Preferred alternative

The SDC thought positively of the preferred alternative. The commission commended the project team for utilizing the existing loading dock on the southside of the area and recognized the opportunities that will be created through the addition of the south plaza. Although the commission thought the project team adequately showed potential access routes to the facility, they recommended the project team better understand where pedestrians will be travelling from.

The commission then discussed the location and proposed design of the atrium. Commissioners questioned the scale of the atrium in relation to the existing facility and encouraged that be taken into consideration as the project continues to evolve. Commissioners also recommended the project team reduce the height of the atrium in order to place an emphasis on the roof line of the existing facility.

The SDC is concerned that, with facility of this size, pedestrians might get lost while travelling around facility. Commissioners recommended the project team incorporate wayfinding into the design to help prevent pedestrians from travelling in the wrong direction.

Site access and circulation

The SDC organized its discussion on site access and circulation into two categories: pedestrian accesses and vehicular access.

Pedestrian access

While the SDC agreed the proposed entrance locations will work with the overall design, commissioners encouraged the project team to study where pedestrians are traveling from, whether it is street parking, parking garages, or transit stops, and to let that guide where entrances should be located. Commissioners mentioned that it is difficult to discuss pedestrian access without knowing how it will be managed. The commission encouraged the design team to continue thinking about how access will be managed.

The SDC then discussed how proposed entrances and pedestrian access will affect the design of the proposed plaza. Commissioners discussed how locating an entrance on the westside of the atrium would also serve as an entrance to Seattle Center. The commission discussed how the proposed atrium on the southside of the arena would affect the design of the adjacent plaza. Commissioner wanted to know more information about the atriums relationship with the plaza. Specifically, commissioners wanted to know if any programming within the atrium would be oriented towards the plaza. The SDC recommended the project team think about how the proposed design and programming of the atrium will affect the design of the adjacent plaza. Commissioners also recommended the project team consider including entrances on the southside of the atrium to allow greater movement between the atrium and adjacent plaza.

Vehicular access

The SDC encouraged the design team to provide a vehicular access and circulation scheme that had minimal impact on the pedestrian realm and surrounding residential streets. Commissioners recommended the project team consider combining vehicular and truck loading ramp to decrease the impact on the surrounding buildings and neighborhood. Commissioners questioned the current location of the proposed service ramp and encouraged the project team to think about relocating the ramp near the existing parking garage along Thomas St. Commissioners also suggested the project team understand how the proposed design will affect areas east of the project site along Thomas St, specifically at the intersection of 2nd Ave and Thomas St, which serves as a major intersection of many uses within Seattle Center. The SDC recommended the project team pay close attention when designing the area around this intersection.

The Commission then discussed the capacity of the proposed underground parking. Several commissioners questioned if this was the best location for parking. Other commissioners questioned the proposed capacity of 400 parking stalls and encouraged the project team consider providing additional onsite parking, which would provide an opportunity to redevelop the existing garage on the southside of the development area.

Urban Context

The SDC organized its discussion on urban context into the following categories: Uptown neighborhood, Seattle Center, and Plazas.

Uptown

The SDC discussed how the proposed project will relate to the surrounding neighborhood context. Commissioners agreed that any future development needs to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Commissioners also encouraged the project team to address views between the project site and neighborhood. The commission then recommended the project team study the potential for redevelopment on the southern block where the truck access is proposed. The SDC also recommended that, if development of the south block occurs, the project team should consider providing affordable housing with street level commercial space along 1st Ave and John St.

Seattle Center

The SDC highly encouraged the project team to show how their development proposal related to other projects occurring on the Seattle Center campus. Commissioners then recommended the design proposal include a sequential entrance into Seattle Center as well as street improvements adjacent to the south plaza on Thomas St. The Commission agreed that it will be important for the project team to show where existing services for Seattle Center along Thomas St. will be relocated.

Plazas

The SDC recommended the project team create a vision for each proposed plaza (south, east, west, and possibly north) so to ensure that they serve as more than “pass through” spaces for pedestrians to pass through. The Commission then recommended the project team show how each plaza will be programmed during the day as well as at night. Commissioners recognized the importance of providing a lighting concept to support night time activities.

The Commission then discussed the location of entrances to the atrium as they relate to the east and west plazas. Commissioners agreed the entrances will provide wayfinding and will help in framing each plaza. Commissioners were concerned with extending the west atrium entrance beyond the façade of the arena, which will block pedestrians from moving into the south plaza. Commissioners also discussed the current usage and potentials enhancements of the north plaza. The Commission encouraged the project team to address the limited accessibility of areas in the north plaza. The SDC recommended the project team consider how proposed programming will interact with surrounding uses.

Sustainability & Equity

The SDC encouraged the project team to prioritize the pedestrian realm when providing access to uses within the development site. The SDC then expressed its concern with accessibility to the parking garage. Commissioners encouraged the parking garage be available to the public on non-event days. Commissioners also recommended the consider providing access to the atrium on non-event days as well.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of the pre-concept design for the Seattle Center Arena. The SDC did not take an action during today’s meeting. The Commission provided the project team with the following recommendations that should be addressed prior to the next meeting:

1. When deciding the hierarchy of entrances to the building, develop an understanding of where pedestrians will be travelling from, such as bus stops, future light rail, parking facilities, etc.
2. Consider reducing the size of the atrium because it detracts from the roofline of the stadium.
3. Provide a wayfinding system for people navigating around the outside of the facility.
4. Consider how the proposed design and programming of the atrium will affect the design of the adjacent plaza.
5. Think of allowing permeability of the atrium on the south side so that people can flow in and out there.
6. Develop a vehicular circulation scheme that minimizes impacts to pedestrian flow and the neighborhood.
7. We strongly advise combining vehicular access to the garage with the loading to minimize impacts to the pedestrian realm along Thomas St.
8. Carefully consider how the proposal will affect the east end of Thomas St, in particular the busy gateway area to the Seattle Center at 2nd and Thomas that is crucial for many uses at the Center. Think of the current use of this area as you design this corner of the arena site.
9. Explore whether the proposed parking garage is sited well.

10. Consider parking on both the arena site and the area south of Thomas St. comprehensively and strategically. Evaluate the idea of increasing the number of stalls on the arena site to eliminate the need for the existing parking garage and surface lot south of Thomas.
11. Examine how the proposal will affect the developability of the parking lot site south of the Bressie building where the tunnel entrance is proposed. Given the location of the site within an Urban Center, and the upzones being undertaken across the city, study how it can be developed to its fullest potential. Consider preparing for and facilitating the development of the site with ground level retail and much needed affordable housing.
12. Explain the relationship of the design to the other campus elements and programming at the Seattle Center.
13. Provide information on where the existing uses along Thomas St will be relocated, in particular the skatepark and non-profits.
14. Provide street improvements to Thomas St. This is a key entrance to the campus from the west. Design a sequential entry experience along Thomas St.
15. Create a vision for each proposed plaza to help ensure that they do not become just "passing through" space. Show how each plaza will be used both during the day and night. Provide lighting to allow for night time activities.
16. Consider how proposed programming will interact with surrounding uses at Seattle Center.
17. Consider providing public access to the atrium and parking garage on non-event days.