

Seattle Center Arena

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Commissioners Present

Ben de Rubertis, Acting Chair
Justin Clark
Rikerrious Geter
Brianna Holan
Mark Johnson

Commissioners Excused

Laura Haddad
Rick Krochalis

Project Description

The project applicant is proposing to redevelop the existing Seattle Center Arena (Arena) for existing and future professional sports teams, concerts, and shows. The proposed redevelopment includes the existing Arena, its adjacent plazas, and the public realm generally bounded by 1st Ave N, Thomas St, Warren Ave, and John St. The existing arena, which is a designated City of Seattle landmark, will be expanded to increase overall seating capacity. The current loading area and truck access along Thomas St. will be redeveloped into an atrium and pedestrian plaza. A 400 stall parking garage and loading services have been proposed below grade under the new and expanded plaza areas. Access to the below grade parking would be from Thomas Street while the truck loading access will occur south of the site through a tunnel on a parcel at the corner of 1st and John Streets, also owned by Seattle Center.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) fifth review of the Seattle Center Arena Project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the design development (90% design) for the project. After the presentation and discussion the SDC voted, 5-0, to approve the design development phase with several conditions and recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

Laura Haddad recused herself as her studio, Haddad-Drugan, was selected to develop the Art plan for the project.

May 2, 2019

1:00 - 2:30 pm

Type

CIP

Phase

Schematic Design (60% phase)

Previous Reviews

[6/21/18](#), [5/3/18](#), [1/18/18](#), [10/5/17](#)

Presenters

Geoff Cheong
Populous

Gareth Loveridge
Swift Company

Sara Zora
SDOT

Attendees

Jill Cray
Seattle Center

Ariel Davis
Fehr + Peers

Joy Jacobson
FAS

Donald Kunz
Uptown LURC

Jae Lee
Seattle Center

Julia Levitt
Seattle Center

Chris Page
OSE

Ryan Thomas
Perkins Coie

Rico Quirindongo
DLR Group

Jeff Reed
Seattle Center

Todd Spangler
Populous

Rob Stephens
CAA Icon

Hannah Wetter
Seattle Center

Kris Wilson
Perkins Coie

Summary of Presentation

Sara Zora, of SDOT, Geoff Cheong, of Populous, Gareth Loveridge, of Swift Company, and Rico Quirindongo of DLR Group presented the design development phase of the Seattle Center Arena project. The presentation began with project updates and site context followed by information about the transportation plan as detailed the Master Use Permit (MUP) requirements and the Arena Access Management Plan (AAMP). Physical improvements include bus-only lanes, adaptive signals, widened crosswalks and bulb outs. Sara Zora discussed strategies based on event and traffic demand.

The project team then discussed the plans for redevelopment of the existing surface and structured parking bounded by 1st Ave N, Warren Ave N, Thomas Street, and John Street. The redevelopment at this block includes modifications to an existing surface parking lot that will provide access to a tunnel extending from the surface parking lot at 1st and John north into the Seattle Center Arena. The tunnel will provide truck access to the Seattle Center Arena. Access to the existing parking garage along Warren between John and Thomas Streets will also be modified. The parking garage will also be modified to provide mechanical features and cooling towers to serve the Seattle Center Arena. The

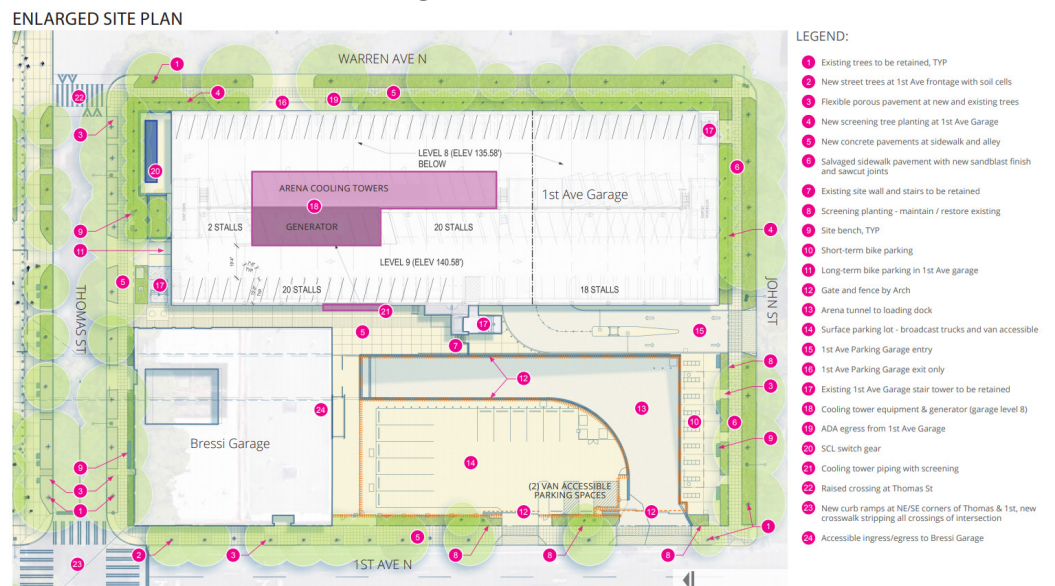


Figure 1: South parcel site plan



Figure 2: Rendering of proposed cooling towers, bicycle parking, and truck access

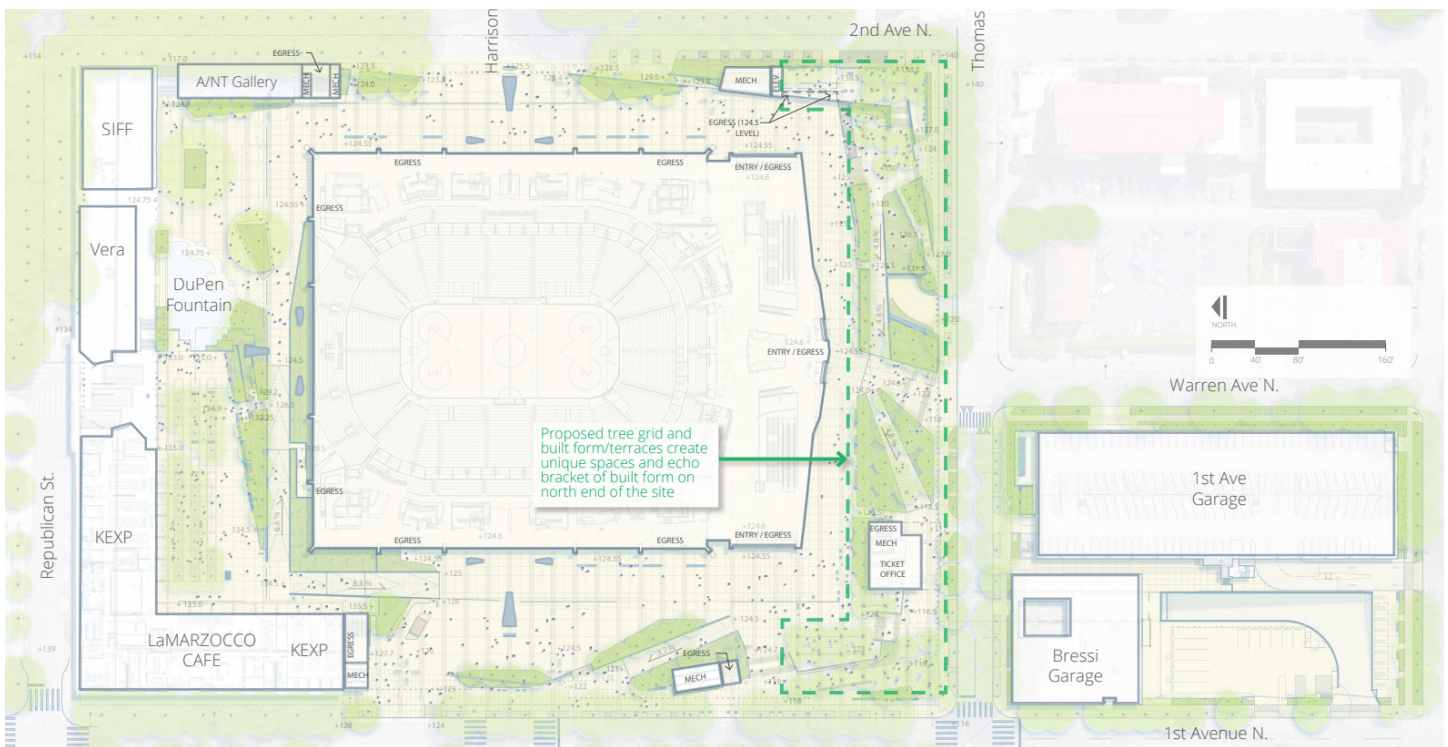


Figure 3: Updated site plan

proposed cooling towers will be placed on the top level of the parking garage and will be surrounded by a screening material, while the Seattle City Light (SCL) switchgear will be relocated below grade along the north façade of the parking garage. Long-term bicycle parking will be provided by 34 double-stack lockers which will accommodate 68 bikes. Detailed plans include making the parcel more pedestrian-friendly and accessible, as well as inclusion of screenings, plantings, and street furniture, and bicycle racks to make the parking facilities more inviting and functional. The proposed landscape plan of a perimeter of trees around the 1st Avenue garage, cast-in-place concrete and local wood construction materials, and stainless-steel bicycle racks. See figures 1-3 for more detail.

The surface parking adjacent to the parking structure will become unavailable to the public during events in order to provide staging for broadcasting trucks and other uses. The project team described a signage and wayfinding strategy, ADA accessibility, greater courtyard space, lighting, views, and a conceptual art plan.

Agency Comments

Joy Jacobson, FAS, questioned where bike share drop-off would be located, and then stated that bike share can be a huge impediment to people with vision issues. Ms. Jacobson then highly recommended the project team consider where bike share drop off points be located. Ms. Jacobson also asked the transportation consultant to consider the needs of people with mobility issues who use ridehailing vehicles when creating a ridehailing plan in the AAMP.

Public Comments

Donald Kunz, Uptown LURC, asked if the project team still going to do something imaginative with the paving pattern in the south plaza. The project team responded by saying the proposed paving is textured, but that the art plan could explore doing something more creative.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Site access and circulation
- South parcel and Thomas Street design
- Vent and egress structures
- Open space
- Lighting and art integration
- Materials, finishes, and landscape

Site access and circulation

While the SDC commended the project team for their coordination with other City departments and agencies to address site access and circulation issues, they also commented that site access and circulation had not changed much since the last review. Although commissioners recognized that there are still unanswered questions related to transportation and traffic improvements, they conditioned that the project team return for a separate meeting to show how the transportation curb management plans have evolved to address the integration of different transportation modes as well as better integrate with the surrounding site. The Commission then recommended the project team continue to think about how they will address bike share as well as ADA access.

South Parcel and Thomas St design

The SDC appreciated the project team's response as to why a curbless design could not be implemented on Thomas Street. The Commission also appreciated the project team identifying Thomas Street as a pedestrian space and recommended they continue to prioritize pedestrian movement across Thomas Street. Commissioners then encouraged the project team to continue prioritizing the protection of trees along Thomas Street.

The SDC then commented on the switchgear located adjacent to the existing parking garage. Commissioners appreciated the relocation of the switchgear below grade along Thomas Street. The Commission agreed this was a positive change for the surrounding area. The SDC then expressed their concern with the quality and durability of the proposed screening materials for the cooling tower. The Commission conditioned that the project team show how the proposed materials have been refined in response to reevaluating long term sustainability and durability of the screening material.

Vent and egress structures

The SDC appreciated the design progression of the southwest vent structure, which is adjacent to 1st Ave. The Commission acknowledged the difficulty of locating the structure in this location and appreciated how well the proposed design integrated with the surrounding plaza. The Commission then recognized how well the art program is integrated with the facility and encouraged the project team do the same with the vent and egress structures. The commission recommended the project team pay attention to detail regarding artwork on or near the vent and egress structures so that adjacent LED signage doesn't take prominence over the art program. The Commission then conditioned that the project team review the art integration plan to ensure that art will continue to be integrated within and enhance the experience on site, specifically near signage.

Open space

The SDC commended the project team for creating spaces that are not only well integrated within the surrounding neighborhood but that are also designed to be well used on non-event days. The SDC then commended the project team for the design of the north plaza. Specifically, Commissioners appreciated the openness of the updated design as well as increased visibility into the arena from the plaza. The Commission also appreciated the site circulation through the north plaza. The SDC then commended the project team for the design of the south plaza. Commissioners agreed the design is well integrated and serves as an extension of Seattle Center instead of only serving as an open space for the arena.

The SDC cautioned the project team from overusing signage within the surrounding open space. Commissioners commented that signage can create a sense of being exclusive, deterring people from using the space. Rather, the surrounding plazas should feel open and accessible to everyone.

Lighting and art integration

The SDC appreciated the scale of the pedestrian lighting, but recommended the project team include pedestrian lighting near the bike area on the south parcel as a way to increase the public's awareness of the bike area.

Materials, finishes, landscape

The SDC acknowledged the lack of visual hierarchy with the proposed materials, texture, and color palette. Commissioners encouraged the project team to use materials with a greater variety of textures and colors to help create a hierarchy and to add depth within the open space. The Commission then reiterated their concern over the long term sustainability and durability of the screening material on the south parcel.

Commissioners are concerned the specified material will deteriorate much faster than anticipated and recommended the project team consider an alternative material.

The SDC recommended the stainless steel finish on the bollards be refined to match the quality of materials used elsewhere on site. The Commission then recommended the project team consider alternative design options to reduce the number of bollards used around the perimeter of the site.

The Commission then reminded the project team to consider the integration of art when specifying the materiality of the panels on the vent and egress structures so that the art does not appear to be attached or “plopped” onto the façade.

Action

The Commission thanked the project team for their presentation of the design development phase for the Seattle Center Arena project. Overall the Commission appreciated the construction mitigation plan to mitigate short term impacts to community, long term transportation plan to integrate and collaborate with other agencies, continued refinements of the site to integrate with site elements to create public spaces for everyday and event use. The SDC voted, 5-0, to approve the design development phase for the Seattle Center Arena project with the following conditions:

1. Return to the SDC for a subcommittee review of the curb management plan that shows integration of different transportation modes as well as better integration with the surrounding site¹
2. Show how the proposed materials of the garage rooftop cooling towers have been refined to address concerns about their long-term sustainability and durability²
3. Revisit the art integration plan to ensure art is well integrated with site and enhances experience on site, specifically near signage³

The SDC also provided the following recommendations:

1. Continue to think about how they will address bike share as well as ADA access
2. Continue to make Thomas St a pedestrian dominant space as it evolves in design
3. Refine fence choice on south parcel
4. Pay attention to detail regarding artwork on or near the vent and egress structures so that adjacent LED signage doesn't take prominence over the art program
5. Refrain from overusing signage within the surrounding open space
6. Use texture and light to enhance open space experience
7. Consider providing pedestrian scaled lighting near the bike area on the south parcel
8. Consider alternative design options to reduce the number of bollards used around the perimeter of the site.
9. Consider using a finish on the bollards that will match the quality of materials used elsewhere on site of bollard to match the high quality of other site materials

¹To meet this condition, SDC staff will consult with SDOT staff to see that any final Street Improvement Permit reflects SDC concerns

²This condition can be fulfilled through a subcommittee review

³SDC will consult with the Landmark Board as part of their approval of any Certificate of Approval reflecting Art and/or signage.