

WSCC Expansion - Freeway Park Improvements

Tim Burgess
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Samuel Assefa
Director, OPCD

Ross Tilghman, Chair

John Savo, Vice Chair

Lee Copeland

Ben de Rubertis

Thaddeus Egging

Rachel Gleeson

Laura Haddad

Brianna Holan

Rick Krochalis

Evan Fowler

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Aaron Hursey
Planner

Juliet Acevedo
Administrative Staff

Diana Settlemeyer
Intern

**Office of Planning and
Community Development**
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Avenue, 5th Floor
Seattle, WA 98124

TEL 206-684-0435
FAX 206-233-2784
seattle.gov/designcommission

Commissioners Present

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

Commissioners Excused

Thaddeus Egging
Ben de Rubertis
Rick Krochalis

Project Description

The Washington State Convention Center (WSCC) is proposing to vacate three alleys and two streets below grade on three blocks bounded by Pine St, 9th Ave, Howell St, and Boren Ave. The petitioner is requesting the full vacation of the following three mid-block alleys:

- Block 33 (Site B) - bounded by 9th Ave, Howell St, Terry Ave, and Olive way
- Block 43 (Site C) - bounded by Terry Ave, Howell St, Boren Ave, and Olive Way
- Block 44 (Site A) - bounded by 9th Ave, Olive Way, Boren Ave, and Pine St

The petitioner has also modified their initial vacation petition to change the vacation of Terry between Olive and Howell to a subterranean-only vacation. The request for a subterranean vacation for Olive Way, between 9th Ave and Boren Ave, has not been modified.

The preferred scheme includes approximately 2.385 million square feet (sf) of development on three sites. The WSCC expansion would occur above grade on Site A only, and extend to a below grade loading dock on Sites B and C. These remaining two sites will include co-developments above grade. The preferred proposal includes 1,165,000 square feet dedicated to the convention center expansion, 385 residential units, 575,000 square feet of office space, 42,000 square feet dedicated to street-level uses, below-grade parking for 700-800 vehicles, and below-grade loading services.

As a part of the proposed public benefit package, the project team will provide \$10 million in funding to repair and enhance Freeway Park. Freeway Park is a 5-acre open space located between Downtown and the First Hill and Capitol Hill Neighborhoods. Pending approval of the public benefit package, funding will be given to Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation (SPR) for the design and construction of improvements to Freeway Park. The SDC will review this project as a Capitol Improvement Project (CIP) in the future.

October 5, 2017**1:00 – 4:00 pm****Type**

Street and Alley Vacation

Phase

Pre-Concept Design

Previous Reviews[7/6/17, 5/18/17, 3/16/17, 2/16/17, 1/19/17, 9/15/16, 4/21/16, 2/4/16](#)**Presenters****Mark Brands**

SiteWorkshop

Riisa Conklin

Freeway Park Association

Matt Griffin

Pine Street Group

Attendees**Margery Aronson**

Art Advisor

Kathleen Conner

SPR

McCaella Daffern

Capitol Hill Housing

Jim Erickson

First Hill Improvement Association

Therese Graf

GGN

Alex Hudson

First Hill Improvement Association

Bryn Kepler

GGN

Bruno Lambert

PPUNC

Jane Lewis

Pine Street Group

Cathy McClure

Artist

Kelsey Mesher

Cascade Bicycle Club

Bob Messina

Resident

Thomas Pitchford

Lid I-5

Paige Premselar

SOJ

Ian Robertson

University of Washington

Meeting Summary

The Seattle Design Commission (SDC) reviewed a pre-concept design for Freeway Park as a proposed public benefit element. The SDC approved, 6-0, a pre-concept design for the Freeway Park project with several recommendations. While this project is a part of the WSCC public benefit package proposal, the SDC did not take an action for the project as a public benefit element for the WSCC Expansion. The SDC will review and take an action on the proposed public benefit package at a future meeting. If the vacation is approved by City Council, the project will return to the SDC as a CIP.

Recusals and Disclosures

Thaddeus Egging recused himself as his employer, KPFF, is working on the project. **Brianna Holan** recused herself as her employer, LMN Architects, is working on the project.

John Savo disclosed that NBBJ worked with Lawrence Halprin and Angela Danadjieva on the original park design.

Summary of Presentation

Mark Brands, of SiteWorkshop, and Riisa Conklin, of the Freeway Park Association, presented the pre-concept design for the Freeway Park project.

WSCC will provide \$10 million as part of their public benefit package to Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation (SPR) for the redevelopment and on-going activation of Freeway Park. The project scope includes the restoration and repair of aging park infrastructure (electrical, irrigation, paving), additions/upgrades to pedestrian lighting, wayfinding signs and kiosks, park entrance signs, site furnishings, stormwater infrastructure, comfort stations, planting areas including soil, and additional park programming. Potential programming elements include rotating art installations, art murals, community gathering space, café, outdoor seating, performance space, play area, and temporary market space.

The proposed design includes areas located on property owned by SPR, WSCC and other property owners; there was discussion of whether the proposed funding should be used only to address areas owned by SPR. WSCC maintains the Freeway Park

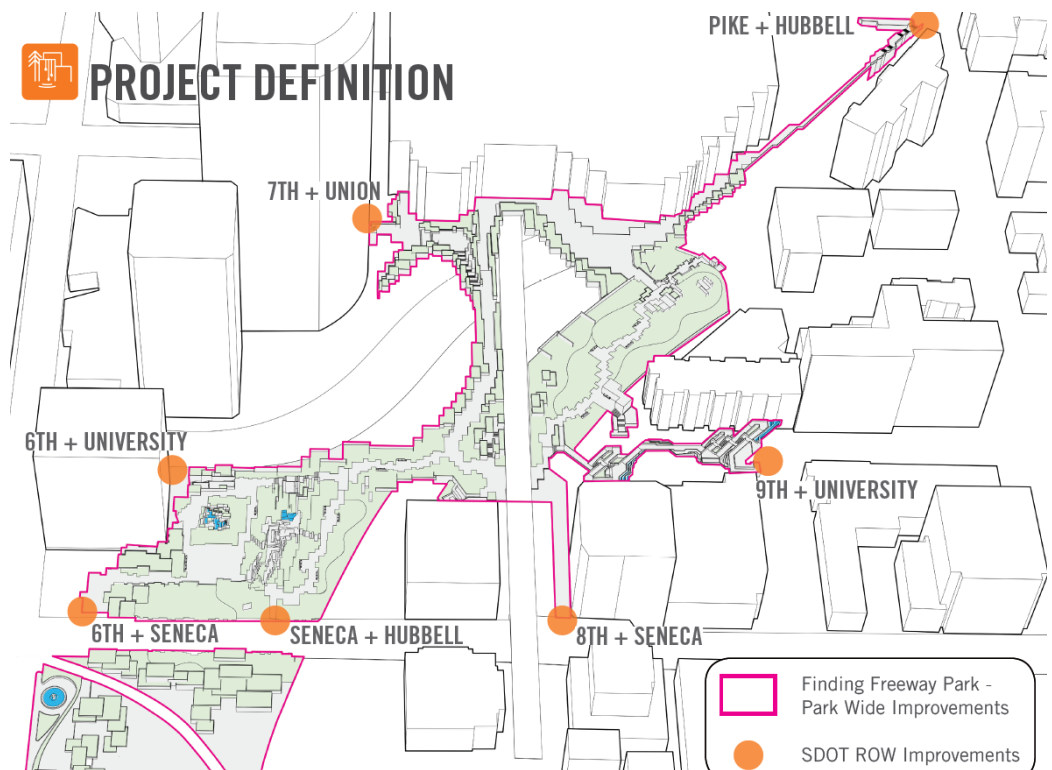


Figure 1: Project definition

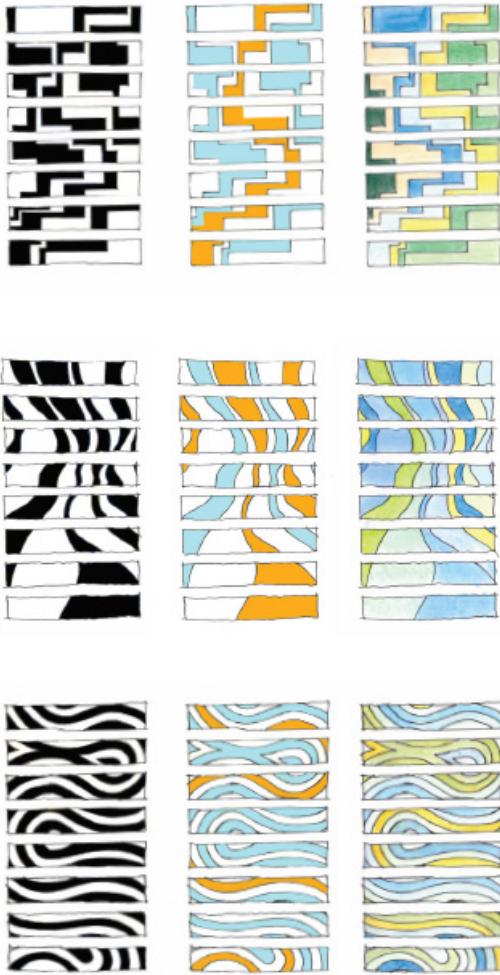


Figure 2: Crosswalk design options

property it owns on an on-going basis. The Freeway Park Association used funding provided by the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) Neighborhood Matching Fund for the Finding Freeway Park phase of work to provide community outreach and create a pre-concept design for wayfinding, lighting, and park activation. Additional funding from the Department of Transportation (SDOT) through the Neighborhood Street Fund program will be used to provide right-of-way (ROW) improvements near seven entrances to the park.

Agency Comments

None.

Public Comments

Jim Erickson voiced his support for design enhancements to Freeway Park. In particular, Mr. Erickson encouraged the improvements of pedestrian lighting, removal of obstacles to lines of sight, wayfinding signage and ADA mobility access.

Alex Hudson, FHIA and Community Package Coalition, stated the Community Package Coalition has been working in partnership with the team representing the Washington State Convention Center Addition to develop a public investment package commensurate with the scale and impact of the development impacts. Ms. Hudson then said the Coalition is in full support of investment in Freeway Park and that restoration, repair, and amenities improvements align with the community's desire to see connections between this project and the surrounding neighborhoods and places.

Iain Robertson, UW, Reminded the project team not to forget the role plants and landscape will have in the success of the park.



Figure 3: Canopy walk concept idea



Figure 4: Underpass concept idea

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Design Principles of repair, restore, and enhance
- The influence of outreach and equity on the design proposal
- Safety, access, wayfinding, and functionality
- Right-of-Way improvements
- Infrastructure improvements
- Proposed program elements
- Stewarding historic design and funding

Design principles of repair restore enhance

The SDC expressed its disappointment that the project team did not discuss Lawrence Halprin's original design concept for Freeway Park. As the project progresses, commissioners encouraged the project team to use Halprin's original design concept as a guide in assessing their scope of work. The Commission recognized the value of the park in providing a place of respite from the surrounding urban setting and encouraged the project team to think about how to repair and restore park elements. Commissioners recommended the design team think about how repairing and restoring could better activate the park before providing additional programming elements.

The Commission then discussed the appropriateness of park enhancements. While they agreed the opportunity for park enhancements should be considered, commissioners recommended proposed enhancements should support the overall vision of the existing park.

The influence of outreach and equity on the design proposal

The SDC stressed the importance of honoring Lawrence Halprin's initial idea of addressing equity through the inclusion of nature and respite within Freeway Park. The Commission then commended the project team for their extensive outreach effort, but encouraged future outreach to extend beyond the surrounding community. The SDC stressed the community's desire to have a space of respite, but disagreed with the community feedback that encouraged the implementation of art through the use of paint.

The Commission also stressed the importance of providing adequate on-site restroom facilities. Commissioners recommended the project team think about the appropriate location for future restroom facilities.

The Commission reminded the project team that Freeway Park provides a natural environment within a dense urban setting and recommended the design of surrounding entrances, wayfinding, and ROW improvements to represent this transition from an urban to natural environment. Commissioners then encouraged the project team to think about how the proposed design can facilitate more informal interactions between all types of park users.

Safety, access, wayfinding, and functionality

The SDC stressed the importance of providing wayfinding signs that are well designed. Several commissioners recognized the important role standard SPR park signs play in clarifying that you are entering a public park and providing adequate wayfinding for park users. Commissioners recommended using standard SPR park signs near their entrances to Freeway Park. In recognizing that the park includes several unique architectural features that serve as wayfinding guides, the Commission then encouraged the design team to provide the minimum amount of wayfinding signs needed to prevent park users from getting lost. Commissioners also recommended the project team to include notifications about whether or not specific routes are universally accessible.

The SDC emphasized the importance of including lighting. The commission recommended the design team understand what types of lighting are appropriate for different areas within the park.

ROW improvements

The SDC encouraged the design team to use a natural color palette wherever possible. Commissioners agreed that the proposed graphics of the surrounding crosswalk designs were not in keeping with the park's design aesthetic and will not help in providing wayfinding to Freeway Park. The Commission encouraged the project team use durable materials for the crosswalk design. The SDC then recommended the design team to research what design elements have been changed and/or compromised since the park first opened and recommended restoring those elements back to their original design intent when it is in keeping with current safety standards and design parameters.

Infrastructure improvements

The SDC stressed that the proposed design should include a plan for ongoing park stewardship, which should ensure the park is sustained in perpetuity. Commissioners then restated Professor Robertson's assertion about the large role that plants will have in the renewal of the park. The Commission questioned which agencies should fund long term maintenance for the park. Commissioners recommended SPR and WSCC create a coordinated plan for the funding of long term maintenance for the park.

New program elements

The SDC cautioned the design team in their approach to introducing new program elements. Commissioners agreed the elements currently proposed are not well integrated with the existing park and highly recommended the design team better integrate program elements. Several Commissioners encouraged the design team to provide a small amount of programming to be strategically placed in areas throughout the park. It was suggested that for any permanent alterations to the park, such as the paving and restrooms, the design team seek input from Lawrence Halprin's collective historians.

The Commission is concerned with the proposed programming along the "Canopy Walk" between Convention Center Plaza and Pike St, which is owned by WSCC. Commissioners are concerned with what design intervention will be used in this space and how it will affect surrounding uses. The SDC is also concerned with proposing an art installation beneath the underpass, which they view as clashing with the existing design intent of the park. Commissioners recommended the project team consider other types of ephemeral programming beneath the overpass, such as a light installation. Commissioners then stated that it was not appropriate to introduce vibrant colors to any of the proposed elements.

Stewarding historic design and funding

The SDC agreed the design proposal is heading in the right direction. Commissioners are concerned that because the public space is owned by SPR and WSCC, there will not be enough funding to fully maintain the park. The Commission encouraged both owners to partner to provide long term maintenance for their respective areas of the park, specifically in addressing ongoing plant maintenance. Commissioners also stressed the importance of both owners providing spaces that interact well with one another.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for the presentation of the pre-concept design for the Freeway Park. The Commission thought the proposed funding was an appropriate element for the proposed public benefit package for the WSCC Expansion street vacation. While this project is a part of the public benefit package proposal, the SDC did not take an action for the project as a public benefit element. The SDC will review and take an action on the WSCC Expansion vacation public benefit package at a future meeting.

The SDC voted, 6-0, to approve the concept design for the Freeway Park project with the following recommendations:

1. Continue to incorporate Halprin's original pre-concept of equity and nature in the current design proposal
2. The primary focus of the design should be to repair and restore the park, with an emphasis on the landscape. Enhancements should be a secondary aspect of the improvements.
3. Park enhancements and programming should support the overall vision of the existing, historic park
4. Explore the appropriate location and design for future restroom facilities
5. Design surrounding entrances, wayfinding, and ROW improvements in a way that represents a transition from an urban to natural environment
6. Consider using standard SPR park signs near all entrances to Freeway Park
7. Include notifications at appropriate points about whether or not specific routes are universally accessible
8. Continue to evaluate which types of lighting are appropriate for different areas within the park
9. Research which design elements have been changed and/or compromised since the park first opened and consider changing those elements to reflect their original design intent. Continue to seek input from Lawrence Halprin's collective historians.
10. Coordinate between SPR and WSCC to create a plan to fund long-term maintenance for the park
11. Provide programming elements that are better integrated with the park design and original concept
12. The enhancements proposed beneath the overpass do not appear to be in keeping with the park's original plans. Consider alternatives for activating this space.