

APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Ed Murray
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Tom Nelson, Chair

Osama Quotah, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Megan Groth

Laurel Kunkler

Shannon Loew

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Ross Tilghman

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Nicolas Welch
Planner

Joan Nieman
Administrative Staff

February 20, 2014

Convened 8:30 am

Adjourned 4:00 pm

Projects Reviewed

E Howe St Street Vacation

9th & Stewart Alley Vacation

Commissioners Present

Tom Nelson, Chair

Osama Quotah, Vice Chair (excused at 12:00 pm)

Bernie Alonzo (excused at 12:00 pm)

Brodie Bain

Megan Groth

Laurel Kunkler (excused at 12:00 pm)

Shannon Loew

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod (excused from 9:15 – 10:35 am)

Ross Tilghman (excused at 12:00 pm)

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins

Valerie Kinast

Nicolas Welch

Joan Nieman

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February 20, 2014 2:00 – 4:00 pm	Project:	9th & Stewart	
	Type:	Alley Vacation	
	Phase:	Public Benefit	
	Previous reviews:	7/18/13 UDM approved; 10/17/13 PB deferred	
	Presenters:	Mark Reddington	LMN Architects
		Mark Brands	Site Workshop
	Attendees:	Howard Anderson	Denny Triangle Association
		Beverly Barnett	SDOT
		Andrew Carr	LMN Architects
		Shauna Decker	R.C. Hedreen Co.
		Michael Dorcy	DPD
		Ryan Durkan	HCMP
		Tres Gallant	citizen
		Howard Greenwich	Puget Sound Sage
		Robert Kelly	UNITE HERE
		Jasmine Marwaha	UNITE HERE
		Jack Mackie	citizen
		Terry McCann	EA Engineering
		Linda Mitchell	Community Outreach Consultant
		Stefan Mortiz	UNITE HERE
		Walt Niehoff	LMN Architects
		Bruce Parris	UNITE HERE
		Joe Ragland	UNITE HERE
		David Schneider	LMN Architects
		John Shaw	DPD
		Laune Torres	Puget Sound Sage
		Stephen Van Dyck	LMN Architects
		Jen Webby	UNITE HERE
		Erica Wickstrom	Gethsemane Lutheran Church
		Ruri Yampolski	Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs

Perri Howard, Arts Commissioner, joined the Design Commission for this review.

Recusals and Disclosures

Commission Quotah was recused. Commissioner Tilghman was recused.

Purpose of Review

This is the third time the Commission has reviewed the 9th & Stewart alley vacation. On July 18, 2013, the Commission approved the urban design merit for the vacation. On October 17, 2013, the Commission postponed a vote on the proposed public benefit package due to insufficient information.

Since the last meeting, it was determined that a Supplement Environmental Impact Statement will be required.

The Commission received several comments by email regarding the timing of the Commission meeting in relation to the timing of the Supplemental EIS. Since mitigation measures as required as part of the EIS cannot be counted as public benefit, there could not be a vote at this meeting.

Summary of Proposal

The applicants propose to vacate the 16-foot-wide L-shaped alley in the block bounded by 9th Ave, Howell St, 8th Ave, and Stewart St in the Denny Triangle neighborhood in Downtown Seattle. The vacation would allow the development of a mixed-use project that includes:

- 1,500 hotel rooms;
- 150,000 sf of meeting room space;
- 152 affordable housing units for people earning up to 80% of the County's median income;
- ground-level retail and restaurants; and
- 700 below-grade parking spaces.

The building massing includes a six-story base with retail, restaurants, and various ballrooms and meeting spaces. Rising from this base are two separate towers: an 8-story tower along Stewart for the housing and a 35-story tower along Howell for the hotel. A multimodal through-block connection would link 8th and 9th Avenues. This connection includes dropoff zones for hotel guests, access to parking, and pedestrian connections for the public. Entrance to the truck loading area is from 8th Avenue; the loading area itself is located below grade.

The applicant is proposing the following public benefits:

1. Increased building setbacks
2. Enhanced ROW improvements along 9th Ave and Howell St.
3. A through-block pedestrian connection
4. A bike share station
5. Wayfinding signage
6. Publicly accessible art along 9th Ave and in the through block connector

Summary of Presentation

Mark Reddington reviewed the presentation dated February 20, 2014, available on the available on the [Design Commission website](#). Mr. Reddington gave an overview of the project background, program, and design and summarized the proposed public benefit package. He described the following elements:

1. ROW improvements along 9th Ave
2. Green street sculpture garden
3. Publicly accessible lighting art in through-block connector
4. Through-block connector
5. Additional voluntary setbacks / ROW enhancements
6. Bike share program
7. Wayfinding program

Mark Brands went into detail about the ROW improvements and green street sculpture garden along 9th Avenue (approximately 18,000 sf). The team has selected an artist, Beverly Pepper, to produce three sculptures located throughout the park along 9th Avenue. Mr. Brands explained the lighting, paving, and landscaping plan for the site.

Mr. Reddington detailed the through-block connection and its relationship to the texture of the existing street grid. He noted that the team has strived to create a public experience.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission provided feedback around two main issues: First, while they appreciated the merit of the proposed art pieces and the gesture of siting them in the public realm, the Commissioners generally felt the sculptures was not adequately integrated into the urban context of the sculpture garden. That said, they were appreciative of how the design and landscaping of the 9th Ave Green Street creates an interesting pedestrian experience. Second, the Commissioners questioned the degree to which the through-block connector is adequately welcoming to visitors not associated with the hotel. They suggested ways to make opening of the through-block more visually inviting and encouraged the team to consider this space as an urban street and seek to infuse it with that character.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, believes that 9th Ave and Howell St look very good and sees a public benefit proposal that is commensurate with the scale of the project. The design allows the public to enjoy these features and engage with the building. Nevertheless, the mid-block connector seems more about function than public benefit. She recognizes its importance for hotel design and removing queuing and traffic impacts off the street but feels it's more about the hotel than public benefit.

John Shaw, DPD, stated that the information in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)—which is preliminary and precedes a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)—on pedestrian traffic shows that the project will have substantial capacity for the flows expect. Analysis looks not only at pedestrian activity generated by hotel activity, the restaurant, and the residential units, but also the potential for the mid-block connection to draw in pedestrians traveling throughout the downtown area. That's a very difficult figure to estimate. The calculations done in the DEIS show the sidewalks around site and mid-block will have more than enough capacity to accommodate both the pedestrians generated by project and those drawn in to walk through the site because of the artwork, accessibility, and attractiveness of the features. That's what we've seen so far, and we're not seeing anything in the conclusions that substantially concerns us. That said, we're open to continuing to review it, and the FEIS will be forthcoming. The public benefit package succeeds to the extent that it exceeds what code requires and what mitigation requires.

Michael Dorcy, DPD, recounted that the final Design Review Board recommendation meeting was held February 4, where the board members unanimously recommended it for approval. They also recommended granting nine departures (e.g. curb cuts, modulation). The Board was generally happy with the added modulation at the mid-range of the building and with the way the transparency, activity, and excitement at the lower level was opened up. The next step will be public meetings for the DEIS, which is March 3.

Public Comments

Howard Anderson, chair of the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association, has been following project and is aware of difficulty with the alley. He identified three important areas—public benefit, traffic, and green streets on 9th avenue—that he thinks this proposal handles very well. Currently, the alley is nonfunctional, inefficient, and wouldn't work for a full development plan. The proposed mid-block crossing provides coverage, supports bikes and pedestrians, and creates a safe space for everyone. From

a streetscape perspective, Mr. Anderson applauded the openness of the entire block and the standard the proposed design establishes for downtown. His association is very excited about and supportive of the project.

Jack Mackie, artist, neighbor to the project, also shared excitement about the development. He stated that he expects it to improve the neighborhood by bringing new people into the area and increasing activity on the street. However, he voiced caution about the proposed public benefit, specifically the setback on 9th Ave. He questioned whether the applicant would actually locate the building edge against the sidewalk and, if not, whether that full setback can be considered public benefit. He also questioned the designation of the sculptures as public art since there was no public process that produced them and warned of permanent graffiti due to their material. Lastly, Mr. Mackie referred to the offsite public benefit previously proposed and noted the challenges at the intersection of Howell St, Olive Way, and 9th Ave. He estimated that those issues could be resolved for the price of one of the proposed sculptures.

Jasmine Marwaha, UNITE HERE Local 8, said there is a difference between public vs. private space and welcome vs. non-welcoming space. She noted that within a few blocks of the site, there are several affordable housing buildings, Mary's Place, and many service providers, not just retail and high-end condos. Ms. Marwaha questioned whether all members of the public would feel welcome in the mid-block connector and worries it might become part of the hotel space. Lastly, she stated that public benefit must be in proportion to the private gain afforded by the vacation, which she elaborates on in her written comment.

The following people and organizations have sent letters to the commission:

Yemane Gebremicael, Peter Eglick, Karen McLean, Jill Mangaliman, Darel Grothaus, Jasmine Marwaha, The Church Council of Greater Seattle, Puget Sound Sage, Jon Morgan, John Hanson, Andra Kranzler, Kaaren Black, Doris Rolander, Rebecca Saldana, TM Rosario, Hamdi Abdulle, David West, Tim Allen, Harry Hoffman, Dave Kerlick, Laurie Torres, Patrice Thomas, CoCo Chandi, Kristen Wendt, Jonathan Grant, Tom Norwalk, Maura Ahearne, and Erica Wickstrom.

All other commenters were encouraged to send electronic statements to SDC_Administration@seattle.gov.

Action

The Design Commission thanked the design team for the second presentation of the public benefit package for the 9th & Stewart alley vacation. The Commission did not vote on the public benefit because the Supplemental EIS for the project has not been completed. Mitigation items for environmental impacts cannot be considered public benefits for the alley vacation, so the Commission cannot ascertain if the public benefit is sufficient until the SEIS has been completed. A vote on the public benefit is anticipated at a future meeting. Approval of both the urban design merit and public benefit package constitute a recommendation to the SDOT Director by the Design Commission to approve the vacation. The ultimate decision to grant the vacation lies with the City Council.

The Commission provided the following recommendations for further development of the public benefit package:

1. Develop the art along 9th Ave to integrate better with its urban context and the site design. The quality, quantity, and scope of the art appear to be sufficient, but the art should express a consistent and cohesive art ethos that relates to the place it is located.
2. Continue to increase the public nature of the through-block connector. Potential solutions to explore include:
 - a. The character and program of the internal “street façades”;
 - b. The idea of vendors and creating moments along the long straight edges of the space;
 - c. The openings to the connector, which currently read as holes punched into large, planar façades;
 - d. Spilling the art beyond the space and finding synergies with the lighting program; and
 - e. Making the bike share station easy to locate for the public.