

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 Street Vacation

9th & Stewart Alley Vacation

Commissioners Present

Tom Nelson, Chair

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

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Megan Groth

Laurel Kunkler (excused at 12:00 pm)

Shannon Loew

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod (excused 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
9:30 – 11:00 am

Project: E Howe Street
Type: Street Vacation
Phase: Urban Design Merit
Previous reviews: none

Presenters:

Dawn Bushnaq	Bushnaq Studio Architecture + Design
Karen Kiest	Karen Kiest Landscape Architects
Mike Phifer	Artist
Pat Hansen-Lund	MKA

Attendees:

Patrick Ashman	Daly Partners
Beverly Barnett	SDOT
Jim Daly	Daly Partners
Pat Hansen-Lund	MKS
Garrett Hodgins	Daly Partners
Sze Lyn Lim	Bushnaq Studio Architecture + Design
Bruce Rips	DPD
Eric Susanto	Bushnaq Studio Architecture + Design

Recusals and Disclosures

Commissioner Bain’s employer, Perkins+Will, is designing the adjacent development at 1818 Fairview. She is not working on the project.

Purpose of Review

The purpose of this meeting was to review the urban design merit of the E Howe Street subterranean vacation. The design team presented on the public benefit package as well, but the Commission focused its discussion and voted only on urban design merit, the first step in its vacation review process.

Summary of Proposal

The applicant is proposing to vacate a subterranean portion of the E Howe St right of way in order to connect the below-grade parking under two development sites at 1903 Yale Pl E and 1823 Eastlake Ave E. Currently, the E Howe St ROW is unimproved at the project site and if developed would represent a “fifth street” at this intersection. The proposed development straddles the E Howe ROW and the two parts together include 90 residential units, 6 live/work spaces, and a small-scale ground-floor commercial space. Both buildings are four stories. The 3,000 sf of subterranean ROW between the two development sites would be developed as part of a below-grade parking structure with 70 spaces accessible for use by both sites.

The proposed public benefit package consists of:

1. Development of the E Howe ROW as a public open space
2. Voluntary setback on Yale Pl E
3. Public art
4. Enhanced ROW improvements along Eastlake Ave E and Yale Pl E, including a new curb bulb

Summary of Presentation

Dawn Bushnaq introduced the team, discussed the background of project, and thanked the Design Commission for their valuable input. Ms. Bushnaq reviewed the presentation dated February 20, 2014, available on the available on the [Design Commission website](#). Ms. Bushnaq gave an overview of the development schedule, with construction to start in early 2015. The design team has had several meetings with community members that have helped the team understand the site context, particularly in relation to the Howe St stairs.

The presentation showed the design and program of the proposed development. Regarding urban design merit, Ms. Bushnaq cited improvements to pedestrian safety and connectivity that the proposed development intends to accomplish. As one of the few opportunities to experience the topographical change and views from Capitol Hill to Lake Union, the Howe St pedestrian connection has become a central motivation for the project.

Ms. Bushnaq discussed the adjacent development site, 1818 Fairview, which is a biotech research facility that has applied for its MUP, and noted an agreement between the developer and SDOT that the E Howe ROW not be opened to vehicles and be maintained as a pedestrian connection.

The civil engineer explained the impact of the project on utilities. Currently no stormwater or electrical infrastructure passes through the ROW. There are overhead lines running through the corridor, and the team has worked with SCL and CenturyLink to reorient these lines as necessary. SPU have CenturyLink planned improvements in this area and an upcoming meeting will cover that.

According to the design team, the vacation scenario allows for more parking spaces, more bicycle parking, and a single entry at street level (on Yale) so that Eastlake has an uninterrupted sequence of street trees and no vehicle entry. The no-vacation scenario decreases parking spaces, leading to spillover on neighboring streets, two ingress/egress locations, and a less desirable pedestrian environment along Eastlake. A service ingress/egress would also be required at the intersection of Yale and Eastlake.

Ms. Bushnaq then moved to the public benefit proposal, which includes three primary items:

1. Development of the E Howe ROW as a public open space
2. Voluntary setback on Yale PI E
3. Public art
4. Enhanced ROW improvements along Eastlake Ave E and Yale PI E, including a new curb bulb

Karen Kiest, the landscape architect for the project, explained in further detail the landscape plan for the site. Given bicycle or vehicle speeds along Eastlake, the ROW open space won't be seen as a street but as an open court. Ms. Kiest recognized the need to make the 35-foot-wide ROW space feel public. The team has sought to increase views towards the lake.

The art piece, which has not been precisely located, is private art in the public right of way; accordingly, it will not go to PAAC. Mike Phifer discussed his concept for the proposed steel sculpture, which is comprised of flat powder-coated metal plates. It may include small lights. Given its porosity and narrow profile, the sculpture is quite transparent. The team has also considered included a play element for children.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission applauded the architecture and design of the project and its integration into the neighborhood context. The Commissioners recognized the benefits of the vacation scenario, particularly being able to avoid curb cuts on Eastlake Ave E, the improved pedestrian experience, additional bicycle parking, and more efficient design of the below-grade space. There was some concern about the three main elements of the project: the siting and orientation of the art piece, the lack of differentiation of materials between the ROW and the private development, and the pedestrian connection through the adjacent 1818 Fairview site.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, shared that the project has received numerous emails from the community citing support, which is rather unusual. No issues have come up yet. A technical question is how far below grade the vacation will go out of concern for utilities. The design of the public benefit, specifically making the ROW feel like a public space, will be very important.

Bruce Rips, DPD, stated that the Capitol Hill Design Review Board saw this project and will see it again at a recommendation meeting in 1-2 months. The board appreciated the urbanity of the project and the attempt to reduce curb cuts on Eastlake and was very encouraged by the preliminary design. As for the adjacent development at 1818 Fairview, the discussion was preliminary in terms of how the setbacks would be. The board was very supportive of the pedestrian corridor.

Public Comments

none

Action

The Design Commission thanked the design team for the presentation of the urban design merit of its request to vacate the E Howe St right of way below grade from Eastlake Ave E approximately 120 ft west toward Fairview Ave S. Urban design merit is the first of two components of the Design Commission's vacation review process. 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 particularly appreciated that the vacation proposal:

1. Builds on neighborhood-scale connections
2. Eliminates the need for curb cuts along Eastlake
3. Creates a public space
4. Offers a link to Lake Union and furthers neighborhood and regional goals for the Cheshiahud Lake Union Loop

With a **vote of 9 to 0**, the Design Commission approved the urban design merit of the E Howe St subterranean street vacation with the following recommendations:

1. Develop the open space design to balance the destination and connection aspects of the project. Ensure the pedestrian route to the overlook feels welcoming and public.
2. While the design successfully unifies the architecture across the E Howe right of way, in this situation it gives a sense that the open space is private. Refine the design and architecture to welcome and engage with the public. The public space must be clear, inviting, and distinct from the private development.

3. Develop signage, wayfinding, and lighting.
4. Continue close coordination with the adjacent biotech development at 1818 Fairview to ensure these two projects connect in the best possible way. These should be separate but integrated projects in the ROW.
5. Continue to explore solutions to the siting of the art piece.