Seattle Design Commission

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Chair

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Adam Christiansen

John Hoffman

Karen Kiest

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Approved

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

July 6 2006

Convened: 10:30am
Adjourned: 5:15pm

Projects Reviewed

Presbyterian Retirement Housing – Alley Vacation Follow Up
Thomas Street Pedestrian Bridge – Concept Design
Woodland Park Zoo West Garage – Schematic Design Update

Commissioners Present

David Spiker, Chair
Pam Beyette
John Hoffman
Karen Kiest
Anindita Mitra
Sheri Olson
Nic Rossouw
Dennis Ryan
Darrell Vange

Staff Present

Layne Cubell
Tom Iurino
Valerie Felts

6 July 2006 Project	**Presbyterian Retirement Housing**
Previous Reviews:	May 2005
Phase:	Alley Vacation Follow Up
Presenters:	Julie Lawton, PRCN Dan Nelson, Perkins + Will Architects Mark Tilbe, Murase Associates Beverly Barnett, Seattle Department of Transportation Bruce Rips, Department of Planning and Development
Time:	1 hour (SDC Ref. #170)

Action

The Commission would like to thank the design team for the thorough verbal and visual briefing of the alley vacation follow up of the project now known as Skyline and First Hill and by a vote of 7:1 approves design details of the public benefit package with the following comments:

- **Encourage artist/landscape architect to take the art element further so that it is distinct from landscape elements**
- **Suggest strengthening design of the crescent lawn, perhaps with the addition of art elements to be more scenic in that area**
- **Refine landscape on 8th Avenue crescent**
- **Add street edge paving on 8th Avenue sidewalk rather than continuous lawn**
- **Suggest maximizing size and quality of plaza/courtyard at 9th and Cherry Street**
- **Encourage team to enhance Columbia Street edge by rigorous landscaping**

Note: Commissioner Hoffman abstained from the vote as he arrived late.

Proponents Presentation

The Commission recommended conceptual approval of the alley vacation in May 2005 with several conditions. The proponents addressed the conditions, related to design of the public benefit areas. They include: 1) terraces on Cherry Street, which will serve as a public hillclimb; 2) garden crescent on 8th Avenue with approximately 3,000 to 4,000 sq. ft. of publicly accessible open space; 3) landscaping around the site; and 4) landscaping for the drop off area on 9th and Columbia St.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Are the stone benches art elements?
  - Yes, they are part of the hillclimb composition. They will be made of granite, hand selected and textured by Murase, which they are known for.
- Encourage team to push this to make it a more distinct form
- What is proposed for site in terms of paving?
  - 2 x 2 standard, scoring on all sides, except in the courtyard at 9th and Columbia which will be colored stone or concrete
- Can you describe the loading doors?
  - Inset
- Crescent design seems too distinct from the hillclimb design
- Specifically the lawn on 8th Avenue seems too flat, open, rather weak and the benches have a formal location, but they are too few, so read as empty space
- Work on tying together more, refine plaza features
- Loading/parking curb design should be sensitive to needs of elderly, a paved strip, not lawn would be good there
- Why two strips of green separated here?
  - Public/private
- Disappointed in lack of stormwater reuse, but appreciate response and that it was explored
- Columbia Street edge seems too harsh

    - Pushed the sidewalk 5’ to the north (off the property line) to allow more room for landscape area between building and sidewalk pedestrians
- Generally, public benefits package is well thought out, the Commission feels it will meet concerns of Council and tried to activate all edges
- Appreciate that team has worked to enhance 9th and Columbia courtyard, agree Columbia is probably weakest street in overall design

6 July 2006 Project	**Commission Business**
Action Items	**A.** Timesheets **B**. Minutes from 06/01/06/Felts
Discussion Items	**C.** DC 2006 Recruitment Update/Cubell **D.** Prep for COW on SR-520, 8/14, 9-11 am/Cubell and Rossouw
Announcements	**E.** Waterfront for all events, Council/City Hall and Town Hall

6 July 2006 Project Commission Business Updates

Staff Discussion

Time: 1 hour

The Commission discussed ongoing review of several big projects, the Viaduct and Waterfront Outreach efforts, outside commitments, and 2006/07 leadership.

6 July 2006 Project **Thomas Street Pedestrian Bridge**

Previous Reviews:	December, 2004
Phase:	Concept Design
Presenters:	John Arnesen, Seattle Department of Transportation John Coney, Uptown Alliance QACC Brian Sperry, ABKJ Engineers
Time:	1 hour (SDC Ref. #170)

Action

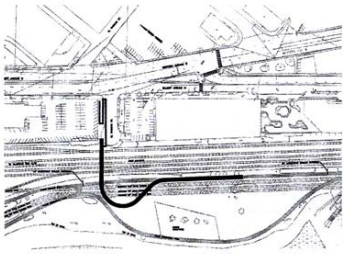
The Commission recommends approval of the concept design with the following comments:

- **Support extended scope for an overpass from Myrtle Edwards Park across Elliott**
- **Be sensitive to view opportunities and view corridors**
- **Support simplicity of ramps and pursuit of design elegance**
- **Consider design treatment, especially throw fence**
- **Support inclusion of artist on planning/design team**
- **Pay attention to Heizer sculpture at Myrtle Edwards Park**
- **Explore new, revised pedestrian connections on Elliott below the bridge**

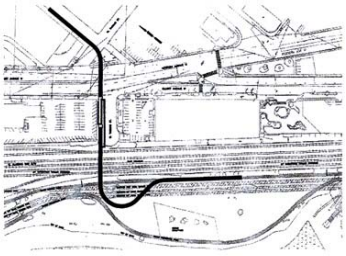
Proponents Presentation

The team outlined various overpass alternatives and their costs. The preferred alternative is Alternative 3.1, which consists of two options, A and B. Option A would consist of an overpass crossing Elliott Ave. only. Option B would be an overpass crossing railroad tracks and Elliott Ave. Option A would provide adequate space for shared uses such as bicycling and include a longer 5% grade ramp in Myrtle Edwards Park, smaller ramp radius and no landings. Option B would include an 8 ft. switchback ramp to Queen Anne and a larger radius ramp. Total cost of Option A is $4.2 million, $1.3 million of which has been secured. Total cost of Option B is $6.3 million, $2.9 of which has been secured.

ALTERNATIVE 1 (14' WIDE PATH)

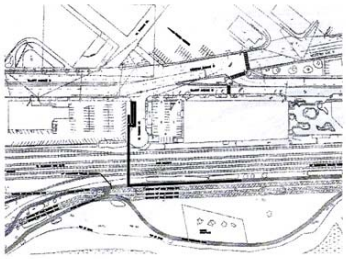


OPTION A (CROSS RR TRACKS ONLY)



OPTION B (CROSS RR AND ELLIOTT AVE)

ALTERNATIVE 3 (10' WIDE PATH)



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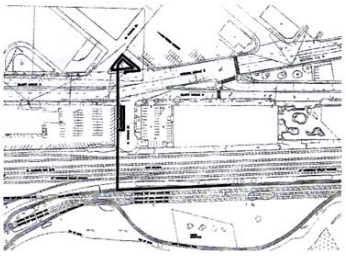

OPTION B (CROSS RR AND ELLIOTT AVE)

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- What is the long term plan for Thomas Street?
    - There is no plan to close it. The bridge will go over the railroad tracks and possibly over Elliott, depending on funding.
- Why make the bike part of the bridge so wide (14 ft.)?
    - To accommodate cyclists walking bikes
- How does this relate to any future bike lanes on Elliott?
- Not aware of scope of any bike lanes on Elliott, that is not part of the scope of this project
- Are you coordinating with Parks to integrate designs with Myrtle Edwards Park especially the embankment and retaining wall?
    - Last connected with Parks in 2005, need to rekindle discussions soon
- Does the bridge have to be enclosed? Look at Amgen bridge as a model
    - It will have a 10 ft. throw fence that could be mesh metal
- It is important to knit the Queen Anne neighborhood with Myrtle Edwards Park. Will you get the necessary funding?
    - $1.3 million has been acquired, $3.1 million is needed
- Make it a safe pedestrian environment. Improve the south pedestrian crossing at Harrison St.
- The Design Commission supported the bridge going over Elliott in the past; encourage full span across Elliott as the Mayor proposes.

6 July 2006 Project	**Woodland Park Zoo - West Garage**
Previous Reviews:	January, March, June 2006
Phase:	Schematic Design Update
Presenters:	Dan Phillips, Woodland Park Zoo
	Jim Maxwell, Woodland Park Zoo
	Paul Diedrich, KPFF
	David Hewitt, Hewitt Architects
	Kris Snider, Landscape Architect, Hewitt Architects
	Scott Ringgold, Department of Planning and Development
Attendees	Paul Andrews, Phinney EcoVillage
	John Barber, Parks and Open Spaces
	Esther Bartfield, Phinney Ridge neighbor
	Jim Bennett, Woodland Park Zoo
	Walter Charm
	Craig Fryhle, Zoo neighbor
	Anne Davis, Save Our Zoo
	John Davis, Save Our Zoo
	Diane Duthweiler
	Edward Duthweiler
	John Jeffcott, Zoo neighbor
	Mark Phillips, Woodland Park Zoo neighborhood liaison
	Marylou Reslock, KPFF
	Corey Satten, Zoo neighbor
	Susan Wagner, Phinney Ridge resident
	Irene Wall, Zoo neighbor
	Ginny Watkins, Zoo neighbor
	James Webb
	Tom Veith, WCC
Time:	1 hour 45 minutes (SDC Ref. #RS0612)

Action

The Commission appreciates the quick response to last month's previous review and the depth of proponents' presentation today. It understands the challenges that this project brings to bear on any designer or landscape architect. By a vote of 6:3, the Commission approves the schematic design with the following comments:

- **Finds the current design scheme strikes the appropriate balance between a building that wants to be minimalized and one that wants to have certain expressions that relate to its surrounding context**

- **Recommends that the Zoo consider building, if funding is available, the West Plaza Entry concurrently with the garage since it is linked so conceptually and physically to it**
  - **Revisit the materials of the north ramp wall and the entire east elevation in terms of the way they relate to the functions of the Zoo, particularly in the sense that those sides are open for a significant amount of time.**

Commissioners Rossouw, Hoffman, and Mitra cast dissenting votes as they 1) disagree with the project in principle 2) believe the materials and architecture are inappropriate and 3) have concerns about traffic, scale, context, and pedestrian experience.

Proponents Presentation

The team addressed issues identified in a Design Commission review in June 2006. These were: Master Plan update, the west entry, landscape design details, public process update, and design guidelines for the garage from the Long Range Physical Development Plan. A review of siting information and other existing conditions including entrances were discussed to show context and scale of the proposed garage.

Pedestrian Circulation Diagram - Long Range Plan

The team described the arrangement of the Zoo around 10 bioclimatic zones of the world and how the plants and topography reflect these. The West Parking Garage and new West Entry will be in the local bioclimatic zone, the temperate forest. Visitor amenities were described which include improvements to orientation and circulation by shortening the distance of some routes. Improvements to wayfinding at the north and west entrances were described. An Arrival Zone to the southwest corner of the garage would accommodate visitors arriving on foot, bicycle, and by bus. A Gathering Zone would serve as an orientation area for visitors where ticket sales, membership and other services would be available. The west plaza area, where visitors enter the Zoo perimeter, would provide visitor assistance, restrooms and the Zoo store.

The landscape architect for the project discussed efforts to seek more than just screening, but to let existing trees soften the building. The trees are close to 50 to 60 ft. high; the garage would be 35 ft. high. In addition, low plants will be used near walkways.

Comments that came out of recent community open house meetings were discussed. These included traffic and circulation on Phinney, 59th Street, and the 57th Street underpass route. Also, impacts on the meadow; noise from cars using the garage ramp; and concerns about height and views.

Approximately 20 community members attended the Commission meeting, most of whom chose to make public comments.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Designers seem to not be adhering to the original idea of hiding the garage as much as possible – to hide it, not make it pretty.
- Are any traffic improvements planned at the new entry?
    - That will be studied in the SEPA process, signaled access is most likely
- Is the west plaza able to exist independent of this project? The two seem to be integral to one another.
    - The plaza is entirely unfunded at this time, but it is in the Capital Improvement Plan, so fundraising will start.
- Flat floor of garage makes sense
- North side/face will be hard to disguise
- Design should be both minimal and well designed – the right balance has been struck
- Elevated core should not be celebrated, the southwest corner is not yet resolved
- Appreciate the berms, like earlier ideas with even more of it. Over time, the building will blend into the landscape
- See opportunity to consider future use of existing parking sites elsewhere in the Zoo for other purposes if the garage will serve all future parking needs.
- Staging of west plaza needs to be revisited, build out now to make it work over time
- Do not understand why the garage cannot be built into site more
- Cannot support, in principle, as the Zoo should be a sanctuary from cars. But does find the designers doing as good a job as possible, intelligently handled. Still concerned about the impact on the meadow.
- Non-building approach needs to be pushed further
- Materials are inappropriate, punched metal is more nautical than suitable for a zoo

- Seattle Center Garage is still a good model offering a hybrid scheme and above/below meadow grade and one lower in scale, more appropriate to urban conditions
- This is not residential architecture but rather a Zoo design.
- The architecture is nicely done, but this is not the right place for it, it is a place for a non-building. Concerned about the future event center. Suggest Council find the funding to do it right, more appropriately for the urban condition of the neighborhood. The proposed design does nothing for the urban context.
- Regardless of how it is done, it is going to set a direction for future development. Would like to see parking replaced elsewhere in the Zoo, with something else other than parking.
- Strikes a good balance between design and landscape buffer
- Supports design and finds approaching it as a 4-sided project makes sense. It is still in schematic design stage, willing to accept that design intentions are good and refinements will continue.
- East side/elevation is still unresolved
- North façade needs new look

Public Comments

Scott Ringgold of DPD stated that the SEPA process is part of the MUP process. The applicant has not yet filed a MUP as is too early in the process.

Karen Jones, Zoo neighbor, predicts 50 years from now no animal can use the last flat spot left in the park, which is where the garage would be built.

Tom Veith of Wallingford, expressed concern with the impacts of traffic generation and the building on the Zoo. He suggests the garage be built in stages, so the success of it could be gradually assessed. Alternatively he suggests it be built underground.

Annie Davis, Zoo neighbor, commented that she did not see animals immediately upon entering the Zoo.

John Jeffcott, Zoo neighbor, believes the garage plan is flawed and that adequate parking exists. He objects to the manner in which things have been done – neighbors were told one thing, yet the team did another.

Irene Wall, Zoo neighbor, believes the task before the designers is impossible. A 700-car garage does not belong in what is being called a temperate forest. She urged the Commission to say “no” to the garage because sometimes that is necessary, even in Seattle – when a project is inappropriate. She also commented that the garage will be painfully visible from the North Meadow, which at least one Commissioner has noted. The landscape design shown focuses on mitigating the visual impact from Phinney Avenue, and while this is important, protecting the character of the park and North Meadow is more important and not addressed in the design of the garage.

Susan Wagner, Phinney Ridge resident, feels the proposed garage is much larger than it should be as it takes much too much green space. She compared the park to Golden Gate and Central Parks.

Paul Andrews, of Phinney EcoVillage, objects to the size and bulk of the garage structure, especially in an Olmsted park. He stated that there is space dispersed throughout the park that could provide parking. He believes the site as proposed would be difficult for people to find.

Craig Fryle objects to the garage. He provided handouts which were distributed to the Commission.

John Barber objects to the garage. He reminded the Commission of the aesthetic and recreational values of a major Olmsted park.

Esther Barber, citizen, questions how cars will get in/out of the west garage. She urged the Commission not to approve the plan until the issue of traffic congestion is addressed, as the underlying assumptions are wrong.

Jim Webb, Zoo neighbor, objects to the garage site and predicts significant traffic congestion.

Diane Duthweiler, of Save Our Zoo, urged the Commission to consider the bulk and size of the garage, which she believes is too big.

Edward Duthweiler, citizen, stated he is pleased with the process but object to the garage site. He feels there are alternatives worth consideration.

Corey Satten, Zoo neighbor, believes the plan is not in harmony with the Jones and Jones plan; is much larger than it needs to be, is a desecration of the park and would be bad for the city, the Zoo, and the neighborhood.