Seattle design Commission

# APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

August 6, 2015

# Seattle Arena

**Edward B. Murray**
Mayor

**Diane Sugimura**
Director, DPD

**Shannon Loew**, Chair

**Ellen Sollod**, Vice Chair

**Brodie Bain**

**Lee Copeland**

**Thaddeus Egging**

**Rachel Gleeson**

**Grant Hromas**

**Martin Regge**

**John Savo**

**Ross Tilghman**

**Michael Jenkins**
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## Commissioners Present

Ellen Sollod, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Thaddeus Egging
Rachel Gleeson
Grant Hromas
Martin Regge
John Savo

## Commissioners Excused

Shannon Loew, Chair
Ross Tilghman

## Project Description

The petitioner proposes to vacate Occidental Ave S between S Massachusetts St and S Holgate St in the SoDo neighborhood to facilitate development of a 750,000-square-foot, 18,000-20,000-seat multi-purpose arena for NBA basketball, NHL hockey, other sporting events, concerts, and shows.

The project site is bounded by S Massachusetts St to the north, 1st Ave S to the west, S Holgate St to the south, and the BNSF Railway right-of-way to the east. The vacation of Occidental Ave S would increase the developable area of the project site by roughly 17.5%. The proposed development includes a plaza space at the northwest corner of the site and widened sidewalks along 1st Ave S and S Holgate St.

## Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) second review of the proposed public benefit package. On June 18, 2015 the SDC provided initial feedback on the Public Benefit package. Because of the scope and complexity of the project and proposed street vacation, coupled with the City's ongoing review of mitigation required for permitting of the Arena, an action on the proposed public benefit package was not taken at this meeting.

## Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

**August 6, 2015**
**9:00 – 11:30 am**

**Type** Street Vacation

**Phase** Public Benefit

**Location** Full block bounded by S Massachusetts St, 1st Ave S, S Holgate St, and the BNSF Railway right-of-way

**Previous Reviews**
12/6/12, 1/17/13, 4/4/13, 5/2/13, 11/7/13, 4/16/15, 5/21/15, 6/18/15

**Presenters**

**Mark Brands**
Site Workshop

**Cale Doornbos**
HOK

**Anton Foss**
HOK

**Brook Jacksha**
Magnusson Klemencic Associates

**Jack McCullough**
McCullough Hill Leary, PS

**Attendees**

**Tom Backer**
Washington State Major League Baseball Stadium Public Facilities District

**Beverly Barnett**
SDOT

**Lynn Claudon**
Lynn Claudon Consulting

**Chris Eaves**
SDOT

**Dan Eder**
Council Central Staff

**Mike Fleming**
Resident

**Melody McCutcheon**
Hillis Clark Martin & Peterson, P.S.

**Zach Mendelsohn**
Magnusson Klemencic Associates

**Garry Papers**
DPD

**Norie Sato**
Sato Services

**John Shaw**
DPD

**Bryan Stevens**
DPD

**Mike Swenson**
Transpo Group

**Lish Whitson**
Council Central Staff

**Ruri Yampolsky**
Office of Arts & Culture

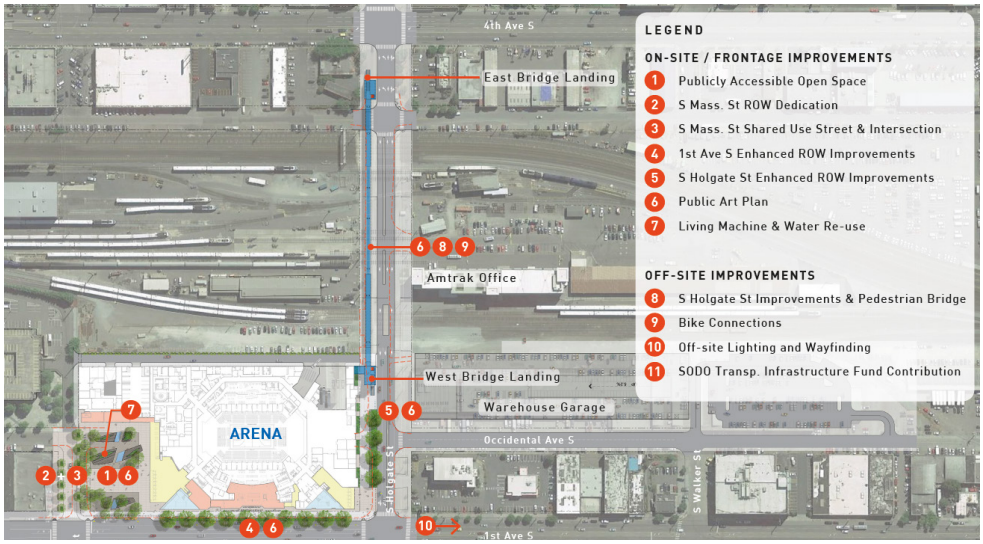


***Figure 1.*** *Proposed public benefit package*

## Summary of Presentation

Jack McCullough introduced the presentation, which is available on the Design Commission website. Mark Brands presented the proposed public benefits broken down into seven categories, as follows. Figure 1 represents the proposed public benefit package.

### Open Space and Living Machine

Mr. Brands explained aspects of the open space plaza at the northwest portion of the site. The open space plaza itself is not considered public benefit; the programming of the plaza and the proposed living machine are proposed as public benefit. He provided an overview of how the design of the plaza had been modified since the last meeting in order to support its role as a public benefit feature, *as seen in figure 2*. One such addition included designation of public restrooms in the building adjacent to the ticketing office. He also described the Living Machine and its role in providing ecological function through the recycling of gray and black water generated by the Arena. Mr. Brands described how additional water features in the plaza, which would be expressed as play elements, and a large art piece would be a further amenity in the Plaza. In response to the SDC request to provide more information on programming of the open space, Mr. Brands also responded to previous direction by the SDC

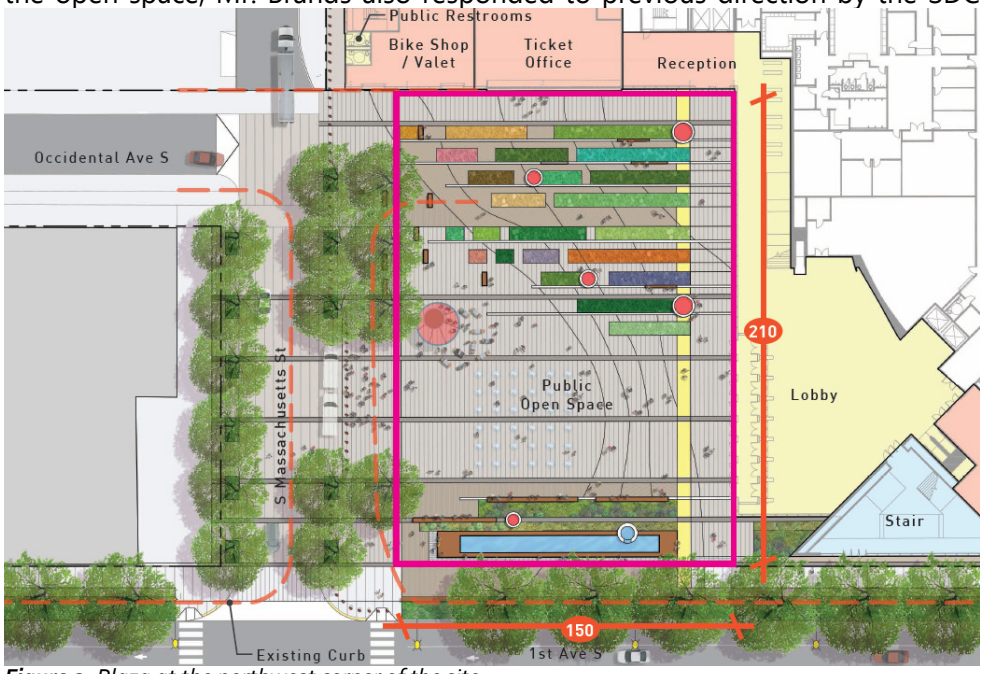


***Figure 2.*** *Plaza at the northwest corner of the site*

concerning plaza programming; he reported that the project team had done research and would anticipate pursuing a partner to do programming once the project had advanced further.

**S Massachusetts St Right of way Way (ROW) Dedication & Festival Street**

A conceptual design of S Massachusetts St between 1st Ave S and Occidental Ave S was presented. Mr. Brands explained this would be designed as a curbless street in order to accommodate for customary industrial use as well as an extension of the plaza at times.

**1st Ave S Enhanced ROW Improvements**

In response to early SDC input, and after consulting with SDOT, the designers moved the curb of 1st Ave S abutting their site, and the portion to the north of the project site, approximately 9 feet outward to widen the sidewalk zone. Mr. Brands described the system of swales included in the streetscape as both landscape and stormwater management. The swales would treat surface water from the street in a manner that would exceed code requirements. He also provided information on the seat wall proposed both as a public amenity and in its role as enhanced security for the facility from automobiles that could strike the facility from 1st Avenue S. *See figure 3 for more detail.*

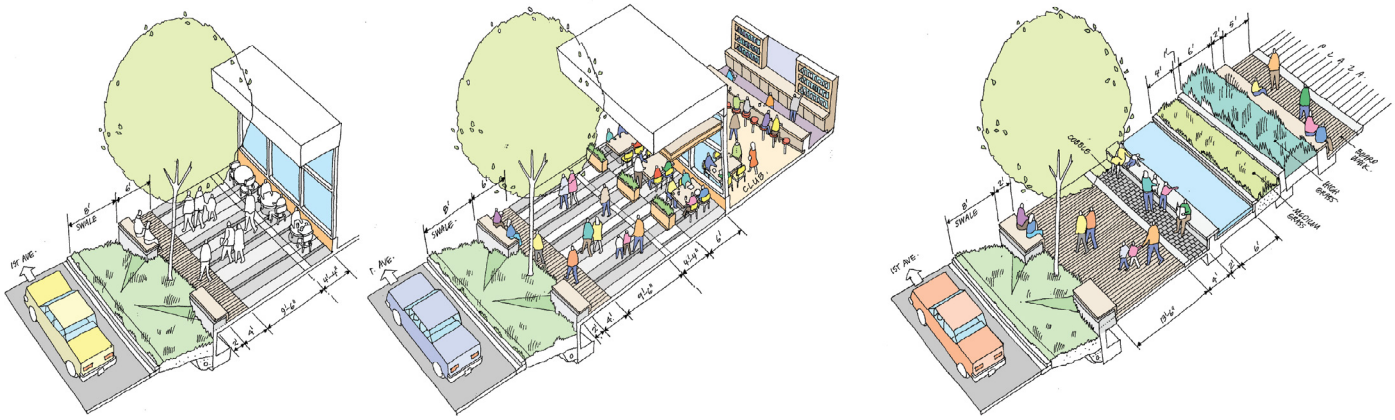

***Figure 3.*** *Proposed sidewalk zones and vegetated swales along 1st Ave. S.*

**S Holgate St Enhanced ROW Improvements and Pedestrian Bridge**

Mr. Brands presented improvements to the Holgate and pedestrian bridge design, *as seen in figure 4*. He reported that coordination with SDOT was ongoing related to the details for this ROW. Enhanced ROW improvements are planned on the north and south sides of the road in the block between 1st Ave S and the railroad ROW. The pedestrian bridge is proposed to extend above S Holgate between 1st Ave S to 3rd Ave S. Ramps and stairs would be provided at each end; no elevators are proposed. A direct connection into the first floor level of the arena is planned. The bridge design assumes the use of a truss bridge system, with specific design details to be developed with SDOT. The intention is to do an artistic bridge such as the Amgen bridge or the one at the Museum of Flight.

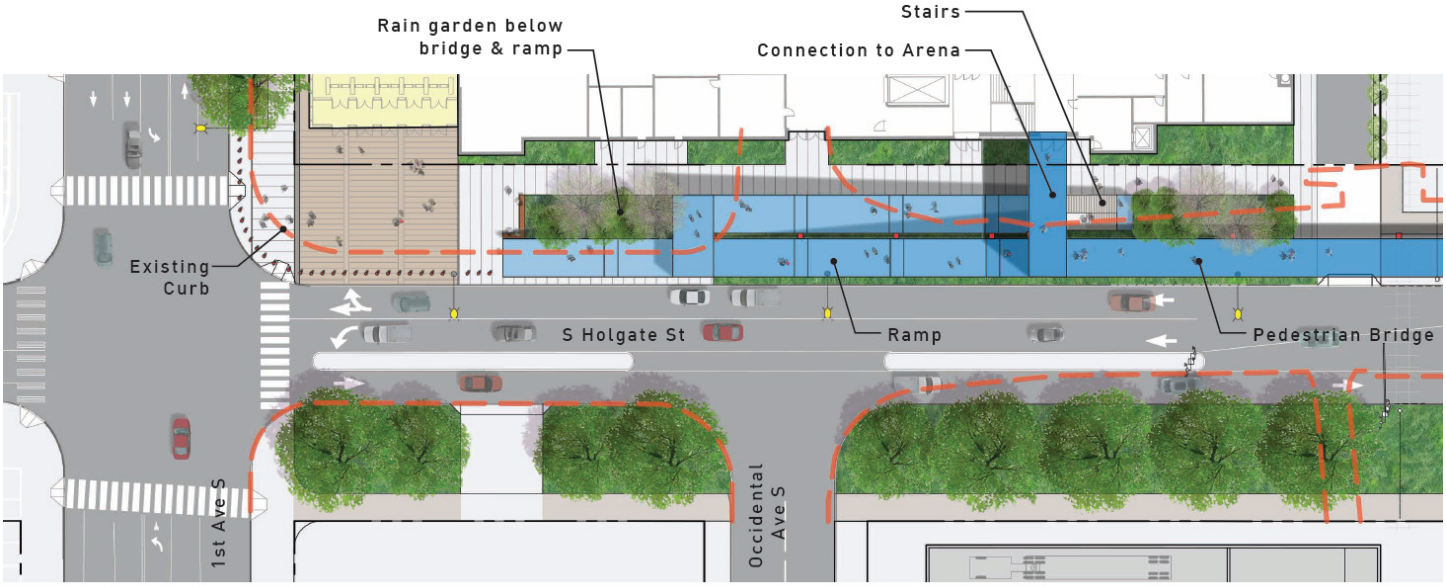


***Figure 4.*** *S. Holgate St. ROW improvements and pedestrian bridge location*

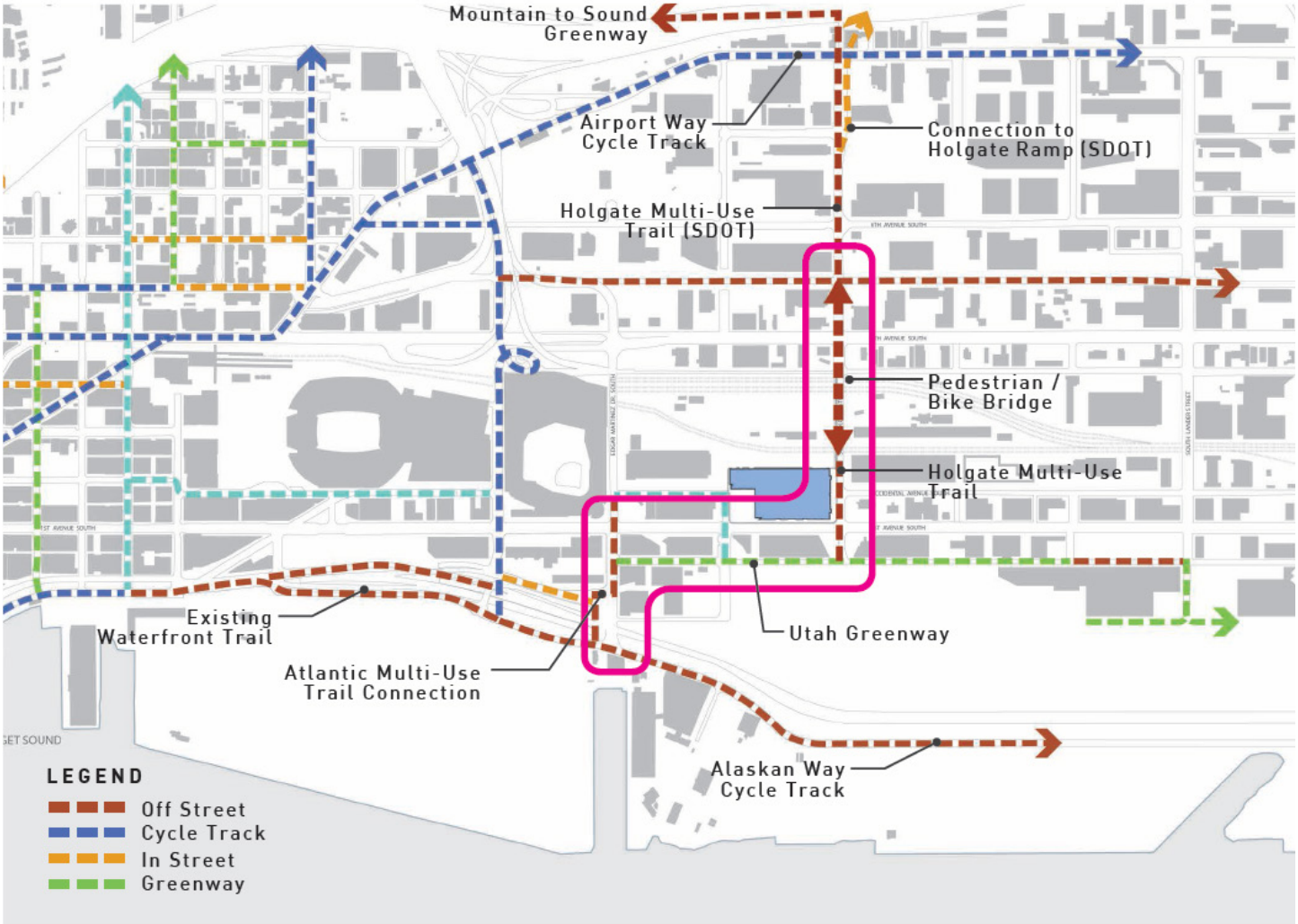


***Figure 5.*** *Proposed bicycle improvements*

**Art Program**

A draft art program was presented. It listed the budget for the program as 1% of the project budget. Mr. Brands explained that the Art plan would be developed with enough detail to be part of the vacation decision by the Council. The intent for the art was to integrate it into the project, making it part of the living machine, facades, temporary events, etc. The focus would not be on sports.

**Bike Improvements**

Diagrammatic plans were presented for providing bike infrastructure on Holgate, Utah, and Edgar Martinez Way. The idea was to link to the Mountains to Sound Trail as well as providing bike trails as part of the viaduct replacement project. *See figure 5 for more detail.*

**Off Site Wayfinding**

Mr. Brands presented plans for additional wayfinding signage in the greater stadium area. He explained that after analyzing the area the team and SDOT recognized that signage and lighting was already provided in most places near the existing stadiums. There was a need for wayfinding south of Edgar Martinez Way. The proposal would focus on extending wayfinding infrastructure south to S Lander St with several signs and kiosks pointing to transit. *See figure 6 for more detail.*

## Agency Comments

**Beverly Barnett**, SDOT, stated that it was still unknown what mitigation would be required and as such the adequacy of the public benefit could not be determined. In addition, a higher level of detail would need to be provided on the public benefits items to make any conclusions. She explained that the loss of public trust function must be considered along with how well impacts were mitigated, and that both would play into the adequacy of the public benefit. She commented on each public benefit items:

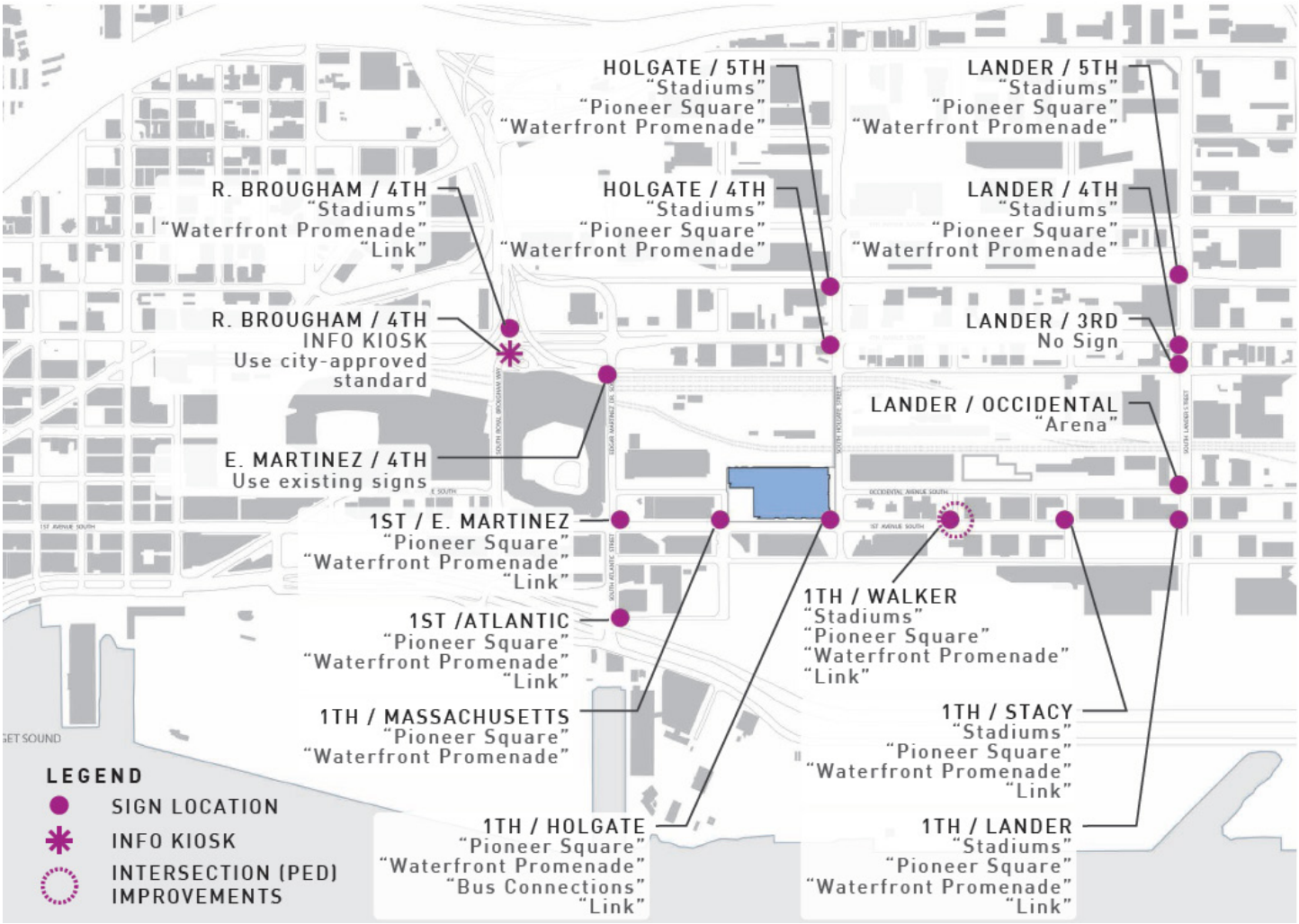


***Figure 6.*** Proposed off-site wayfinding

1. Publicly accessible open space – It is unclear if the plaza can be considered public benefit at all because the DRB considers it a component of the design they are reviewing. Areas for crowd control, entry areas, sidewalk cafes etc. would need to be taken out of the equation. Concerning the Living Machine it appears this is beyond the state of the art sustainable features that would otherwise be expected.
2. Massachusetts St - Dedications are transportation infrastructure basics. Festival streets are an acceptable public benefit, but the applicant must consider other users of street in the neighborhood and avoid conflicts.
3. 1st Ave – Providing improvements based on City plans is laudable, especially if they extend beyond site.
4. Holgate – Remember that the nature of Holgate is different between 1st and 4th than it is east of there. Think about what the public needs. The pedestrian bridge is mitigation given rail lines. It must meet standards. If art is provided beyond that base design that may be considered public benefit.
5. Art Program – The program must provide enough information that the scale of contribution to the public benefit package can be determined and it can be enforced.
6. Bike Facilities – Specific information must be provided as to what is being proposed.
7. Wayfinding – Specifics must be worked out before it can be accepted as public benefit.

**Chris Eaves,** SDOT Traffic Operations reported that he was glad to be working closely early on with the project designers on solutions for the pedestrian bridge and bike infrastructure. Details still needed to be worked out for connecting to the portside trail, among other things. Also, SDOT was considering possible impacts of a festival street on the operations of S Massachusetts.

**John Shaw**, DPD, commented that the project would be returning to the DRB for recommendations on September 1, 2015. He explained that the plaza was a central component in meeting the design guidelines. He noted that the board hadn't seen the design since the Living Machine was added and would be taking it under consideration.

**Ruri Yampolsky**, Office of Arts and Culture, commended the team for bringing Norie Sato as an artist to the team because of her broad knowledge of the public art process. She explained that OACA includes soft costs in the 1% for art calculation.

## Public Comments

**Melody McCutcheon**, Hills Clark Martin & Peterson, representing the Mariners, questioned the appropriateness of S Massachusetts St as the location for a festival street given its heavy use by trucks on non-game days for loading. While the sidewalks on Massachusetts might be seen as a public benefit, the roadway is heavily used so considering pedestrian use of it a benefit would be to the detriment of the stadiums who use it.

**Mike Fleming**, community member from Redmond, commented that this location was optimal for another stadium because of its proximity to transit. He expressed a preference for the team to be in Seattle over it being the Tukwila Sonics.

## Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the public benefit items in the order they were presented and as they were grouped:

1. Publicly Accessible Open Space and Living Machine

   Commissioners commented that the overall design had improved significantly since it was first presented as a grade separated space. The SDC supported the concept of a Living Machine as a strong central programming element. Provisions of restrooms were noted very positively. The Commission reiterated how important programming would be for a plaza at this location, given the low level of pedestrian activity in the immediate area. The SDC was concerned that any programming proposals include events that can draw on local and regional populations. A need for more detail on programming was expressed, both for the Living Machine and for the regional programming.

2. S Massachusetts St ROW Dedication and Festival Street

   While the Commissioners appreciated the ROW realignment of S Massachusetts, they noted that vacation policies do not allow for street realignments and dedications as public benefit when they are mitigation items. They believed the festival street was a question of semantics and made clear that they expect the function of the road for trucks to be maintained. The SDC supported the use of special paving to extend the plaza visually, but that it not preclude traffic operations as needed in the area.

3. 1st Ave S ROW Improvements

   The Commissioners discussed extending the special paving and swales north to the 1st Ave frontage of the block north of Massachusetts. While some of the commissioners questioned the need to extend the paving and swale beyond the Arena site, others felt it would contribute to a special stadium district streetscape. Ultimately, the Commission agreed it was a public benefit to provide street improvements along that block. All appreciated the value of treating stormwater from the street, something not required by code. It was also mentioned that extending the seating wall/safety barrier on the block to the north would be a positive for the overall design.

4. S Holgate St ROW Improvements and Pedestrian Bridge

   The Commissioners described the pedestrian bridge as an important structure because of its gateway and connecting functions and its role in enhancing the overall design of the south side of the Arena because the pedestrian bridge is required mitigation, the Commissioners spoke about the need for special architecture and art to make a public benefit contribution. The commissioners struggled with the question of how distinction between public benefit could be provided for the vacation and the skybridge permit; the skybridge will need a separate SDC approval.

5. Public Art Plan

   The Commissioners expressed enthusiasm for the idea of providing art as public benefit. They appreciated that ArenaCo engaged an experienced public artist with broad experience. Commissioners had questions about how the proposed art plan would be managed, how art would be selected, and who would influence choices that would affect how the value to the public of the art. Areas of concern about the proposal included:

   - How digital art might move into the realm of advertising,
   - that art on the turbine would be redundant,
   - that art inside the building would not be perceived by the public outside the building, and
   - that functional items designed by artists might not be optimal functionally

   Commissioners asked that the calculation of what is being offered as public benefit be clear, and that the plan spell out clear implementation. They questioned whether the amount was sufficient within the overall public benefit package.

6. Bike Facilities

   The Commissioners saw this as a valuable public benefit. They expressed a need to see specifics on what could be built.

7. Off-Site Wayfinding

   This public benefit item was seen as positive. Again, Commissioners wanted to see more specifics on what could actually count as public benefit and what would be required as mitigation.

## Action

The SDC thanked the project team for the presentation of the public benefit items of the Arena street vacation.

The SDC did not vote on the Public Benefit proposal. A decision was postponed so that additional information can be developed on the public benefit items, and so that there is more clarity on the mitigation items of the Environmental Review. The following recommendations were provided:

1. Provide a more developed programming strategy for the plaza. Also, present more information on the public restrooms and water features that are proposed.
2. Emphasize the demonstration and educational value of the Living Machine public benefit item.
3. Provide clarity with the terminology used for the special treatment of Massachusetts St. Provide additional information on vehicular and non-vehicular uses of the street and timing of these.
4. Extend the enhanced ROW improvements proposed in 1st Ave along the Arena site to the block north of Massachusetts.
5. Clarify the extent of ROW improvements to Holgate.
6. The pedestrian bridge as such is a mitigation item and is not a vacation public benefit item. If the applicant would like enhancements to the bridge considered as public benefit, the Commission recommends that an artist be a member of the bridge design team. The expectation would be to develop an iconic element in the neighborhood. Provide more information on the character of the bridge and its role as gateway. Give an indication of the bridge type and level of finishes. Lighting and options for art integration should be provided. Provide clarity on the funding and design relationship of this art to the art in the art program, if the two are separate.
7. Increase the level of financial commitment to the art plan and provide a more detailed plan. Provide information on how the funding amount will be calculated, if it is a percentage.
8. Provide more detailed information on the bike facilities that are proposed, including their monetary value. Consider the industrial uses in the area and potential bike-truck conflicts. Consider how this piece connects to the waterfront trails.
9. Illustrate the extent of the area where wayfinding improvements will be provided that are being proposed as public benefit.