Seattle design Commission

APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Mike McGinn
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

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Joan Nieman
Administrative staff

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November 7, 2013
Convened 8:30 am
Adjourned 4:30 pm

Projects Reviewed
Arena vacation
Denny Substation
LRRP Northgate art

Commissioners Present
Tom Nelson, Chair
Osama Quotah, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain (arrived at 9:30 am)
Megan Groth
Shannon Loew (arrived at 9:45 am)
Ellen Sollod

Commissioners Excused
Bernie Alonzo
Martin Regge
Laurel Kunkler

Unconfirmed Commissioner Present
Ross Tilghman

Staff Present
Michael Jenkins
Valerie Kinast
Joan Nieman

November 7, 2013	**Project:**	**Arena**	
9:30 am – 12:00 pm	**Review Type:**	Vacation	
	Phase:	Urban Design Merit	
	Previous Reviews:	1/17/13; 4/4/13; 5/2/2013	
	Presenters:	Anton Foss	360 Architecture
		Barbara Swift	Swift Company
		Brook Jacksha	Magnusson Klemencic
		Jack McCullough	McCullough Hill, PS
	Attendees:	Beverly Barnett	SDOT
		Brad Tong	SOJ
		Bryan Stevens	DPD
		Cale Doornbos	360 Architects
		Jessica Clawson	McCullough Hill, PS
		John Shaw	DPD
		Josh Brower	Seattle Planning Commissioner
		Katy Chaney	URS Corporation
		Kurt Gahnberg	Transpo Group
		Melody McCutcheon	HCMP
		Moira Gray	SDOT
		Nathan Torgelson	FAS
		Susan Ranf	Seattle Mariners
		Tom Backer	Ballpark PFD
		Zach Mendelsohn	Magnusson Klemencic

Recusals and Disclosures
There were no recusals or disclosures.

Purpose of Review
The purpose of this meeting was to review for the third time the urban design merit of the Arena and to preview the public benefit. At the previous review on May 2, 2013, the approval for urban design merit was postponed until a greater level of information was available for the Commissioners. It was anticipated that the public benefit would be reviewed at a future meeting. Approval of urban design merit and the public benefit package of the vacation result in the Design Commission recommending approval of the vacation to the SDOT director. The ultimate decision to approve the vacation lies with the City Council.

Summary of Proposal
The applicant is requesting the vacation of 23,531 square feet of Occidental Ave S between S Holgate and S Massachusetts Streets in order to permit the future construction of an approximately 725,000-square-foot, 18,000-20,000-seat private spectator sports facility called the Seattle Arena. The land is bounded by S Holgate St, S Massachusetts St, 1st Ave S, and the BNSF railroad tracks.

Since the last review on May 2, 2013, the team is proposing to change the facility to be fully above ground due to the high water table in SODO. Service and loading facilities will be located at grade with entry from the access road. The event level and plaza will be at grade, and there will be approximately 100 staff parking spaces onsite.

The design is based upon a contextual, perforated wrapper. It may include Occidental S. to the north of the arena as a festival street. The northern entry of the arena and the associated plaza may be covered with a glazed canopy. The street along 1st Ave features retail and club restaurants whose location and number will be determined by the Arena's dimensions. The design also includes a practice facility at the northeast corner of the site. At present, there are no plans for structured parking; existing structures and nearby lots will absorb most of the need for parking. The full extent of the need and location for parking will be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). On game days, 13,000 patrons are expected to arrive from the north, 2,400 from the south, and 2,400 from the east across the railroad tracks. These estimates are based upon existing use of light rail, not projections based upon light rail's expansion.

The design of the Seattle arena's public realm includes:

1. 16-30' sidewalks along Holgate Ave S
2. 16-24' sidewalks along 1st Ave
3. 120' x 170' at-grade plaza with an entry to the arena in the northwest part of the site
4. 140' x 180' area for stairs which lead from S Massachusetts St and Occidental Ave S to the arena's main entry
5. 140' x 190' elevated terrace located to the east of the entrance stairs.

Landscaping and furnishings include:

1. Large 40' street trees, rain gardens, streetscape planting, seating stoops, lean rails, and bicycle racks as well as entrances to retail along 1st Ave
2. Small 20' tree plantings, porous paving, and water features in the at-grade and elevated plazas
3. Columnar 40' street trees and a green wall with upper level terraces on S Holgate St.

The proposed public benefit package consists of:

1. A publically accessible private plaza on the site north of the stadium building
2. A publically accessible off-site private plaza, north of S Massachusetts St
3. Elevated view decks
4. Two publically accessible basketball half-courts
5. Increased building setbacks and sidewalk widths

Summary of Presentation

Jack McCullough, McCullough Hill PS, introduced the project and noted that, per Commission recommendation, the wing wall had been removed and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) completed. Anton Foss of 360 Architecture gave the presentation dated November 7, 2013, available on the Design Commission website, and explained how the design had evolved since the last

Commission meeting. Mr. Jacksha noted that the building had been raised due the level of the water table, and as a result the previously below-grade elements are now located at grade.

Summary of Discussion
The Commission acknowledged the challenges of working within an industrial area and was hopeful the Stadium District planning process can provide guidance and direction towards creating a smart pedestrian network. They were appreciative of the deletion of the wing wall, the location of the plaza on one level, improved transparency on 1st Ave S, and the removal of loading from S Holgate St. The Commissioners also focused on the impact of the project on the transportation network. There was interest in bus queuing and loading at the site and concern that pedestrian conflicts had not been fully resolved. The increased sidewalk width was a positive new element.

Agency Comments
There were no agency comments.

Public Comments
Melody McCutcheon stated that she believed the action on the vacation was premature for the following reasons:

1. Since the DEIS lacks critical info, action on the vacation is premature. Ours is 18 pages long. There is a lack of appreciation of the role Occidental in this setting. It is unique and very complicated. There is not enough information on mitigation.
2. The Arena needs a pedestrian overpass over railroad tracks at Holgate. The Mariners have had to provide overpasses. This needs to be part of the project as is central to UDM.
3. Loss of 50 parking spaces.
4. Access road on eastern side is critical to functioning of Mariners. Only southern access to Mariners garage and access functions. 24-7 access critical

Joseph G, Port of Seattle:

1. Caution against underestimating the role of Occidental. Traffic scenarios. Railroad tracks and freeway access create a bottleneck. Occidental helps relieve that pressure. The Safeco Field garage exits onto Occidental. It is critical and necessary.
2. We hate to see a loss of industrial land that cannot relocate elsewhere.

Josh Brower, Seattle Planning Commission, explained who the Commission is, its purpose, and its process. He is on the advisory committee for the Stadium District/Industrial zone. The Commission is a steward of the comprehensive plan. Currently there is an overlay. The Stadium District would create new district, the 39th. One voice. Discussion so far is that the project is moving too quickly. There is no need for urgency and not enough information to make a major zoning change. The freight access study will not be done until 2014; without it there is no holistic view of how freight moves around.

OQ: Can you talk about the process?
Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are considered once a year. Major update occurs every 5 years. Then the amendment goes before PLUS committee for review and input (December).

OQ: Arena in overlay district is compliant, technically, with current zoning. Any input on that?
That district was not intended to accommodate a third stadium. Refer to letter on website.

Action
The Design Commission thanked the team for the presentation of the urban design merit of the Arena proposal to vacate Occidental Ave S between S Massachusetts and S Holgate St. Overall, the Commission applauded the direction of the new design. The removal of the wing wall, the team's decision to raise the stadium out of the ground and locate the plaza on one level, and the area where the stairs empty onto 1st Ave all received praise from the Commission. They also encouraged the team to take the sustainability program even further, particularly around opportunities to use natural lighting and to allow the public to see how the building systems function.

Nevertheless, the Commissioners felt that, due to concerns and insufficient information, they were not prepared to vote on the urban design merit of the Arena at this meeting. Most importantly, it was stated that, until the mitigation measures that come out of the EIS process are known, it would not be clear to what degree the functionality of the grid could be maintained without this segment of Occidental Ave S. This would also stymie assessment of public benefits, because it would not be clear what is "above and beyond" mitigation requirements. The specific concerns were as follows:

1. It is still unknown how the loss of function for vehicles in the area, especially freight, will be mitigated and how much the functionality of the grid will be affected.
2. Information is lacking on a) the number and sizes of buses and other vehicles expected to drop off and pick up patrons from events and b) the location and timing of queuing.
3. Planning for pedestrian queuing and circulation within the overall scheme is insufficient.
4. There is a need to address pedestrian circulation beyond the site, to and from transit and garages, etc.
5. We have not seen a solution for managing conflicts between pedestrians and rail on S Holgate St.
6. There is inadequate information about the vehicular and pedestrian functions of both the north *and* south sides of S Holgate St.
7. It has not been thoroughly explained what the plans are for corporate naming, signage, the video installation, and the integration of these elements into the concept of landscape.
8. The value of the plaza to the public has not been shown. It is shaded and appears to be needed for the functioning of the facility.
9. The interconnectedness of the plaza to the areas beyond the site at the north have not been defined.
10. The retail strategy has not been fully developed.
11. The focus is still on game days and facility users, not the neighborhood and general public in this changing part of town. It is not clear that conditions during all seasons have played out in the design.

The Commission provided the following recommendations as the team moves forward:

1. Allow good design to manage the issues of the mobility networks, not technology. Design good spaces for pedestrians in the right places.

2. The simplified building forms are appreciated, but continue to balance them with interesting elements.
3. Maintain vibrancy along the street and consider ways to increase the level of activity throughout the year.
4. Increase building transparency and activation of the S Holgate St frontage. Allow insight into what's going on in the building. If possible, move back-of-house uses below grade. Consider how the landscape here relates to the landscape concept of the plaza.
5. Begin planning for the art now, when it can still be integrated. Provide information on the art planning to the Commission, preferably in a written document.
6. Consider integrating vertical elements with the ground plane, such as moving the video wall. Consider moving the signage to S Holgate St. Think about disintegrating the massing at the north edge corner to allow light to go through edge of building.
7. Consider exploring solutions to the issue of shading of the plaza. Given the shading and expansive functional needs of the facility here, explore shrinking the plaza and expanding public open space where it would be more valuable, such as along S Holgate St or 1st Ave S, where there is more light.
8. Balance the approach of "building as signage" with the other signage that is planned. Consider the content of the video signage with a mind to times of day and what's going on at the venue and providing public messaging.
9. Consider how the building can carry messaging to the public about the systems and sustainability.
10. The quality and durability of the materials should be considered, in addition to maintenance.