



APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Mike McGinn
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Julie Bassuk
Chair

Mary Fialko

Laurel Kunkler

Shannon Loew

Tom Nelson

Julie Parrett

Osama Quotah

Norie Sato

Donald Vehige

Debbie Harris

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Tom Iurino
Senior Staff

August 16, 2012

Convened 8:30am
Adjourned 4:00pm

Projects Reviewed

Block 93 Alley Vacation
SR 520 I5 to Medina

Commissioners Present

Julie Bassuk, Chair
Shannon Loew
Tom Nelson (excused from 1:00-4:00pm)
Norie Sato
Don Vehige
Osama Quotah
Mary Fialko (excused from 8:30-9:30am)

Commissioners Excused

Debbie Harris
Julie Parrett
Laurel Kunkler

Staff Present

Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino



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August 16, 2012 **Project:** **Block 93 Alley Vacation**
Phase: Alley Vacation
Last Reviewed: Jul 5, 2012; Jun 21, 2012
Presenters: Sharon Coleman, Vulcan
 Dan Simpson, ZGF
 Kris Snider, Hewitt
 Patrick Gordon, ZGF

Attendees: Bertha Martinez, ZGF
 Denise Fong, Candela
 Greg Bell, Vulcan
 Jeff Peterson, Coughlin Porter Lundeen
 Jim Broadlick, Vulcan
 Jim Goodspeed, community member
 Maggie Goedecke, Vulcan
 Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Vulcan

Time: 9:00am-12:00pm

Summary of Project Presentation

The design team presented its revised public benefit package for Block 93. Vulcan is proposing to vacate the northern part of the alley that runs parallel up the center of the block between 9th and Westlake, just south of Mercer St, and rededicating a leg of alley extending it east to Westlake Ave N. The alley vacation allows Vulcan to develop two six-story buildings on the block bordered by Mercer St, 9th Ave N, Westlake Ave N, and Republican St. The buildings, separated by a mid-block pedestrian connection, would include 375,000 square feet of office space and 15,000 square feet of retail space, 546 parking stalls below grade, and an overhead pedestrian connection.

The commission approved the project's urban design merit at a previous meeting and provided comments on the public benefit package presentations. The revised public benefit package consists of:

1. voluntary building setbacks:
 - a. along Westlake Ave N (290 lf; 2,400 sf)
 - b. along Mercer St (185 lf; 1,100 sf)
 - c. along 9th Ave N (315 lf; 2,400 sf)
 - d. along Republican St (74 lf; 450 sf)
 - e. along existing alley (setback 10 ft; 1,100 sf)
2. privately-owned public open space
 - a. plaza along Westlake Ave N (1,800 sf)
 - b. 9th Ave N plaza (2,200 sf)
 - c. "Pedestrian Galleria" connection between Westlake Ave N and 9th Ave N (7,800 sf)
 - d. Public bench seating (250 lf)

- e. Café seating for the general public (1,300 sf)
 - f. Overhead weather protection (7,000 sf)
 - g. Landscaped areas (2,500 sf including 6 trees)
 - h. “Gallery Parasol” transparent cover high above pedestrian connection (TBD artist collaboration)
 - i. Water feature (800 sf)
3. Reduced building scale
 - a. re-orient building to address 410-foot façade along 9th Ave N (two buildings, 240 lf and 100 lf)
 - b. re-orient building to address 290 foot façade along Westlake Ave N (two buildings, 110 lf and 110 lf)
 4. Enhanced right-of-way improvements on the streets around the block, incl. up to 400 sf for bike share facility
 - a. upgraded alley paving at Westlake Ave N. (325 sf)
 - b. street tree upgrades (in caliper) (1 on Mercer St.; 5 on Westlake Ave. N.; 6 on 9th Ave. N.; and 3 on Republican St.)
 - c. planting improvements in right of way (additional trees: 7 on Mercer St.; 5 on Westlake Ave. N.; 10 on 9th Ave. N.; 3 on Republican St.; and 3,700 sf of planting area)
 - d. overhead weather protection canopies along Westlake and portions of Mercer St. (3,100 sf)
 - e. overhead weather protection building overhangs at pedestrian areas on portions of Mercer St and 9th Ave. N. (1,200 sf)
 - f. seating elements in right of way (100 lf)
 - g. pedestrian lighting
 - h. bicycle amenities (20 public bicycle racks; 50 sf bike fix-it station on 9th Ave. N., bike box on 9th Ave. N., 400 sf for future bike share station along 9th Ave. N. to be operated by bike share non-profit)
 - i. pedestrian wayfinding elements (1 on Westlake Ave. N.; 1 on 9th Ave. N.)
 - j. dog bag dispensers (1 on Westlake Ave. N.; 1 on 9th Ave. N.; and 1 on Republican St.)
 5. elimination of vehicular access to Mercer St from alley (1 curb cut eliminated)
 6. reduced number of curb cuts (proposed curb cuts: 0 on Mercer St.; 1 on Westlake Ave. N.; 0 on 9th Ave. N.; and 1 on Republican St.)
 7. streetcar waiting area
 - a. incorporate SLU streetcar station into building at Westlake Ave. N. (NE corner of building)
 - b. provide interactive commuter information center kiosk (1 on Westlake Ave. N.)
 - c. provide seating and weather protection for streetcar patrons (adjacent to building)
 8. sustainability features/meeting
 - a. incorporate green factor into project
 - b. target LEED gold
 - c. incorporate rain gardens at 9th Ave. N. (1,300 sf)

- d. increase public awareness of incorporated sustainable measures through informational materials and/or displays (TBD with artist collaboration)
 - e. green roofs (13,00 sf)
 - f. reclaim rain water for irrigation (100% of annual irrigation needs at grade, 7,500 sf)
9. utilities undergrounding on 9th Ave. N.
10. added retail frontage
- a. enhanced retail/lobby frontage on Westlake Ave. N. which is a class 1 pedestrian street (100% retail/lobby/public)
 - b. added retail frontage on Mercer St. which is a class 2 pedestrian street (44% retail frontage)
 - c. added retail/lobby frontage on 9th Ave. N. (approximately 50% retail/lobby/public)
 - d. added potential for future retail entry on Republican St. which is a class 2 pedestrian street (30% frontage)
 - e. added retail frontage along pedestrian galleria (approximately 75% retail/lobby frontage)

The design team also discussed lighting strategies and the art elements which are not yet developed and are not considered part of the public benefit package. They will soon hire an artist to work with the design team.

Department and public comments

Lyle Bicknell, DPD, written comments: "The Block 93 development presents a number of opportunities to enhance the pedestrian and cycling environment. While it is imperative that the surrounding streets successfully accommodate motor vehicles -- particularly large truck movements -- this must not be done at the cost of a quality public realm. The following design elements will help achieve a balance between mobility and livability.

Pedestrian realm

- Replace the painted 'block out' north of the on - street parking on Ninth Avenue with a wider sidewalk and/or increased landscaping
- Capture all street frontage not needed to accommodate large truck turning movements on Mercer

Intersection of Ninth and Mercer

- If possible include a bike box on northbound Ninth Avenue
- Minimize the curblin radius

Left turn pocket on Ninth

- Analyze the intersection function incorporating the proposed 'mercerc west' improvements
- If the projected volume is sufficiently low, consider reducing the length, or eliminating entirely, the westbound turn pocket
- Use the captured space to provide a landscaped median and/or enhanced bicycle facilities

Streetcar stop

- Removal of the existing shelter will reduce both visual clutter, and physical obstacles in the sidewalk
- The concern that there will be a increased distance for the disabled to move from the covered area to the streetcar is offset by a more generous seating area for the mobility challenged and decreased sidewalk obstacles for the visually impaired
- This solution is consistent with city policy"

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, written comments: The changes shown are positive. However, there are significant concerns about the public benefit as proposed.

- A lively street: one concern with any alley vacation is whether the vacation turns the project “inside out” by putting amenities in the interior rather than the street. The project has been most responsive and most successful in addressing this concern by working on retail and interesting streetscape enhancements around the project. The work being done at the Westlake/Mercer corner to responds more to the streetcar stop. This is a great direction.
- Is the benefit truly a benefit to the public? Does the proposed midblock connection is truly something the public needs, wants or will use; there isn’t any evidence that demonstrates that this has a larger public purpose. Where are people coming from or going to when they use this space? Midblock plazas and connections can be a public benefit (and there are several in S. Lake Union) but there is no evidence that the connection here has value other than to the tenant.
- Overhead connection over public plaza: the biggest concern remains the proposal to has two multistory connections over the public space. The materials proposed for the Design Commission discussion did not include these connections or show the location/height/width/# of stories of the overhead pedestrian connections. These types of aerial connections are disfavored and raise serious questions. The visual impact of the overhead uses act to make the space feel private. The drawing on the 1st page of the proposed Design Commission material is telling. The building looks great, but there is not a space that is considered public or a public benefit.

Molly Franklin, nearby resident: She expressed that the design, especially of the galleria, looks great. She is part of a family with kids and would like to use it. Two things make it appealing: it is protected from traffic, and the micro-eateries will mean more eyes on the space.

Jim Goodspeed, nearby resident: He appreciates the variety of spaces in and around the building. The design gets people away from traffic, and breaks down the block so the building’s not so long. The transparency of the bridges could be improved and more transparent; the bridge connections make them feel like part of the building, even though it is just one floor with glass.

ACTION

The Seattle Design Commission thanked the design team for its detailed work with the commission, for responding to recommendations, and for revising the building program.

The Seattle Design Commission approved, by a vote of 7-0, the Public Benefit Package of the proposal to vacate the northern end of the alley that runs parallel between 9th Ave and Westlake Avenues North., north of Republican and south of Mercer Streets, which includes the following items:

- **Voluntary building setbacks**
- **Privately-owned public open space**
- **Bicycle infrastructure**
- **Enhanced right-of-way improvements**
- **Incorporation of Streetcar station**
- **Sustainable features**
- **Utilities undergrounding**
- **Activated frontage**

and is subject to the conditions bulleted below.

This is the second of two approvals needed to constitute a recommendation to the SDOT Director by the Design Commission to approve the vacation.

A complete, detailed list of the approved public benefits, with the bulleted condition items incorporated, is provided in the Approved Public Benefit Summary below. The Summary should be used as reference as the project is developed. The presentation document, BLOCK 93 Alley Vacation Public

Benefits, August 16, 2012 provides a reference point for the quality of design and materials that is expected.

Conditions

Voluntary building setbacks

- The commission supports the setbacks with one exception: study the corner at 9th and Republican to see how it can be made better for pedestrians. Make it feel more public and improve its scale and proportion. Consider increasing the height of the building overhang, perhaps by removing a portion of the second floor.

Privately-owned public open space

- Blur the boundary between the private open space and the sidewalk by designing the paving in such a way to make the private open space feel more public. Refine the design of the open space using these six elements to make it feel more public: transparency of the buildings framing the space, the sightlines into the space, the transparency of the overhead links, the unique paving that extends to the public sidewalk, the lack of thresholds, and a unique, memorable art experience.
- Prioritize making the bridge as transparent as is shown in the drawings. Because of its likely effect on energy performance, the bridge design is ambitious and you will be under pressure to alter it.
- Consider removing tree at eastern end of the mid-block crossing. It interferes with the sight lines to and through the space.
- Reduce the bulk of the bridge at the western end of the galleria. Consider refining the bridge's placement, scale, dimensions and color. Also be sensitive to the underside of the bridge and its design to make its presence from below as light as possible.

Bicycle infrastructure

- The commission supports and is excited about the bike share and the fixit station.
- Pursue the bicycle box and the bicycle off-ramp on 9th Ave. N.

Enhanced right-of-way improvements

- The commission supports the improvements urged by DPD:
 - include a bicycle box on northbound Ninth Avenue just south of its intersection with Mercer;
 - minimize the curb line radius at 9th and Mercer,
 - replace the painted "block out" north of the on-street parking on Ninth Avenue with a wider sidewalk and/or increased landscaping, and
 - capture all street frontage not needed to accommodate large truck turning movements on Mercer.

Negotiate these improvements with SDOT and the freight mobility community.

- Consider making the docks larger, both in scale and proportion; make them more grand and inviting for pedestrians.

Streetcar station

- The commission supports all aspects of the streetcar station.

Sustainable features

- The commission supports the sustainable features. Share the performance measures and data with the public and the city.

Utilities undergrounding (on 9th Ave. N.)

- **The commission supports the undergrounded utilities.**

Activated frontage

- **The commission supports the activated frontages. Find ways to make the retail bleed a little more on Mercer St. A fairly large amount of lineal feet that is tenant devised space (conference room). The Commission remains concerned about activation along Mercer, and though we are supportive of the changes made thus far, we feel this is still an area that needs more work to create the lively street front Mercer deserves.**

Seattle Design Commission

Block 93 Alley Vacation

August 16, 2012

Summary of Approved Public Benefits

1. Voluntary building setbacks

Voluntary building setbacks will be provided along:

Westlake Ave N, approximately 290 lf; 2,400 sf;

Mercer St, approximately 185 lf; 1,100 sf;

9th Ave N, approximately 315 lf; 2,400 sf;

The quality of the open space that is created by setting back the buildings more than required at the ground level is essential in providing a true benefit to the public. To make the setback areas more inviting to the public, the proportions and scale of the open space at 9th Ave N and Republican St, and the dock and rain capture element along 9th Ave N will be further developed from what was presented.

2. Privately-owned public open space

The following privately owned public open spaces will be provided:

Plaza off of Westlake Ave N, south of Mercer St., approximately 1,800 sf. The presented design will be further developed to blur the boundary between the private open space and the public sidewalk by designing the paving in such a way to make the private open space feel more public.

Plaza off of 9th Ave N, south of Mercer St., approximately 2,200 sf. The presented design will be further developed to blur the boundary between the private open space and the public sidewalk by designing the paving in such a way to make the private open space feel more public.

East-west pedestrian connection through the block, "Pedestrian Galleria", approximately 7,800 sf. The presented design will be further developed to blur the boundary between the private open space and the public sidewalk by designing the paving in such a way to make the private open space feel more public.

Special attention will be given to ensuring that the overhead building connection above this open space is as transparent as is shown in the presentation drawings. At the western end of the Pedestrian Galleria the design of the building connection will be refined to reduce bulk and perception, and to help make the spaces along the Galleria work as a whole.

Elements of the open space that will be provided for the public include:

Bench seating, approximately 250 lf;

Café seating, approximately 1,300 sf;

Overhead weather protection, approximately 7,000 sf;

Landscaped areas, approximately 2,500 sf, including six trees;

Gallery parasol, which will be designed in collaboration with an artist;

Water feature, approximately 800 sf.

3. Bicycle amenities

The following bicycle improvements will be provided:

- 20 public bicycle racks;
- 50 sf area on private property for fix-it station along 9th Ave. N;
- Bike box on 9th Ave. N;
- Up to 400 sf on private property for future bike share station along 9th Ave. N., which will be managed by a bike share organization;
- Bicycle off-ramp leading from 9th Ave. N. to access new bike stations;

4. Enhanced right-of-way improvements

Improvements will be provided in the right-of-way to create an enhanced pedestrian experience.

Providing a good streetscape experience for the public will depend not only on the amenities, but also on maximizing and strategically locating active uses within the buildings along the streets (see item 8).

The improvements that will be provided include:

Plantings in right of way:

- Approximately 3,700 sf of planting area;
- Additional trees: Seven on Mercer St., ten on 9th Ave. N., three on Republican St., and five on Westlake Ave. N., although the Commission suggested removing a tree at the eastern end of the Pedestrian Galleria, in the ROW on Westlake;
- Street tree upgrades, increased caliper: one on Mercer St., five on Westlake Ave. N., six on 9th Ave. N., and three on Republican St.;

Canopies along Westlake Ave N and portions of Mercer St., approximately 3,100 sf;

Overhead weather protection building overhangs at pedestrian areas along portions of Mercer St and 9th Ave. N., approximately 1,200 sf;

Street furnishings, including:

- Seating elements in right of way, approximately 100 lf;
- pedestrian lighting;
- pedestrian wayfinding elements, one on Westlake Ave. N., and one on 9th Ave. N.;
- Dog bag dispensers, one each on Westlake Ave. N, 9th Ave. N., and Republican St.;

minimize the curb line radius at 9th Ave N and Mercer St to provide more space for pedestrians to the greatest extent possible allowed by the City.

The proponents will work with SDOT to explore moving curblines to increase pedestrian and bike space as follows:

Replace the painted "block out" north of the on-street parking on Ninth Avenue with a wider sidewalk and/or increased landscaping to the greatest extent possible allowed by the City;

Capture all street frontage not needed to accommodate large truck turning movements on Mercer to the greatest extent possible allowed by the City.

5. Streetcar station improvements

The existing street car stop south of Mercer on the west side of Westlake Ave N will be redesigned and a new facility provided as follows:

SLU streetcar station will be incorporated into building at Westlake Ave. N.;

Interactive commuter information center kiosk will be provided on Westlake Ave. N.;
Seating and weather protection for streetcar patrons will be provided adjacent to building;

6. Sustainability features

The development will provide sustainability features as follows:

- Meet green factor;
- Target LEED gold;
- Rain gardens at 9th Ave. N., approximately, 1,300 sf;
- Informational materials and/or displays, created with artist collaboration;
- Green roofs, approximately 13,00 sf;
- Reclaim rain water for irrigation, 100% of annual irrigation needs at grade, approximately 7,500 sf;
- Share the performance measures and data with the public and the city.

7. Utilities undergrounding in 9th Ave. N.

8. Increased retail frontage

In conjunction with the increased building setbacks and right-of-way improvements, an increased amount of retail will be provided to help create an active public realm, and the proponent will look further for opportunities to located uses at the ground level that provide interest to some degree.

Increased retail frontage will be provided in the following locations as noted:

- Westlake Ave. N., which is a class 1 pedestrian street, 100% retail/lobby/public, above the 75% required by code;
- Mercer St., which is a class 2 pedestrian street, 44% retail frontage, greater than 0% required by code, and more will be targeted, if viable;
- 9th Ave. N., approximately 50% retail/lobby/public, greater than the 0% required by code;
- Potential for future retail entry on Republican St. which is a class 2 pedestrian street, 30% frontage, greater than the 0% required by code;
- Along the pedestrian galleria, approximately 75% retail/lobby frontage, greater than the 0% required by code.