

DRAFT
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor

Samuel Assefa
Director, OPCD

Ross Tilghman, Chair

John Savo, Vice Chair

Justin Clark

Ben de Rubertis

Evan Fowler

Rachel Gleeson

Laura Haddad

Brianna Holan

Mark Johnson

Rick Krochalis

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Aaron Hursey
Planner

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August 2, 2018

Convened 8:30 am

Adjourned 4:30 pm

Projects Reviewed

SCL – Broad Street Substation Vacation

Marion St. Bridge

Commissioners Present

Rachel Gleeson, Acting Chair

Justin Clark

Evan Fowler

Laura Haddad

Mark Johnson

Rick Krochalis

Ross Tilghman

Commissioners Excused

John Savo, Chair

Ben de Rubertis, Vice Chair

Brianna Holan

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins

Valerie Kinast

Aaron Hursey

Juliet Acevedo



August 2, 2018
9:00 – 11: 00 am

Project: SCL – Broad Street Substation Vacation
Type: Street Vacation
Phase: Urban Design Merit & Public Benefit
Previous Reviews: 03/15/18, 04/05/18
Presenters: Mark Brands, SiteWorkshop

Attendees: Beverly Barnett, SDOT
Biruk Belay, Siteworkshop
Matt Boyd, Electric Power Systems
Peter Kitchen, Stepherson Associates
Vivian Liu, SCL
Claire Lloyd, SCL
Shannon Straws, SCL
Tran Tuan, SCL

Recusals and Disclosures:
None

Project Description

The project team is proposing to vacate a portion of the Broad Street right-of-way (ROW) at the corner Harrison St and Taylor Ave to provide improvements for the Broad Street Substation. This section of Broad Street between 5th Ave N and Ninth Ave N was permanently closed in 2014 to allow for additional construction of the Mercer Corridor Project and SR 99 tunnel. The vacation proposal includes the development of the previously closed ROW to house additional equipment for the Broad Street Substation as well as street improvements along Taylor Ave and Thomas St.

Meeting Summary

This is the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) second review of the Seattle City Light (SCL) Broad Street Substation Vacation. The purpose of this meeting was to review the updated urban design merit and public benefit package proposals for the project. The SDC voted, 6-0, to approve the updated urban design merit proposal for the SCL Broad Street Substation Vacation with several recommendations. The SDC then voted, 6-0, to approve the public benefit proposal for the SCL Broad Street Substation Vacation with one condition.

Summary of Presentation on Urban Design Merit

Mark Brands, of SiteWorkshop, presented the urban design merit proposal for the project. The presentation team provided a brief overview of the project proposal, surrounding neighborhood context, and community engagement. The remaining portion of the presentation focused on the updated design proposal for the vacation scenario. The updated design proposal includes a wall, which averages 13' in height and includes solid and transparent sections, along the northwest corner of the site. The solid portion of the wall is located adjacent to the crane tower building. This section of the wall, which does not attach to the crane tower building, is solid in order to meet safety code requirements. The remaining portion of the wall is designed to mimic the existing chain-link/block wall enclosure, and will include a series of solid sections, that are 7' in height, and transparent chain-link fencing. The updated design increases the transparency of the wall at the corner of Harrison St. and Taylor Ave in order to limit the obstruction of views to the Space Needle, Seattle Center, and remaining portion of the Broad St ROW. The vacation proposal will require service access from Harrison St for annual facility maintenance.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, of SDOT, commented that the project team has been very responsive to issues that have been identified during previous meetings. She then stated that the updated design is much improved from the previous design proposal, and now focuses on how the project will fit into the surrounding neighborhood. Ms. Barnett said that she had concerns regarding the visual impact of the enclosure, but feels that the project team has done a good job in meeting their needs while being aware of where they are located. She then stated that the project team has worked with SDOT to see where street improvements can occur, and that she believes the street improvement proposal is feasible.

Public Comments

None

Summary of Discussion on Urban Design Merit

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Circulation
- Open space and landscape
- Views
- Materials, scale, and details
- Utilities

Circulation

The SDC agreed the design proposal provided adequate circulation around the site. Commissioners commended the project team for reducing the width of the access point along Harrison St. Commissioners also acknowledged that the proposed design helped standardize the design of the block that the project site is located on.

Open space and landscape

The SDC agreed the proposed design will improve the area located near the intersection of Harrison St. and Taylor Ave, which will better integrate the site with the surrounding urban context. Commissioners then commended the project team for reducing the overall height and increasing the transparency of the wall, specifically at the northwest corner of the site. The commission also appreciated the addition of a low retaining wall along the corner of the site, which pedestrians can use as seating opportunities.

Views

Although the SDC acknowledged that the proposed wall will have some visual impact, commissioners commended the project team for the continued development the overall wall design. Commissioners agreed the updated design to increase transparency will limited impacts on views.

Materials, scale, and details

The SDC is concerned with the proposed complex materiality of the wall design adjacent to the Crane Building. The commission strongly recommended the project team decide the material of the new wall prior to deciding how to integrate it with the existing wall. Commissioners discouraged the project team from using chain-link fencing along solid sections of the wall, commenting that it is not consistent with the design of the Crane Building.

Commissioners then commended the project team for the overall design updates to the wall. The commission then reiterated their appreciation for the height reduction and increased transparency of the wall. The SDC then recommended the project team use as many sustainable materials as possible during the design and construction of the project.

Utilities

The SDC agreed the increased transparency of the wall design will showcase the importance of utilities and infrastructure within the urban environment. Commissioners stated that the project helps in showing where Seattle City Light is physically present within city limits.

Action – Urban Design Merit

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of the updated urban design merit proposal for the SCL Broad Street Substation Vacation project. Overall, the Commission appreciated the progress made in advancing the design to complement the surrounding neighborhood as well as team’s willingness to improve options for the design of the wall. The SDC voted, 6-0, to approve the urban design merit proposal for the SCL Broad Street Substation Vacation with the following recommendation:

1. Use sustainable materials in the design and construction of the project

Summary of presentation on public benefit

Mark Brands, of SiteWorkshop, presented the public benefit proposal for the project. The proposal includes right-of-way (ROW) improvements along Thomas St, between Taylor Ave and 6th Ave, and Taylor Ave, between Thomas St. and Harrison St. Proposed improvements along Thomas St include a planting strip with street trees and vegetation on the north side of the street as well as a 12-foot wide sidewalk and protected bicycle lanes on both sides of Thomas Street. The proposal will also include benches, tables, and pedestrian lighting on the north side of Thomas St. The proposed design follows guidance from the Thomas Green Street Plan which was adopted by SDOT.

Proposed improvements along Taylor Ave includes an extended curb, 12.5 -foot wide sidewalk, wide planting area with street trees and vegetation, and parallel parking on the east side of the street. The proposal will also include benches, tables, and pedestrian lighting on the east side of Taylor Ave. Due to the limited availability of space beneath Taylor Ave, the project team is unsure about the location, quantity, and type of planting they will be able to use in the planting area along Taylor Ave. The team will conduct further studies to see what is feasible.

Agency comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, commented that the public benefit package proposal is consistent with the scale of the project. Ms. Barnett then stated that, although the project team needs to resolve issues around street tree placement, she thinks the proposal will enhance the overall pedestrian environment for the surrounding area. Ms. Barnett then commented that she would like to see the project team use wayfinding as a way to increase connectivity with other public amenities in the area and to show how site relates to the greater surrounding context.

Public comments

None

Summary of discussion on public benefit

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Pedestrian and bike facilities
- Landscape, lighting, and seating
- Art
- Wayfinding

Pedestrian and bike facilities

Although the SDC agreed with the design of the bike facility, as it has already been established elsewhere along Thomas St, commissioners questioned the use of paint to demarcate a protected bike lane. The SDC then encouraged SDOT to use other materials to create a protected bike lane along the Thomas St. Corridor.

The SDC then commended the project team for proposed pedestrian improvements along Taylor Ave, specifically with the increased sidewalk width and additional vegetation.

Lighting, landscape, seating

The SDC agreed with providing all public benefit elements within the right-of-way. Given the nature of the project, commissioners understood that all enhancements to the right-of-way would serve as the main public benefit proposal, and would not be treated as a secondary element features. Although the SDC acknowledged the potential limitations of providing trees and other vegetation along the southeastern edge of Taylor Ave. commissioners agreed this area should include some type of vegetation if street trees cannot be planted. The commission then discussed the limited detail provided for proposed design elements along Taylor Ave. The SDC agreed that they are comfortable approving a design with limited details because the project team has adequately described how the design will match the existing design of the surrounding area. Commissioners also recognized that SDOT is comfortable with the proposed designs. The SDC then conditioned that the project team return for a subcommittee meeting to review planting strategy along Taylor Ave as well as proposed street furnishing along Taylor Ave and Thomas St.

Art

The SDC commended the project team for coordinating with the artist who commissioned artwork on the adjacent SCL property. Commissioners commented that this project has the ability to showcase infrastructure as art, but expressed disappointment that SCL did not allocate funding for art. Although there is not funding for art, the commission agreed that the project team is thinking about how to incorporate art elements through materials.

Wayfinding

The SDC thought it was appropriate for the project team to wait on wayfinding recommendations from SDOT. Commissioners commended the project team for coordinating with other city departments.

Action – Public Benefit

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of the public benefit package for the SCL Broad Street Substation Vacation project. Overall, the Commission appreciated the careful attention taken to design a better pedestrian environment as well as the project team's willingness to collaborate with other city departments. The SDC voted, 6-0, to approve the public benefit package for the SCL Broad Street Substation Vacation with the following condition:

1. Prior to SDOT's completion of their report on the vacation to City Council the project should return for a subcommittee meeting to review the planting plan and proposed street furniture for Taylor Ave and Thomas St.