

June 2005 Stakeholder Design Workshop Summary

Prepared for:

The Seattle Department of Transportation

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Introduction

The Mercer Corridor Project, led by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), is being conducted to determine transportation improvements along the Mercer Corridor from I-5 to Dexter Avenue. The project's purpose is to improve local safety, access, and circulation for vehicles and pedestrians, accommodate economic growth and neighborhood livability within the South Lake Union urban center, and improve the connection from I-5 to and through South Lake Union.

The City of Seattle has identified a preliminary preferred alternative for the Mercer Corridor. As part of the city's efforts to ensure that the preferred alternative provides a balanced approach to accommodate all modes and is designed in a way that is sensitive to the City and neighborhood vision for South Lake Union, two design workshops were convened to listen to stakeholder ideas and concerns regarding how the Two-way Mercer alternative should "function, look, and feel."

This report summarizes the results of the second design workshop, and includes input on three themes for a design concept for the Mercer Corridor Project. The purpose of the second workshop was to confirm with participants if the three themes accurately reflected the input received on design ideas during the first design workshop and to identify new ideas for the design themes.

Forty-two people, who represent the diverse range of interests within and outside the project area, were invited to attend. Fourteen people attended the workshop.

Participants

The following is a list of the interest groups and business representatives who attended the workshop:

Cascade Neighborhood Council
Center for Wooden Boats
Copiers Northwest
Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board
Seattle Biomedical Research Institute
Seattle Center
Seattle Parks Foundation
Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board
Shurgard
South Lake Union Friends and Neighbors (SLUFAN)
Swartz Brothers Restaurants
Vulcan/Transpo

Workshop Format

The workshop was held on Thursday, June 9, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Center for Wooden Boats at 1010 Valley Street. After a brief welcome, participants were introduced

to the workshop purpose and objectives. Following that, a brief project update was presented. After the update, a more detailed presentation was given on the draft design concept and themes. Following the presentation, attendees were asked to give their input on the following design themes:

- Reflect maritime and industrial history
- Integrate with South Lake Union Park
- Reflect a sustainable grass roots community

The workshop agenda is included in Appendix A of this report.

Input to Design Themes

Meeting attendees were asked to consider the concept and each theme and to provide their input on the following: were comments from the April workshop accurately reflected in the design themes; what they liked about the concept, themes, and why; how the concept or themes should be changed, and why; and if there were new ideas that should be considered. The following section summarizes the comments received at the workshop. The facilitator notes are provided in Appendix B of this report.

Reflecting a maritime and industrial history theme

In general, attendees agreed that their comments from the April 6 workshop were accurately represented in this theme, and that that the South Lake Union area has strong ties to maritime and industrial history. They believed that this theme should be incorporated into the concept's design, and said that:

- Water should be part of the design
- A maritime/industrial interpretative trail should be incorporated into the design
- South Lake Union Park has a maritime theme, which should be enhanced by this project's design

Integrate with the park theme

Attendees believed that their comments from the April 6 workshop were represented in this theme, and thought that this theme should be incorporated into the design concept. Attendees commented that the Mercer Corridor Project should integrate with the park's design particularly on Valley Street. Ideas for incorporating the park into the project's design included:

- Using pocket parks and a trail to "capture" the park feel between Valley and Mercer and make people want to be in the area
- Using the same or similar park materials (pavers, lighting, benches, etc.) on Valley
- Using design (textured pavement, roundabouts, etc.) to slow traffic down

Reflect a sustainable grass roots community theme

Attendees believed that their comments from the April 6 workshop were represented in the description of this theme. However, they did not believe this was a stand alone design theme. They said it should be part of the fabric of the overall design concept, and that sustainability should be built into the other two themes' implementation. Ideas for doing this included:

- Use “grass roots community” as the design’s brand
- Ensure public transit is easy to use and has well-designed facilities
- Use sustainability as a way to get other groups and businesses to contribute to the design (materials donation)
- Use functional art work (water reuse, rain harvesting)

Other comments

Attendees made a number of other comments about the project’s design. The majority of these comments focused on artwork, and how it should be incorporated into the design. Some thought that more emphasis should be put into street trees, inviting streetscapes, and good signage than into grand artwork, especially at the Mercer ramps, where people will be moving at high speeds. Others said:

- Art should be part of the design
- Art and good wayfinding are more important in the neighborhood
- Art could be incorporated into the signage to create recognizable visual cues
- It’s important to remember that Mercer is a connection to other neighborhoods (downtown, Queen Anne, Seattle Center), not just a gateway to South Lake Union

Appendix A – Workshop Agenda

mercercorridorproject

“How should the Mercer Corridor function, look, and feel?”

**Design Workshop
Center for Wooden Boats
June 9, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.**

Agenda

Description: A workshop to introduce design concepts for the preferred alternative that address previous stakeholder input and to continue a design process for the preferred alternative.

Purpose: To provide, discuss, and evaluate design options for the preferred alternative in order to ultimately select a design that is effective and fits into the South Lake Union neighborhood.

<u>Agenda Topic</u>	<u>Presenter(s)</u>	<u>Time</u>
1. Welcome	Eric Tweit	5 mins.
2. Workshop Overview	Chris Hoffman	5 mins.
3. Mercer Project Update	Eric Tweit	20 mins.
4. Design concepts	Darby Watson	20 mins.
• Overview		
• How they were developed		
5. Break		5 mins.
6. Design concepts “walk through”	All	45 mins.
• General comments		
• Pros and cons analysis		
• Suggest refinements and additions		
10. Report out	All	20 mins.



Appendix B – Facilitator Notes

Integrate with the Park Comments

- Integration with the park on Valley Street is critical
- Use pocket parks throughout the project to capture the park theme and make it interesting to walk around
- Pocket park development should begin between Mercer and Valley
- There should be signage on Mercer to direct people to the park
- Graphics/signage will have to be different on Valley and Mercer
- It's positive that Valley will become an extension of the park from an experiential and environmental perspective
- Pocket parks will make walking in the area more pleasurable, softening the area in a way that makes people want to be there
- Use the same or some version of the materials (benches, paving, lighting, etc.) used in the park on Valley (should be related if not exactly the same)
- Traffic on Valley will have to be slowed down (30 mph road) to make it an extension of the park
- Change of texture, or colors, should be used at intersections to make drivers slow down
- Incorporate Terry Street design guidelines, and consider eliminating the curb on Valley
- Could roundabouts be used to slow down traffic at intersections?
- The park and Valley Street should be designed as if they were one project

Reflect a sustainable grass roots community comments

- Brand the design with a sense of community
- Public transportation is a big part of the community: connect area to public transportation (nice bus stops and well-designed transit facilities)
- This theme flows through the other two themes and is not a stand alone theme
- Use sustainability theme as a way to get other groups and organizations to contribute to the design
- Utilize functional sculptures (water reuse piece, rain water harvesting)

Reflect a maritime and industrial history comments

- Expand maritime theme by including ancient mythology (sea serpents, deities, figures from the past that represent maritime theme)
- Figure out how to incorporate water into the design
- Use more water oriented elements
- Incorporate a walking trail that interprets (art, displays) and describes maritime history. Should be a transition from or extension of the park
- There is more of an industrial history in the area than is reflected in the theme as it is now presented
- Somehow highlight mist, fog, water

Other comments

- Still concerned about capacity on Mercer
- The three themes accurately reflect the character of the area
- Consider utility pole lighting that reduces light pollution (check out www.darksky.org for examples)
- Seams of pavement transitions on the streets need to be smooth to accommodate bikes safely (in general make sure textures work for bikes)
- Mercer is a gateway to downtown, not just to South Lake Union
- This is a thru-way, as well as a destination
- Don't need to entice people off Mercer into neighborhood streets, but make it easy to get on and off Mercer
- It would be a waste to put gateway artwork at I-5 off ramp – it is more important to have trees, inviting looking streets, and nice signage
- It is better to spend money on art and wayfinding within the neighborhood
- The design of the street, the streetscape, is what is important at the I-5 offramp
- The art could be in the design, the landscaping, etc.
- Artwork can help with wayfinding by creating recognizable cues (doesn't have to be explicit)
- Use functional elements as art (simple, efficient, functional, finesse)
- Consider using flags as signs