



Seattle Design Commission

Approved

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
September 21 2006**

Gregory J. Nickels,
Mayor

David Spiker
Chair

Pam Beyette

Adam Christiansen

John Hoffman

Karen Kiest

Anindita Mitra

Sheri Olson

Nic Rossouw

Dennis Ryan

Darrell Vange

Guillermo Romano
Executive Director

Layne Cubell,
Senior Staff

Convened: 8:30am

Adjourned: 3:30pm

Projects Reviewed

Northgate Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel – Design Development
Northgate 3rd Avenue NE Street Improvements – Schematic Design
DPD Green Building Team – Staff Briefing
Carr America/Dexter Avenue Development – Street Vacation

Commissioners Present

David Spiker, Chair
Pam Beyette
Adam Christiansen
John Hoffman
Karen Kiest
Anindita Mitra
Nic Rossouw
Dennis Ryan
Darrell Vange

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Layne Cubell
Valerie Felts



Department of Planning and
Development

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21 September 2006 Project: Northgate Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel

Previous Reviews: April 2005, Oct 2005, November 2005,
February 2006

Phase: Design Development

Presenters: Michelle Chen, Office of Policy Management
Miranda Maupin, Seattle Public Utilities
Melanie Davies, SvR Design
Peggy Gaynor, Gaynor, Inc.

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. #169/RS0607)

The Design Commission recommends approval of design development with the following comments:

- **See this project as a tremendous experiment in the public realm. There is a real celebration of water in and of itself and the qualities and opportunities for water treatment at this extremely visible site.**
- **Support all changes, but find the greatest improvement is evidenced in the collaborative work with the ERA Care and Lorig design teams on better site integration.**
- **Urge greater legibility and clearer hierarchy of plant materials from both a security and maintenance point of view. Anticipate team has this idea, but it is not clear in today's presentation.**
- **Commend the choice of site materials and support use of recycled granite curbs.**
- **Encourage team to look at minimizing fences, should not be seen as barricades.**
- **Do more with educational component. For project to be a success in the public eye you need an educational component. Art in and of itself should not do that.**
- **NE and SW corners should be more open than shown in plans**
- **Commission has some concerns about the central art piece, but will relay those to the Public Art Advisory Committee and defer to them.**

Proponents Presentation

City staff provided a general overview and update on recent developments in the Northgate area. Highlights are the recent grand opening of the Northgate library, park, and civic center as well as completion of the first phase of the 5th Avenue NE streetscape. Also, improvements to the Mall are well underway.

Proponents then provided an update on progress with the Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel project. The project is the cornerstone of Thornton Place, a planned mixed-use development which will include residential and commercial

uses, including senior housing led by ERACare and an adjacent retail and market housing complex to be developed by Lorig Associates.

The team addressed concerns identified by the Commission in a February, 2006 review. These were edges, materials, lighting, art, and pedestrian connections surrounding the site.

Guiding the design are goals of improving Thornton Creek water quality, providing pleasing public open space, and stakeholder advice/values. Stakeholder values include moving water throughout the site; aesthetics and safety of open space; pedestrian movement intended to break up the super block – including ADA access through the major pathway; and cost controls.

The project contains an art component consisting of features referencing the water theme located in three locations on the site. Types and placement of trees and plantings were described as were site details of materials, lighting, railing, seating, and paving.

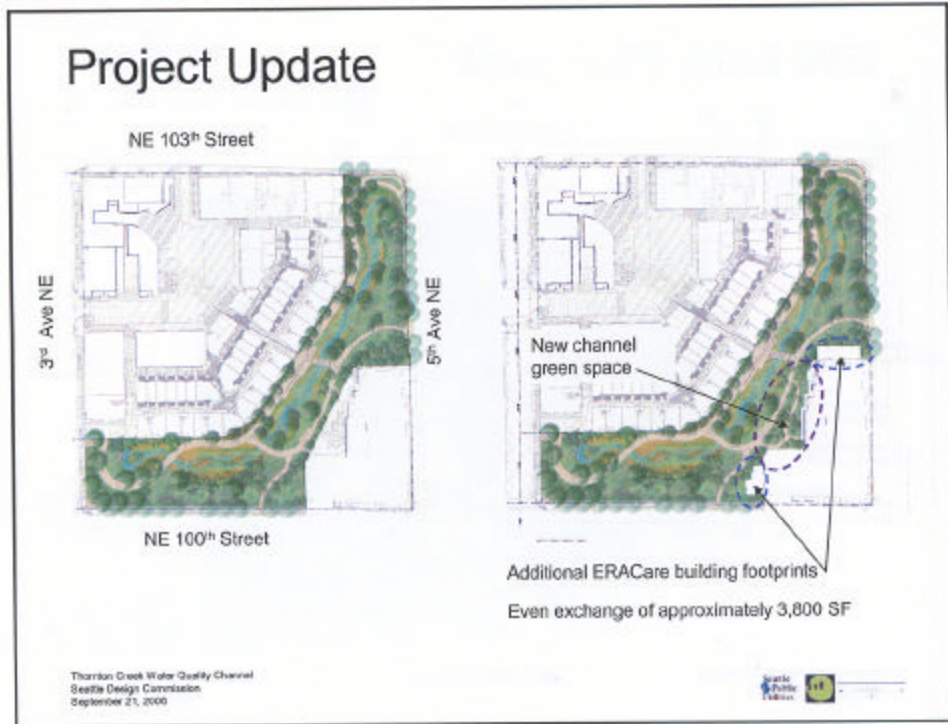
The schedule has been revised for the project, as follows: 1) Lorig – MUP/DR complete, 2) ERACare – Revised MUP, 3) Construction – Channel construction to start in 04/07

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- As ERACare is trading open space for new building, do they still have an open space requirement with their property boundaries?
 - There is an open space requirement, primarily it's provided on the streetfront with a large plaza and raised terrace. The land being traded is open uncovered land which will be then be covered. The team is working with the Design Review Board on the design details for that.
- What does the green fabric wall material look like?
 - 12 inch layers of geotextile wrap. At maturity you will see only green. There is an example at 110th St.
- How much water flows during a dry summer?
 - less than 1/10th cubic foot per second in the upper channel cascade area (this flow may be seasonal), less than ½ a cubic foot per second in the lower channel, where there will be water year-round.
- Will it be maintained by SPU, will skateboarding be permitted?
 - There will be skateboard deterrents. The design is pedestrian oriented and sensitivity to elderly users is a concern. And yes, both SPU and community stewards will maintain.
- Why are railings included? Caution against overuse.
 - Because of steep grade which is up to 25 ft. At places there are grade changes between 8 to 12 ft. Railings also provide pedestrian safety and define which areas are accessible to the public.

- Is there an educational component?
 - Not at this time. SPU will be developing an educational component (likely signage and tours) as a condition of Department of Ecology funding.
- Will the landscape be maintained regularly or allowed to grow into mature plantings? Will landscape massing and density work in the end?
 - Some plants will be allowed to grow more than others. The design has emphasized more formal and more informal areas. SPU will also develop a joint operating agreement with the adjacent property owners regarding security and maintenance expectations.
- Land trade with ERACare is a positive move. Their cohabitation near the site is positive.
- Like the quality of materials and intensity of vegetation. See possibility for large trees 200 years out.
- Appropriate to deter skateboarding in light of ERACare's elderly pedestrians, but would recommend City finding a place for skaters.
- Would recommend minimizing use of fences.
- Education component is critical. Look for creative opportunities – with informative but not literal signage.
- Not seeing hierarchy of plants - more legibility would help. Encourage restraint in plant palette. In terms of maintenance, those who do it will need to understand needs of plants and design intentions.
- SW corner needs plaza needs editing. Refer to Meadowbrook Pond as far as an educational reference. Educationally, this is a significant investment by the City. It is the water and landscape that describes what you are trying to accomplish.
- Regarding concrete seating at NE entry, would team consider other seating materials or seating wall? It would be more engaging for people.
- What about sound from the water flow?
 - Sound is part of idea of water flow – to draw people in. Site is in a noisy neighborhood.
- In reference to inclusion of art as metaphorical object, why do we need it if we have the water? Is it not a man-made intrusion/distraction?
- Artwork is still being developed and is under review by PAAC, not in the purview of the Design Commission.
- Great project – a celebration of water and treatment of water - a nice divergence from contrived expressions of water seen elsewhere in the City.
- What is the difference in public/private entries?

- What is the gradient of the ADA paths?
 - 5% gradient on paths



21 September 2006 Project: Northgate - Third Avenue NE

Previous Reviews: February 2006
Phase: Schematic Design
Presenters: Mike O'Neil, King County/Metro
Dean Wilson, King County/Metro

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. #169/RS0606)

Action

The Commission appreciates the presentation of 3rd Ave. NE Street Improvements by King County and Metro. By a vote of 8:1, the Commission approves the schematic design as presented today and has the following comments:

- **Given the site's orientation and proximity to the future intermodal transit center, there may be a need to step back and reevaluate the greater priority given to buses and revisit this with Stakeholders Group. As the dialogue between Metro and the City continues keep that in mind.**
- **In the development of streets, we seek to have greater potential in future adjacent development. Suggest looking at a mid-block bulb-out that may be used to enhance the pedestrian experience and help to tone down the nature of super block and create some perceived permeability through that. Additional sidewalk width would be good all along the street, but realize it may not occur.**
- **As far as the larger pedestrian experience, urge team to rethink the need for benches as some on the Commission question whether they will really contribute to the pedestrian experience. Allow the site to be used and see how it responds and then determine whether there will be a need for benches. Support fewer benches and more trees.**
- **Tie in lighting and benches to the Channel project so there is some continuity and design consistency.**
- **Supports the chosen lighting scheme, but do not let it be dominated by traffic and consider pedestrian lighting examples that provide an ample amount of light. Feels that fewer poles are better for the pedestrian experience.**
- **Regarding the landscape, rethink the shrubbery palette for the areas between parked cars and pedestrians. There have been mixed comments about the canopy tree vs the columnar tree, but generally support the goal of a larger tree canopy.**
- **Continue to work through viable options with private development of how delivery trucks can enter the site and what their circulation may be.**
- **Looks forward to seeing the project again.**

Note: Commissioner Mitra dissented as she believes the design does not adequately benefit pedestrians.

Proponents Presentation

Proponents provided an overview of the project, the highlights of which are:

- Enhanced pedestrian use of 3rd Avenue NE – connects the major future transit hub to a new major residential, retail, and retirement center – ERACare.
- Lane use connection – the project will contain two new parking structures with 575 apartments; retail, restaurant, health club, hotel or office space, a cinema, and a daycare center.
- Regional transit – provides connections for transferring between Metro buses and the future Sound Transit light rail station
- Traffic relief – traffic congestion on 1st Ave. NE and 5th Ave. NE would be mitigated by the creation of a new street.

KC/Metro are working with City staff to satisfy mutual street design standards. Anticipated construction start is the Spring of 2008.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- In light of bus traffic, can 2 to 3 more feet be added to the street?
 - Would have to be 10 to 15 ft. wide at crosswalk. Bulk of traffic will go to 5th Ave. Lane widths are not the issue, turning radius for buses at corner is.
- Maybe sidewalk should be wider for anticipated commercial pedestrian traffic. Has team considered combining cobra lights with pedestrian lighting - into one fixture?
 - To do so would create redundant lighting. There will be pedestrian lights near the entrance to the park so it will tie together there.
- Would recommend tying in benches and lighting with of the adjacent Channel project.
- This is almost a “build it and they will come” situation. The team is in the position of building a pedestrian friendly street where there are no pedestrians yet.
- There are too many friendly things going on: pedestrian-friendly, nightlife-friendly, bicycle-friendly, parking-friendly, etc. Know team is working with multiple users so appreciate efforts to accommodate all.
- The street is a successful environment for cars, but this design has silenced any advocate there might have been for pedestrians. It is not a place for gathering or congregating. 12 ft should be minimal street width.
- Can a 67-ft. truck-trailer combination maneuver this street and get into mid-block access points?
 - No

- These are 8-acre super blocks. They are big enough that pedestrian activity and focal points will be in one of the internal divisions of the super blocks, not on the perimeter.
- Intersection breaks the scale of the super block down
- Like distinction between open space and large buildings. But not sure who would gather here.
- Has team explored permeable pavement?
 - Only on sidewalks. Permeable pavement on driving surfaces is on infrequently used shoulders only.

Public Comment

Northgate resident Bunny Hirschman had several questions and comments. She commented that Metro at one time had a plan for buses to enter the TOD project underneath from the new 3rd Ave. She feels 3rd Ave. will become a residential street. She noted that significant commercial development south of the site and an 800-stall parking garage outside Penney's will create pedestrian traffic along 3rd Ave.

Questions:

- Will power lines be placed underground?
 - Yes
- Will there be traffic signals at the intersection of 100th St.?
 - No, only on 103rd St.
- Will parking be metered?
 - It has not yet been determined.



Third Avenue NE Streetscape between NE 100th Street and NE 103rd Street

21 September 2006 Project: DPD Green Building Team

Phase: Staff Briefing
Presenters: Lynne Barker, Department of Planning and Development
Peter Dobrovolny, Department of Planning and Development
Attendees: none
Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. #170)

Summary

The Commission thanks the DPD Green Building Team for the briefing and thanks the City for creation of the team that pools the knowledge and resources of many City departments into one unit. The Commission has the following comments:

- **Appreciate hearing about plans to focus on sustainable infrastructure and green urbanism work and look forward to hearing about this in detail in a future briefing**
- **Enjoyed hearing about the eco-charette idea for projects and how it works**
- **Appreciate the work that the team is doing to increase green building priorities in public/private building projects**
- **Encourage the team to investigate more collaboration with artists and the possibility of an artist in residence program**
- **Urge the team to recognize the Commission as an important early and ongoing advocate of Green Building in the City**
- **Hope team's work will inspire others throughout the region**

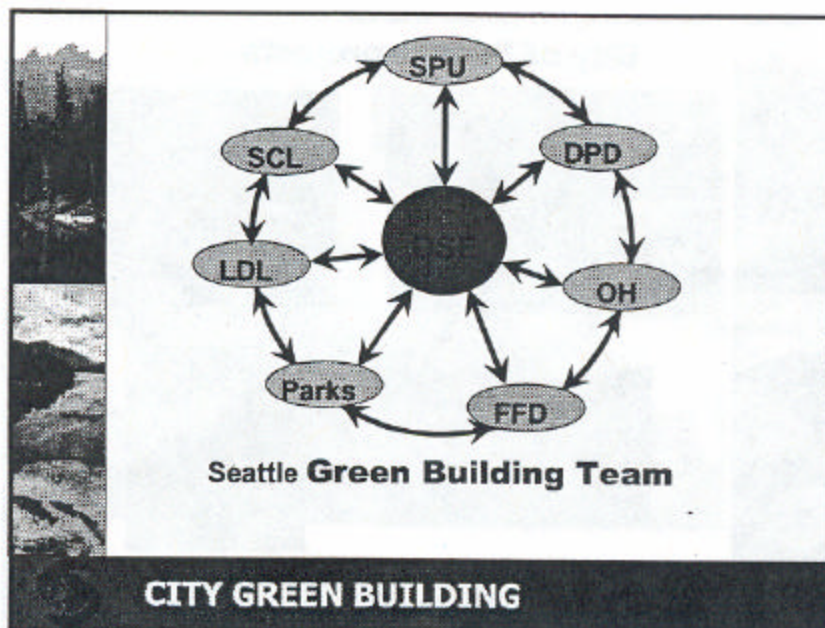
Proponents Presentation

Under the Mayor's directive, DPD worked with SPU and Seattle City Light to reorganize green building activity of various departments into one group: DPD's 5-member Green Building Team. The goal of the new team is to encourage public and private projects to pursue sustainable design. The team outlined City incentives for builders: financial incentives; technical assistance; design tools; demonstrating business cases; raising of awareness through media and communication campaigns; and affordable housing guidelines. Seattle currently leads the U.S. in the number of certified LEED buildings – 22. It was noted the number of builders practicing sustainable building is growing across the country.

An outline of financial and other incentives and benefits of green building was provided. Included in these are energy conservation incentives offered by Seattle City Light and healthier work environments resulting in less employee sick leave.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Is the team working with SDOT?
 - DPD provided some support to the SLU streetcar facility. SDOT is striving to gain a LEED Silver rating on this project. City Green Building is not working with SDOT on green infrastructure projects.
- How would you define green infrastructure?
 - Sustainable design of streets, sidewalks, Rights-of-way. The City looks at natural drainage systems, pervious pavements on residential streets. High Point and SEA Street projects are examples.
- What is the Green Seattle Partnership?
 - It works to protect the 2500 acres of forest land we have, increase canopy cover significantly, which is low compared with other municipalities.
 - In the future (5 to 10 years) we may have more distributive systems for infrastructure. Instead of building a new dam we would have local utility districts in neighborhoods where they would generate their own energy within that neighborhood or manage their wastewater using a biological waste treatment system.



21 September 2006 Project: Commission Business

ACTION ITEMS

A. Timesheets

B. Minutes from 9/7/06/Felts

DISCUSSION ITEMS

C. DC Farewells/Romano and Cubell – 15 minutes

D. PSB Site Workshop Report/Kiest et al – 15 minutes

E. SR-520 DEIS/Rossouw et al – 20 minutes.

F. AIA Seattle Livable Communities Conf./Spiker – 10 minutes

F. Skybridge Policies Update/Cubell – 10 minutes.

G. Outside Commitments/All – 15 minutes

ANNOUNCEMENTS

H. Mayor's Reception for B&C Members, 9/26, 6-8pm

I. DC Welcome Reception, 10/19, 6-9pm

J. Olympic Sculpture Park Opening – postponed to 1/20/07

21 September 2006 Project: Carr America/Dexter Avenue Redevelopment

Phase: Street Vacation

Presenters: Eric Anderson, Mulvanny/G2 Architecture
Greg Brower, Berger Partnership
Beverly Barnett, Seattle Department of Transportation
Scott Ringgold, Department of Planning and Development

Attendees: none

Time: 1½ hours (SDC Ref. #170)

Action

The Commission appreciates the presentation by Mulvanny/G2 on behalf of Carr America on the proposed street vacation of one block of Highland Drive between Westlake and Dexter. Vacation review is a two-step process for the Commission, looking first at the urban design considerations and on the impact of the changes on neighborhood plans, and second, at the public benefit aspects proposed by the development. The Commission generally concurred that the proposed street vacation would be appropriate from the standpoint of vehicular use and the functionality of the streets, but chose to defer the decision until a subsequent meeting when more information could be provided. Similarly, the public benefits package will be considered at the next meeting as well.

The Commission's key observations and concerns are summarized below:

- **Vacating of the street from both the perspectives of vehicular use and functionality of streets is acceptable. Questions that remain have to do with siting of buildings and protection of view corridors.**
- **Commend the team for the comprehensive site orientation as it helps us understand design issues.**
- **Would like to see how Concept 2 would be refined to make overall program work better while leaving Highland Drive alignment in place.**
- **Activated design of plaza will be important for open space.**
- **Pedestrian edge on Westlake is just as important as hill climb – would like to see it developed further.**
- **Acknowledge moving hill climb to south and leaving Dexter building exposed helps open character of hill climb.**

- **Realize many of the streets have already been vacated and many of the views are already jogged, but those were decisions of the past. Today we are concerned with the views that remain.**
- **Would like to better understand SDOT's review of traffic light and intersection operations and the relationship of this project to the AGC project traffic and driveway use.**
- **Concerned about aesthetics of garage entry and how it is treated, but appreciate how it responds to the position of the traffic light. This should be addressed in a subsequent meeting.**
- **Would like to see more adjacent site information, including property lines, applicable zoning, and height and bulk potentials for the properties east of Westlake and immediately south, in order to assess view impacts.**

Proponents Presentation

Proponents seek a street vacation to provide improved public access and a public stair on one block between Dexter Avenue and Westlake. The site is located in a neighborhood in transition, an urban mix of old fabric, warehouses and new 6- and 7-story condos and office buildings. The vacation is part of a multi-phased, 5-building, mixed-use development. It would also maximize open space with neighboring uses and provide public amenities. Open space areas would be: South Lake Union terrace center; Dexter Court, containing benches and a courtyard; Dexter office buildings, though not yet activated, would offer courtyard views of water; and Neptune, which offers a gated courtyard with a water feature, open during daytime hours.

The team outlined the need for the street vacation; existing conditions at the site; and design options and challenges.

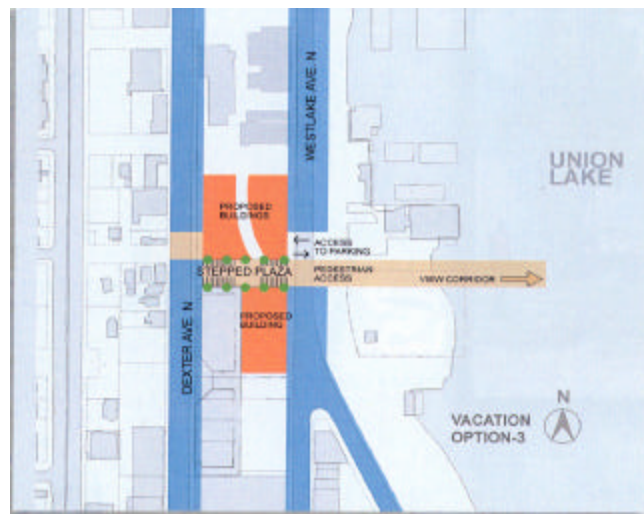
Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Appreciate context analysis in the comprehensive presentation. Buildings could be bulkier. Appreciate traffic light response.
- Would support vehicular access at Highland. Pedestrian area to south of garage looks pretty squeezed on the south. Need much better edge on Westlake or it won't be seen by people going by.
- Would the Maple tree blocking the view come out?
 - Yes, it would have to come out
- Would there be a lid all the way to the future building?
 - Yes
- Share concerns regarding land use and zoning on other side of Westlake. What about pedestrians crossing Dexter, coming off of Highland?
- Gaping hole that is entrance to garage could be mitigated. Make sure plaza is activated through tenants, etc. Although this may not be in the Commission's purview.

- Vacating the street is OK, but so much of the City is being treated like suburban campuses. This would benefit pedestrians.

Other Comments

- SDOT: the main thing SDOT is looking at is shifting the street and realignment of views and access point. We'll also be looking at the street connection to the garage on the lower level. Generally when we vacate we move traffic from where the street used to be, so there is no confusion about public/private access.
- DPD: Design Review Board has held its EDG meeting and notes from that have been supplied to Commission staff. MUP will be filed soon which will begin DPD's full Land Use review.



Option 3 - Team's Preferred Option