



**Seattle
Design
Commission**

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

17 July 2003

Gregory J. Nickels,
Mayor

Donald Royse
Chair

Laura Ballock

Ralph Cipriani

Jack Mackie

Cary Moon

Iain M. Robertson

Nic Rossouw

David Spiker

Sharon E. Sutton

Tory Laughlin Taylor

John Rahaim,
Executive Director

Layne Cubell,
Commission Coordinator

Projects Reviewed

Northgate Library, Community Center, and Park
Bitter Lake Reservoir Open Space
Design Commission 35th Anniversary Project
SDOT Artist in Residence
Vacation Policy Revisions

Convened: 8:30am

Commissioners Present

Donald Royse, Chair
Jack Mackie, Vice Chair
Ralph Cipriani
Cary Moon
Iain M. Robertson
Nic Rossouw
David Spiker
Sharon E. Sutton
Tory Laughlin Taylor

Adjourned: 3:30pm

Staff Present

John Rahaim
Layne Cubell
Brad Gassman
Lisa Baker



Department of Design,
Construction & Land Use

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17 Jul 2003 Project: **Northgate Library, Community Center, and Park**

Phase: Conceptual Design

Previous Reviews: 20 February 2003 (Site Plan-Follow-Up), 6 February 2003 (Pre-Design)

Presenters: David Kunselman, Seattle Public Libraries
Bob Hull, Miller Hull PartnershipAttendees: Mark Brands, Site Workshop
Erin Devoto, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Alex Harris, Seattle Public Libraries
Jess Harris, DCLU
Kristian Kofoed, DCLU
Marty Curry, Planning Commission
Tim Morrison, Department of Finance
Tim Motzer, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Bob Shrosbree, Site Workshop
Kurt Stolle, Miller Hull Partnership
Scott Wolf, Miller Hull Partnership

Time: 1.5 hours (SDC Ref. # 221 | DC00108)

Action: **The Commission thanks the team for coming early and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.**

- **The Design Commission applauds the direction that the design team is taking;**
- **approves the location of the building elements, the intention to make multiple uses of the hardscape surfaces, and the creative approach being taken to NE 105th St;**
- **recognizes that the challenge of this project is that it carries the weight of being the first step toward an urban future for this neighborhood;**
- **encourages the team to define the different edges of the site and the buildings in such a way that they move toward this urban future including creating a strong edge along 5th Ave. NE that gives pedestrians preeminence, and looking at 105th St. as potentially a more urban “SEA Street” ;**
- **feels that the alignment of entries on 5th Ave. is problematic, and insists that this intersection absolutely must be resolved as part of this scheme as well as the internal parking area on the portion of the site near that entrance;**
- **reiterates that 5th Ave. should have on-street parking as a way to slow down traffic and create a pedestrian friendly environment;**
- **encourages the team to look at grade changes and grading as opportunities, and to look at innovations that might happen involving drainage and existing waterways;**
- **would like the design team to push the three-dimensional tension between the open spaces, the parking, plaza and the built structures and develop an overall concept that ties these elements together;**
- **urges the team to explore pedestrian circulation both on and around the site, in particular how pedestrians enter the site, and how circulation links social spaces within the site;**

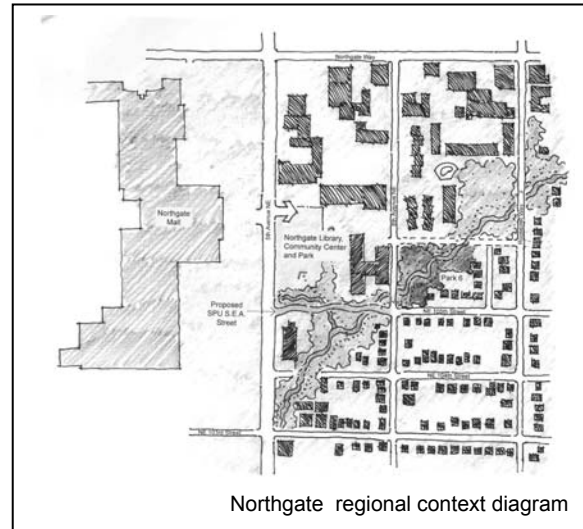
- **would like the team to bring SDOT to the next presentation; and**
- **recommends approval of concept design with eight in favor and one opposed.**

This project is a collaboration between the Parks Department and Seattle Public Libraries. Previously two schemes were developed and the surface parking scheme was chosen due to both cost and design issues. Two public forums have been held to solicit community input as well as an open house. The team will engage two to work on this project, one for the library and one for the community center.

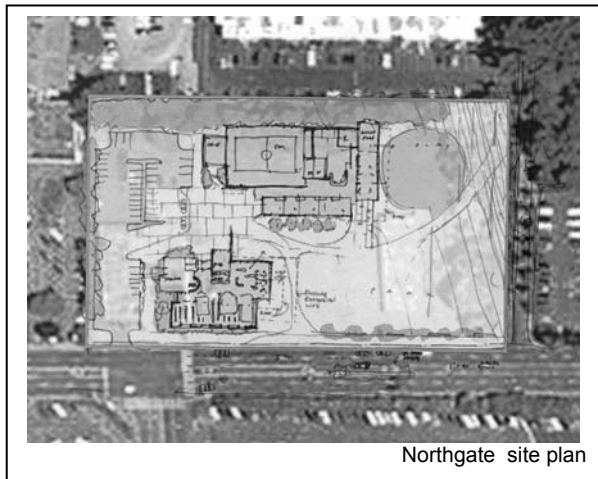
The design team is very excited to be working on this project. Phase I of the project was developed by ARC Architects. The current team agrees with the direction established in Phase I. Phase I was completed in February and the team is currently developing Phase II which consists of site refinement and matching the budget with the concept.

The Design Commission listed the following concerns/key issues at the previous meeting:

- connection to the neighborhood
- civic presence
- parking - reduce or joint use
- urban character of the park
- site grading – mitigate parking and increase usable area
- 5th Ave NE – parallel parking and urban edge
- NE 105th St – does not need to be a neighborhood collector



Northgate regional context diagram



Northgate site plan

Some modifications have been made to the plan since the last meeting. The community center has been moved further north in order to allow more usable park space. This will allow 70ft of additional park space. This configuration still maintains visual connections to the community center from the street. The Library is located directly on 5th Ave. and helps to create an urban edge. The team is beginning to investigate the opportunities for the library to display their wares on this public face.

The site plan must accommodate future expansion of the library. The previous scheme planned for the expansion to take place to the north of the library.

The current plan proposes that expansion take place to the south. This will allow the future expansion space to be used as part of the park until the expansion occurs. Although this space will be connected to

the park it will be delineated from the rest of the park by a path. The site has also been reconfigured to make use of sloped grading in order to enter the community center, which will eliminate the need for an elevator lift. The proposed grade to the community center would be developed at a 1:20 slope.

A public plaza will be framed between the community center and library buildings. Both buildings will be entered from this plaza. The parking lot has been moved further north in order to expand the park space. This means that the entrance to the parking lot is not aligned with the access road across 5th Ave to the west. There is the potential that the access road could be realigned to match the proposed parking lot entrance for the library and community center. The design team is exploring the possibility of developing the parking lot as a multi-use surface with the potential to use that space for a farmers market or other events. They also recognize that the parking lot will be one of the social spaces of the development due to the uses on the site. Rather than long term parking with little pedestrian activity there will be many parents dropping kids off and picking them up and meeting other parents who are doing the same thing.

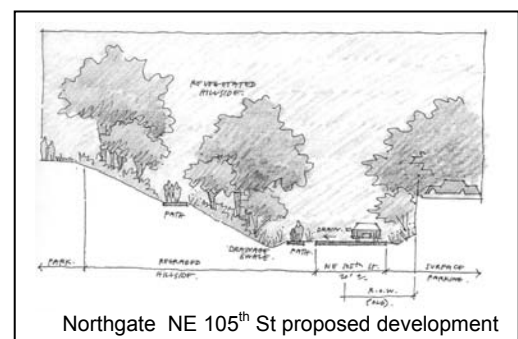
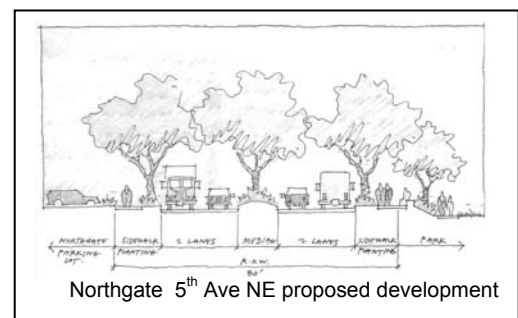
The major elements of the design are as follows:

- **Connection to the neighborhood** – will remove some trees to the south of the site to connect to Thornton Creek
- **Civic Presence** – library is placed on the street and community center is visible through the park
- **Parking** – are providing 67 spaces with the potential to take some exemptions
- **Urban Park** – plan is arranged to give optimal solar exposure to the park and allows the park to be visible from the street
- Site Grading – using a 5% slope which matches the overall grade change across the site and allows potential to create perched elements in both buildings
- 5th Ave – improvements on the east side – need to resolve alignment issue
- 105th St – developed as a “SEA” street

105th is designated by the city as a future neighborhood collector. If this designation is upheld without any exceptions it will have to be substantially widened and will need to include considerable improvements. The neighborhood does not feel that the designation of this street as a neighborhood collector is appropriate. 105th St is currently a paved right of way with no curbs, gutters or sidewalks. The design team would like to develop this road as a “SEA” street and is working with DCLU to see what exemptions might apply to the neighborhood collector designation.

The landscaping works with the existing grade changes across the site. The site grade rises 10 ft from east to west across the site and 18 feet from south to north. A playground is planned to the south of the community center on a gentle slope. This playground will be shared between the community center and the park.

SDOT has planned future improvements along 5th Ave. immediately West of the site. The design team would



like these improvements to be coordinated with the development of the Library, Park and community center project. The improvements to the east side of 5th Ave will be included within this project.

The Community center building will be developed as a primarily solid building with glassy pieces that project into the park. Some of the glassy portions of the building will have a western exposure which will require overhangs and scientifically placed deciduous trees to mitigate the solar gain.

The library will incorporate viewing slots with bookshelves if possible, and the opportunity to incorporate art and/or signage. The addition to the library would potentially be softer and more green than the rest of the building.

Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns

- Likes the overall direction of the scheme. Feels that the team has tightened things up. The parking lot has been improved without compromising the buildings. Likes the way the plaza is tucked in and feels that the community center works well at the back of the site.
- Questions how the scheme responds to urban/suburban nature of the site. Feels that the site is not really urban and that the buildings leave undefined open spaces. Suggests looking at Aalto's schemes for small towns. The plaza could work more strongly to bring the buildings together.
- Is very excited to see the concurrent development of these three projects. Feels there needs to be more energy between the buildings and the landscape. Recommends that the design team stop work on the buildings and develop the park more. Is concerned that the parks feels like it is just a backdrop for the buildings. Feels the team should focus on how people move through the spaces. Urges the team to develop a concept that links all of the pieces together.
- Questions how pedestrians get to the site and wonders where they go after they have arrived. Also wonders if the team considered putting both of the buildings along 5th Ave.
 - Proponents stated that they did consider having both buildings on 5th briefly at the beginning of the process. They felt that this configuration would be harsh on the buildings and that not all of the building uses are compatible with being directly on the street. They also stated that the solar exposure for the park is better in this configuration. Additionally proponents explained that the community wanted to have the park as a visible asset from the road.
 - Proponents explained that circulation into the site would be through the parking lot and also along the path that would define the edge of the future library expansion.
- Is concerned that this scheme is not treating the site in a fully urban way. Notes that the front door to the library is not on the street, which is not typical of an urban building. The primary entrance to the development is the entry to the parking lot, and the entrances to the buildings are secondary. Thinks it is important to consider the location of the bus stop in planning the entrances into the site.
- Suggests that a colonnade or another circulation element could gather pedestrians entering off of the street and people entering from the parking lot and act as a single main entrance to the site.
- Agrees that a pedestrian entrance from the street needs to be a strong element. Feels that it is more an issue of entering the site than entering the building. Thinks it would be acceptable for the door to the library to remain where it is if there is a better articulated pedestrian entrance to the site.
- Suggests the design team look at Rick Sundberg's design for the Southwest Library which has a similar condition.
- Feels that the design needs a third piece. In addition to the two buildings trees along 5th could create a more defined edge. This edge can still maintain visibility of the park from the street but should be delineated as a formal boundary. There needs to be a sense of urbanity to this edge. There is the

danger of just flopping into the park.

- Proponents stated that they have not developed that part of the scheme in detail yet. They feel that the fact that the grade in the park is lower than the street is a good configuration and allows people to see into the park from the street.
- Is curious about the section through 5th Ave. both at the intersection and through the library. Wonders how far south the turn lanes extend and how far north the proposed median in 5th Ave. extends to the north. Is concerned that there will be a big open space adjacent to the library.
 - Proponents stated that they are talking to property owners to the west about the potential to move their access road further north to correspond with the proposed parking lot entrance. They explained that that would also involve moving the turn lanes and extending the median further north.
- Feels that the design issues around 5th Ave. need to be resolved as soon as possible. These decisions will have a domino effect on the development of the site plan. Acknowledges that it is unfair to place the burden of the development of this entire environment on this project. Feels that someone needs to stand up and take advantage of this opportunity. Since this is a pivotal site, the design team should be collaborating with SDOT to guide this development. Is concerned that the proposed development of 5th Ave. is not urban. Parallel parking on 5th Ave. would not be incidental, it would be very important to the character of the street. Parking would slow down traffic and make it a people place.
- Thinks that the areas that are already paved should be used for parking. Sees it as a safety issue rather than an issue of comfort. Does not think that trees in the median on 5th Ave. are important.
 - Proponents questioned whether the Commission has seen the 5th Ave. Street Plan. They explained that parking was originally part of the plan. They stated that SDOT and Metro were concerned about the parking. These agencies were afraid that there was not enough demand for on-street parking and that having an unused parking lane would be worse than not having one at all.
- Feels that if SDOT is concerned that there is not enough demand for on street parking that some or all of the surface parking could be eliminated from the library/park/community center.
- Reiterates that the alignment issue on 5th is very important. Feels that commercial development should follow this public development rather than the other way around.
- Feels that the parking at the entrance to the site probably isn't workable. This parking could be moved to the diagonal portion of the lot further east.
- Feels that the grading should be looked at as an opportunity and again encourages the team to look at Aalto's work as a model for this development. There is the potential to use berm work to define the library expansion area. Grading could also be used to structure different areas in the park. Also recommends that instead of using a single row of scientifically placed trees that a looser more natural bosque of trees could be planted.
- Feels that 105th Street does not need to be upgraded, and supports the teams work to develop that as something other than a neighborhood collector.
- Agrees that 105th St. does not need to be a collector, but doesn't want this to be developed as a suburban "SEA" street. Would like the team to develop a "SEA" street that is urban in character.
- Wonders about the grade conditions along 105th St. A Retaining wall in the section suggests that the grade is higher than the road. Would it be possible to fill in the grade along 105th St and alleviate the valley.
- Feels that filling in at the valley would be a very bad idea. It would have serious repercussions for

the drainage in the area.

- Proponents stated that they intend to treat the retaining wall along 105th St. to make it more attractive. They added that currently there is no money in the budget for improvements along 105th St.
- Wonders what the character of the area labeled “play” will be. Is this a structured area?
 - Proponents explained that this area will include play structures and will be shared between the park and the daycare in the community center.
- Feels that the east and west sides of the community center could be developed very differently from each other.
 - Proponents stated that they intend to allow natural light into the gym. They explained that the gym is located on the east side of the site in order to allow the light to be filtered through the trees to avoid glare. Proponents stated that they are considering the eastern façade of the community center as an austere edge but not a blank one. They also explained that the edges of the building facing the interior of the site would likely have more glazing.
- Is concerned about the South and West facing glassy walls that have been described. Is aware of a project where a large mechanical unit was required entirely to handle the heat gain of a similar west facing wall. Does not want to have a similar problem with this building.
 - Proponents stated that they feel confident in their ability to control heat gain through the south facing walls using overhangs and projections. They acknowledge that the west facing walls will be more of a challenge. They reiterated that their plan is to use strategically placed deciduous trees that will shade the walls in the summer and allow sun into the building in the winter months.

Key Visitor Comments and Concerns

- Is interested in the pedestrian connections. The community would like 8th Ave. to be a residential connector. There are many retirement homes north of Northgate Mall. There is the potential for people in the retirement homes to walk to the library and community center via 8th Ave. Wonders if there could be a pedestrian edge on the west side of the site in the future.
 - Proponents stated that they have talked to the property owners about the possibility of coordinating some sort of a connection.
- Stated that currently library and community center are not allowable uses in the zoning overlay district where the site is located. Proponents of the project have started a process to revise the allowable uses so that these will be included. Feels that this is only a technical issue that needs to be resolved, and should not impede the project.
- Wonders if it would be helpful to have SDOT at the next meeting.
 - Proponents and commissioners agree that this would be extremely useful.

17 Jul 2003 Project: **Bitter Lake Reservoir Open Space**

Phase: Concept Design

Previous Review: 1 May 2003 (Concept Design)

Presenters: Tim Motzer, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Tanja Wilcox, J.A. Brennan Associates

Attendee: Erin Devoto, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 169 | DC00303)

Action: The Commission thanks the team for bringing their proposals to the Commission and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.

- The Design Commission appreciates the extent that the team has worked with the neighborhood and gotten them involved in generating ideas for the project;
- appreciates the way that the Parks Department has worked with SPU in partnership to make this site available and possible for use, compliments both entities on developing this together and working with the Department of Transportation on further improvements, and generally appreciates the in-house work that has been done between different agencies;
- likes the way the ideas have been developed further from the last presentation, but is concerned about the extent to which the options presented by the design team are realistic; questions whether this may be creating false expectations in the community by showing options that are not possible within the budget, and recommends that the design team edit, clarify, and simplify the designs to be more in keeping with what the budget requires;
- asks the design team to look into the art piece and to check with OACA and with the artist on whether it may be moved to another location on the site and incorporated into this project and encourages the city to look after this piece of art;
- appreciates the intent and ambition stated by the team, but does not see them expressed in the physical forms with a boldness and clarity that the Commission feels is essential to work on a site of this sort, and encourages the team to look at examples and imagery from other locations such as the work of Peter Walker and the bold gestures that he takes rather than pastoral imagery;
- appreciates the work on the swales and the storm water, and encourages the team again to look at simpler, bolder imagery,
- appreciates very much the social energy that the team is trying to develop, but feels that it would be better to focus on one or two areas, rather than a large number of areas or social gathering spaces, and to locate these spaces where the public is most likely to go and gather;
- recommends that the approach the design team takes is one of simpler, bolder, clearer gestures, with spaces that people may walk through rather than sit at, and also that people can appreciate while driving by, and generally feels that a larger scale is desirable;
- recommends a more inspiring approach to the educational elements and

rather than being literal in the way that water is dealt with and in telling the story, that the design provoke people into thinking about these issues instead of providing them the answer;

- **feels the team needs to come back to the Commission with a simpler, clearer, bolder concept, and an understanding of what the essence of the site really is, so that the design approach is derived from the site; and**
- **cannot recommend approval of concept design.**

This is the second time that the Design Commission has seen this project. This Parks Department project involves relocating the existing fence around Bitter Lake Reservoir in order to create public open space at the perimeter of the site. The Parks Department is partnering with Seattle Public Utilities in order to fund this project. The ideas being presented today do not fit within the budget for this project. The project team would like to get feedback from the Design Commission as to which elements should remain in the final design. The project team is also working with SDOT to coordinate improvements to the right of way adjacent to the site. SDOT wants to make sure that these improvements will be permanent so that there is not the appearance of having amenities that are built and then taken away.

The community wants this to be a local open space, not a space that attracts people from other neighborhoods. They are also concerned about illegal activities such as drugs and prostitution that are currently taking place on this site. The community considered incorporating a P-patch into the new open space as that would bring people into the site and help maintain security.

Seattle Public Utilities has many guidelines which must be met in order to maintain and protect the reservoir. These include views for patrolling, restriction of plant species and placement to avoid debris, as well as requiring plants and landscaping that do not encourage large bird populations. Because of prevailing winds on the site SPU requires a larger buffer between the planted areas and the reservoir on the Southwest corner of the site. Additionally due to these prevailing winds large trees may only be planted on the Northeast of the site.

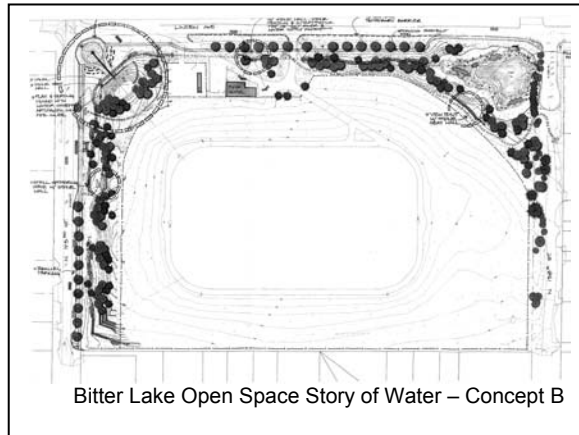
The project team is working with SDOT to see what improvements can be made along Linden Ave. In the future the interurban trail will be passing by the site. They would like to take advantage of this opportunity to link this open space to the trail.

The project team has been working with the community to develop a set of principles to guide the development of this open space. These principles include:

- Sense of place
- Community identity
- Site as an educational resource
- Celebration of the reservoir
- Sustainable design

The neighborhood surrounding this open space is designated as a future Hub Urban Village. The community would like this open space to be a focal point for the present and the future. The design team is struggling with how to give community identity to an area that is primarily a travel corridor at the present. The community is interested in using this open space to stimulate neighborhood pride. They have considered locating a P-Patch on this site as a way of developing a sense of community ownership. The P-Patch is only one idea for the site and will not happen without a substantial amount of support. At the present it seems unlikely that there will be enough support to create a P-Patch.

The community has identified this open space as an educational opportunity to explain how water comes from the Tolt River and other natural systems and feeds the city. They would also like to hold educational events on this site. Additionally they would like areas for passive recreation and creative play. The community would also like to see pedestrian and bike connections to nearby trails.

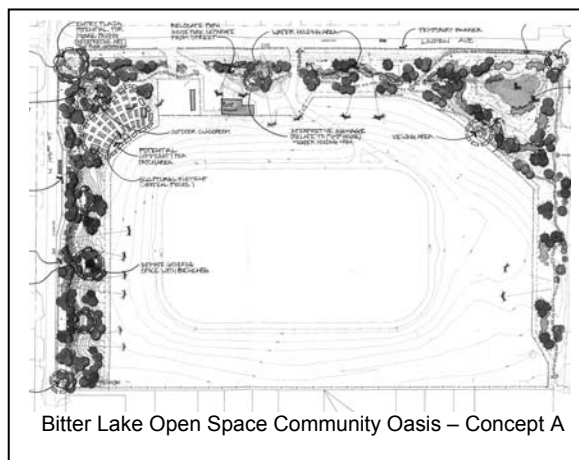


The design team has developed two schemes for the open space. Scheme B focuses on the story of water. This scheme would incorporate a structured play area in the Northeast corner of the site. This play area would play off of the engineered slope surrounding the reservoir, taking a similar, but much smaller form. This area would include seating that overlooks the play area.

Along the east edge of the site there would be a canal system which would be part of a system of swales on the site. The canal form would contrast with other contoured bio-swale forms. There could also be a potential to incorporate a map of the Tolt River into

this system. This system of swales would terminate in an infiltration pond on the Southeast corner of the site. As this pond would be intended for infiltration rather than retention it would often be empty. While empty it would be very lush and green. Most of the grade would be covered in low maintenance eco-turf. The swale would have special plantings to improve its ability to filter water.

This scheme would include a plaza element with a sculpture on the Northeast corner of the site. This element would help establish a sense of place and visual character for the open space. The plaza space would be paved with pervious materials and there would be a strong focus created by a series of vertical copper pipes. These pipes and a series of cobbles would represent water coming from a natural system into a resident's house. There would also be two smaller gathering spaces in addition to the primary space.



The other scheme, scheme "A" is conceived of as a community oasis of green. This scheme was intended to incorporate a P-Patch, but includes many other elements as well. This open space would be structured as a backyard wildlife resource. In this plan the path would be brought into the landscape and away from the street. This would help engage the community in the landscape. The path would meander through the site and meet up with a bus stop on site, as well as with intersections at the corners of the site. This plan would include several small places where water could be retained, although the overall purpose of swales, as in the other scheme, would be to filter water. There would also be several small

gathering places incorporated into the landscape.

The team is considering whether to keep the existing "Scatter Piece" sculpture. There is not a lot of public support for keeping the piece. Moving the piece would require it to be demolished and rebuilt.

Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns

- Is concerned that the sculpture on site is not understood by the public. It is one of several pieces scattered at the high points of Seattle. It is currently in a state of neglect. Wonders if the reason the community would like to remove it is because of this neglect, or if there is another reason. Will raise this issue at the next Arts Commission Meeting. The Commission urges the City to do a better job of maintaining their art and educating the public to the context of the piece.
 - Proponents stated that they do not know the reason that the community does not support keeping the sculpture on site.
- Wonders if the piece could be moved within the site with the artist's permission. Notes that once the fence has been moved it could be located on a higher point on the site.
- Feels that there are large issues that are not being addressed in the project. There seems to be a disconnect between the ideas being presented and the site itself. The reservoir is a big forbidding element that needs to be addressed in the design. The drawings presented do not show the form of the reservoir. The educational component of the site also seems at odds with the existing social realities. Does not see an attempt made to bridge between the ideas of the project and the realities of the site. Also wonders what the swales will be like if they are most often dry.
- Notes that there is a disconnect between the project budget and the designs being shown. Encourages the team to investigate what can be done within the budget.
- Is concerned about similar issues, but is encouraged by the changes since the last presentation. Thinks the project should be developed at two scales 1) at the pedestrian scale and 2) at the scale of a car driving by. Encourages the design team to look at Peter Walker's work. Feels they need to prioritize and focus. Likes the creative play area and the hints at abstraction. The design needs to be bolder, and should eliminate the pastoral elements. Cautions the team not to be too literal about revealing the story of water. Don't give all the answers, allow mystery, and allow visitors to ask questions.
- Feels that there are too many gestures that are too small for this site. The fewer gestures and the more dramatic the better. Scale is an important issue on this site.
- Thinks it could be interesting to use low maintenance native plants as a demonstration of what residents could plant in their yards that would not need to be watered or maintained.
- Questions why this project is called Bitter Lake Reservoir Open Space. There is a fuzziness about what this project is. Perimeter is the essence of this site. Suggests it should be renamed "Perimeter Park" to clarify what it is. Feels that there is something too tentative about the project. Likes the proposed elevated viewing area.
 - Proponents stated that this project is called an "open space" as opposed to a park, because of the communities concern that it would attract too many visitors from other places.
- Thinks that there is an opportunity to make use of the grading on site as a design element. Suggests creating a path that zigzags up and down the slope. Encourages the team to use more berming on the site and to create the deepest swale possible to allow the most play across the topography.
- Wonders what material is on the slope inside of the fence. Could this area be planted in wild flowers?
 - Proponents stated that the slope is covered in a manicured lawn. They will investigate with SPU whether this could be done as wildflowers.
- Suggests that the slope could be maintained as manicured lawn in contrast to the area outside of the

fence.

- Wonders how far the fence needs to be away from the reservoir. It seems to be unequal on the two sides of the reservoir. Could the fence be moved back even further to create more usable space?
 - Proponents stated that the fence needs to be at least 100' away from the reservoir. Because of the prevailing winds SPU would like to have the fence even further away on the Southwest portion of the site. The team will investigate if there is any potential to increase the amount of open space on this site.

17 Jul 2003 Project: **Design Commission 35th Anniversary Project**

Phase: Staff Briefing

Previous Reviews: None

Presenters: Brad Gassman, CityDesign
Mieko Ishihara, CityDesign Intern

Time: .5 hours (SDC Ref. # 170 | DC00310)

Summary: CityDesign staff presented plans and ideas for a document and exhibit that are being developed for the Design Commission's 35th anniversary event which will be held in December. The team has been investigating DCLU's archive, as well as the City's archive to find out about the history of the Design Commission. They are working on a brochure that will describe the role of the Commission in Seattle's development of civic spaces and buildings, and will highlight key projects in the Commission's history. This brochure will also serve as the template for a companion exhibit and possibly also this year's letters of commendation. The team solicited the Commission's input on the development of this material.

CityDesign staff have been working to develop materials to celebrate the Design Commission's 35th anniversary. An event is planned for December. Their idea is to produce a brochure that gives an overview of the history of the Design Commission and the projects it has reviewed. In addition to the brochure there could be an exhibit with display boards highlighting the same issues. CityDesign also thought it would be a good idea to incorporate this year's Design Commission project commendations into the same format. The team presented a draft format that had been developed for the brochure, and elicited feedback from the Commission.

CityDesign has been doing research into the DCLU's archives as well as the City's archive to uncover information about the history of the Design Commission. There are some gaps in the archives, but they have discovered a lot of information on the Commission as well as some amusing correspondence. The team has compiled a list of potential projects to include in the overview of the Commission's history. They would like the Commission's feedback on which projects should be included. Their goal is to create a simple piece and to pick images that people are familiar with. They want to pick projects that people feel the city wouldn't be the same without.

The Commission questioned how the history piece would be related to this year's commendations. The team explained that that is ultimately up to the Design Commission, but that their initial idea had been to use a similar format for all of the 24x36 display boards. They also imagined that this format could match the format of the brochure on the Commission's history.

Their current draft of the brochure includes:

- Goals
- Index
- History
- Message from the chair
- Current members
- Link to the Design Commission website

A narrow strip along the bottom of the brochure could include a list of all of the Design Commission's

commended projects. The other side of the brochure could include 6 selected projects throughout the Commission's history. The group agreed it would be best to keep the brochure simple and not duplicate other Design Commission materials. The Commission suggested that the projects highlighted could be the Design Commission's "greatest hits". The Commission wondered if there are place themes that run through the projects that could be used to organize them. The group discussed the trade off between color and paper quality. The Commission recommended printing in black and white, or possibly black and white with one color.

The Commission cautioned the team to make sure that all of the highlighted projects aren't open spaces. They feel that there should be a variety of projects. The Commission feels that the piece of the brochure highlighting different projects is much clearer than the other side of the brochure. They feel that this should be more of an historical synthesis and have less information about the Commission itself. One suggestion was to show projects reviewed by the Commission alongside other historical events. Some commissioners would like the format to be bolder. Others are concerned about producing a brochure that would have limited shelf-life. There was discussion about having a brochure with two parts, one that is fixed and one that pulls out. It was also suggested that it would be helpful if the brochure was designed to read better from a distance.

The team from CityDesign will make changes to the format based on the committees suggestions and will meet with the Commission again later to review their progress.

17 July 2003 Commission Business

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----|---|
| ACTION ITEMS | A. | <u>TIMESHEETS</u> |
| | B. | <u>MINUTES FROM 03 JULY 2003</u> - APPROVED |
| DISCUSSION ITEMS | C. | <u>PROJECT UPDATES</u> - CUBELL |
| | D. | <u>RECRUITMENT UPDATE</u> - CUBELL |
| ANNOUNCEMENTS | E. | <u>DC/PC WATERFRONT SUBCOMMITTEE</u> - JUL 17 TH , 4-5:30PM, |
| | F. | <u>MONORAIL REVIEW PANEL</u> - JUL 21 ST , 4-7PM |

17 Jul 2003 Project: **SDOT Artist in Residence**

Phase: Briefing

Previous Reviews: None

Presenters: Barbara Goldstein, Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs
Daniel Mihalyo, SDOT Artist in ResidenceAttendees: Annie Han
Silvia Whitney, Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs
Ruri Yampolsky, Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs
Frank Yanagimachi, Seattle Dept. of Transportation

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 169 | DC00311)

Summary: **The Commission thanked the artist and the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs for coming. The Commission would like to make the following comments.**

- **The Commission encourages the artist to acknowledge that SDOT also paves and to look at the paving division for ways to make an artful rug out of the city;**
- **encourages the artist to organize his projects by type, and suggests that art in the right of way is one category, salvage is another, historic approach is another, and recommends that the artist investigate actual movement through the city as another type;**
- **wholeheartedly supports the idea of an exhibit focused on earthmoving for two reasons; 1) it will help Seattle understand itself and 2) it will help people understand the loss of the photography department which helped to document the City;**
- **applauds the breadth of the artist's investigations, and recommends for a Pilot Project that the artist either pick one project that will make itself apparent and that is very strong, or pick a couple of smaller projects, and looks forward to seeing whatever is brought forward;**
- **encourages the artist to look at policy and changes in policy that would generate programming that allows artists' work to occur without having to rely on one percent capital funds authorization; and**
- **applauds both the artist and SDOT for taking on the Artist in Residence program because it encourages the agencies involved to see themselves in ways that they wouldn't otherwise.**

When the artist in residence program began its focus was on having artists represent the work that was being done by different departments in the city. The current program is more focused on long range planning and how art can be incorporated into the departments' work. As well as investigating long range ideas the artists are invited to pick one of their ideas and implement it as a pilot project.

Daniel Mihalyo is the current Artist in Residence in the Seattle Department of Transportation. He has a background both in art and in architecture. He currently has pieces on display at Linda Hodges Gallery. His past work includes a thesis project on homeless housing as well as a book and exhibit documenting the typography of wood burners used in the lumber industry. He has an architectural practice with a partner and also teaches at the University of Washington.

The artist began his residency at SDOT by touring departments and visiting project sites. An early idea of his was to develop a survey of creative objects in the right of way. He was also interested in exploring the history of issues surrounding public art. While beginning his research he attempted to find similar artist in residence programs with transportation departments in other cities, but was unable to find any.

SDOT has roughly 900 employees. The artist was surprised to find that the department was not as labyrinthine and bureaucratic as he expected. He was also encouraged to find that most people seemed to be enjoying their jobs and were excited about the artist in residence program.

One of the artist's initial ideas was to facilitate smaller more intimate public art pieces. He was also interested in encouraging SDOT to steward and reclaim unusable land created as part of their projects. Additionally he wanted to explore how SDOT could incorporate creative and aesthetic thinking into all of their work.

The artist has developed a broad range of ideas from policy changes, to specific art projects, to new staffing potentials. Highlights of these ideas include:

- **funnel arts initiatives to marginalized communities**
- **encourage non-traditional mediums already occurring in the right of way**
- **find art opportunities in recurring SDOT projects** – build on existing success of under bridge art in Seattle – use artistic bollards at trail crossings to identify trails
- **change street use permit policy** – policy should encourage creative activity in the right of way – should be proactive rather than reactive
- **municipal reuse and salvage yard** – salvage and sort construction debris and signage for retail and artists
- **wayfinding on signage control boxes** – make use of signage control boxes for local area maps and wayfinding in the city
- **neighborhood sidewalks program** – encourage unique sidewalks that identify different Seattle neighborhoods
- **brass sidewalk inlays** – incorporate a North arrow and commemorate concrete crew's work
- **remnant adoption program** – encourage citizens to adopt remnant land at grid intersections or concrete medians
- **art survey in the right of way**
- **reinstate photography department**
- **exhibit on earth moving in Seattle**

The artist will continue to develop long range planning ideas for two more months. After that he will spend six months developing a particular project. He is considering either working on a capitol improvement project or on a number of smaller projects.

Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns

- Encourages the artist to focus on policy changes within SDOT. Applauds the inexpensive projects, but feels there will be more impact by spending more money. Working internally within the

department would also have more of an impact.

- Applauds the artist on a great group of ideas. Encourages him to pick one or two projects, or something that will make a mark. Likes the idea of the earthmoving exhibit.
- Did not know about the photography department. Is curious about its role.
 - The artist explained that in the past the department photographed construction projects before, during and after they were built. These photographs have been extremely useful afterward. For example details of the construction of the Alaskan Way Seawall are only known because of these photographs. The department has now been downsized and is only used to take portraits of elected officials.
- Encourages the artist to be more conceptual in categorizing his ideas. Feels that his ideas fall into three large categories; 1) art in the right of way 2) sustainability and 3) historical documentation. Notes that all SDOT projects are about movement. Suggests that the artist develop ideas in a fourth category that addresses this movement.
- Encourages the artist to develop ideas that change SDOT programs and incorporates art into the core of their programs. Suggests that the artist should not be afraid to advocate for policy changes.
- Feels that there is potential in paving as art. There could be an artist in residence in the paving department.
- Notes that the commission is wholeheartedly in favor of the Artist in Residence program.

Key Visitor Comments and Concerns

- Applauds the Artist in Residence program. SDOT feels it has been extremely valuable, and has given the department a new perspective on its projects.

17 July 2003 Project: **Vacation Policy Revisions**

Phase: Staff Briefing

Previous Reviews: 15 May 2003 (Briefing)

Presenters: Beverly Barnett, Seattle Dept. of Transportation
Virginia Beas-Garcia, Council Central Staff Consultant

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 170 | DC00166)

Action: The Commission thanks the presenters for initiating the conversation about potential revisions to the street and alley vacation procedures and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.

- The Commission appreciates the systematic approach that is being taken and the opportunity to get feedback;
- agrees that the City should work toward more clarity and predictability in the vacation process and believes that there is the opportunity to spare staff, Design Commission, and Council time;
- feels that the current two-step process observed by the Commission would work better in the framework of having a threshold process in which staff clarifies those steps for applicants and addresses some of the underlying land use predicaments that are driving vacations when they should not;
- advocates that the first meeting between project proponents and the Design Commission should address only urban design aspects and the impact of the vacation on the overall city;
- feels that the second step is justified only by an overriding public benefit, and the purpose of that second meeting should address the design development of the public benefit;
- feels that the Commission is effective in its current role of analysis of the urban fabric and feels very strongly that it should continue to be a part of that discussion in the future;
- feels that the process should anticipate issues that trigger alley vacations when they do not need to and asks that staff begin to identify recurring themes where vacation requests might be forestalled through different means;
- recognizes the Commission's own role in what is a confusing process for developers, particularly because the makeup of the Commission is constantly changing, and feels that the process needs to be much more systematic and follow a set of written rules;
- acknowledges that the current process asks applicants to work in a way that they do not normally work and asks developers to act in a way that is not in their own self interest;
- recognizes that there are fundamental flaws in the current process and would like to participate in an open discussion with all of the stakeholders involved in the vacation process; and
- supports the concepts underlying the Commission's issue paper while acknowledging that there are problems in the current implementation of these ideas.

Virginia Beas-Garcia met with Councilmember Richard Conlin to find out what Councilmember Conlin would like to have considered in the review of the street and alley vacation process. Councilmember Conlin indicated that under the current process it takes too long to reach a decision. He feels that the City does not say “yes” or “no” very well. He would like there to be more predictability in the process. He also feels that if the answer is no, that it should be decided earlier in the process. Beverly Barnett indicated that the current procedure was adopted in the mid 80’s and there seems to be consensus in the City that it is time to review it and make changes as necessary.

The presenters stated that one idea being explored is having a threshold decision earlier in the vacation process to screen out projects that will definitely not get approval. The Commission feels that it would be extremely important in a threshold scenario for applicants to understand that they could still be denied the vacation later in the process even after receiving an initial “yes”. Virginia Beas-Garcia also indicated Councilmember Conlin’s desire to have the public benefit required of projects to be more quantifiable.

Councilmember Conlin would like to review the Commission’s role in the vacation process in order to find out what works and what does not work under the current system. According to Virginia Beas-Garcia, Councilmember Conlin stated that the Commission should not be required to decide whether or not a vacation impacts the city grid. He indicated that perhaps this is a technical issue that would be better handled by other staff. Another idea to explore is having the Commission review the application after the initial “yes” has been given.

The presenters distributed an informal memo intended to help start the conversation about revisions to the vacation process and the Design Commission’s role in the process.

Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns

- Would like to discuss item #6 on the memo concerning the comparison between the Schnitzer review and the Starbucks review. Questions whether City Council thinks that the Commission got to “no” quickly in the Starbucks review.
 - Proponents stated that the Council felt that this was a very efficient review.
- Agrees that the Schnitzer process was slow. Feels that the Commission tried to say “no”, but that the developer did not want to hear it and that the Commission tried to be diplomatic.
- Is concerned that when the Commission says “no” it may be putting Council in an awkward position. In the Starbucks project there was no question that the vacation should be denied. The Commission was still concerned about being diplomatic in saying “no” and what the repercussions for Council might be.
- Wonders where Council feels too much time is being spent. Thinks that in many cases applicants spend too much time and money preparing graphics for the initial review.
- Wonders if the City wants to be more or less lenient with vacations in the future.
 - Proponents stated that the City is not interested in increasing or decreasing the number of vacations that are permitted. They are interested in clarifying the process.
- Is surprised that Councilmember Conlin believes that the Design Commission should not be involved in the decision regarding the impact of the vacation on the city grid. Feels that this is not just a technical issue, but a very important urban design issue.
- Feels the City should start from scratch and develop a new process rather than modifying the existing one. Thinks that the idea of having a threshold in the process is a good one, as long as it is

acknowledged that most vacation applications will be denied.

- Suggests that the design component should be taken out of the first review. This review should deal with urban analysis only. If a project passes this first review then a second review could be held to discuss the public benefits and design of the project. Feels that many applicants are confused about the criteria for vacations and mistakenly believe that images of an attractive project will convince the Commission to approve the vacation.
- Feels that applicants should be prepared in advance of the first threshold by staff. Thinks that most vacations could be solved by other means. It would speed up the process if these projects were identified earlier.
- Feels that people apply for vacations that really shouldn't be considered. Maybe if the stages were more clearly separated it would alleviate this problem.
 - Proponents feel that developers will want to move through the process as quickly as possible. If they get approval at the first stage they won't want to wait a long time for the second review.
- Notes that applicants need to demonstrate that there is no other way, than a vacation, for the project to work. Feels that developers often have a different idea of what is necessary for a project to happen i.e. they feel that they need bigger floorplates to get the rents that they want.
- Thinks it is important to clarify that vacations are only granted if there is a demonstrated public benefit, not just a benefit to the developer.
- Is concerned about the proposal to quantify the necessary public benefits. It is incumbent upon the designer/developer to explore these benefits. There is no set amount of public amenities that can guarantee a vacation.
- Feels that in a typical process the designers are not used to doing an urban design study of the area. The analysis required for the Commission review is often developed very superficially. Questions if the Commission should force applicants to do an analysis that they don't want to do.
- Feels it is critical to have a conversation that involves all of the parties involved in the vacation process. These stakeholders are:
 - The Design Commission
 - City Council and Council staff
 - City Staff
 - Developers
- Feels that a long process has been created because of a planning failure. Questions if it would be possible to do a typography of alleys that identifies which alleys could or could not be considered for vacations, and which if any, are not functional, and should not need to go through a vacation process at all.
 - Beverly Barnett indicated that the City does not have the resources to do this sort of analysis.
- Thinks that it would not be difficult to quantify different types of alleys in the city. Sees three

categories as being downtown, residential, and industrial.

- Is concerned about potentially eliminating alleys in areas that are currently industrial, but that could become commercial or residential in the future.