

Seattle Design Commission

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

05 May 2005

Gregory J. Nickels,
Mayor

David Spiker
Chair

Charles Anderson

Pam Beyette

Karen Kiest

Hannah McIntosh

Anindita Mitra

Sheri Olson

Nic Rossouw

Darrell Vange

Guillermo Romano,
Executive Director

Layne Cubell,
Commission Coordinator

Projects Reviewed

Green Building and Market Transformation
Alaskan Way Viaduct/Seawall Workshop
Safeco Insurance Project-Skybridge and Street Vacation

Convened: 8:30am

Adjourned: 12:30pm

Commissioners Present

David Spiker, Chair
Pam Beyette
Karen Kiest
Hannah McIntosh
Anindita Mitra
Sheri Olson
Nic Rossouw
Dennis Ryan
Darrell Vange

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Layne Cubell
Tom Iurino
Emily Podolak



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Development

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05May 2005 Project: Green Building and Market Transformation

Phase: Staff Briefing

Previous Reviews: none

Presenters: Lynne Barker, Department of Planning and Development

Attendees: Rebecca Herzfeld, Legislative Department
Meg Moorehead, Legislative Department
Neil Powers, Legislative Department
Monica Jimenez, Department of Transportation

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 220 DC00000)

Summary: The Commission thanks proponent for her compelling and well-organized presentation and

- **commends the city's leadership in promoting green building, in particular through creating Department of Planning and Development's Sustainable Building Program and establishing the Office of Sustainability and the Environment.**
- **is unanimous in its desire to make green building an integrated part of city development.**
- **towards that end, the Commission believes that certain issues remain unresolved. The Commission's questions relate to:**
 - **The value and cost of the current process of LEED certification with the Green Building Council, and the budgeting of public projects to absorb the cost of the certification process;**
 - **The questionable guarantee of "green performance" through the LEED certification process (since the checklist makes many key elements of green building, such as energy optimization an option);**
 - **The possible integration of key "green values" into building code and review;**
 - **The opportunity for a broad-scale approach to integrating green development, from neighborhoods plans to planning for mobility; and**
 - **The city's commitment to fully integrating green values in ALL city functions, departments, and departmental review processes; and supporting the capacity building that will be necessary to making Seattle truly green.**

Proponent presented an overview on what is happening in the market place, focusing mostly on private sector, it is relevant to the Commission because it reviews right of way projects and works with private developers on occasion, and also an opportunity to see how it affects public projects as well.

The City of Seattle has been an early leader in embracing LEED and using it as a performance standard for their own buildings. The city has initiated the Urban Sustainability Forum, a series to start a public dialogue about what is urban sustainability and green urbanism, timely as the design community is in the process of trying to define what green urbanism means. Experts, national and international, present different aspects of green urbanism giving a broad understanding of the different issues and new models.

The proponent presented case studies created by Department of Planning and Development and the US Green Building Council to demonstrate the business case for green building. The case studies focus on why the organization decided to build green, and the business strategy they were trying to accomplish.

Why Build Green

The building industry is the nation's largest manufacturing industry; 13% of GDP. The national average, 40% of waste is from construction. In United States, buildings are responsible for 35% of greenhouse gases; buildings use 39% of energy use and 12% of potable water use, most for irrigation.

People spend 90% of time inside and over past 50 years, since WWII, indoor environmental quality has continually gotten worse. Indoor air can be 2, 5 to 100 times worse than outdoor air quality. EPA ranks indoor air quality as one of top health risks in the nation.

Decisions about the buildings that we build are based on 2% of the life cycle cost of the building, capital costs represent 2%, personnel or salaried people occupying the buildings make up 92% and energy, 6%. People don't often think about building buildings that support the people who occupy the buildings.

Historical Overview

As city became interested in green building, realized that the building industry is highly fragmented in order to transform the market place, there was a need to bring everyone together, to have a shared vision. In 1997 a local initiative for the City of Seattle to make recommendations on what the city could do to promote green building, identified 7 strategies; the most important, lead by example and develop a standard for green building (there was no definition at that time). In 1998, began to address the regional scale. Two hundred professionals from British Columbia, Washington and Oregon met together to figure out what to do regionally to promote green building in the market place. Similar strategies emerged and were recorded in the Pacific Northwest Regional Sustainable Building Action Plan. LEED launched into the market place in the year 2000, and as a regional community we agreed to embrace LEED and focus on promoting it in the market place instead of each city developing their own standards, deciding it was not an efficient use of resources time or money. Many people from this area were involved with the development of LEED and continue to be involved in the leadership and communities of the US green Building Council.

Today

The green building standard is transforming the market place and not just the building market but also increase in FSC certified forest lands. Most of criteria of LEED are in alignment with what we are trying to achieve as a city, stormwater management, transit oriented development. The

City of Seattle has 13 LEED certified buildings more than any in the nation, 9 in Portland, 36 projects in the pipeline, represents 5.6 million square feet of development and 1.4 billion in capital investment.

The Department of Planning and Development is in the process of working with King County Public Health to develop a rainwater harvesting code that they hope to be drafted by middle of July 2005 and ready for the marketplace. King Street Station using LEED for existing buildings which targets how building is operated, maintained, cleaned, renovated, occupant recycling etc. It has been done for low income housing on a very tight budget.

The performance on average of Seattle's LEED buildings are as follows: energy use 15 to 30% less, 30% less potable water use, managing stormwater impact on site, recycling at least 75% of construction waste

Last fall there were 1500 registered projects, there are now over 2000 projects which is at least 5% of the new construction market place, the "tipping point" is 2.5% which means the market is transforming, it is not a trend but rather a shift. This theory is based on book the Tipping Point and market diffusion theory.

Why the private sector is building green

- higher return on investment, 2 years or less
- higher employment recruitment and retention
- higher net operating income from lower utility costs
- increased productivity, enhanced health and well-being of employees

It is becoming the contemporary definition of a quality building.

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Asks how measure percentage of dollars spent on LEED
 - The Office of Sustainability and Environment hired a consultant group to survey architecture and engineering firms, dollar value of construction projects in the area. It is about 10% of dollars spent on LEED
- Comments that the Commission reviews green roofs proposed on tiny structures, is this just a gesture, does it make sense to use it, is it the best use of dollars
 - More important to focus on performance on what trying to achieve rather than specific strategies, thinks that could limit innovation in the industry if only focus on one strategy but instead focus on the goal, i.e. green roofs versus attenuation of stormwater, creating habitat, green space. Great thing about green roofs is that it achieves multiple goals but other strategies will work
- Expresses concern that there is some consensus among public project managers that they would love to do LEED and many of their projects would count as LEED, but don't pursue certification process because it is exhausting time-wise and financially, hears that certification is not included in the budget, the green technology is, the certification isn't; asks if proponent often hears this and how to address it
 - Yes and no, issue is that some people are not seeing the value of getting certification, currently no way to make decision based on performance, LEED allows a level of confidence by public in what they are receiving and that it is not "green wash". Organizations that have done several LEED projects they are

developing a process for documenting and are seeing how to control and reduce costs because they have a process in place.

- Feedback that city only approaching individual projects and not working across departmental lines to embrace it, if one person in city worked on getting all projects certified
 - The department had someone who was let go, example of loss of institutional capacity
- Asks if it is being considered in terms of easing the bar of certification or standards being considered to be nationalized like in Europe don't pay a private organization for something special but rather part of the process like ADA.
 - Not at this time is the industry is moving towards integrating it into code, the city of Seattle may be able to do it fairly easily 5 years from now if transformation of marketplace.
- Asks how the city is measuring impact on the environment overall, how do we determine what are the priorities, for instance would investment in mass transit have greater impact
- Comments that still not guaranteed in what we are getting still is a list of choices to qualify for LEED, should it be, as a city do we apply standards in addition to LEED that directly address certain issues and guarantee a certain performance
 - City does require that all city funded projects focus on specific criteria and do have a certain level of energy performance but again do we want to as a city start directing specific areas, flexibility of LEED is beneficial in that a building owner can decide what is important to them and their project.
 - LEED is an evolving document, taking a look at the documentation process and how to streamline, hired a consultant to interview developers across the US also in the process of developing the 3.0 version which is different than the standard is right now and take into consideration the weighting of more important credits
- Comments that if it is more incorporated into benefits into the code and making it more mundane and mainstream, greatest way this would change things in the country if it was incorporated into the code less about being certified and more about being codified
- Comments that the interesting thing that the companies using LEED are the leading companies in their fields, parallel of companies philosophies and innovational thinking
 - Professional firms in the area, leaders in green building are increasing their profitability, they are recognized leaders in the field and are getting lots of green work
- Asks if anyone is focusing on the planning side
 - Yes, working on how to integrate sustainability into planning projects
- Comments that South Lake Union is a big opportunity work with developers to achieve mutual benefits, area of most intense development in the city of Seattle
 - Looking at alternative strategies to deliver energy to the south lake union, geothermal systems, renewable energy systems and looking at the advantage of having higher energy efficiency in the area

05May 2005 Project: Alaskan Way Viaduct/Seawall Workshop

Phase: staff briefing

Previous Reviews: none

Presenters: Commission staff

Attendees: none

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 228 DC00242)

The Commission discussed their involvement in the three Viaduct/Seawall workshops, which focused on the surface design of Alaskan Way and its environs (including a lid that would extend from Pike Place Market to the waterfront) once the viaduct is removed and the tunnel built. They spent time reviewing their final recommendations and discussed how to compile the information with graphics to create a final booklet/report.

05May 2005 Project: Safeco Insurance Project

Phase: Vacation and Skybridge Briefing

Previous Reviews: none

Presenters: Dan Huberty, Zimmer Gunsul Frasca
Phillip Goodman, Safeco Insurance
Roger Pearce, Foster Pepper Sheffelman
Beverly Barnett, Seattle Department of Transportation
Rex Stratton, Seattle Department of Transportation
Cliff Portman, Department of Planning and Development
Mike Podowski, Department of Planning and Development

Attendees: Steve Trainer, Seneca Group
Mike Hassenger, Seneca Group
Jeff Hencz, Safeco Insurance
Rebecca Herzfeld, Legislative Department
Stephanie Pure, Council Staff
Joe Bell, Seattle Department of Transportation

Commissioners Karen Kiest and Hannah McIntosh recused themselves from the presentation as their firms are involved in the project

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 170 DC00000)

Action: The Commission thanks proponents for their presentation and exhaustive background materials provided today and

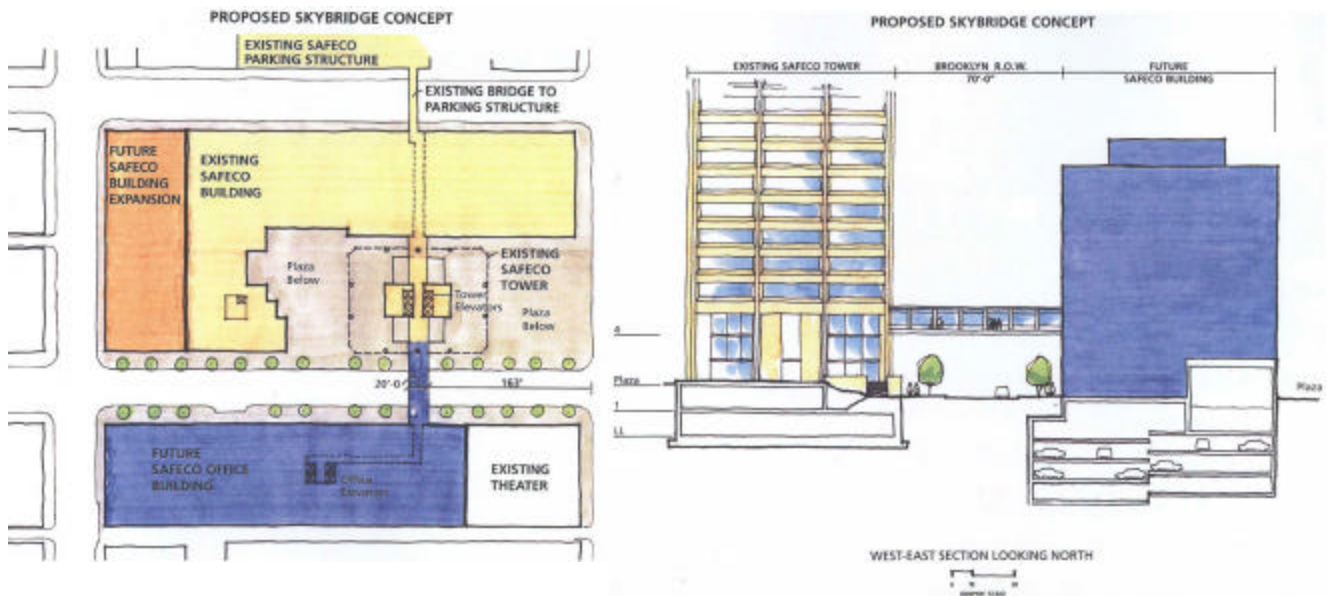
- recognizes the significant economic value of Safeco's commitment to the University District and to the City of Seattle, but remind proponents that their charter is to promote design excellence and therefore they look for specific public benefits and design features in their considerations ;
- with regard to the subterranean street vacation, believes that the request appears reasonable, provided the development plans do not compromise or impose additional significant cost on the future Sound Transit north link light rail route and station proposed for the area;
- with regard to the skybridge, agrees that a bridge better accomplishes the operations and security objectives of the proponent compared to a tunnel or at-grade crossing, but they request that proponents reduce the width of the 20-foot skybridge, in order to reduce its impact on the street;
- believes that the public benefits package submitted by the Proponent was very weak, and asks that this element be considered further. Specifically, they ask the proponents to:
 - consider using the existing plaza and any new public open spaces to present a public art program for which Safeco is already well known. The south edge of the project in particular has potential for beneficial plazas and public open space.

- **study ways to create a superlative streetscape on both sides of Brooklyn Ave. as they control both sides of the street.**
- **recommends that proponents explore ways to activate the sidewalk-level building facades on both sides of the street, either with retail or with uses where transparency is appropriate.**
- **in summary, believes that the proposed public benefits are not significantly greater than the improvements required by code, so additional public benefits should be explored and proposed during the next presentation;**
- **recommends that when considering additional public amenities, proponents should evaluate and consider the entire campus' perimeter, the alleys and the sidewalks in and around the campus as areas for enhancement;**
- **believes that the proposed subterranean alley vacation (all approve) and proposed skybridge application (6 favor, 1 oppose) are justified based on their assessment of existing and potential urban design conditions in the public realm;**
- **recommends that prior to City Council review of the proposed vacation and skybridge application the public benefit package be reconsidered and additional public benefits be proposed and presented to the Commission in a subsequent presentation.**

Skybridge Application

Safeco is planning to consolidate its operations on one of its two Puget Sound area campuses, either the Seattle University District or Redmond. Because of its strong historic ties with the University District, Safeco's preferred location for consolidation is at the University District site. A key part of Safeco's consolidation will be creating a corporate campus that promotes collaboration, creates greater business efficiency and functions as a functionally-integrated unit. While designs for a University District campus is not yet determined, a new office building on the east side of Brooklyn Ave NE, will be the largest new component of the Safeco campus complex. It will be critical to integrate this new building with the existing Safeco Tower and other buildings on site. Safeco anticipates thousands of trips per day between its buildings because many core functions will be centralized: employee cafeteria, training rooms, major meeting rooms and auditoria, mail and supply services.

To foster these goals an efficient campus connection is needed, that is not circuitous, is convenient and is weather-protected for pedestrians and supplies. A secure connection is also needed, for employees that work after hours and to protect private information of policy holders. Safeco operates a secured facility that requires passing through a security access station, an internal campus connection will cut back on trips through security system. The campus connection also needs to avoid conflicts with traffic. The number of pedestrians using the proposed skybridge would be significant and putting thousands of crosswalk trips back and forth across Brooklyn Ave. NE on a daily basis could create significant pedestrian/vehicle conflicts. The skybridge would not take pedestrian traffic off the street but simply allow for Safeco internal pedestrian trips, and therefore would not be expected to reduce sidewalk pedestrian traffic for Safeco employees' trips to University District restaurants and shops.



Proposed skybridge concept, plan and cross section

The proposed skybridge horizontal clearance of 23 feet is adequate for any traffic that would use Brooklyn Ave., the skybridge will not conflict with street lighting utilities and allows full view of signals located at the intersection of Brooklyn Ave NE and NE 45th Street from a safe distance, no views from City SEPA viewpoints or view corridors would be impaired.

While tunnel alternatives were explored, none of the alternatives provide an efficient connection that would allow the Safeco campus buildings to function together as an integrated unit, a tunnel conflicts with city storm/sewer main and building foundation, and at-grade connection would not provide the secure, weather-protected connection necessary for Safeco's operations.

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Asks if main elevators go to down to basement to access tunnel
 - No only one elevator that goes to main floors
- Asks if light rail is located below CSO
 - Yes, it is down 80 feet
- Asks if there is a bridge from the Tower going to the existing parking lot, was it accomplished through the same process as present
 - Yes there is a skybridge, it was built in 1968 so don't know if processes were the same
- Asks how many people expect to use the skybridge in one day
 - New building holds 750 people, between trips over for meetings, cafeteria and parking location, and traffic going other way we are anticipating about 3000 trips
- Asks if skybridge wasn't there how it would impact productivity
 - It would be significant, we haven't come up with a statistical model that analyzes that but just the thought of the mail and supplies needing to go down to that level,

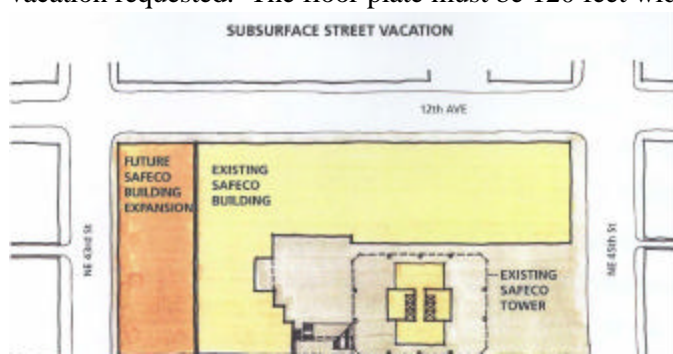
employees that work two blocks away express that they feel isolated and there is not a great weather-protected route for them to get between buildings, number of disabled persons that use wheelchairs, need safe and weather protected route. In terms of quantifying impact don't have numbers but in terms of qualitative impact yes, deal with it now, had to build additional eating facilities and mail facilities in the other building in order to function for the 300 employees that are located in other building.

- Expresses that the complications with this design strategy is that proponents state they want the connection for offices but are making the connection on the auditorium and cafeteria floor, not sure how this meets broader goal
- Elevators all stop at plaza level and cafeteria level, and then serve the rest of the tower, the 4th floor is a common floor that can serve all of the floors up and down and also deal with a place that people are going to go in mass during certain times of the day
- Asks for basis of bridge width, asks if it is based on projected use
 - It is based on the existing skybridge on site which is 28 feet wide, there is the potential to reduce width
- Asks if the current at grade crossing will remain as it is now or be improved
 - As it is now, currently has two bulb outs at crosswalk
- Proposes changing its location to under the skybridge so crosswalk would be weather-protected as well
 - There is nothing that says it needs to stay where it is now, will look at relocating
- Asks how wide proposed at grade crossing is
 - There are two lanes of traffic, parking on each side, approximately 22 feet
- Asks if employees will remain at Roosevelt Commons
 - Yes, proponents have long term lease there until 2013
- Asks for clarity on additional employee numbers
 - Currently there is extra capacity to occur at the location, anticipating 750 for just the new building, going to bring over 1350 employees from the Redmond campus there is existing 1600 employees included in Roosevelt Commons so that is 2950, capacity for growth of additional 250 in this new development

Partial Subsurface Street Vacation

Proponents are seeking a subsurface street vacation of the east 17 feet of the Brooklyn Avenue NE right of way between NE 43rd street on the south and the north property line of the Safeco Insurance Company property on the north in order to provide adequate width for a garage. Given the size constraints of the IHOP parcel and existing loading facilities to the west, parking is not feasible under the smaller building. Underground parking would be located in a multi-level garage beneath the larger building and in existing Safeco parking facilities, which includes garages to the west of the Tower.

A functionally efficient underground garage cannot be constructed without the subsurface street vacation requested. The floor plate must be 120 feet wide in order to provide for an efficient



design for ingress and egress, to accommodate turning radii, and to provide for a sufficient number of parking stalls at reasonable

excavation depths. The width of the site is 103 feet. Safeco has analyzed the feasibility of a “no vacation” alternative. While it is technically possible to construct a garage without the subsurface vacation, the garage would have to be deeper, requiring more excavation, would require a longer construction period, would be significantly more costly to construct and would be functionally inefficient. There are no major utility lines or facilities within the subsurface vacation area, it will have no impact on the streets light, air, open space or views.

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Asks if considered spanning into alley right of way rather than into the street right of way
 - Yes, couldn't go as far into the alley, right now it is only 14 feet wide
- Asks if it gives Sound Transit enough clearance
 - Yes, proponents have been working with Sound Transit but still have to study with them where the tunnel goes and whether or not need to cut back the bottom level
- Asks if it is contingent upon working with Sound Transit
 - Ultimately that is City Council and Mayor's decision, needs to be worked out but hasn't been discussed enough yet. Are very willing to work with Sound Transit but are unable to wait for them to get to that point, conversations will continue with Sound Transit
- Asks how one enters the parking
 - Off the alley, through a ramp, coming in on an access off of 43rd Ave. for both in and out

Proposed Public Benefit Package

Proponents proposed the following public benefits:

- A major employer with long-term ties to the community will remain in Seattle;
- Employment will be significantly expanded with the new complex potentially accommodating 3200 employees;
- The expansion expresses public confidence in and contributes to a more stable future for the University District community that has struggled with various problems over the last several years;
- The Safeco workforce will continue to patronize and support neighboring businesses, providing crucial economic benefits to those businesses;
- The expansion will include creation of a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, with attractive landscaping and related amenities, and

- It includes underground parking which reduces the demand for on street parking and which is neighborhood friendly.

The proposed project fulfills one of the City's University District Area Revitalization Plan's key goals to "stimulate private investment what helps create a healthy community."

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Comments that the first two points are not public benefits by our definition, they are self-referential in terms of the project
- Reducing off street parking, doesn't see where it is a public benefit, building parking to take care of Safeco's parking needs, it is not providing more public parking
- Points four five and six are improvements assuming that they are above Department of Planning and Development's and Seattle Department of Transportation's standards for rebuilding sidewalks and streets; comments that has not heard anything above and beyond the requirements
- Requests a more definitive and fleshed out proposed public benefit package
- Comments that the benefits the proponents would accrue from the vacation and application are substantial, getting a much less costly and more efficient garage underground and efficient access via skybridge
- Comments that there has not been sufficient public benefits proposed but disagrees a little believing that bringing 1300 jobs to the University District is a phenomenal benefit and should be recognized but agrees that it is not a design issue
- Suggests that this is an opportunity to discuss benefits for proponents to come back with next time
- Proposes retail on base of buildings
 - there will be along 43rd, but it is required to be retail
 - Responds that it is then not a benefit
- Suggests reducing footprint on 43rd to create some open space, refreshing existing plaza on north end of project
- Suggests working with Sound Transit on open space and entry to station
- Expresses that is not convinced for the need of the skybridge, prefers that the pedestrians be on the street level and believes that there are possibilities for weather protection at that level
- Recommends that improvements can be made on the streetscape experience with art, making skybridge attractive and connection with street level

Public Questions and Comments

Beverly Bartlett, Seattle Department of Transportation

Subsurface vacation, petition is new and have not looked at utility issues, the subsurface vacation has fewer implications than most vacations they look at. Most important part, is that the below-grade vacation does not infer any surface area and doesn't alter any of the development potential of the site; sub surface rights facilitate the parking but do not alter the building or streetscape in any way. Because of this, it does have fewer policy and land use applications.

A lot still to work out with Sound Transit, but word from them is that they can work with this because there facility is not yet designed and would collaborate on some conditioned language. It is a little more challenging with this project because we have less information about how the project is going to work.

The public benefit for subsurface vacation is a little bit different because not dealing with the same land use implications. Looking at requirements of public benefit for the vacation and the impacts of the proposed skybrige, we will be most interested in refinement of the pedestrian character and safety, want to see it as a vibrant streetscape.