



APPROVED

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
May 15, 2008**

**Seattle
Design
Commission**

Convened: 8:30am
Adjourned: 3:30pm

Greg Nickels
Mayor

Karen Kiest
Chair

Tasha Atchison

Brendan Connolly

John Hoffman

Mary Johnston

Juanita LaFond

Dennis Ryan

Norie Sato

Darrell Vange

Darby Watson

Guillermo Romano
Executive Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Projects Reviewed

Freeway Park
Seattle Center Skate Park
Block 101 Alley Vacation
Capitol Hill Park
John and Summit Park

Design Commissioners Present

Darrell Vange, Acting Chair
Tasha Atchison
Brendan Connolly
John Hoffman
Juanita LaFond
Dennis Ryan
Darby Watson

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino
Ian Macek



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15 May 2008 **Project:** **Block 101 Alley Vacation**
Phase: Alley Vacation: Public Benefits
Last Reviews: 4-3-2008
Presenters: Tim Clemen, Walker Macy
Sharon Covoman, Vulcan, Inc.
Peter Krech, Callison
Attendees: Beverly Barnett, SDOT
Jennifer Dalley, Callison
Phil Fujii, Vulcan, Inc.
Lori Jay, Callison
Scott Kemp, DPD
Michael Medina, Callison
Sean McKeever, Callison
John Schoettler, Amazon

Time: 1.0 hours

(SR170 /RS0606)

ACTION

The public benefit package is deemed adequate, and is approved by a vote of 5-2. The Commissioner recommends that the following comments be considered in the next design stage, which will be reviewed by staff:

- **Raises concerns over the inversion of the public benefit diagram, as most benefits are interior to the block rather than on the perimeter.**
- **Concern that lobby entrances are sited on the interior plazas and not directly on the street, which may decrease the activation of the public sidewalks.**
- **Appreciate the preservation of the Terry Avenue Building, which adds depth of time. A positive feature is providing eyes on the adjacent spaces. Support moving the rooftop mechanical equipment to new development.**
- **Appreciation for the level of details of the streetscapes**
- **Recognize that Harrison is the logical path for pedestrians and that the team has extended the curb and provided features to support this.**
- **Appreciate the sidewalk improvements per the Terry Ave guidelines, which are not mandatory. Extended streetscape on Terry is consistent with other developments.**
- **Appreciate that the project matches the widened sidewalk on the adjacent block on Harrison.**
- **Support the use of display windows to enhance the perimeter sidewalks where transparency is not possible.**
- **Appreciate the mid-block bulb on Boren.**
- **The landscape consistency enhances the seamlessness of the transitions.**
- **Appreciate eroding of the corners of the buildings at the mid-block entrance and the angled building walls at the Boren-side plaza.**
- **Appreciate extension of sidewalk improvements at the Bio-Rad loading docks.**
- **Appreciate including the sun/shade studies in the presentation.**

- **Suggest exploration of public art in the project.**
- **Concerns over the garden rooms and that they will not feel public.**
- **Encourage the team to promote uses in the Terry Avenue Building that activate the Big Tree plaza, with services that are inviting to the general public, and to provide public amenities and seating in the plaza in addition to those associated with the Terry Building commercial tenants.**

The two dissenting votes were based on the opinion that the public benefit package as proposed provides open space that is focused on private retail use at the interior of the block, rather than allowing the public benefit to be sufficiently public.

Project Presentation

Project Background

A partial alley vacation is requested in order to reconfigure the private parcels into a more viable set of building footprints, while saving the two storey Terry Avenue building, which has been nominated for landmark status by the proponent. Preservation of the Terry Avenue building is proposed as the main public benefit. It has character that is indicative of the past history of the neighborhood.

Open spaces are incorporated into all of the varying blocks of the Amazon campus. The varying character of the spaces adds to a sum that is greater than the individual blocks. There is a lot of interaction with pedestrian routes and the space of Block 101. The open space is situated on an axis that provides view corridors to the Space Needle due to the 20ft grade change of the site. The topography of the site will be an integral part of the design, bringing abstract lines into the plazas and acting as a unifying element. The plan also erodes the base of the buildings to expand the ground plane, creating a space that is larger than the actual space between the buildings. The lobby entrances are off the Boren Ave courtyard. The alley will be a dead-end and have a hammerhead turn-around.

The team spoke on the three areas that make up the public benefits package: perimeter street attention, the Terry Avenue Building and its integration, and the through-block connection and series of outdoor rooms created. The proposed through-block connection is different from the proposals for the other blocks in the Amazon campus due to the elevation change across the property.

Perimeter Streets

Terry Avenue is subject to the Terry Ave guidelines, but compliance is not mandatory. The proposal includes sidewalks that are 31ft wide, change of materials, larger tree canopies, bicycle parking and benches in the ROW. All of these things are non-standard elements. The same brick pattern will be used to provide continuity along the blocks all the way to Mercer. Bollards are required due to the 2in curbs. The Terry Ave Building sits five ft beyond the typical property line; therefore it sticks out further into the public ROW than the new construction. The Terry Ave building will be restored with new doors and windows. The curbs on Harrison will be extended to provide more plating space. The parking entrance on Harrison will be aligned with the building across the street. In addition, the sidewalk will be widened to match the adjacent blocks. Planters will be

adjacent to the buildings as well as along the street. Display windows will be behind the planters to hide the aboveground parking. A 15ft setback is required above 45' along Thomas Street to preserve the view corridor, so roof terraces were created. On Boren the tree planting area is increased to expand the plaza into the ROW. The buildings will have overhead canopies above the sidewalk. There is a north/south slope change of 20ft along Boren as well. The improvements on Thomas include curb extensions, drought tolerant street trees, and plantings at the corners. The project will also be improving the right-of-way just across the alley, which is in front of the Bio-Rad service entry.

Terry Avenue Building

The Terry Ave Building will be retained and act as a retail hub for the entire neighborhood, as it is well suited for a wide variety of retail uses. The proponents will seismically upgrade the building as well as add other mechanical services. The building provides eyes on the courtyard. Skylights and windows provide daylight to the interior of the building. The ground floor of the new building is shorter than the existing structure, so the interiors of the buildings do not align. However, the exterior space has been aligned with the Terry Ave Building floor levels to improve pedestrian flow. No structural upgrades will be needed for the proposed eco-roof, which can be used to capture rainwater. Mechanical structures will be moved to the adjacent building and not be located on the roof. The roof will have irrigation to provide varied vegetation.

Through-Block Connection

The through-block connection is comprised of two main spaces, the Boren Plaza and the Terry Avenue Plaza. A series of small spaces will be created, rather than one unified space. The project proposes to use a diversity of tree types to provide visual interest. A rain garden and green wall will be used to add color, texture and interest.

A large plaza will be located adjacent to the Terry Ave Building which includes a large specimen tree to give an immediate impact. The large tree immediately scales the site, and allows better sightlines to the stairs due to the higher canopy. It will provide shade, but not too much. A rain stairway will be integrated into the elevation change. There is an opportunity for the accessible route to tell the narrative of the site, and provide storage to house fixtures used to animate the lower plaza.

The upper Boren Ave courtyard now has a softer stadium stair approach. Movement is under the actual building overhang, which again promotes the eroding of the architecture to allow pedestrian movement. A collection of smaller scaled garden rooms will be created within the larger space to provide a more intimate feeling. Plantings along the east side of Boren act as a push into the courtyard. The area will be active due to the retail space and lobby entrances.

The overall tree selection will provide continuity with adjacent blocks. As a whole, access to water is a larger site problem than access to sunlight. Irrigation will ensure the success of the plantings.

Public Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT:

- The design has advanced. Appreciate the attention to detail on all sides of the development. The Terry Ave improvements cover everything with the guidelines, preservation of the building, and plaza.
- Has preserving an existing building been used before?
 - The building is an icon, whether or not it is designated. Preserving landmark buildings is listed specifically as a public benefit in the Street Vacation policies. The project to the north preserved part of the building, but it did not make use of it as beautifully as here.

Scott Kemp, DPD

- The DRB has been very supportive and likes the general site plan. They are still interested in the façade treatment, garage façade treatment, and tunnel bridge connection. Best design yet seen in SLU.

Commissioner's Comments

- Will the accessible route be the primary access route throughout the year?
 - People are encouraged to go up the stairs; this will be a secondary route.
- Is Terry Ave one-way?
 - Yes, going north.
- Can you access the belvedere without taking the stairs?
 - There will be elevator access on all levels.
- How discretionary are the Terry Ave guidelines?
 - They are guidelines, not mandatory.
- There is an eco-roof on Terry Ave building. Typically used to accept rainwater and allow detention and evaporation, not to have runoff, but will have it on this building.
 - They can only hold 20% of normal rainwater. Also provide bird habitat and fixes nitrogen in the air. Because the soil media is so shallow the water goes through it quite fast, so it's incorporated into the runoff garden.
- Where will water come from for the rainwater stairway?
 - It is a sustainable feature, only from at minimum Terry Ave building roof.
- Will the project be storing rainwater?
 - Not at this point, but the team is exploring the possibility.
- What are the safety implications of this alley type?
 - Pedestrians are not invited to use the alley. In this case they would need to turn around to exit.
- Do any guidelines provide emergency exits in the alley?
 - None do because they are not intended for a pedestrian.
- Not many are dead ends with this type of topographic break, so this does pose a safety concern.
 - Pedestrians will be able to go into the building during business hours.
- Can the team speak about the alley improvements near Bio-Rad?
 - They are not required and are not part of public benefit.
- Green Factor being met primarily by green roofs..

- Is street crossing at Boren encouraged?
 - No.
- Is there any lighting proposed at the Boren plaza?
 - The three lighting strategies are up high having low intensity mood lighting, benches housing linear light fixtures, and decorative lighting higher in the space.
- Appreciate clear presentation.
- The bicycle racks are exposed at the perimeter. Encourage providing public bike storage, and steel channels up the stairways to promote bicycle movement.
- Resting spots for the public are in the shady spots and more private looking spaces. These are not comfortable spaces for the general public.
- Concerns over winds and what will happen.
 - Wind study currently being conducted.
- Terry Ave plaza is the best gathering space. It is the heart of the entire project, frustrated that it is claimed by the private retail spaces.
- Impressed with changes. Appreciate canopy removal on Boren, the sun studies, and adding the specimen tree adding to the open space. However, encourage rethinking type of tree.
- Appreciate attention to detail along the streetscape.
- Appreciate pedestrian connections, but wish the neighboring buildings were shown.
- Would like to have seen how pedestrians will use the space.
- Parking entrance on Harrison. Pedestrian must compete with those using the parking.
- The public benefit seems to mainly be at the middle of the site.
- Safety of the alley is a concern. Would like to see a 24hour access to the public space from the alley.
- Appreciate topographical erosion of the ground plane that the public can appreciate and read as public space.
- Need to find more ways to provide clearly public spaces for seating/respice.
- Encourage public art dimension.
- At Harrison the bulbs and the notch and the way the garage is treated seems like a good resolution.
- Encourage placing a bench around the tree.
- The team may want to investigate the elevated north end of the alley. People have the natural tendency to go to the edge and look below.
- Appreciate the sun and wind studies.
- Appreciate the clear line of sight that has been created across the site.
- Encourage providing seating opportunities that are both commercial and public.
- The streetscape is nice along the perimeter of the building, but the structure is not engaging. Interior through-ways have provided a means for lobby entrances
- Encourage taking tree out along Boren to open up space.
- Garden rooms are perpendicular to the flow and act as barriers. May not be perceived as public.
- Accessible pathway from Terry may create security issues.

- Did not see how the erosion translated into the design.
- The preservation of Terry Ave building does not seem like a public benefit.
- The public benefit around the perimeter responds well. Shares disappointment that there is not more activation along the streets.
- The Boren plaza is too heavily landscaped and may be a logical location for art. Does not see as an oasis, but as pass-through to the haven on Terry.
- The right balance does not exist there to make it a successful public space.