

Seattle design Commission

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APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

June 4, 2009

Convened 8:30 pm
Adjourned 4:00 pm

Agenda Items

Yesler Terrace Redevelopment
Councilmember Rasmussen
Councilmember Clark
Madison Valley Stormwater Improvements – Phase II
Council President Conlin

Commissioners Present

Mary Johnston, Chair
Andrew Barash
Julie Bassuk
Graham Black
Brendan Connolly
John Hoffman
Julie Parrett
Nathan Polanski
Norie Sato

Staff Present

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Jeff Arango



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Celebrating 40 Years 1968-2008



June 4, 2009

Project: Yesler Terrace Redevelopment

Phase: Pre-Design

Last Reviewed: April 2, 2009

Presenters: Judith Kilgore, Seattle Housing Authority

Harold Moniz, Collins Woerman

Attendees: Ray Gastil, DPD

Brian Sullivan, Seattle Housing Authority

Time: 3 hours

(122)

Presentation

The current Yesler Terrace development has 1200 Residents and is the 2nd oldest public housing development in US. Yesler Terrace was the first integrated public housing development and opened in 1939.

Why not replace it?

- Buildings are inadequate for current residents
- Infrastructure is failing
- Replacement alone is not financially feasible

Financial Challenges

- No sources to simply replace what's there
- Cost of new infrastructure and parks – 60 to 90 million
- Cost to replace existing housing – 120 to 140 million

Core values and guiding principles

- Social Equity
 - Promote a diverse community
 - Include stakeholders throughout the process
 - Minimize the impacts of displacement
 - Meet low-income housing needs
 - Foster positive community interactions
- Economic Opportunity
 - Foster access to jobs, transportation and community services
 - Create living wage jobs for residents
 - Promote a micro-loan program to promote small businesses
 - Preserve in-home and small businesses
 - Support job training
- Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability
 - Incorporate smart growth principles
 - Create a safe and healthy community
 - Use environmentally friendly and sustainable building techniques
 - Meet the needs of families, the elderly and those with disabilities
- One-for-One Replacement Housing
 - Replace (or exceed) the current number of low-income units
 - Plan for future growth
 - Expand current boundaries and provide more housing and amenities

- Provide relation assistance
- Give public-housing-eligible residents first priority to returns

Program

- Total site, including ROW is 40 acres.
- Existing Development has 561 low rise apartments on 28 acres
- With higher buildings and a mix of uses we can create a vibrant, livable community
 - Parks and open space
 - Diverse housing types
 - Economic Opportunity
 - Live-work-play
- 3,000-5,000 units
 - 561 extremely low-income units
 - 250 very low-income units
 - 950 low income units
- 800,000 – 1.2 million square feet
- 25-100k sq. ft. of street level retail
- Public open space 5-8 acres

Neighborhood Studies

- The group of blocks in Belltown between Elliott and 2nd Ave. and Sculpture Park is comparable in size and density with 224 units per acre on 24.4 acres and 40% is the ROW.
- Also looked at an area in First Hill between Boylston and Boren Avenues that has 189 units/developable acre with 350,000 sf of office
- The two areas that are part of the neighborhood studies have different urban forms and provide insights into the urban design options for the Yesler Terrace Redevelopment.

Planning Concept Approach

- Constants
 - Program (Housing Neighborhood)
 - Sustainable Strategies
 - Phasing Strategies
 - CRC Guiding Principles & Planning Concepts
- Variables
 - Concept Variables
 - Vision
 - Building Height and Massing
 - Open Space
 - Topography
 - Circulation
 - Connections and Edges
 - Land Use-Office
 - Land Use-Retail

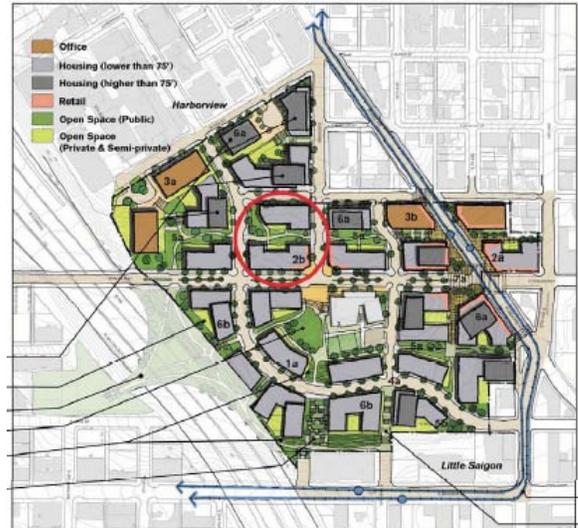


Development Concepts

- Concept A

- Extends the Seattle Grid
- Open Space system of green streets
- Office uses limited to northwest quadrant
- Harborview and retail focused along streets at the intersection of Yesler Way and Broadway

Concept A



- Concept B
 - Yesler Terrace is part of a larger Yesler neighborhood which could extend from I-5 to 19th Ave. East
 - Center of neighborhood would be located at the Boren, Yesler Way and 12th Ave. East intersection
 - Green public open spaces that are independent of the street network
 - Secondary open space system would link public parks independent of the streets
 - Adjacent to Harborview and along Boren high and massing would be increased with less building height and massing southwest of the community center

- Concept C
 - Strong connections from Harborview to Little Saigon
 - Circulation parallels I-5 and Boren and strengthens the main north/south connection at 9th and 10th Ave. hillclimbs
 - Open space includes the “Hillclimb Spine of Parks and the widened 9th Ave./10th Ave. connector from Harborview to Little Saigon
 - Additional open space is in district parks or semi-public open spaces
 - Retail and office placement reinforce the connections, circulation, open spaces and heights and massing
 - Three-story ground related units can be made available for daycare, senior/accessible units and market rate housing adjacent to social services amenities.

Concept B



Concept C

Commissioners' Comments and Questions

As far as institutions go and other city functions besides parks, are you considering swapping sites with the city to building libraries and community centers?

We haven't had those discussions, but a community center was built at Yesler in 05'. We want to make sure the concept is reasonable first before we have those conversations.

It seems to me that this will fall under design review for Capitol Hill., Could there be a specific district for design review that is just for Yesler Terrace?

Would a sub-committee of the design commission to work with us on this project make sense?

Yes, the design commission is interested in participating at this level.

Which points should there be meetings?

One of the things I'm interested in, you're creating a neighborhood, but it's connected to other neighborhoods. Knowing what things are provided on the periphery will help to decide what is needed or not needed on-site.

We agree and have started to look at those issues as part of the Citizens Review Committee.

The open spaces in all three concepts seem like they could benefit from a larger open space. The concepts seem to focus on smaller open spaces at the expense of a larger open space.

One of the things we're working on is going to establish a more specific open space plan. One of our concerns is overly emphasizing a large open space and it might reduce overall use versus a more decentralized concept.

As you put on your developer hat, think about how open space can generate economic benefit.

Yes, I agree.

The quality of the open space is important too, perhaps a skate park, or other uses, but the uses around the open space uses is an important consideration.

So, what I hear you saying is it's not just the design and use, but the relationships between adjacent uses and buildings.

I think it's important to consider surrounding features and uses in order to play to the strengths of the surrounding uses and topography. It can provide a mechanism to reflect the history of the adjacent neighborhoods.

It may be difficult to phase construction with the grading difficulties as well as the difficulty of creating a walkable neighborhood with such steep slopes.

It would be nice to have a graphic of the best walking routes into and out of the neighborhood and connections to key uses such as the library and grocery store.

One of the goals the residents expressed in meetings is the ability to have options for walking and accessing areas within and adjacent to Yesler Terrace.

Have you considered creating an icon within the development to identify the neighborhood?

What we've been discussing is creating a community park as an identifier. There's also the historic symbol of terraces.

Definition of place vs. integration of the whole is another major consideration. It's an amazing social phenomenon, the fact that this is the first integrated housing project in the country and this should be celebrated. One of the planning principles of integrating into the neighborhood is extremely important. Integration both within the community and into the context socially needs to happen. The old public housing stigma should go away. I'm more inclined to see the street grid integration as the principle method of integrating.

Where do you see the 100% corner or the main land value intersection of the development?

The northwest corner up near Harborview is where I see it. It has great views. The other one is Broadway and Yesler.

In terms of an iconic symbol, the intersection of two of the most famous streets in Seattle, Broadway and Yesler, will serve as an icon.

The design needs to take advantage of the land value created from views and other amenities.

We need to establish the bones of the design concept that considers these factors and allows it to manifest itself in different ways through further design development.

It seems like in Concept B there is some heart and identity in and of itself, but looks at tying into the identity of the surrounding neighborhood. It is such a smart way to address these relationships even before the surrounding neighborhood sees future redevelopment.

Two things apply to all concepts: what is going to attract interesting capital to this project? How a project like this gets managed, it has to include a new way of holding these pieces together. To me the future of this country is energy, and none of these concepts are great examples of that. It looks conventional to me.

You are right, these concepts are part of the underlying principles informing the design, but we need to bring them more to the front.

Agriculture and urban agriculture needs to be a major emphasis on the project and drive how the buildings and open spaces are organized.

Concept A – the strong grid pattern, I like that aspect. I like the relationship between Harborview and the high rise office spaces. What I don't like: it doesn't take the opportunity to change the grade to benefit the development and adjacent connections.

Connections – You have an opportunity to create a whole new neighborhood and several districts within the development that have their own feel and identity.

As a planner, wherever this goes have a strong plan of design criteria and investments in ROW and Open spaces that have amenities.

Concept B addresses the history of Yesler Terrace and the unique character of the existing site and solar access.

I think it's also important to have office space over by Boren and Yesler in addition to adjacent to Harborview.

The curvilinear street on Concept B seems like a "rural lane" and out of character.

It's designed to take advantage of the views and could be reconfigured.

Culture is critical of this neighborhood, some kind of more overt reference to it should be considered.

Putting your high value structures near Harborview makes senses, but I also like the Boren and Yesler node in Concept B. In terms of integration, you have a monumental task in reconciling the strong sense of ownership that exists there now with the corporate and precise images that are being developed and the market forces.

The issue with this kind of density is can you get these qualities back? If you go with the standard block size and building type, it won't leave space for that "funkiness" that has been created in the existing development.

I like Concept B where there are two hearts and the recognition the transit hub over on Boren and Yesler. On B we're grading up and creating a wall with the International District. With the proposal to build a lid over I-5 there may be some grading issues.

Concept B seems to require a major intervention all at once to make it work.

It's harder for me to look at the larger blocks and get an understanding of it, but it creates a new identity while still make connections.

One of the things that impressed me about the Little Saigon Plan is that they have small connector streets that create chaos and more eccentricity.

I think we recognize more now that we would keep back some distance from the lake so that it remains public. I would argue that along I-5, where you have that great view, that is sort of a public amenity and consider holding back development from it.

At I-5 it may be a great view, but do we have activity? It's a balance between both of those factors that will be needed.

Vancouver Library, where they integrated public and private uses, there may be some real fun synergy that is possible.

June 4, 2009

Project: Councilmember Rasmussen

Phase: Briefing

Last Reviewed: April 17, 2008

Presenters: Councilmember Rasmussen

Time: 1 hour

(168)

The Commission appreciates the time that Councilmember Rasmussen took in meeting with them. Talking points covered were the parks levy, playgrounds and small projects, the green street projects like Bell Street in the Belltown Neighborhood Green Street design or the creation of more public space-park like areas have been requested in other neighborhoods too.

CM Rasmussen shared that the Pike/Pine overlay district is being considered to protect the historic character of the area. The intent of the legislation is to preserve the area for its historic value, and the character of this mid century auto showrooms district. Most of the buildings are over 85 years old and they are looking at incentives, such as height bonuses, to preserve the existing businesses. There is consideration of expanding that district to include the triangle on the southern end of Broadway near the Silver Cloud Hotel. The effort intends to green the streets and rights-of-ways in and around the project area to provide needed open space without paying the high cost of land. CM also shared the West Seattle triangle Study; The Fauntleroy neighborhood has an opportunity to consider how this area may take shape in the wake of Huling Brothers going out of business and properties being bought by developers for redevelopment. CM Rasmussen pointed out that the right-of-way manual holds opportunities for guiding redevelopment of the right-of-way in different neighborhoods. The Commission might contribute, by providing administrative reviews.

West Seattle Junction residents are concerned about the loss of views as a result of the Conner Homes project that the Design Commission reviewed an alley vacation for. Perhaps view corridors could be viewed as a public benefit as part of a street or alley vacation.

CM Rasmussen asked about public benefits and how these are monitored, one case was the huge stairway that goes from the Four Seasons to Western, he considered it needs some more design elements, like an addition of a bike canal for bikes moving their bikes through the massive stair. With regards to the viaduct he shared his interest in opportunities to keep a portion of the viaduct structure for public open space or viewpoints.

Commissioners' Comments and Questions

There are not designated view corridors in that area, which makes it difficult to address from a regulatory standpoint.

Conner Homes project exemplifies what the Design Commission does as well as the 100 Republican near Seattle Center. We're making headway in our communication with SDOT.

One of the things I reference a lot is the white paper by Kathy Wolf saying the owners can demand higher rents (11%) on streetscapes that are inviting.

In terms of utility rooms, many departments have them, it could be an opportunity for a design charette or competition.

June 4, 2009 **Project:** **Councilmember Clark**

Phase: Briefing
Last Reviewed: May 1, 2008
Presenters: Councilmember Clark

Time: .5 hour

(168)

The Commission appreciates the time that Councilmember Clark took in meeting with them. As Chair of the PLUNC, which is the Committee that the Commission directly reports to, the conversation was framed around street and alley vacations, CIPs, skybridges, and neighborhood planning. The Commission also shared their idea of generating ideas for the sites in the city where projects have stalled for her input. With regard to CIPs, CM Clark shared that fire stations are something the Council is wrestling with, and how helpful it would be if the Council was cued into design issues early in the process. In terms of the time and money it takes to go through review, it is difficult when it comes to the council to have a constructive dialogue without having project delay. The libraries were, because of their nature represented amore visionary exercise and the City was less afraid of taking risk in the design of these facilities. Another example is Community centers, in this case they'll be redoing the Rainier Beach Community Center and it's been a nightmare building in terms of the ability to effective use both buildings. CM Clark expressed her satisfaction on how the Yesler terrace project is moving as well as the Pike Place Market, both recently briefed at the Commission. The conversation also included the concept of urban farming, agricultural zones that could complement the pea patches program and other food efforts like farmer markets and local productions. She enforces a creative approach towards sustainability and LEED certification, expressed interest in the "Living Building" concept and how the City can expedite demonstration projects.

Commissioners' Questions and Comments

We are frustrated about the designs of fire stations. The budget and agency seem to be two of the biggest issues.

One of the things we talked about earlier with Yesler, is the ability to tie public and private development together as was the case with the Vancouver, BC library.

One of the things I hear often is questioning why we didn't put housing on top of some of the library facilities.

Sustainability issues are also important relative to fire stations, that hasn't been incorporated to the degree they should.

June 4, 2009 **Project:** **Madison Valley Storm Water Improvements – Phase II**

Phase: Concept Design

Last Reviewed: March 19, 2009

Presenters: Tom Finnegan, MWH
Brent Middleswart, SPU
Gail Staeger, Nakano Associates
Mark Graham, MWH
Kenichi Nakano Nakano Associates
Grace Manzano, SPU

Time: 1 hour

(169/RS0607)

ACTION

With an eight to two vote the Design Commission denies approval of the schematic phase of the design for the Madison Valley Storm Water Improvements Phase II project and asks the project team to return for further Commission review once the schematic design has been refined. The two dissenting votes were on the grounds that the design was sufficient as is with no refinement to the schematic design necessary.

The Design Commission makes the following recommendations:

- **Be more intentional in the geometries and details of the design, especially in relation to the path layout, path ending near the tennis courts and spaces created.**
- **Integrate maintenance features, such as the access pad and truck turnaround, more carefully.**
- **Strengthen the guiding idea of making the tank location apparent.**
- **Consider how the complete tank footprint will be read.**
- **Consider the curves of the various paths and roadways in relation to the circular expression of the tank, and with regard to the organization of the open space.**
- **Allow more opportunity for the art to express the water and engineering of the project. This can aid in bringing to light the powerful engineering of the containment of water**
- **Be more intentional with the planting locations and the spaces that are created.**

Presentation

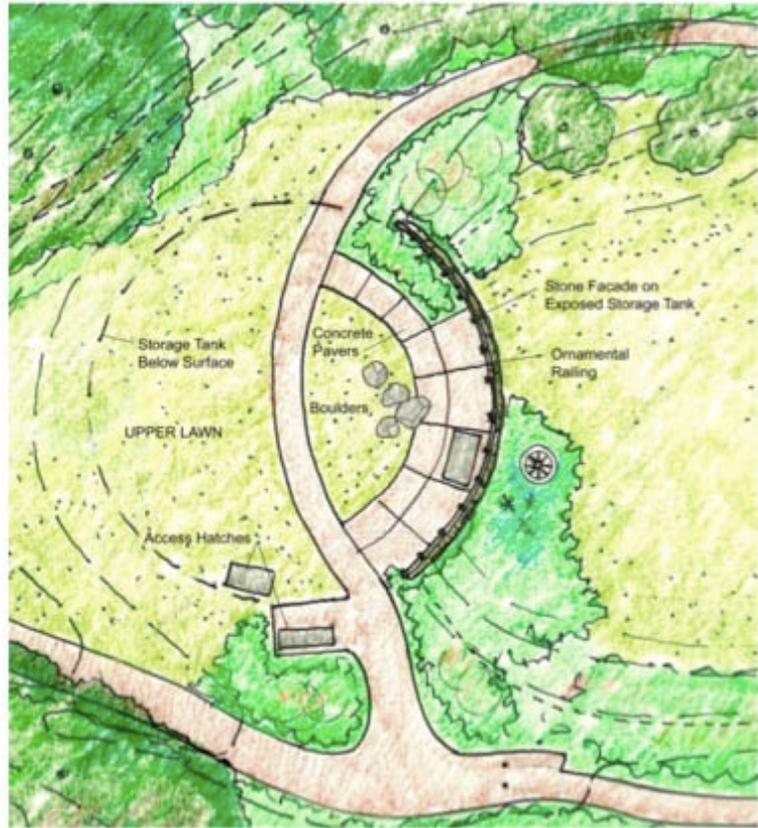
This is the 5th review by the Seattle Design Commission. Last summer and fall was Phase I review, which is now under construction.

Phase II is a large stormwater pipeline conveyance to storage in Washington Park. Three alternatives for the pipeline alignment were explored including a full open cut to completely trenchless. Financial, economic and social cost and benefits along with outreach to the community were considered as part of the decision making process that led to the selection of the fully trenchless technology. Eight shaft locations are along the route to send and receive the equipment for the boring machines. The project includes both above and below ground storage including a large storage tank. The tank holds everything except for anticipated flow during the two most extreme events that occur approximately every 200-600 years. An arborist has been involved in the project area including identifying and cataloguing the tree areas.

An artist is on board at this point, but is still at the conceptual stage and they don't have designs to share today. The public process has led to a strong desire to keep the Olmsted urban forest features of the park. Friends of Olmsted have reviewed the project.

In terms of the project schedule, the next public meeting is on Monday the 8th, council utility committee on the 23rd of June and the master use permit will be completed by the end of the year.

There will be one entrance off of Madison, a pedestrian entrance. The service entrance is now from the end of East Roy Street to the top of the tank. Pedestrian pathways will be 7' wide. The entry road will be asphalt, but they are still undecided on the materials for the pedestrian paths, but they are looking into natural looking materials. Almost all native plants will be used (approximately 90%). The green footprints organization would like to see a trail around the three sides of the lawn area. The paths are designed to allow for future connections.



Conceptual Landscape Detail

The east side of the tank will have a stone façade on the exposed portion of the tank with an ornamental metal railing and pavers will likely be used. A real stone veneer will be used around the lower portion of the tank overlooking the sunken lawn meadow.

Commissioners' Questions and Comments

Do you know what medium the artist works in?

He's looking to emphasize sustainability to tie in with the stormwater theme, perhaps providing refuge areas with native plantings.

Have you thought about plantings that have seasonal interest and smaller scale perennials?

We haven't gotten that far yet, but it seems like a good idea.

Can you talk a little more about the native plantings that you are proposing?

We have not developed that yet, but our thought is that there are a lot of trees there, so adding understory plantings and other varieties to provide a balance.

When you're on the overlook, next to the fence, what are you able to see?

The view over the soccer field is a nice building and out to the redwoods .

Are you adding lighting?

No additional adding is proposed. The Parks Department and neighbors expressed a desire not to add any additional lighting.

What is the path material?

We're still exploring what the surface will be, perhaps crushed rock.

Is there flexibility on where the hatches on the top of the tank can be placed?

For the one with the stairs, it can be anywhere on the perimeter, but the others must be where the valves are.

Is there anyway to tie Phase I and II together?

The artist may be able to help with that and also in the landscape materials and plantings. It is the same artist being used on Phases I and II.

Are there opportunities for the artist to be involved more fundamentally in the design?

Yes, but the initial runoff from the street will be dirty and would need to be treated.

One way that you could get in the idea of the power of water and the retention of it is to take the path around the outside of the tank to create a more powerful image of the size and scope of the tank.

The service road and the parking spaces need to be integrated better, particularly between the two materials for the pathways.

In terms of plantings, I'm excited about the types of planting you are proposing, but when I look at the site plan and the dark green and light green I'm wondering the logic of where you are locating your plantings. I'm feeling that the path orientation and the open spaces you are creating could be more intentional and graceful.

It seems the primary element, the tank, is fighting between being expressed and being hidden. The theme of the tank could be utilized in the pathway design as well by creating circular nodes at various points.

June 4, 2009 **Project:** **Council President Conlin**

Phase: Briefing

Last Reviewed: March 20, 2008

Presenters: Council President Conlin

Attendees: Ray Gastil, DPD

Time: 1 hour

(169)

The Design Commission appreciated the time that Council President took in visiting the Commission. Also that he expressed not to second-guess people in the design professions and trusts the Commission on their advice. As with CM Clark he expressed concerns with some fire station projects, if these could turn into missing opportunities by combining fire stations with mixed-use buildings. There are examples of where housing has been added on the top of fire stations that have been successful without getting into the design of the buildings themselves. In Vancouver, BC they have combined other uses with their streetcar maintenance building in Pioneer Square.

CP Conlin is hoping he can get more projects to be reviewed by the Design Commission and is looking to explore capital projects that have been shelved due to funding and whether or not bonding might make sense. The cost of the interest could be paid back by the reduced construction prices we're seeing. Fire stations, parks and parks maintenance, SPU and City Light projects should be considered. He expressed interest in the Commission's "hole on the ground" exercise and looks forward to its results.

Commissioners' Questions and Comments

One of the projects we've just seen is the Bell Street Green Street and we're going to be seeing the central waterfront plans as they evolve. The Bell Street project could be the green fingers that extend to the waterfront. I used to advocate for buying land for parks with Central Park in NYC as the model, but because of the cost of land it seems like the Bell Street project is the prototype for what park planning will be in the future based on using the existing ROW.

We're looking at how to deal with vacant spaces including projects that are stalled as result from the economy. Exploring options for sites with varying topography and potential uses.

The South Transfer Station is ready for further development. However, we need to really design the facilities to accommodate zero waste, which is a significant engineering and design issue. The second issue is how they relate to the neighborhood and what kind of screening standards should we have for these types of facilities. When we ask SPU or City Light to incorporate amenities into the project and we run into budget issues by using utility money, but if they were a part of the development regulations it might get around that.

In terms of transfer stations, it seems like there are new technologies coming out about how to deal with waste. Might it be possible to design the facilities so they can evolve based on new demands and technology?

Urban Farms – what kind of progress are you making on the p-patch program and other urban farming initiatives?

We are about to develop 500 more sites within the City on existing City-owned land. In terms of the urban farm, we have not done a lot on that issue. We have that one example in South Seattle, a fifteen-acre farm that is essentially an agricultural use. A four-acre property in West Seattle also has an agriculture designation. So, those are the two only existing parcels, but there may be other options. I believe we need to create agricultural zoning that would change the property value of the property and allow for agricultural uses.

Are you looking at non-traditional city owned land for additional p-patches?

Yes, there are several P-Patches that are already with rights-of-way and we are continuing to look at that. A study done by a UW student showed 196 properties owned by the city that could be used for P-Patches. Seventeen of those sites will be developed immediately.

There are greenbelt properties that are overgrown with blackberries and ivy that the parks department gave up on and perhaps they could be used as the p-patch.

We looked at the skybridge over Elliott Ave. and we understand the discussion has been put aside because of the economic climate. When the skybridge issue comes back online, we need leverage to get good public amenities out of the process and policy for dealing with existing skybridges.

Do you have any suggestions for how the Design Commission can be more effective?

My interactions with the Design Commission have been positive experiences and I'm interested in the SPU projects that are being reviewed because I hadn't thought of the design implications of these projects. The other thing I've very interested in is how can we go to the next cutting edge level of green design. Perhaps it could be piloted and tested in city buildings. Sewage treatment is another opportunity to advance green design concepts.

As we deal with climate change and sea level rise, what is the City's plan for dealing with sea level rise?

We really haven't dealt with that, but rather the utility issues, mainly stormwater and the water supply. Sea level rise is an area we haven't done much to address and we need to look at it.