



APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Mike McGinn
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Tom Nelson, Chair

Osama Quotah, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Seth Geiser

Megan Groth

Debbie Harris

Laurel Kunkler

Shannon Loew

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Joan Nieman
Administrative staff

September 19, 2013

Convened 8:30 am

Adjourned 4:30 pm

Projects Reviewed

10th Avenue Hillclimb

Westin Building Skybridge

Commissioners Present

Tom Nelson, Chair

Osama Quotah, Vice Chair (10:00am - 2:30pm)

Bernie Alonzo (excused at 12:30pm)

Seth Geiser

Megan Groth

Laurel Kunkler (excused from 10:30-12:00pm)

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Commissioners Excused

Brodie Bain

Debbie Harris

Shannon Loew

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins

Valerie Kinast

Joan Nieman

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September 19, 2013	Project:	Westin Building Skybridge
	Review Type:	Skybridge Ordinance
	Phase:	n/a
	Previous Reviews:	Feb 27, 2013
	Presenters:	Jaime Page-McGuigan, Westin Building Jerry Coburn, GCH Landscape Architects
	Attendees:	Jessica Clawson, McCullough Hill, PS Amy Gray, SDOT Dan Jones, Westin Building Kyle Peters, Westin Building

3 – 4 pm

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

Purpose of Review

At this meeting, the Design Commission reviewed a request from the Westin Building Exchange to retain an existing skybridge. They considered whether to recommend approval of a new permit (ordinance) for the skybridge to the SDOT Director and whether the public benefit mitigation package was sufficient. The Commission had previously reviewed the project on February 7, 2013, and unanimously denied approval because the public benefit package was not sufficient. The applicant was encouraged to consider the improvements to the public realm in context of all the new development going on in the area.

The Commission's recommendations on skybridges are made to the SDOT Director who in turn provides recommendations to the City Council, which makes the final decision.

Summary of Proposal

The Westin Building Exchange requested to retain an existing skybridge and proposed public benefits to mitigate adverse impacts of the skybridge to the public realm. The skybridge is located in the alley that runs from Virginia to Lenora between 5th and 6th Ave. It is not the Westin Hotel skybridge, which is over Lenora just south of this one. This skybridge connects the Westin Building and its parking garage and emergency power supply. The Westin Building Exchange is one of the largest internet gateways on the continent. The skybridge is the primary access point to the Westin Building for visitors who come primarily by car. In 2011, there was an average of 420 daily crossings into the Westin Building. Accessibility for mobility-impaired people from the ADA parking to the Westin Building would be very difficult without the skybridge. It would entail exiting through the vehicle entry/exit point of the garage on 5th Ave and walking around both buildings to the entrance on 6th Ave.

The public benefit package proposed by the Westin Building Exchange consisted of the following:

1. Overhead weather protection along the east half of the block along Virginia and south third of the frontage along sixth
2. Tree pit expansions and plantings in six places along 6th Ave
3. Bike racks
4. Additional plantings in existing planters along Virginia St and 6th Ave
5. Umbrellas on publicly usable sitting areas along 6th Ave

Summary of Presentation

Jessie Clawson of McCullough Hill, and Jerry Coburn and Jaime Page-McGuigan, of the Westin Building Exchange, presented the PowerPoint dated September 19, 2013, which is posted on the Design Commission website:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Commission/Project_Review_Meetings/Minutes/default.asp

Summary of Discussion

The Commission was glad to see the changes to the public benefit package in line with their previous comments. The importance of the umbrellas was discussed, as was the idea of somehow treating the blank concrete walls at 5th and Virginia. While there was no consensus, there was support for the suggestion of shifting resources from the umbrellas to the blank walls. Solutions were discussed for draining the canopies to avoid water spilling onto pedestrians.

Agency Comments

Amy Gray, SDOT, reported that the Skybridge Review Committee had reviewed the proposal, and were recommending approval. They found that after being revamped, the public benefit mitigation package better integrated to the changing conditions of the area and would better serve the public.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

ACTION

The Design Commission thanked the team for the presentation of the Westin Building Skybridge proposal.

With a vote of 6 to 0, the Seattle Design Commission recommended approval of a new skybridge ordinance for the existing Westin Building Skybridge, including the following public benefit mitigation package:

1. Overhead weather protection along Virginia, along the east half of the block that runs between 5th Ave and 6th Ave, and along the 6th Ave frontage of the Westin Building.
2. Tree pit expansions and plantings in six places along 6th Ave.
3. Bike racks.
4. Planting and maintenance of additional vegetation in the existing planters along Virginia St and 6th Ave.

The Commission provided these recommendations for further development of the proposal:

- Provide improvement of the appearance of the blank concrete walls at 5th and Virginia.
- Find canopy design solutions that ensure that water will not drip onto pedestrians.
- Select tree grates in line with barrier free access standards.