

# Seattle Center Arena

**Jenny Durkan**  
Mayor

**Samuel Assefa**  
Director, OPCD

**Ross Tilghman**, Chair

**John Savo**, Vice Chair

**Lee Copeland**

**Ben de Rubertis**

**Thaddeus Egging**

**Rachel Gleeson**

**Laura Haddad**

**Brianna Holan**

**Rick Krochalis**

**Evan Fowler**

**Michael Jenkins**  
Director

**Valerie Kinast**  
Coordinator

**Aaron Hursey**  
Planner

**Juliet Acevedo**  
Administrative Staff

**Office of Planning and  
Community Development**  
**Seattle City Hall**  
600 4th Avenue, 5th Floor  
Seattle, WA 98124

**TEL** 206-684-0435  
**FAX** 206-233-2784  
seattle.gov/designcommission

## **Commissioners Present**

Ross Tilghman, Chair  
John Savo, Vice Chair  
Lee Copeland  
Ben de Rubertis  
Rick Krochalis  
Evan Fowler  
Rachel Gleeson

## **Commissioners Excused**

Thaddeus Egging  
Brianna Holan  
Laura Haddad

## **Project Description**

The project team is proposing to redevelop the existing Seattle Center Arena for existing and future professional sports team, other sporting events, concerts, and shows. The redevelopment site includes the area surrounding the existing arena as well as the block bounded by 1st Ave N, Thomas St, Warren Ave, and John St. The existing arena, which is a designated City of Seattle landmark, will be expanded below grade to increase overall seating capacity. The current loading area and truck access along Thomas St. will be redeveloped into an atrium and pedestrian plaza with 400 stall parking garage and loading services located below grade. Access to truck loading will occur south of the site through a tunnel under the south parcel.

## **Meeting Summary**

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) second review of the Seattle Center Arena project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the concept design phase of the project. After the presentation and discussion, the Commission voted, 6-1, to approve the concept design phase for Seattle Center Arena with several recommendations.

## **Recusals and Disclosures**

**Thaddeus Egging** – recused himself because his firm, KPFF, is working on the project

**Laura Haddad** - recused herself as her studio was selected to serve as the artist for the project

**January 18, 2018**

9:00 am - 12:00 pm

**Type**

CIP

**Phase**

Concept Design

**Previous Reviews**[10/05/17](#)**Presenters****Chris Carver**

Populous

**Geoff Chang**

Populous

**Jill Crary**

Seattle Center

**Rico Quirindongo**

DLR Group

**Barbara Swift**

Swift Company

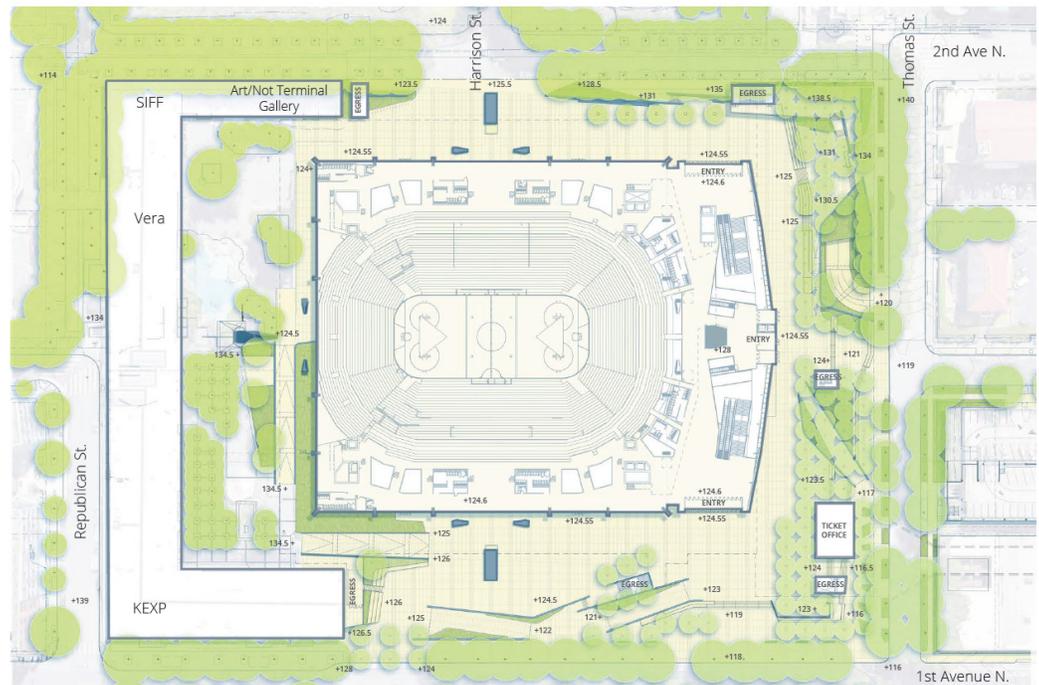
**Attendees****Maria Barrientos** | Uptown Alliance**Lyle Bicknell** | OPCD**Robert Cardona** | Uptown Alliance**Chris Daniels** | King 5**Erin Doherty** | DON**Debi Frausto** | DF Consultants**Chuck Haigh** | Mortenson**Jackie Kern** | OPCD**Donald Kunz** | Resident**Jae Lee** | Seattle Center**Kami Lemke** | DLR Group**Julie Levitt** | Seattle Center**Gareth Loveridge** | Swift Company**Shaun Mason** | CAA Icon**Steve Mattson** | Oak view Group**John Shaw** | SDCI**Susan Wickwire** | Seattle 2030  
District**Ruri Yampolsky** | OAC

Figure 1: Preferred design concept - updated

### Summary of Presentation

Jill Crary, of Seattle Center, Rico Quirindongo, of DLR Group, Barbara Swift, of Swift Company, and Chris Carver and Geoff Cheong, Populous presented the schematic design phase of the Seattle Center Arena project. The presentation team provided a brief overview of the site context and proposed project framework as well as a review of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Seattle and OakView Group, the lead development agency for the project. The team specifically talked about plans for the relocation of the existing skatepark. The goal is to maintain the geographic balance of skateparks located throughout the city by relocating the skatepark as close to the current location as possible.

The project team then presented design updates to the arena facility, surrounding site, and adjacent parcels. The proposed atrium, located on the southside of the facility, has been modified to better fit within the layout of the existing arena facility. The east and west ends have been trimmed to align with the east and west façade of the arena. The roofline of the atrium is also sloped to better align with the roofline of the existing facility. See figure 1.

The proposed site design will include modifications to the existing east, west, and north plazas as well as the addition of the south plaza, which will serve as the main entrance to the facility. The design has evolved to include gathering spaces, vegetation, and pathways within each plaza. The north plaza will include pedestrian amenities as well as a vehicle service drive. Updates to the east and west plazas, which formally served as main entrances to the facility, include the addition of gathering spaces, vegetation, street trees, and hardscape materials. The west plaza will also include a series of sloped pathways to guide pedestrians to the main level of the plaza and to entrances located on the south side of the facility. The design also includes the addition of a south plaza. The plaza will be located between Thomas St. and the arena atrium. The plaza will include gathering spaces, vegetation, mature trees, hardscape materials, and egress and ticketing facilities. The west and south plazas also include opportunities for temporary programming as well as street improvements to north side of Thomas St. and east side of 1st Ave. All plazas will be connected to allow for greater pedestrian circulation around the site.

The project team also provided three options for truck and vehicular access. All options will provide truck and vehicular access to a garage and service area located below the south plaza. The first option, labeled the preferred option, includes vehicular access along Thomas St. and truck access along 1st Ave via a service tunnel located beneath the existing Bressi Garage. The next option, labeled as option 1, includes a vehicular access along Thomas St and truck access along 1st Ave via a service tunnel located within the existing 1st Ave Garage. The final option, labeled as option 2, includes both vehicular and truck access along 1st Ave. This option would include two separate curbs cuts along 1st Ave as well as two separate tunnels to provide access to the garage and service area located below grade. The project team followed up with options for the potential phased development of the parcel at the corner of 1st Ave and John St. See figures 2-4

### Agency Comments

**Lyle Bicknell**, OPCD, commented that there are many admiral aspects of the projects and he felt bad highlighting elements that may need further examination. Mr. Bicknell then stated that having a garage entrance off Thomas St. is problematic for several reasons including having walls that really interrupt the proposed plaza and the proposed the egress structures. Mr. Bicknell then commented that the egress structures could be jewel like but could also end up having blank facades. Mr. Bicknell then encouraged the project team to better understand the relationship between the proposed light rail station along Republican St. and the entrances to the Seattle Center Arena.

**Erin Doherty**, DON, stated that the Landmarks Board has yet to see this level of development, but she thinks the board will be pleased with the development of the design. Ms. Doherty commented that the board will appreciate getting the truck access under Bressi Building without having to deconstruct the historic building. Ms. Doherty then commented that while there is concern with having car access off Thomas St, she

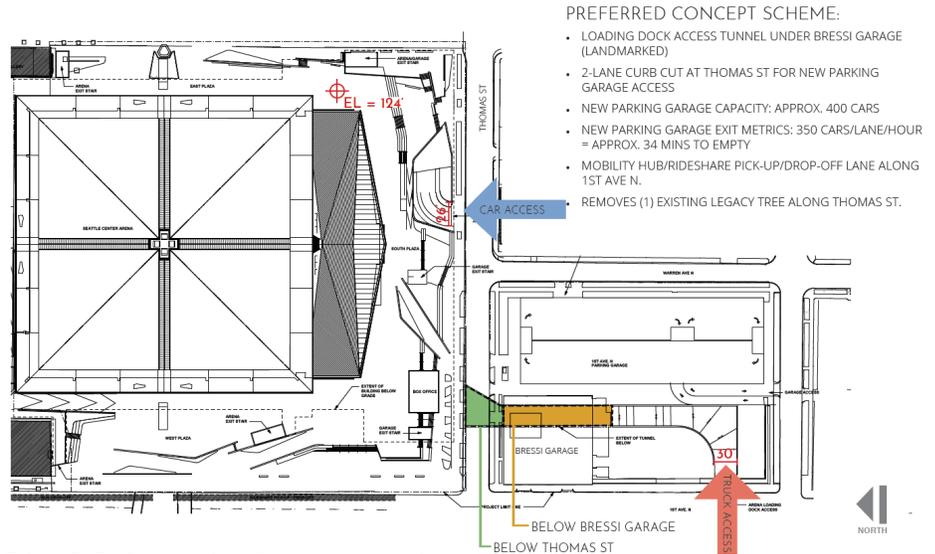


Figure 2: Preferred option for vehicular and truck access

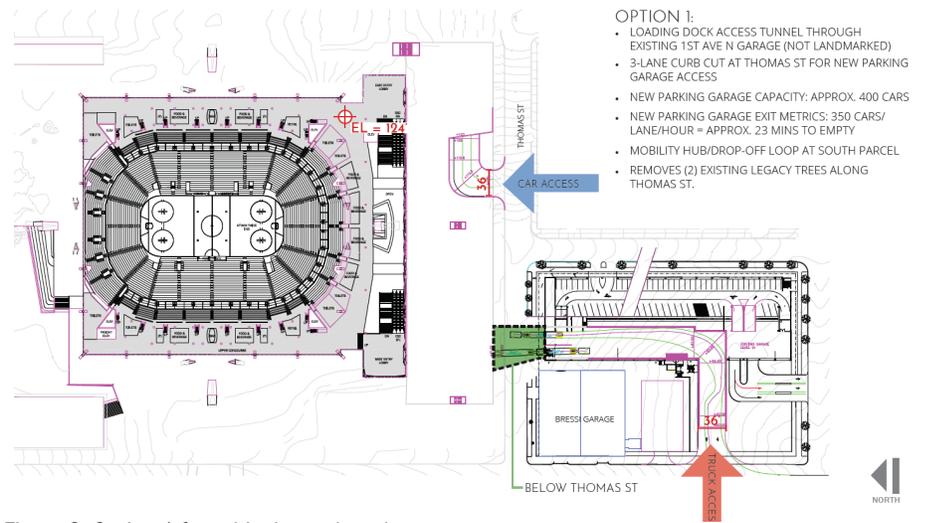


Figure 3: Option 1 for vehicular and truck access

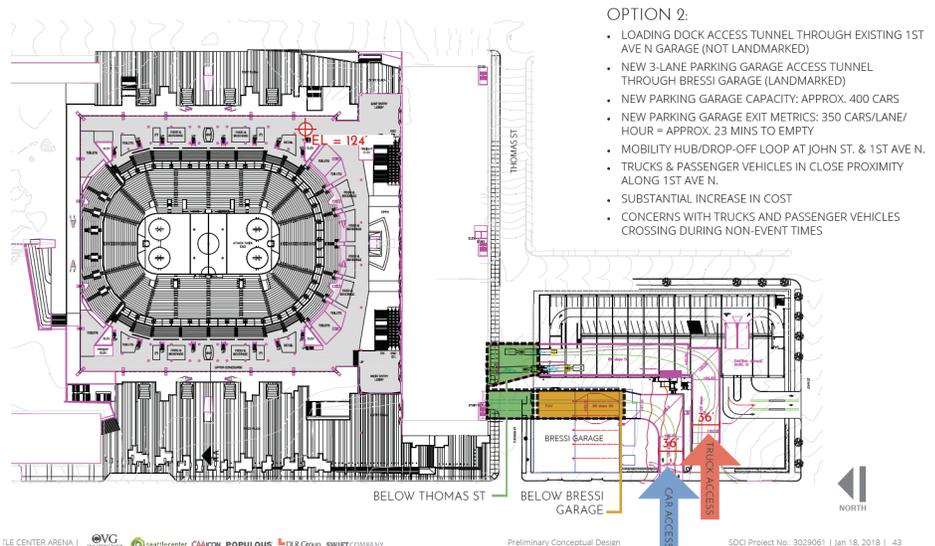


Figure 4: Option 2 for vehicular and truck access

understands it is difficult issue to solve. Ms. Doherty then stated the board had expressed some concerns about the small egress buildings, but there seems to be more thought in how they are developing.

## Public Comments

**Maria Barrientos**, Uptown Alliance, stated that Oakview Group has been thoughtful with feedback provided by the Uptown Alliance. Ms. Barrientos reminded the commission that the Alliance is not against the renovation, but rather, are focused on the impacts to the renovation might have to the uptown community. Ms. Barriento's comments focused on the design the proposed public spaces and how it affects the surrounding community. Ms. Barrientos also stated that any proposed design needs to address safety concerns as well as providing accommodations for daily activities. Mr. Barrientos then commented that the project team will need t continue to work with the Alliance as well as other city agencies to increase the safety of pedestrian access and circulation.

**Donald Kunz**, Uptown resident, commented that he would like to propose an idea for integrating art into the project. Mr. Kunz then said the project has the opportunity to improve cemented areas adjacent to the building, which currently look very boring. He then encouraged the project team to think about these areas being transformed with art. Mr. Kunz stated that it would significantly alter the experience of coming to events at the arena and would be a great way to point to the future. Mr. Kunz then commented that plazas elsewhere in the United States and abroad have been doing this with amazing results.

**Debi Frausto**, DF Consults, commented that the additional entrance along the south facade is great and well needed. Ms. Frausto then commented that she would like to see more information about how people will come and leave events at the arena, specifically showing this as a percentage based on each street. Ms. Frausto then stated there needs to be a strong anchor on the block along 1st Ave and then commented that the proposed drop off on 1st is a real concern.

## Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Open spaces and urban edges
- Pedestrian access and accessibility
- Vehicular access and parking
- Atrium building
- Things to better understand

### *Open spaces and urban edges*

The SDC discussed each of the proposed open spaces individually. The Commission appreciated how the team created access around the entire building. Specifically, commissioners commended the project team for eliminating the sunken areas that currently exist around the building perimeter. The SDC commented that the north plaza will provide the greatest opportunity for respite and encouraged the project team to include overhead weather protection and seating. Commissioners also commended the design team for increasing transparency of the façade between the north plaza and the interior of the building. The commission highly recommended the project team consider designing the north plaza to accommodate circulation between the arena and future Sound Transit Light Rail Station.

The SDC commented that the proposed design for east plaza looks like a corridor, serving as circulation between other areas and the south plaza, rather than serving as a place for people to gather. While the commission had differing opinions as to whether the east plaza should function as a corridor or area to gather, commissioners agreed the east plaza could include additional pedestrian amenities, such as seating, to help support temporary programming in the plaza. The SDC then recommended the project team pay attention to the proposed material of horizontal and vertical elements in the plaza. Commissioners also recommended the integration of art into the design of the east plaza as well as the other plazas.

The SDC then discussed the design of the south plaza. The SDC commended the design team for proposing a green space in the center of the south plaza. The commission also agreed with the location of the points of ingress and egress. Several commissioners commented that the design of the egress facilities be better integrated with the surrounding landscape rather than the building façade, with exception of the design of the ticketing office, which commissioners recommended should take cue from the building. Other commissioners stated that they did not feel strongly regarding whether the egress facilities were more integrated with the surrounding landscape or building

façade, but rather, recommended the design team to pick a design that will make the egress facilities feel and look important. Commissioners then commented that the current plaza design includes a series of small spaces and recommended the project team show how the small spaces come together to create a larger space.

The SDC made several comments concerning the proposed design of the west plaza. Commissioners acknowledged that the west plaza would no longer serve as the main entrance to the facility and that, while it is the most visible plaza, it is no longer serving a major role for the arena. While the commission agreed with the framework of the west plaza, commissioners also agreed the proposed design and layout lacked a specific identity. Commissioners then recommended the proposed design for the west plaza facilitate a greater amount of programming. The commission also recommended the project team provide renderings of the west plaza from the street level.

#### *Pedestrian access and accessibility*

The SDC voiced their support for improvements made to pedestrian access and overall accessibility. The Commission agreed the project team provided a well thought out explanation of principal routes, but recommended the project team provide more detail of access during large events. Commissioners then recommended that the sloped pathways be coordinated in a way to highlight a main pathway that led directly to the facility entrance. The commission also recommended the project team provide information on pedestrian use and circulation near the future Sound Transit Light Rail Station, crossing 1st Ave, and at the Thomas St. and 2nd Ave intersection. Commissioners then commented that the design should not continue to progress without providing a detailed pedestrian circulation analysis. Other commissioners commented that sloped areas should also coordinate with access to public transit stations and stops. The SDC then encouraged the design team to continue working on the design of the sloped areas adjacent to the existing garage across Thomas St.

#### *Vehicular access and parking*

The SDC had several concerns with proposed vehicular access and parking areas. Commissioners thought it was critical to have a better understanding of vehicular circulation surrounding the site. Specifically, the commission recommended the project team understand the relationship between drop off points and the proposed Sound Transit Light Rail Station as well as understanding how the proposed vehicular drop off area along Thomas St will affect potential interaction between vehicles and pedestrians at the Thomas St. and 2nd Ave intersections.

The SDC also requested more information around the layout and design along Thomas St. Commissioners questioned why the project team would design a new entrance on the south façade without addressing the parcels adjacent to the site, along the south side of Thomas St. Several commissioners commented that it would be a missed opportunity to not address potential redevelopment of the existing garage. The SDC highly recommended the project team understand how the south plaza and block to the south can be better integrated. The commission also recommended the project team extend plans drawings and images to include both sides of the street along Thomas St. and 1st Ave. The analysis and design of the updated arena should take the surrounding built context into account.

The commission understood the rationale for providing separate access points for personal vehicles and trucks. Commissioners understood the challenges of collocating trucks and cars into one tunnel given the tunnel is being connected to the existing loading docks of the arena and a new parking structure is being fit within those constraints too. The SDC encouraged the Seattle Center to explore developing the parcel that the truck tunnel entrance will be located on.

#### *Atrium building*

The SDC commended the project team for improvements made to the design of the atrium facility. Including pulling back the east and west ends of the atrium to align with the footprint of the existing arena. The commission recommended the proposed atrium include a contemporary design so to separate it visually from the design of the existing arena. Several commissioners then commented that design team should continue to think about the further integration of the east and west ends of the atrium building and suggested the team might chamfer the east and west corners of the atrium to create more space outdoors. The Commission also highly recommended the project team better understand how the design of the south plaza, specifically in terms of landscape, can help enhance the design and identify of the atrium.

#### *Thing to better understand*

The SDC commended the project team for selecting an artist early in the design process. The commission was also

excited to hear that the team is working to relocate the existing skatepark within the surrounding neighborhood. Commissioners encouraged the project team to reduce the timing gap between the closing of the existing skatepark and the opening of the future skatepark.

The Commission was also encouraged to see that community institutions and organizations are being relocated and recommended the project team continue to provide updates on how the affected institutions and organizations are being accommodated.

The SDC then recommended the project team provide more information about the project's sustainability strategy as well as information surrounding bicycle and transit access and how it will relate to the greater Seattle Center area. The commission then recommended that any proposed wayfinding, lighting, and safety strategies be thought of comprehensively with strategies proposed by the greater Seattle Center area.

### Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of the concept design for the Seattle Center Arena redevelopment. Overall, the Commission appreciated the development of the design since the October 5th, 2017 SDC meeting. The SDC voted, 6-1, to approve the concept design phase of the Seattle Center Arena with the following recommendations:

1. Consider designing the north plaza to accommodate circulation to better connect the arena and future Sound Transit Light Rail Station.
2. Consider providing additional pedestrian amenities, such as seating, to help support temporary programming in the east plaza.
3. Continue to think about the proposed material of horizontal and vertical elements in all plazas.
4. Continue to integrate art in all plazas
5. Continue to design the egress and ticket facilities in the south plaza so they are well integrated and feel important; consider consolidating and/or reducing the number of structures in the south plaza.
6. Show how the small spaces in the south plaza come together to create a larger space
7. Consider additional programming opportunities in the west plaza
8. Provide additional renderings of the edges of the site from the street level.
9. Provide more detail regarding circulation and access of all modes of travel during large events
10. Consider orienting the sloped pathways in a way to highlight a main pathway that leads directly to the facility entrance.
11. Provide better information on pedestrian use and circulation to the future Sound Transit Light Rail Station.
12. Explain the relationship between drop off points and the proposed Sound Transit Light Rail Station
13. Identify where drop offs of all sort will occur and how pedestrian flows and crossings at intersections are being accommodated with the design.
14. Consider proposing a contemporary design for the atrium to separate it visually from the design of the existing arena
15. Better understand how the design of the south plaza, specifically in terms of landscape, can help enhance the design and identity of the atrium

The following are comments from commissioners who voted against the project:

**Ben de Rubertis** - I am not totally convinced with the level of thought and care given to open space and planning along Thomas St. The expectations need to be set higher about integration of egress structures, ticketing office, and access as well as the thought and considerations of how that intersects to create a meaningful place for people. I do wish to say that there has been tremendous progress made thus far.