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Commissioners Present

John Savo, Vice Chair

Lee Copeland

Ben de Rubertis

Thaddeus Egging

Rachel Gleeson

Laura Haddad

Rick Krochalis

Jescelle Major

Commissioners Excused

Ross Tilghman, Chair

Brianna Holan

Project Description

The Washington State Convention Center (WSSC) is proposing to vacate three alleys and two streets below grade on three blocks bounded by Pine St, 9th Ave, Howell St, and Boren Ave. The petitioner is requesting the full vacation of the following three mid-block alleys:

- Block 33 (Site B) - bounded by 9th Ave, Howell St, Terry Ave, and Olive way
- Block 43 (Site C) - bounded by Terry Ave, Howell St, Boren Ave, and Olive Way
- Block 44 (Site A) - bounded by 9th Ave, Olive Way, Boren Ave, and Pine St

The petitioner has also modified their initial vacation petition to change the vacation of Terry between Olive and Howell to a subterranean-only vacation. The request for a subterranean vacation for Olive Way, between 9th Ave and Boren Ave, has not been modified.

The preferred scheme includes approximately 2.385 million square feet (sf) of development on three sites. The WSSC expansion would occur above grade on Site A only, and extend to a below grade loading dock on Sites B and C. These remaining two sites will include co-developments above grade. The preferred proposal includes 1,165,000 square feet dedicated to the convention center expansion, 385 residential units, 575,000 square feet of office space, 42,000 square feet dedicated to street-level uses, below-grade parking for 700-800 vehicles, and below-grade loading services.

Meeting Summary

The Seattle Design Commission (SDC) reviewed the WSSC proposed onsite public benefit elements. The SDC did not take an action during today's meeting. The SDC provided the project team with recommendations that should be addressed prior to the next review of the overall public benefit package.

Recusals and Disclosures

Brianna Holan recused herself as her employer, LMN Architects, is working on the project.

July 6, 2017

1:00 – 3:30 pm

Type

Street and Alley Vacation

Phase

Briefing - Public Benefit

Previous Reviews

[5/18/17](#), [3/16/17](#), [2/16/17](#),
[1/19/17](#), [9/15/16](#), [4/21/16](#),
[2/4/16](#)

Presenters

Cathy McClure Artist

Shannon Nichol GGN

Mark Reddington LMN Architects

Attendees

Bob Anderson Freeway Park Association

Howard Anderson Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association

Margery Aronson Art Advisor

David Blandford Visit Seattle

Jennifer Casillas Downtown Seattle Association

Zackery Clements Pine Street Group

Ryan Durkan HCMP

Jim Erickson FHIA

Holly Golden HCMP

Bryn Kepler GGN

Brian Layton Seattle Theatre Group

Abby Lawlor Unite Here Local 8

Katherine MacKinnon NYHUS

Brandon Mact Capitol Hill Times

Jessica Miller LMN Architects

Deborah Ross Pine Street Group

Martin Sicotte LMN Architects

Linda Walling WSCC

July 6, 2017

Summary of Presentation

Shannon Nichol of GGN, Mark Reddington of LMN Architects, and artist Cathy McClure presented the public benefit briefing. Mark Reddington provided a vision for the overall project by describing a mixed-use convention center that connects the interior with the exterior and considers surrounding neighborhood connections and identities. This presentation focused on the on-site public benefit portion of the overall public benefit package and how they will contribute to that vision. Cathy McClure mentioned that the art program portion of the package will be presented at the next meeting, following a subcommittee meeting with several commissioners.

Shannon Nichol presented the on-site public benefit areas as multiple levels of public open space that are thoughtfully designed as places of respite. The programming and management plan is modeled on the 2+U tower and will apply to the Pine Street Promenade, Pine Street Public Garden, and Flatiron Plaza. Activation is expected to be executed by the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) and will be free and open to all members of the public.

The on-site public benefit open spaces consist of the following:

- A Pine Street Promenade**
- B Pine Street Platforms**
- C Pine Street Public Garden**
- D Flatiron Plaza**
- E Terry Ave Green Street Plaza**
- F Denny Triangle Corner Plaza**
- G Sculpture Garden**
- H Sun Garden**

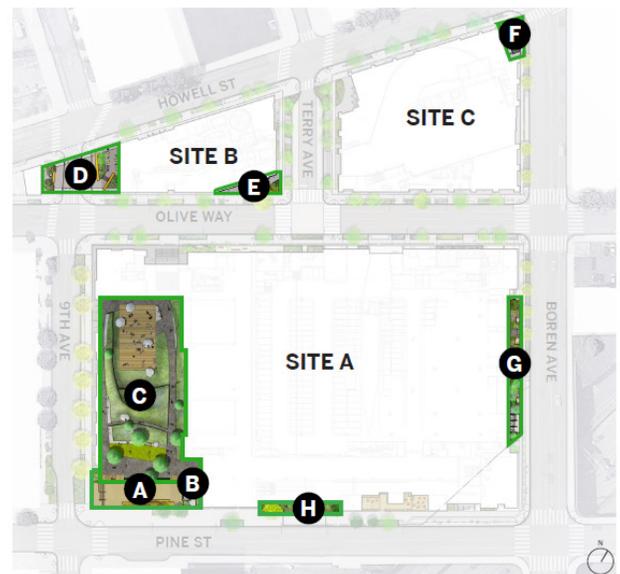


Figure 1: Site plan of public space

Pine Street Promenade

This updated design emphasizes public space, whereas the previous design served more as a continuation of the first floor of the building. Vegetated buffers have been added between the promenade and building entrance to support the idea that this area is an extension of the public right of way. The promenade also features fixed bench seating, steps that function as seating, and a moveable seating area; public restrooms are available inside the convention center on the ground floor. DSA activation for this area and the Flatiron Plaza will consist of everyday, passersby programs such as the activations found at Westlake Park.

Pine Street Platforms

The new design for the stairs leading to the rooftop garden is one of the more notable changes to on-site public benefits since the last presentation. The stairs wrap around an elevator and incorporate open viewing platforms at different levels. The wood material from the promenade continues in the platforms to communicate their use to the public. The red stairs are inspired by other infrastructure in the city, such as the red cranes at the Port of Seattle. Each platform is designed to have a unique view that will lead pedestrians to the public garden on the roof.

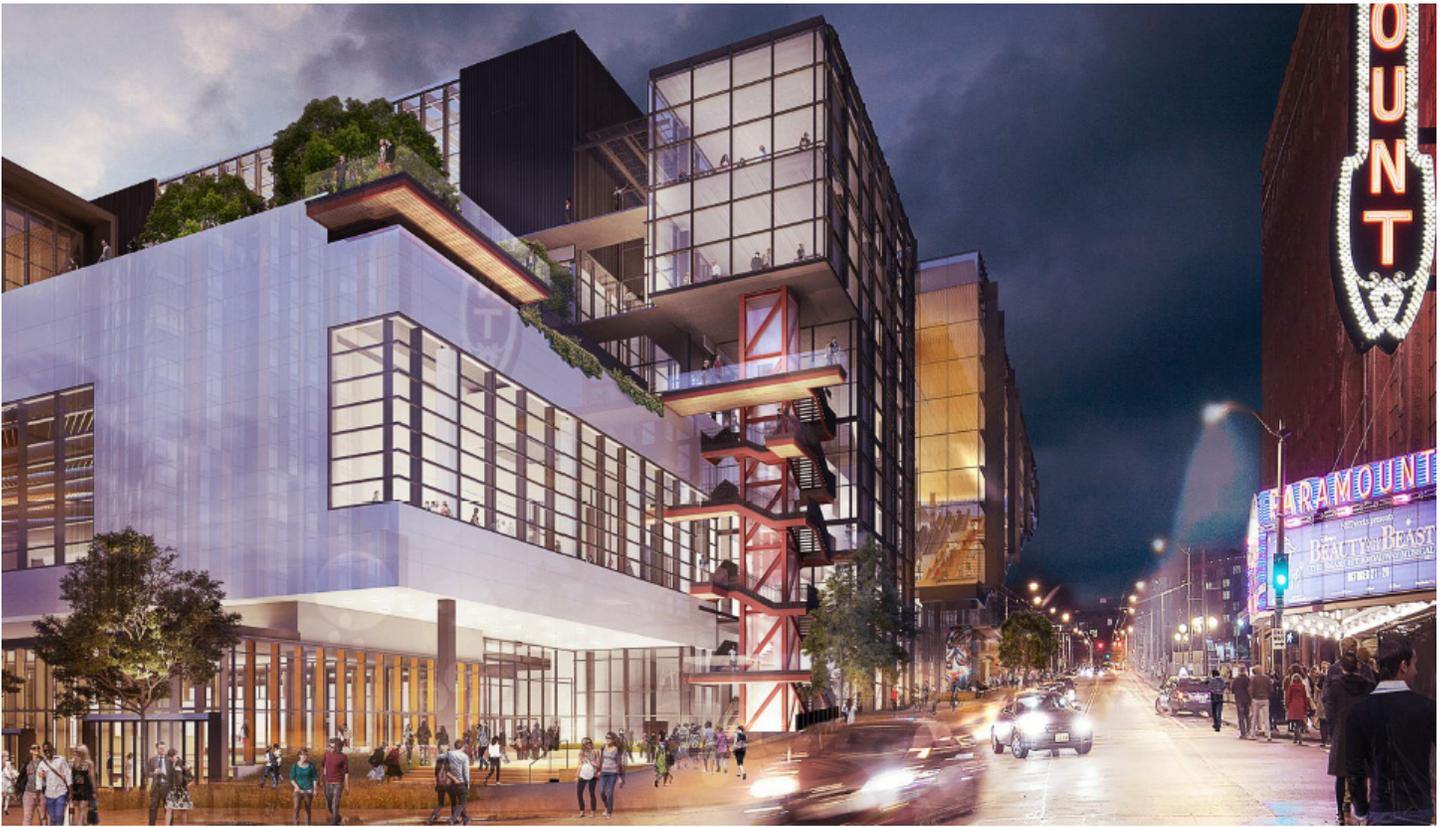


Figure 2: Pine Street platforms

Pine Street Public Garden

This space was designed with a vision for a neighborhood park that draws inspiration from Pacific Northwest landforms and native plants. The public garden is supported by public comment requests for public access and more neighborhood green space. It features a deck, lawn, and viewing platforms, with a path for circulation around the perimeter. The viewing platforms extend over the building edge so that they are visible from the street level. Integrated benches and boulders throughout the garden provide seating. Clear sightlines across the space will allow users to experience nature within the background of the city. DSA activation for this area will consist of a variety of destination event programming.

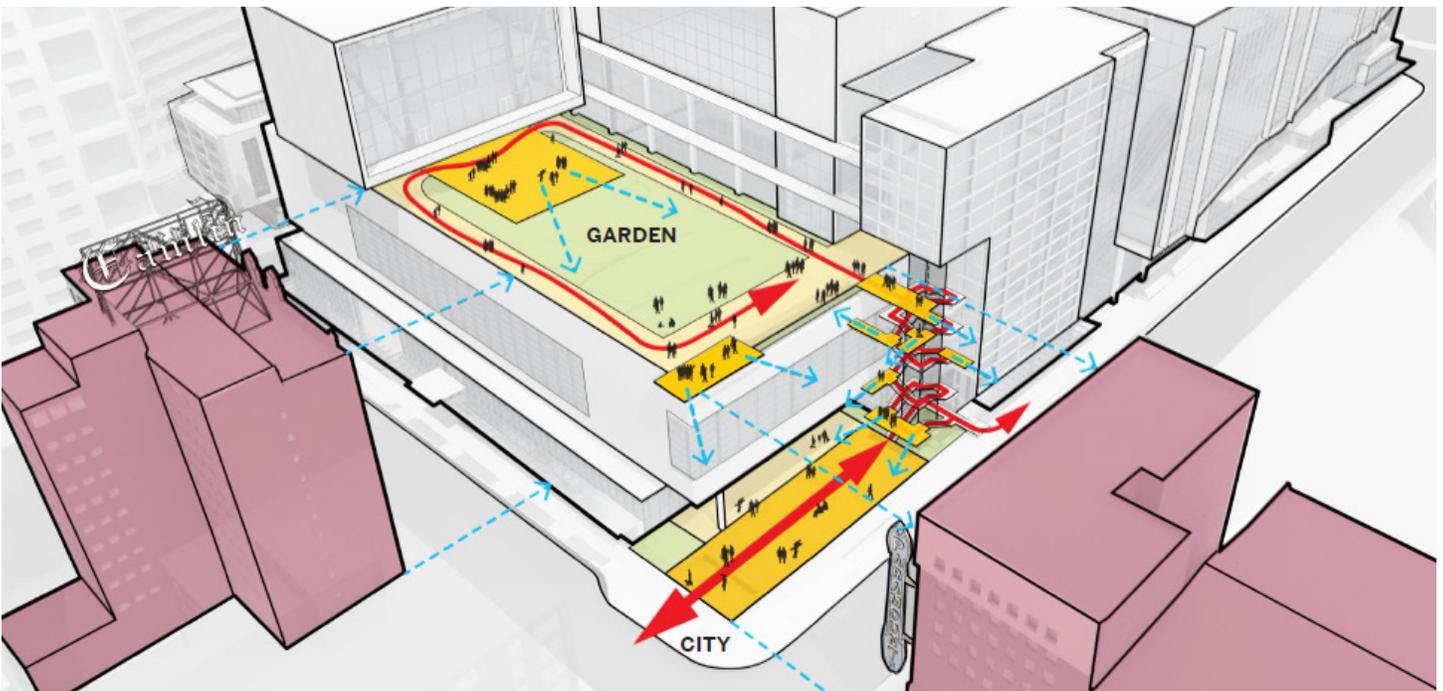


Figure 3: Diagram of circulation and views throughout the promenade, platforms, and garden

PUBLIC BENEFIT AREA: 29,920 SF (0.7 ACRE)

Figure 4: Site plan of Pine Street public garden

Flatiron Plaza

This plaza aims to accommodate pedestrians from all directions, minimize the impact of the roadway, and celebrate the street grid shift. The street along 9th Ave will feature enhanced paving and crosswalks to create stronger pedestrian connections. Fixed benches facing 9th Ave will emphasize the identity of the plaza. The area also features plantings, large log-like fixed seating benches and a moveable seating area.

Terry Ave Green Street Plaza

This plaza features a moveable seating area and a large planter on the corner with a fixed bench. It continues the green street concept found on both sides of Terry Ave and draws foot traffic towards 9th Ave in an effort to communicate a language of landscape rather than streetscape.

Denny Triangle Corner Plaza

This plaza will take advantage of its acute angle by embracing the increased street exposure. It provides more open space on the corner to create a larger waiting area for pedestrians, and relief from a busy intersection. The fixed wooden benches backed by a large planter creates a soft green buffer to the roadway and provides places for pedestrians to rest and observe street life.

Boren Ave Sculpture Garden

This voluntary setback creates an area of landscaping featuring artwork, plantings, and fixed benches. There will be a focus on color to enliven the landscape along Boren Ave. Specific details will be developed with the artist/artist team when selected within the vision of the overall art program.

Pine Street Sun Garden

This is located where Terry Ave would historically intersect with Pine Street, if it continued through Site A, as a continuation of the Terry Ave Green Street spirit. It breaks down the length of the two-block sidewalk using plantings, moveable seating, and a wood platform.

Agency Comments

None.

Public Comments

Bob Anderson, Freeway Park Association, acknowledged the advancements that have been made by the project team in providing an overall vision for the public benefit package. Mr. Anderson stressed that the project team has yet to engage with community organizations. Mr. Anderson expressed his concern with providing open space above the street level, stating that it has been reviewed by the community. He then suggested the project team use the proposed funding for the open space to improve Freeway Park. Mr. Anderson then questioned how the project team will engage with the community. He said the community questioned the allocation of funding for specific public benefit elements and recommended the team provide elements that will achieve placemaking and integration with community.

Howard Anderson, Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association, described the area around the project site as being previously dormant and lacking in neighborhood character. Mr. Anderson then stated this redevelopment will provide several public benefit elements that could not be achieved with other, smaller developments. He then stated this proposal will provide much needed open space while helping to better connect the neighborhood. Mr. Anderson is very excited and provided his full support of this project.

Jennifer Casillas, with DSA, stated that DSA has had success with programming in other public spaces located downtown. Ms. Casillas expressed her excitement for the proposed project and opportunity for DSA to provide support in the activation of the open space. Ms. Casillas then stated the proposed open spaces on site are primed for activation and programming, but stressed the importance of providing programmed elements in the rooftop garden that are visible from the street level. Ms. Casillas closed by stating DSA is excited to partner with the WSCC and that the organization is in full support of the proposed design, which will be a unique asset for the city.

Jim Erickson, FHIA, reminded the SDC of the letter FHIA provided. Mr. Erickson highly encouraged the commission to read the letter.

Brian Layton, Seattle Theatre Group, said the proposed project and associated open space will provide an opportunity for theatre patrons to gather prior to scheduled shows.

Abby Lawlor, Unite Here Local 8, stated that Unite Here Local 8 has formed the basis of a partnership with the project team to develop a hospitality training program. Ms. Lawlor said the training program will create an entry point for workers into the hospitality industry, specifically for marginalized communities, and will connect workers with jobs at the WSCC as well as other union employers throughout Seattle. Ms. Lawlor said this investment provides an example of the convention center meeting a need expressed by a project stakeholder. Ms. Lawlor then stated that other public benefit elements should address needs identified by other project stakeholders. Ms. Lawlor stressed that \$5 million is not enough funding for affordable housing and encouraged the project team to increase their funding proposal.

Summary of Discussion

The SDC organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Pine Street Promenade
- Pine Street Platforms
- Pine Street Public Garden
- Flatiron Plaza
- Terry Ave Plaza
- Denny Triangle Plaza
- Pine Street Sun Garden & Boren Ave Garden
- Overall onsite public benefit elements

Pine Street Promenade

The SDC appreciated the design changes made to the Pine Street Promenade since the previous meeting. Commissioners acknowledge the new design provided greater access along Pine Street and appeared more accessible to the public. The commission also mentioned the updated design worked well in directing users to the Pine Street Platforms, which includes a public staircase and elevator leading to the rooftop open space. Several commissioners recommended only the portion of the plaza closest to Pine Street be considered for public benefit. The commission also recommended the design team provide wayfinding measures so that users know they are allowed to access the Public Garden. Commissioners cautioned the design team from over programming the space.

Pine Street Platforms

The SDC appreciated the basic design framework of the platforms, stairwell, and elevator. In order to appear accessible to the public, the commission recommended the design continue to read separately from the building design and that the design palette used for the platforms continue to be carried out on the street level and rooftop. Commissioners, again, recommended the design include wayfinding throughout that acknowledges the publicly accessible Pine Street Public Garden.

The SDC recommended the integration of artwork in the design of the platforms and stairwell. Commissioners questioned the width of the proposed stairwell and capacity of the elevator. The commission highly recommended the design team increase the capacity of the stairwell and elevator. Commissioners also encouraged the design team to include an alternate route to the rooftop open space through the public market area.

The commission is concerned that this element, along with the rooftop garden, are not public benefits desired by the surrounding community. Commissioners recognized the expense in creating this public benefit element and acknowledged the community's desire to address other elements. The SDC requested clarity that the surrounding community desires this as a public benefit.

Pine Street Public Garden

The SDC acknowledged the positive impact the proposed open space would have on the surrounding environment. The commission is concerned with the limited accessibility as well as the lack of support by community members and organizations. The commission highly recommended the project team seek support from the surrounding community for this proposed element. The SDC recommended the project team maintain public access to a portion of the Pine Street Public Garden during private events. public Commissioners are concerned with limiting access to daylight hours and recommended hours of operation be extended to include nighttime uses and programming.

Commissioners then recommended the project team provide more points of access to the elevated open space, specifically from the public market located along 9th Ave. The Commission encouraged the design team to include programming that will appeal to a broad range of users and recommended there be a permanent location for the playground equipment. The SDC then recommended the project team reduce the number of proposed boulders, increase open lawn area, and provide examples showing that proposed planting palette will function at this elevation.

Flatiron Plaza

The SDC acknowledged improvements in the proposed design. Commissioners appreciated the location of proposed benches within the plaza. The Commission encouraged the design team to place the proposed tables and chairs in areas separate from street level commercial space, maximizing public use. The SDC recommended the design team provide less emphasis on the crosswalk striping on 9th Ave. Commissioners requested clarification on the traffic patterns of 9th Ave between Olive Way and Howell, that result from the reconfiguration of the intersection removing the former metro access drive on private property. The commission also questioned how potential traffic flow along 9th Ave will affect the pedestrian environment within and surrounding the plaza.

Terry Ave Plaza

Although the SDC appreciated how the proposed design connects with Terry Ave, commissioners are concerned the plaza appears like an entrance for the adjacent building. Commissioners supported the use of landscaping as a continuation and reinforcement of the Terry Ave green street design, but questioned the configuration of seating and planting. The commission recommended the project team redesign the plaza to encourage public use rather than appearing as an extension of the adjacent building.

Denny Triangle Corner Plaza

The SDC is concerned with the proposed plaza design, that included a circulation path which made the space feel like building entrance instead of a public space. Although the commission appreciated the setback for pedestrians at the intersection, use of landscape as well as the placement and orientation of the benches, commissioners recommended the project team reconfigure the plaza to encourage public use.

Pine Street Sun Garden and Boren Street Garden

The SDC acknowledged the appropriateness of both spaces as a public benefit. Specifically, commissioners appreciated how both designs provided areas for respite, vegetation, and incorporated public artwork.

Overall On-Site Elements

Overall, the SDC recognized the project team's effort to address on-site public benefit elements. The commission reiterated the importance of engaging with the surrounding community and highly recommended the project team work with community organizations in establishing tangible public benefit elements that will have long-term benefits for the surrounding neighborhoods and city.

The SDC acknowledged the Public Garden strengthened the overall on-site public benefit elements. Commissioners are concerned with the grade separation between the street level and proposed Public Garden. The SDC highly recommended the design team create a space that is welcoming and accessible to the public. The commission also requested further information about the sustainability strategy for the entire project.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of on-site public benefit elements for the WSCC Expansion. The SDC did not take an action during today's meeting. The commission provided the following recommendations that should be addressed prior to its next review of the public benefit package:

1. Engage with community organizations to establish tangible, feasible public benefits
2. Open space elements to be considered as public benefit should be welcoming and accessible to the public¹
3. Engage with community organizations to understand if the proposed Public Garden is a desired public benefit
4. Provide wayfinding measures so that users know they are allowed to access the Public Garden
5. Consider using the same design/materials palette proposed for the Pine Street Platforms along the street level and Public Garden
6. Consider the integration of artwork in the design of the Pine Street Platforms, which include the access stair.
7. Increase the capacity of the publicly accessible stairwell and elevator
8. Consider an alternative route to the rooftop open space through the 9th St Market
9. Consider extending hours of operation for the rooftop garden to include nighttime uses and programming
10. Consider increasing the size of the open lawn and reducing the number of boulders within the Pine Street Public Garden
11. Provide examples showing how the proposed planting palette will function at the elevation of the Pine Street Public Garden
12. Further refine the Terry Ave and Denny Triangle corner plazas to encourage public use
13. Provide information about the sustainability strategy for the entire project.

Successful resolution of these 13 issues will help the Commission determine their appropriateness as elements of your proposed public benefit package.

¹ See the Seattle Design Commission [2016 policy](#) on equity in the design of public space or public facilities