



APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Mike McGinn
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Julie Bassuk
Chair

Laurel Kunkler

Shannon Loew

Tom Nelson

Julie Parrett

Osama Quotah

Norie Sato

Seth Geiser

Debbie Harris

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Tom Iurino
Senior Staff

October 18, 2012

Convened 8:30am
Adjourned 3:30pm

Projects Reviewed

Mercer West II
Denny Substation

Commissioners Present

Julie Bassuk, Chair
Shannon Loew (excused from 8:30-9:00am)
Tom Nelson
Norie Sato
Debbie Harris (excused from 8:30-9:00am)
Julie Parrett (excused from 8:30-9:30am, 11:30-3:30pm)
Osama Quotah (excused from 8:30-9:00am)
Lolly Kunkler (excused from 8:30-9:15am, 11:30-1:00)

Incoming Commissioners Present

Seth Geiser

Staff Present

Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino



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October 18, 2012**Project: Denny Substation****Phase:** Pre-design**Last Reviewed:** N/A**Presenters:** Michael Clark, Seattle City Light
John Savo, NBBJ
Jose Sama, NBBJ**Attendees:** Blake Fisher, NBBJ
Carl Tully, NBBJ
Greg Taylor, City of Sacramento
Jason Huff, Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs
Jay Keeling, Power Engineers
Josh Stepherson, Stepherson and Associates
Juliet Vong, HBB
Kathy Fendt, Seattle City Light
Laurie Geissinger, Seattle City Light
Mark Veldee, KPFF
Michele Sarlitto, Blumen Consulting Group, Inc.**Time:** 1:30pm-3:30pm

Summary of Project Presentation

The design team gave a presentation of the preliminary design of the Denny Substation. The substation is needed to support the fast growth of the South Lake Union, Uptown, Denny Triangle, and First Hill neighborhoods. The project involves the design and construction of a new substation, a transmission line to feed the substation; and a network distribution line system. The project would be constructed in two phases between 2014 and 2020. It will cost \$200 million, \$46 million of which is for construction. The team is asking for the vacation of Pontius Ave N between Denny Way and John St so they can have the contiguous use of two lots.

The team presented the design concepts which are early explorations of how the equipment might fit the space available. The team plans to use gas insulated pipes; they greatly reduce the footprint required for the substation, freeing up space for other uses. Some equipment must remain open to the air, a constraint that will impact the design and limit the density possible. One of the design concepts, a consolidated scheme, emphasizes open space; a second, the pavilion scheme, emphasizes greenscapes and pocket parks; and a third, the terrace scheme, features a sloping planer park atop the substation somewhat resembling the folds concept used in the central waterfront design. The team is also exploring the possibilities for a two-floor facility and co-development. The site is surrounded by residential and mixed use development, and all design concepts are evaluated in context of the surrounding neighborhood character, neighborhood plans, and the city's comprehensive plan. The team shared some preliminary ideas for public benefit such as a sculpture garden, a dog park, skate park, P-patch, and playgrounds, and is planning to soon add an artist to help shape the project's design.

SUMMARY (by Loew)

The Seattle Design Commission thanks the design team for its clear presentation of the Denny Substation project. It appreciates the use of gas insulated piping to shrink the substation's footprint and for coming early in the process when there is time to discuss conceptual ideas. The commission has the following recommendations:

- Explore design concepts which expose the equipment; there is value in allowing the public to see it. Consider a concept where the building object is the amenity and draw people to it, to either look in, pass through, or linger. In addition, develop concepts which boldly explore design beyond traditional substation infrastructure; consider, for example, the station elements as sculptural objects and the project as a union of a downtown utility and art. Explore concepts with two stories including those that pull the infrastructure above and program below. Use the gas insulated technology to shrink the required footprint of the equipment. Do not develop a design with blank walls. Also, study the role of lighting, transparency and vantage points in any of the design concepts. Show precedents and examples of inspiring design of other substations.
- Strike the appropriate balance between the amount of density and amenity. Put more emphasis on programming that benefits the neighborhood, while keeping in mind the project has a farther reach than the immediate neighborhood. Develop the public space in relationship to the heart of the Cascade neighborhood, the nearby open spaces, and to the pedestrians, bicycle, transit, and vehicular routes and volumes. Consider options for programming as part of the design of the spaces, especially because of the lack of people and activity expected in the station itself; some options should include 24 hour diverse uses that attract the public to steward the space. Simply providing public space is not a solution, as not all public space is good public space.
- Study in more detail the northeast corner of the site at Yale and John and the edge of Denny Way. How the project relates to Denny Way is especially important. Develop a good understanding of the opportunities and challenges of Denny Way, both walking along and crossing, to serve as a basis for exploration and evaluation of design concepts and public benefits.
- Study and mitigate the substation's impacts on the neighborhood. Evaluate and address the impact of seismic risk in the project's design. Explore ways to mitigate the potential heat gain; do not add to the urban heat island. Explore how design can help mitigate the effect of noise and EMF on neighboring properties.
- Study the feasibility of energy generation on site. Also, explore the opportunity for education about power generation, how power is used, where it comes from, what EMF is, and the importance of sustainability. Express the bigger geographic nature of City Light; power comes from diverse sources.
- While the list of public benefits is a good start, consider a broader set of amenities than what's listed, including things that exist nowhere else in Seattle. Use your outreach to discover and explore more options.
- Don't forget small gestures, design details, and materiality; nearby Alley 24 is a good example of a project's execution. It's not too early to begin thinking about these details now while exploring the design concepts.