

2026 E Madison St Alley Vacation

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Director, DPD

Osama Quotah, Chair

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Grant Hromas

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

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Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Thaddeus Egging
Grant Hromas
Martin Regge
Ellen Sollod
Ross Tilghman

Commissioners Excused

Osama Quotah, Chair
Bernie Alonzo

Project Description

The applicant proposes to move forward with a mixed-use development at 2026 E Madison St. The project assumes the vacation of a 10-foot-wide alley, which was reviewed by the Design Commission in 2003 and approved by the City Council in 2004 in Clerk File [306083](#). However, development has lagged due to soil contamination from dry cleaner solvents on the eastern portion of the site; remediation began in 2008.

Since then, the site and development rights came under new ownership. Due to the need for remediation, the current owner requested received approval from the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to develop the project in two phases. Phase I would include all elements of the approved development except the portion located on the contaminated soils; this portion is under separate ownership and, after remediation, could be developed with roughly 70 units and retail. The Property Use and Development Agreement (PUDA) that implements the Council approval and required public benefit features applies to the entire area bounded by the remaining right-of-way (ROW).

The current public benefit proposal includes publicly accessible open space, open space amenities, voluntary building setbacks, and public art; these are further detailed later in the minutes.

Meeting Summary

The Commission approved the revised public benefit proposal with a vote of 6 to 2 and required that team return for an administrative review of the art-work when it is further developed. This was the second time the Commission reviewed the updated development proposal and its impacts on implementing the public benefit package.¹ Specifically, the Commission looked at 1) whether the changes to project phasing and the updated public benefit package maintain the original intent of the 2003 vacation approval and 2) the quality of additional public benefit items included in Phase 1. Any future Phase 2 development that is substantially different than the Council-approved public benefit package would require additional Commission review following a request from SDOT.

Recusals and Disclosures

Thaddeus Egging disclosed that his employer, KPFF Consulting Engineers, is working on this project, but he is not involved.

¹ For this review, the Commission did not consider or revisit urban design merit since only the phasing of the development and not the fundamental impacts of the project and associated alley vacation have changed.

November 6, 2014**3:00 – 4:30 pm****Type**

Alley Vacation

Phase

Public Benefit

Previous Reviews[July 1, 2014](#)[December 4, 2003](#)[August 21, 2003](#)[May 1, 2003](#)**Project Team Present****Brian Bellissimo**

Encore Architects

Jessica Clawson

McCullogh Hill Leary, PS

Tejal Pastakia

Pastakia + Associates LLC

Troy Pillow

artist

Scott Rosenstock

HEWITT

Kris Snider

HEWITT

Attendees**Beverly Barnett**

SDOT

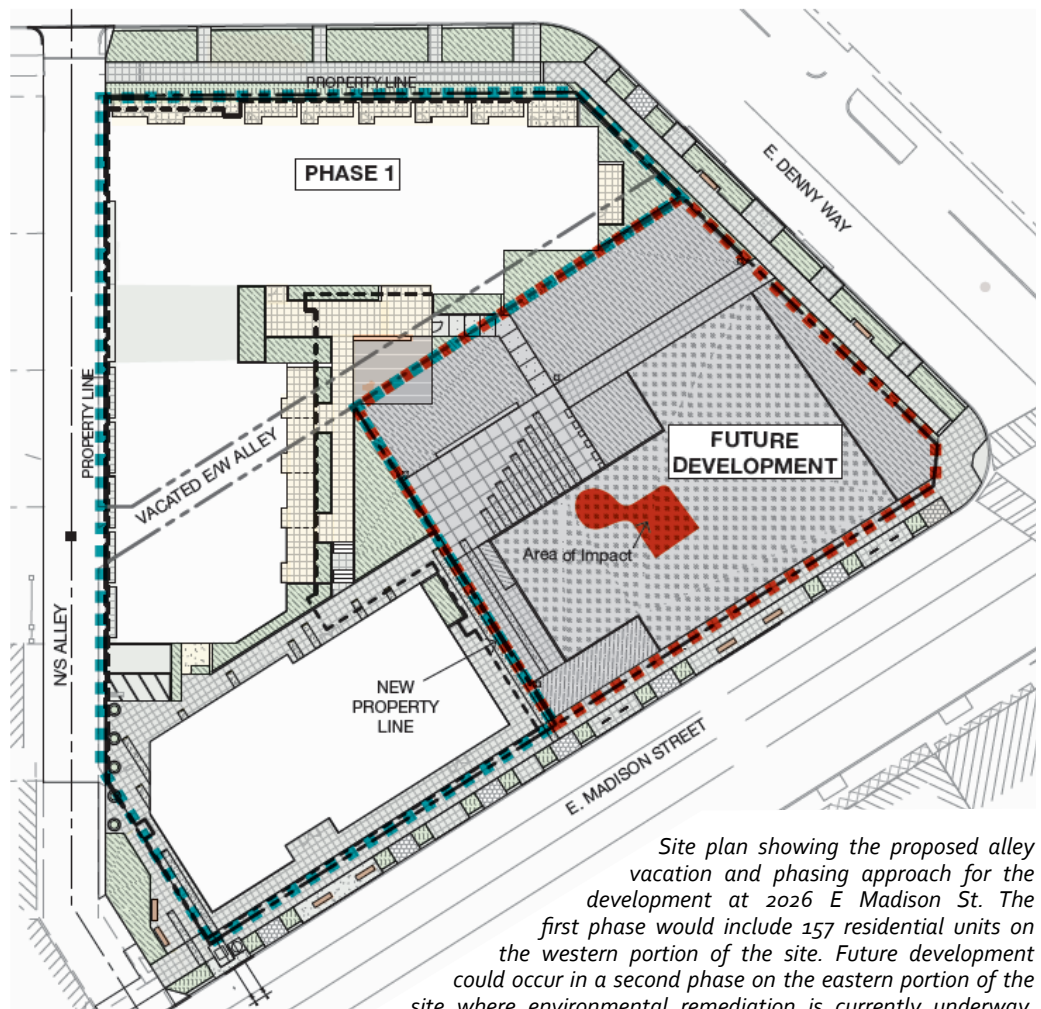
**Summary of Presentation**

Jessica Clawson provided background about the approval of the proposed alley vacation by the City Council in 2004, the discovery of soil contamination, changes in site ownership, and ongoing remediation. Ms. Clawson stated that the team intended to show how they were fulfilling the conditions of Council's approval.

Kris Snider introduced the project area and showed photographs of the site and neighborhood. A series of slides compared the 2009 site plan with the current proposal to develop all but the eastern portion of the site. Mr. Snider identified the contaminated area and described the resulting phasing approach. He then walked the Commission through the quantities of public benefit elements included in the first phase (summarized in a public benefit matrix at the end of this document).

Mr. Snider noted that the quantities shown above reflect a setback from the private space at the project; the team sought to ensure that they did not claim public benefit credit for square footage immediately adjacent to private residential units.

Troy Pillow described his concept for a sculpture proposed as public art in the public benefit package. He stated that he took inspiration from the musical history of the Madison Valley neighborhood, specifically the concept of an equalizer as an important stereo component from the funk genre of the 1970s. According to Mr. Pillow, the artwork would use LED lights to create a glowing effect in the plaza. Mr. Pillow showed samples of translucent acrylic panels that he proposes to use.



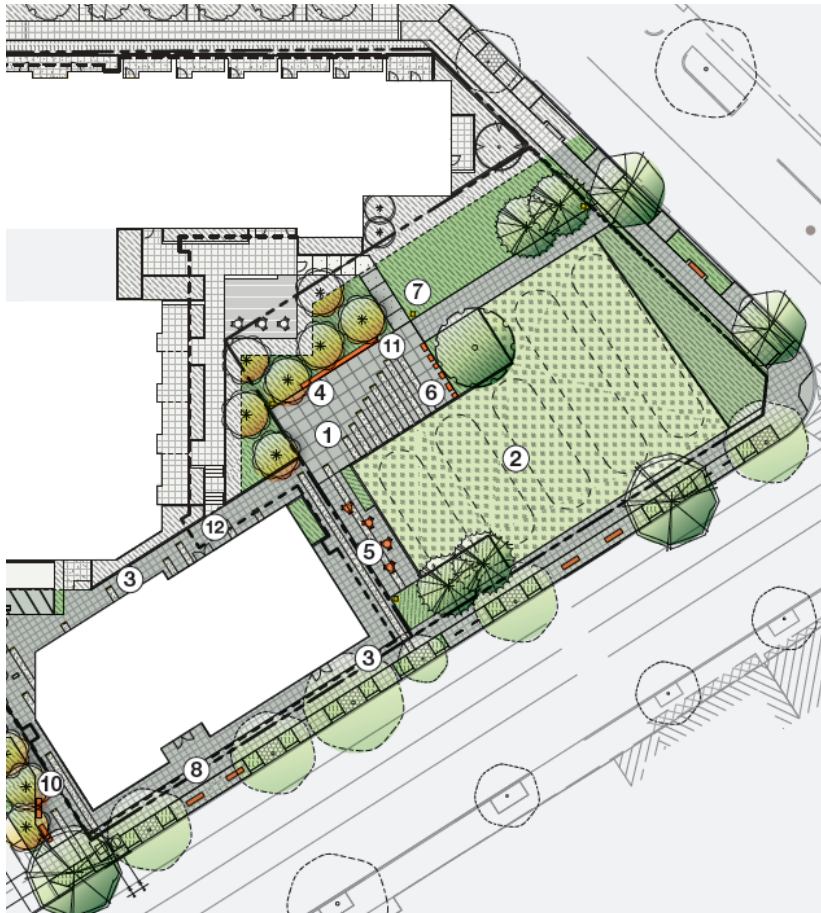
Site plan showing the proposed alley vacation and phasing approach for the development at 2026 E Madison St. The first phase would include 157 residential units on the western portion of the site. Future development could occur in a second phase on the eastern portion of the site where environmental remediation is currently underway.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett explained the City Council's request for additional input from the Design Commission on this vacation petition. Ms. Barnett stated that the Council wants assurance that, as the project moves toward construction, the public benefit elements maintain the quality intended when the Council gave concept approval for the vacation. This is especially important for the 2026 E Madison St project since 1) it was reviewed several years ago, 2) ownership has changed, and 3) the project phasing has changed. To complete the vacation petition, the City needs to see the public benefit items provided initially and understand how they would be affected under a potential future development scenario.

Public Comments

none



PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE with enhanced landscaping, open plaza areas, large turf area, and retail access.

- 1 Hardscape Areas
- 2 Landscape Areas

PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES including security lighting, cafe seating, bench seating, and seatwalls.

- 3 Overhead Weather Protection
- 4 Bench Seating
- 5 Public Seating
- 6 Specialty Finishes
- 7 Pedestrian Lighting

BUILDING SETBACKS on East Madison Street, N/S Alley, and provide spill-out for retail.

- 8 Setback along Madison
- 9 Setback along Denny Way
- 10 Setback along N/S Alley

PUBLIC ART including permanent lighting and a feature sculptural element in the main public plaza space.

- 11 Art
- 12 In-grade Lighting

Public benefits plan for the proposed alley vacation. All of the Council-required public benefit items would be implemented in Phase 1. Any future development would also have to meet the conditions from the Council's concept approval for the vacation.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission found the presentation effectively distinguished the public benefits included in the current development proposal from the potential future development on the eastern portion of the site. The Commission focused its deliberation on urban design and public space; the proposed artwork and its integration; and the seating, benches, and finishes throughout the project.

Overall the Commission felt the open space as designed would read as a public space and be an asset to the surrounding neighborhood. There was detailed discussion about strategies for ensuring that the public feels welcomed into the open space. The Commissioners recommended using substantial transparency at the ground floor of the southeast building, providing adequate retail signage to orient pedestrians, and designing the E Denny Way streetscape to invite pedestrians into the space rather than acting as a boundary between public and private realms.

The artwork received both positive and critical feedback. While the Commissioners were largely supportive of the neighborhood's musical history as inspiration for the art, they questioned whether the piece fully executed that concept. Some found it overly literal. While the Commissioners appreciated that the artwork had both vertical and ground-plane components, the integration of the two was lacking. Some of the Commissioners suggested that more dynamic lighting would help the piece contribute more significantly to the public space.

Action

The Design Commission thanked the project team for presenting the public benefit package for the proposed alley vacation at 2026 E Madison St. The Commission found the updates to the presentation since its last review in July 2014 to be helpful in illustrating the public benefit items included in the current proposal and explaining the potential future development scenario on the contaminated portion of the site.

With a **vote of 6 to 2**, the Seattle Design Commission approved the public benefit package for the 2026 E Madison St alley vacation as summarized in the following table:

PUBLIC BENEFITS	DESCRIPTION	CODE REQ'D	PROPOSED A	FUTURE PROPOSED B
PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE	PUBLIC SPACE WITH HARDSCAPE, LANDSCAPE, SEATING, AND RETAIL ACCESS			
	* PUBLIC SPACE	NOT REQ'D	16,925 SF	11,700 SF
	HARDSCAPE AREAS	NOT REQ'D	6,143 SF	9,348 SF
	LANDSCAPE AREAS	NOT REQ'D	10,782 SF	2,352 SF
OPEN SPACE AMENITIES	PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PUBLIC SPACE			
	OVERHEAD WEATHER PROTECTION	NOT REQ'D	2,316 SF	8,712 SF
	* PUBLIC BENCH SEATING	NOT REQ'D	38 LF	38 LF
	* PUBLIC CAFÉ SEATING	NOT REQ'D	802 SF	1,445 SF
	* SPECIALTY FINISHES	NOT REQ'D	574 SF	1,722 SF
	PEDESTRIAN SECURITY LIGHTING	NOT REQ'D	4 TOTAL	2 TOTAL
BUILDING SETBACKS	VOLUNTARY BUILDING SETBACKS TO ENHANCE THE PUBLIC PLAZA AT THE SIDEWALK AND PROVIDE EXTERIOR AREA ADJACENT TO RETAIL			
	SETBACK ALONG E. MADISON STREET	NOT REQ'D	103 LF, 955 SF	154 LF, 1,168 SF
	SETBACK ALONG E. DENNY WAY	NOT REQ'D	N/A	89 LF, 1,137 SF
	SETBACK ALONG N/S ALLEY TO REMAIN	NOT REQ'D	51 LF, 355 SF	51 LF, 355 SF
PUBLIC ART	ART TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PUBLIC SPACE			
	* ART AND LIGHTING INSTALLATION	NOT REQ'D	1,500 SF	1,500 SF

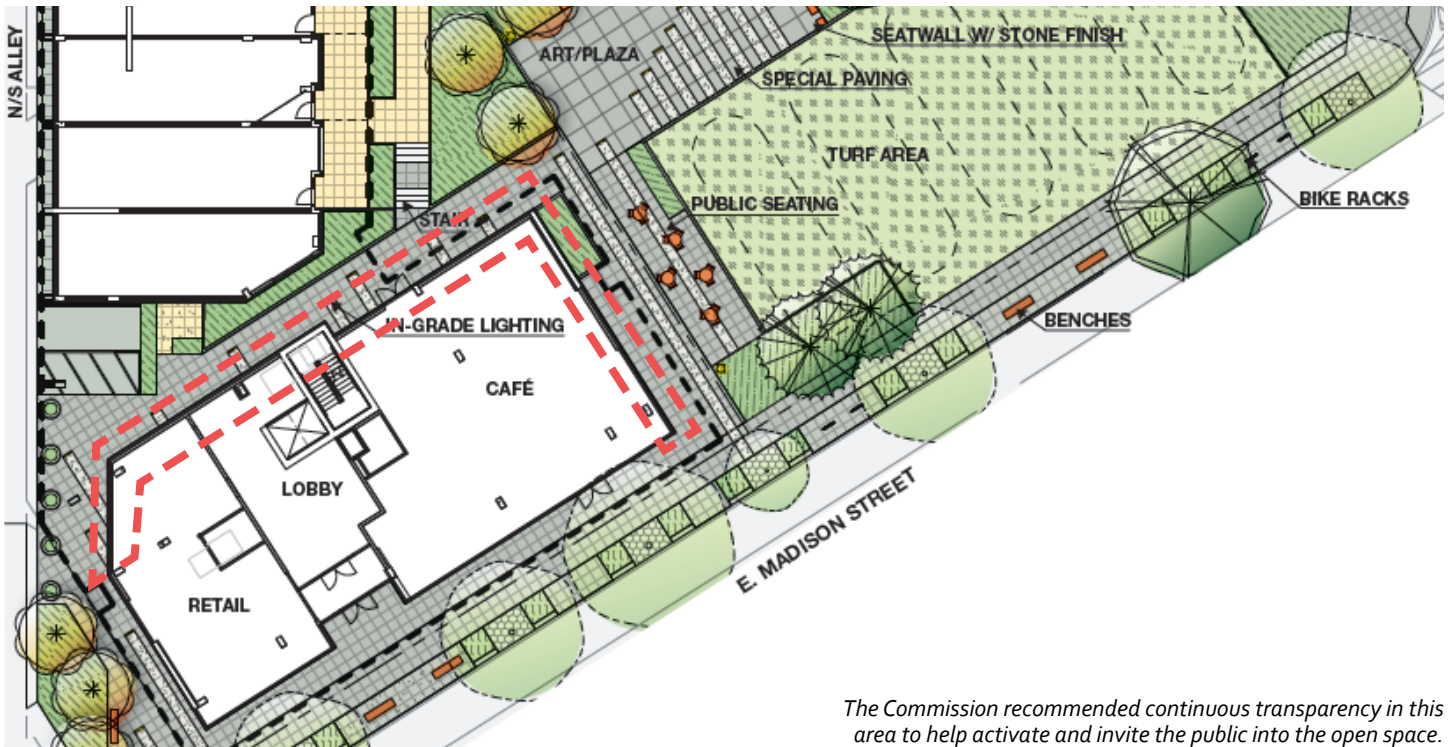
The Commission recognizes that the quantities listed under Proposed A fulfill and in some cases exceed the five Council-required public benefit items enumerated in Clerk File [306083](#).

The approval is contingent on the following conditions:

1. The project shall return for an administrative review of the artwork when the art program and design concept have evolved to a more specific solution.
2. If development on the eastern portion of the site proceeds and substantially modifies the public benefit items approved by Council in 2004 in Clerk File [306083](#), the project shall return to the Design Commission prior to issuance of any permit to review how the overall design fulfills the requirements.

The Commission also provided the following comments and recommendations:

1. Use continuous transparency on the southeast building, particularly its eastern façade, to make the breezeway read public and to make the open space an inviting public environment.



The Commission recommended continuous transparency in this area to help activate and invite the public into the open space.

2. Provide additional signage as a wayfinding tool to orient the public to the retail uses on the site.
3. Explore additional design options for the E Denny Way streetscape to create an inviting public entrance to the project.
4. Optimize the placement of the artwork in relation to pedestrian movement and sightlines.
5. Refine the vertical elements of the artwork. In particular, continue to explore opportunities for interactive lighting that could link the vertical elements with the ground plane.
6. Use landscape planting such as trees, shrubs, and groundcovers to reinforce the visual and physical separation among public, semi-public, and private spaces, particularly as pedestrians move from the perimeter of the project through the site itself.



Looking southwest from E Denny Way. There was concern that this entrance to the landscape open was not adequately inviting to the public.

The reasons for the votes against were as follows:

Ross Tilghman: While I agree with the recommendations on improving the art, I simply don't believe it meets the test of providing public benefit at this stage.

Ellen Sollod: I concur with all of the recommendations included in the motion. I feel that, in many ways, this space will be a benefit to the neighborhood. However, I am unsure that the artwork as currently design will contribute adequately to the character of the space. There are considerable details of execution and integration that need to be resolved so that the artwork occupies the space more dynamically; I'm not sure that can occur in an administrative review.



Looking northeast from the breezeway towards the proposed artwork.