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Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Chair
Ross Tilghman, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Ben de Rubertis
Rachel Gleeson
Laura Haddad

Commissioners Excused

Theo Lim
Thaddeus Egging
John Savo

Project Description

Seattle Opera is located in McCaw Hall, on the Seattle Center campus, and includes a 2,900 seat auditorium with interior and exterior public spaces. McCaw Hall was constructed in 2003 and shares a wall with the former Mercer Arena. Mercer Arena currently provides storage and related services for McCaw Hall. Both McCaw Hall and Mercer Arena are located along Mercer Street

In 2008, Seattle Center and Seattle Opera proposed a 141,369 square foot (sf) expansion onto the Mercer Arena site. The proposal was designed to consolidate offsite activities at their Renton shop and storage facility with McCaw Hall. Due to an economic downturn, the project was put on hold; no substantive commission reviews occurred.

The current proposal revives the original 2008 concept with changes to the size and program. The current proposal includes a 4-story, 105,000 sf expansion at the Mercer Arena site. Unlike the initial proposal, which would have consolidated operations from both Seattle and Renton facilities, the current proposal will relocate retail, offices, costume shops, studios, and rehearsal space from its facility in South Lake Union. The Opera will continue to operate its shop and studio facility in Renton.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) second review of the proposed concept design. Following the presentation, SDC review and deliberation, the SDC voted, 7-0 in favor of the schematic design, with several recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

John Savo recused himself because his firm, NBBJ, is working on the project.

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

May 5, 2016**2:30 - 4:30 pm****Type**

CIP

Phase

Schematic Design

Previous Reviews[02/18/16](#)**Project Team Present****Jill Crary**

Seattle Center

Ken Johnsen

SOJ

Edwin Mickelson

NBBJ

Matthew Somerton

NBBJ

Attendees**Angela Battazzo**

SOJ

Aiden Lang

Seattle Opera

Jae Lee

Seattle Center

Summary of Presentation

Jill Crary, of Seattle Center, Ken Johnsen, of SOJ, and Matthew Somerton and Edwin Mickelson, of NBBJ, presented the project and its development since the last presentation. The presentation included an overview of how the project designs have progressed including an update on the proposed art program and updated design. Ken Johnsen provided detail on the project's art program. The project team continues to collaborate with the Office of Arts and Culture in the creation of an artwork plan. Due to a limited budget for the artwork program, the project team will focus on providing a temporary installation along the exterior of the facility. The design team is also proposing to display craftwork from the costume shop in publicly accessible areas within the proposed facility.

Matthew Somerton presented the updated project designs that address the SDC conditions from the previous meeting and the overall project and program development. As a result of the last meeting and a separate subcommittee meeting on March 24th, 2016, the loading service for McCaw Hall and the greater Seattle Center at the intersection of Republican St and 4th Ave N will remain at its existing location even as Memorial Stadium is redeveloped. Loading services for the new facility will be located adjacent to existing loading services along 4th Ave N. The loading area will be aesthetically enhanced through the use of landscape materials and fencing, which will provide a safety barrier without fully screening the loading area. See *figures 1 and 2* for more detail.

The design will also include several opportunities to engage with activities occurring inside the facility through the location of a pedestrian hub and landscaped areas along Mercer St as well as viewing gardens on 4th Ave N. Circulation along the edge of the project site will also allow for several opportunities to see into the facility, and its various performance and backstage areas.

A key element of the project includes the Mercer Street façade system and designs. The proposed façade will include blue-gray metal siding, high transparency glass, wood accents, painted soffits, and a metal siding scrim. The goal of the scrim and façade is to activate the edges along Mercer St. and 4th Ave N, while creating a unified façade between McCaw Hall and the proposed facility (see *figure 3*). The scrim, combined with landscaping, will help define the public promenade along Mercer St. The updated scrim design will transition along the street, creating multiple layers that differ in transparency. The scrim will appear weightless and transparent at critical points along the façade, including where it touches the ground along Mercer St. and 4th Ave N.

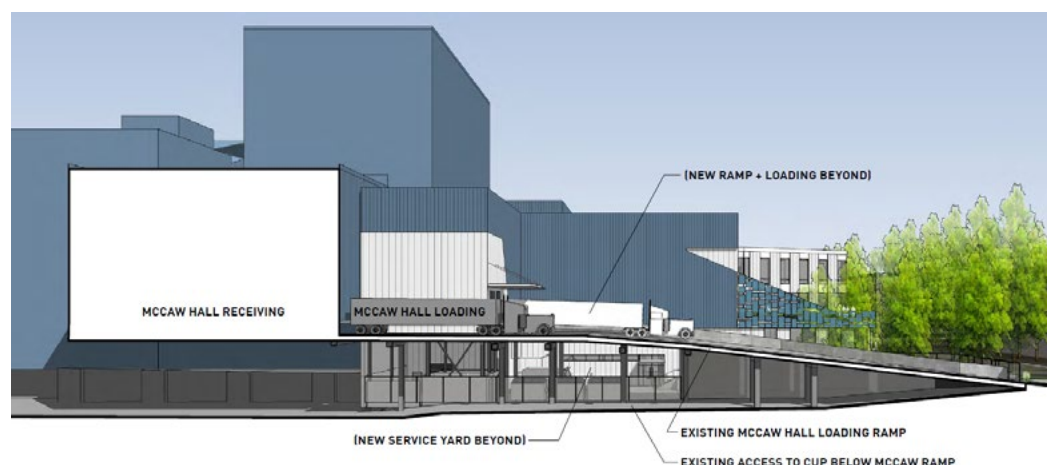


Figure 1: Section of loading area

LOADING AND SERVICING VIEW FROM SOUTHEAST

1. Memorial Stadium - Existing
2. Seattle Center Gate 7 - bollard-controlled access - Existing
3. Service access to Seattle Center central utility plant and service yard - Existing
4. McCaw Hall loading dock ramp - Existing
5. Ramp up for large truck loading
6. Curb cut - Existing
7. Curb cut and driveway access point for service yard - located between existing trees
8. Ramp down on grade to service yard
9. Service yard, daily deliveries, waste handling
10. Gate in fence for Opera access
11. South staff access door (egress door)
12. Roof terrace at L2



Figure 2: Loading and service area for existing McCaw Hall and the proposed expansion

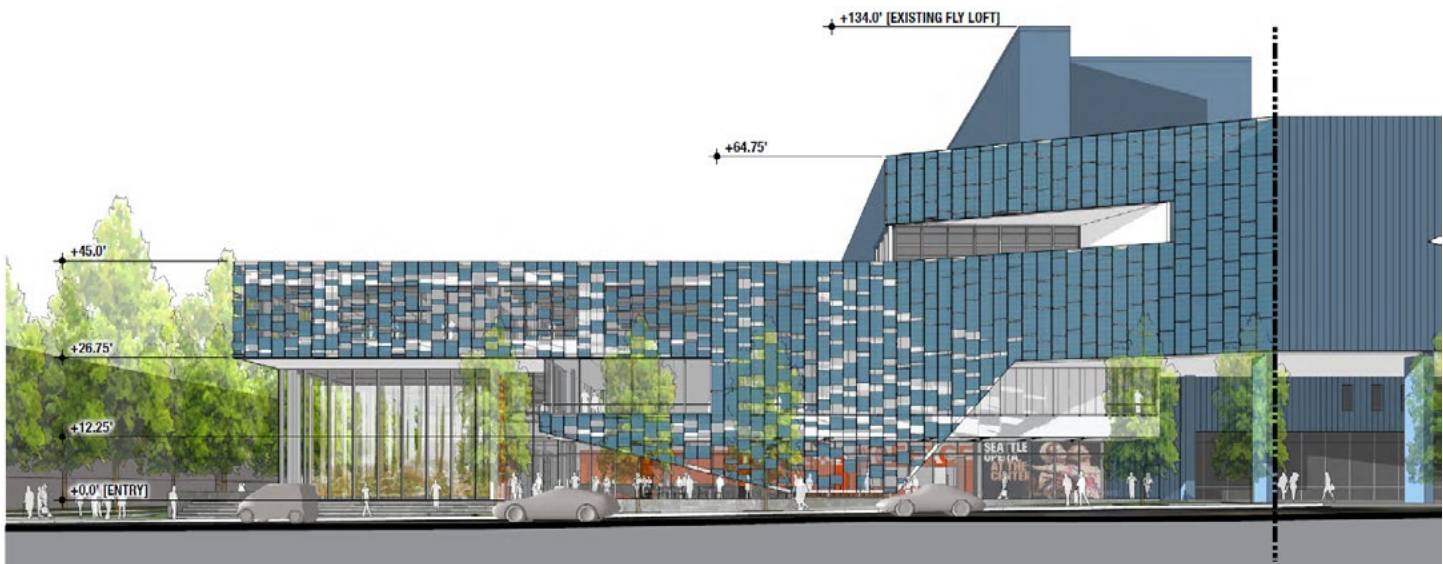


Figure 3: Proposed scrim facade update

Agency Comments

None

Public Comments

Angie Battazzo, of SOJ, Stated that the one percent investment required is focused on the temporary art programming along the exterior of the building. The procurement of art within the facility is above the one percent required and will be provided and financed by the Opera.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Pedestrian experience
- Landscape design elements
- Building design elements
- Art

Pedestrian experience

The SDC agreed the proposed landscaping and fencing along the 4th Avenue N portion of the building supports the overall design of the project and will provide a positive experience for pedestrians. Commissioners agree the team should not re-plant mature trees along 4th Ave N where trees are currently absent. The SDC recommends the portion of scrim and façade along 4th Avenue N continue to meet the ground plane at an angle in order to provide a greater level of visibility into the proposed programming along 4th Ave N. Commissioners also recommended the design team consider repositioning the ADA accessible ramp so that it provides a shorter, more gracious transition at the northeast corner of the building.

Landscape design elements

The SDC is concerned the landscape design is not as fully developed as the design for the facility. Commissioners recommend the design team continue developing the landscape design. The SDC sees different landscape experiences along Mercer St. and 4th Ave N and recommended the design team understand fully how the two landscape concepts on each street can be further developed, with attention also paid to their intersection at Mercer St. and 4th Ave N.

Building design elements

The SDC agrees the updated scrim façade design and its increased perforations provides a greater level of transparency at key points along the Mercer St. and 4th Ave. N façade. The SDC recommended the design team continue to refine both the gradient and transparency of the scrim design as the project moves forward. Commissioners also recommended the project team consider implementing the scrim design in a way other than hanging panels on a cable.

Art

The SDC appreciated the design team providing additional artwork programs above what is required.

Action

The SDC approved, 7-0, the schematic design for the Seattle Opera with the following recommendations:

1. Consider the location and design of the bus loading zone along 4th Ave N
2. Continue to angle the scrim as it hits the ground plane along 4th Ave N in order to provide greater transparency into the costume shop
3. Continue exploring material, signage, landscape, and seating along 4th Ave N and Mercer St to reduce barriers to activity
4. Consider accessibility and length when designating pathways within the surrounding landscape
5. Continue to modify the panel gradient of the scrim in key areas in order to provide a greater level of transparency