

9th Ave S Street Vacation (Seattle Nissan)

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John Savo, Chair

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Commissioners Present

John Savo, Chair
Rikerrious Geter
Brianna Holan
Mark Johnson
Rick Krochalis
Ross Tilghman

Commissioners Excused

Ben de Rubertis, Vice Chair
Justin Clark
Rachel Gleeson
Laura Haddad

Project Description

Seattle Nissan is petitioning to vacate various rights-of-way (ROW) between Airport Way S, Interstate 5, and S Spokane St in the SODO neighborhood to expand an automotive dealership currently under construction. The proposal includes the vacation of three street segments – S Hinds Street, 9th Avenue S and S Lyons Street – located between Airport Way S and Interstate 5. The request also includes the partial vacation of a segment of Airport Way S located in front of the project site. Finally, a 16 foot wide alley that connects the segments of S Hinds and S Lyons in this vacation is also proposed for vacation.

The automotive dealership expansion is occurring in two phases. Phase I, which is under construction, includes the main dealership facility, outdoor vehicular storage, service area, and parking. Phase I is being developed on the parcel bounded by 9th Ave S and Airport Way S (Master Use Permit #3025665-LU). Phase II, which will develop on additional private parcels and area from the vacated ROW of 9th Ave S and portions of Airport Way S., will include a car wash and additional service and 192 parking spaces (Master Use Permit #3030794-LU)

At the time of the petition, construction had begun on phase I of the project, for which the Master Use Permit lists no vacation requests. The Master Use Permit for phase II of the project only lists two of the five vacation requests. We anticipate the Master Use Permit for phase II will be updated to accurately reflect the number of vacations requested from the project team.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the 9th Ave S Street Vacation (Seattle Nissan) project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the public trust analysis for the project. The SDC did not take an action during today's meeting. The Commission expressed fundamental concerns about the vacation requests and provided several recommendations for the project team to address prior to the next meeting.

Recusals and Disclosures

None

October 4, 2018

1:00 - 2:30 pm

Type

Street Vacation

Phase

Public Trust Analysis

Previous Reviews

None

Presenters

Darby DuComb

Schlemlein, Fick & Scruggs

Juliet Vong

HBB Landscape Architecture

Attendees

Beverly Barnett

SDOT

Moir Gray

SDOT

Jesse Moore

Duwamish Valley Safe Streets



Figure 1: Site location

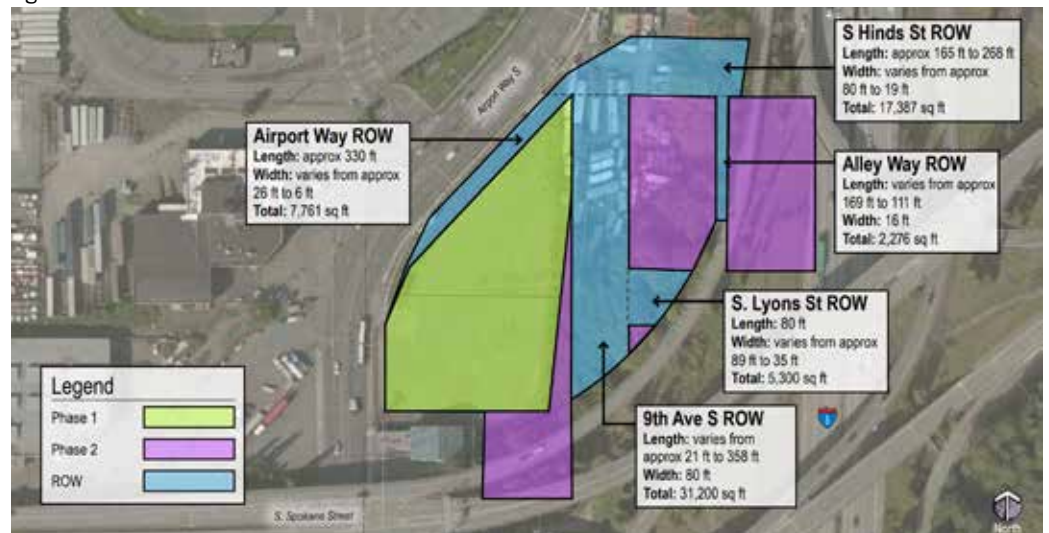


Figure 2: Proposed street vacations

Summary of Presentation

Juliet Vong of HBB Landscape Architecture, and Darby DuComb of Schlemlein, Fick & Scruggs presented the public trust analysis for the 9th Avenue South Street Vacation (Seattle Nissan) project. The development team discussed the current uses of the sites, including surface parking for trailers and debris. The current sites are largely unimproved and considered blighted. The historical and current uses are consistent with the SODO area's zoning, which is IG2U-85 (industrial) at this location. *See figure 1.*

Seattle Nissan's development team is petitioning to vacate five public rights-of-way totaling 1.5 acres (63,924 square feet) (*See figure 2*). The applicant's goal with these vacations is to increase the size of their automobile sales business, facilitate more storage of automobiles on surface parking lots, and construct a car wash. The existing adjacent site of Seattle Nissan is undergoing redevelopment and was granted a Master Use Permit (#3030794-LU) prior to their seeking these rights of way vacations.

The proposed design under the vacation alternative includes main dealership facility, surface parking, surface storage, vegetation, separate car wash facility, and access to additional storage to the east of the project site. This project



Figure 3: Proposed vacation (left) and no vacation (right) scenarios

proposes removing 17 trees from the existing public rights-of-way. Additionally, site plans with vacation granted show green space removed along Airport Way South and South Hinds Street. The proposed design under the no vacation alternative include the main dealership facility, surface parking, surface storage, and ROW improvements along S Hinds St and 9th Ave S. See figure 3 for more detail.

The presenters stated that Seattle Nissan would not be economically feasible without acquiring the adjacent public space, since the ideal size of a Nissan dealership is around 5 acres. They also stated that construction of a car wash may not be viable without the vacations granted. The site plan with granted vacation was said to provide better traffic circulation, especially for large delivery trucks and fire trucks. The presenters discussed working with the SODO BIA (Business Improvement Area) and performing community engagement requirements per SDOT's revised street vacation process.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, mentioned that this is the first project under the newly revised street vacation policy. Couple of differences is policy revisions merged transportation and land use. Ms. Barnett then explained several revisions and changes in the new policy such as the merging of transportation and land use analysis, broadened definition of public benefit, required community engagement throughout the process, and requirement for project teams to consult with the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). Ms. Barnett stated there are still several unresolved issues that need to be discussed such as understanding how the vacation affects the adjacent property owner as well as understanding future impacts of vacating a portion of Airport Way S. Mr. Barnett then said that they have yet to look at the proposed public benefit package, but noted that the proposed onsite landscape is probably more beneficial for the property owner. She encouraged the project team to consider opportunities off site that would better serve the community.

Public Comments

Jesse Moore, of Duwamish Valley Safe Streets, Mentioned that the organization's vision is to connect communities with safe and healthy streets for people who walk and bike. Mr. Moore then said that although 60,000 people commute to the Georgetown neighborhood and surrounding area every day for work, there are few streets for pedestrians to walk safely, specifically south of Spokane St. Mr. Moore then stated challenges related to existing conditions along Airport Way S even though the bike master plan calls for a protected bike lane along the arterial. Mr. Moore then suggested several public benefit elements to which the project team could help implement. Suggestions included extending the SODO bike trail south to Spokane St. which will would help connect users to the light rail stations and downtown.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- 9th Ave and S Lyons St. vacations

- Airport Way S vacation
- Alley vacation
- S Hinds St vacation
- Open Space
- Utilities, drainage, & water supply
- Land use, urban form, & neighborhood impacts

9th Ave and S Lyons St vacations

The SDC is concerned with vacating streets to be used as surface storage. Commissioners commented that, typically the outcome of a vacation included an enhanced public realm, but that the proposed vacation scenario for this project did not reflect that. The SDC strongly recommended the project team show how the vacation scenario enhances the public realm. The Commission requested the project team provide circulation diagrams for the vacation and no vacation scenarios to better understand what opportunities are provided with and without the street vacations. Commissioners then agreed that SPU should comment on the existing utilities beneath 9th Ave S prior to returning to the commission.

Airport Way S vacation

The SDC agreed the no vacation scenario provided more vegetation along Airport Way S. than the vacation scenario. Commissioners stated that improvements to the ROW under the no vacation scenario provide a better solution than utilizing the same area for surface parking. The Commission questioned the necessity of the Airport Way S vacation request, commenting that the wide ROW could be used in the future to serve as a bike facilities and other transportation needs. The SDC recommended the project team provide alternatives for onsite vehicle storage before vacating Airport Way S ROW to better show how much flexibility there is to organize surface storage without this vacation.

Alley vacation

The SDC requested more information as to the design and use of the upper lot.

S Hinds St.

The SDC agreed the S Hinds St. vacation has a direct impact on the adjacent property owner. The commission questioned the necessity of this vacation. Commissioners recommended the project team provide alternative design options within the S Hinds St ROW that can meet the current and future needs of the property without vacating it. The Commission also questioned the need for three curb cuts (including S. Hinds St.) in such a short segment along Airport Way S.

Open space

The SDC is concerned that vacation alternative includes less open space and vegetation than the no vacation scenario. The Commission requested more information on required frontage improvements along Airport Way S.

Utilities, drainage, & water supply

The SDC acknowledged that the vacation alternative includes more impervious surface area than the no vacation scenario. The Commission strongly recommended the project team provide a sustainability strategy for the project.

Land use, urban form, & neighborhood impacts

The SDC commented that although this area of SODO is turning into a more urban environment, this type of land use is consistent with what exists in the neighborhood.

Action

The Commission thanked the project team for their presentation of the public trust analysis for the 9th Ave S Street Vacation (Seattle Nissan) project. Although the Commission appreciated the project team's outreach efforts to comply with the new street vacation policies, they felt that the team did not adequately demonstrate a need for the requested vacations during this meeting.

The SDC did not take an action during today's meeting. The commission provided the following recommendations that should be addressed prior to the next meeting:

1. Show how the vacation scenario enhances the public realm.
2. Provide circulation diagrams for the vacation and no vacation scenarios to better understand what opportunities are provided with and without the street vacations.
3. SPU should comment on the existing utilities beneath 9th Ave S.
4. Provide alternatives for onsite vehicle storage before vacating Airport Way S ROW to better show how much flexibility there is to organize surface storage
5. Provide more information as to the design and use of the upper lot.
6. Provide alternative design options within the S Hinds St ROW that can meet the current and future needs of the property without vacating it and perhaps eliminating the need for a second curb cut into the dealership.
7. Provide information on required frontage improvements along Airport Way S.
8. Provide a sustainability strategy for the project.