



**Seattle
Design
Commission**

**APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MEETING
6 June 2002**

Gregory J. Nickels,
Mayor

Donald Royse
Chair

Tom Bykonen

Ralph Cipriani

Jack Mackie

Cary Moon

Iain M. Robertson

David Spiker

Sharon E. Sutton

Tory Laughlin Taylor

John Rahaim,
Executive Director

Layne Cubell,
Commission Coordinator

Projects Reviewed
Yesler Community Center and
Low Income Housing Project
Oxbow Park
Roxhill Park, Phase II
Zymogenetics

Convened: 8:30am

Commissioners Present
Donald Royse, Chair
Jack Mackie, Vice Chair
Tom Bykonen
Ralph Cipriani
Cary Moon
Iain M. Robertson
David Spiker
Sharon E. Sutton

Adjourned: 5:00pm

Staff Present
John Rahaim
Layne Cubell
Brad Gassman
Sally MacGregor



Department of Design,
Construction & Land Use

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6 Jun 2002 Project: **Yesler Community Center and Low Income Housing Project**

Phase: Pre-Design

Presenters: Toby Ressler, Department of Parks and Recreation
Richard Franko, Mithun
Ellen Kissman, Seattle Housing Authority
Roger Williams, MithunAttendees: Merv Gorasht, Design Review Board Member
Heather Hargeshemmer, Mithun
Scott Kemp, Department of Design, Construction, and Land Use
John W. Marshall, Department of Parks and Recreation
Tom Rooks, Mithun
Robert Scully, CityDesign

Time: 1.25 hour (SDC Ref. # 169 | DC00275)

Action: **The Commission appreciates the presentation and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.**

- **The Commission commends the design team for the thorough site analysis;**
- **looks forward to the development of this project as a catalyst for future redevelopment within the neighborhood;**
- **challenges the team to avoid an inward looking scheme and seize upon this site as an opportunity to make better connections between this community and the larger city, especially downtown and First Hill;**
- **supports the design team's recognition of this site as an important part of the City's Blue Ring/ Open Space Strategy, particularly the views and potential open space at the intersection of Yesler Way and Broadway Avenue, which should not be used for auto drop-off;**
- **encourages the team to develop a massing concept and parking layout that will maximize public use of the site;**
- **points out a discrepancy between the sustainable design analysis with the urban design analysis;**
- **looks forward to the development of the social spaces and different types of open spaces, and encourages the team to use clear diagrams to explain the character of and connection between these social spaces; and**
- **approves pre-design work on the project.**

The design team for the Yesler Community Center and Low Income Housing project presented the project's program goals, design principles, and siting issues for this unique joint venture between Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks Department). The project will be funded by the Community Center Levy and Seattle Housing Authority. The current community center is the smallest in the city, and is only a 4,700 square foot gym. The project includes a new full service Yesler Community Center of 20,000 square feet, including a basketball gym, activity space, and multi-purpose space. The project will also include replacement of the twenty-one low-income rental housing units that must be removed for the construction of the community center, the Yesler Terrace property management office, and auxiliary facilities. As a mixed-use building with multi-family housing, the Design Review Board will also review this project. The current Yesler Terrace public housing

community offers about 580 units on fifty acres.

As the Community Center levy was being developed, the City approached SHA to donate a site to accommodate a new community center at Yesler Terrace. Once the levy passed, an initial siting study, to determine an appropriate location for the community center examined five potential sites in various locations around Yesler Terrace, all of which were found to be unacceptable by either the Parks Department, SHA, or both. A second site study focused on the area along Yesler Way, between Eighth Avenue and Tenth Avenue. This study included several meetings with Yesler Terrace residents. The preferred location identified through this study includes the location of the existing community center, and extends east to Tenth Avenue South.

Project Program:

Community Center:

- Lobby/ Reception
- Administrative Offices
- Full size gymnasium with storage
- Activity Spaces
 - Multi-purpose room with adjacent kitchen
 - Arts and Crafts Room
 - Fitness
 - Game Room
 - Teen Room
 - School-Age child care associated outdoor play area
 - Computer/ Library

Parking

Housing

- Management offices for Yesler Terrace
- Shared Laundry facility
- 28 housing units: mix of 1 and 2 bedroom
- Parking

The design team explained the project goals for the project, which address the project's relationship with the larger Seattle community, as well as the project's relationship with the Yesler neighborhood. The project will also be sustainable, and the design team hopes to attain a LEED™ Silver rating for sustainable design and construction.

Within the Seattle context, the project will enhance open space connections by creating a vista down the "Broadway Corridor," making connections to the CityDesign's Blue Ring pedestrian system. The project will also highlight the activity of the community center, by bringing life to the outdoors, and making interior activities visible on the street edge. The gym would probably be located along



Yesler Way, while other active spaces would be located along the open vista to the south.

The project is a significant opportunity to enhance the spirit of the Yesler neighborhood by creating a “Heart of the Community” that nurtures pride, interaction, and a unique identity for the local residents. The views from the site will be optimized, and the open view throughout the site will also serve to ensure a safe and secure site. The design team will also work with the community to select an artist early in the design process, to provide optimal integration with building design and community goals.

As the design team strives to attain a LEED™ Silver rating, they will design with the sun, wind, rain, and significant existing trees to optimize building locations. The building design will be optimized for heating, daylighting, and power production. This energy efficiency will also be supported by enhanced natural ventilation. The design team also plans to reduce the amount of rainwater draining from the site. The site slopes away to the south, and orientation of the site supports many of these goals. Seventy-five parking spaces are required at the site, but the design team hopes that the extent of impervious surface on the site is not great; the design team is exploring options.

Merv Gorasht, a Design Review Board member updated the Commission Yesler Community Center and Housing project review the previous day. The Design Review Board believes that this is a terrific civic project, and recognizes the potential for more open space and a cohesive neighborhood project. The site is a “precious site” on a plateau. This site and this community need a “front door.” There will not be parking access along Yesler Way, and the Design Review Board supports this idea. Gorasht also explained that the design team may propose a building setback of five feet, rather than a typical fifteen feet; the building will be approximately thirty feet tall, and this height, at this setback, must be addressed by the design.

Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns

- Would like to know the zoning of the site.
 - Proponents stated that the site is zoned L3-30, which has a height limit of thirty feet. The height of the gym would be mitigated by transitions and setbacks to the community center.
- Would like to know why the community center is one level.
 - Proponents stated that the community center is one level for security purposes.
- Would like to know if the project would include improvements to the existing open spaces on the site.
 - Proponents stated that there may not be enough money to make these improvements.
- Commends the design team for the overall site plan. Recognizes that public housing is typically isolated. Believes that there should be strong connections between this community and downtown.
- Recognizes that one of the design principles indicates a need to retain the active social spaces within the neighborhood. Encourages the team to present diagrams showing the social spaces within the community, and then present diagrams showing how the new social spaces at the community center would coordinate with the existing spaces in the community. Urges the team to present a diagram of the proposed five foot setback, and how this setback would relate to existing social spaces in the neighborhood.
 - Proponents stated that the open space to the south, the ball field, would likely be redeveloped as housing in the future. Further stated that there is also an existing path and public stairway that connects Yesler Terrace and the International District.

- Encourages the team to consider how the project would serve other uses within the community, or how this project would not inhibit other uses in the area.
 - Proponents agreed that this would be an important stage of the design process.
- Would like to know how the central area, between the community center and the housing, would be used. Would like to know if this would be parking. Does not believe that this project should be inward-looking. Urges the design team to show how the open spaces would be public spaces for the community.
 - Proponents explained that this space was for parking. Proponents stated that housing could be built atop the community center, increasing the height of the building, but would also increase the amount of open space on the site.
- Would like to know if the team has considered underground parking.
 - Proponents stated that underground parking would require a high level of security, and would be expensive, but underground parking is not out of the question. Further stated that the five foot setback would also allow the team to increase the open space south of the building, at which the views are important.
- Encourages the design team to begin to work with a landscape architect now, so that the interaction between the inside and outside spaces is seamless.
- Would like to see site diagrams explaining pedestrian and vehicular movement, in order to better see a connection between this site and the larger Seattle area.
- Believes that the overall site strategy, the placement of the community center and housing, is appropriate. Is excited that the Open Space Strategy has been incorporated in the concept design. Recognizes that the design team will continue to address these ideas throughout the design process, but believes that the general site strategy is good.
- Commends the team for the extensive site analysis, and recognizes that the team has raised a number of issues. Encourages the team to look at the open spaces on the site with the same level of coherence as the diagrams that address the building design.

Key Visitor Comments and Concerns

- Merv Gorasht, representative of the Design Review Board, believes that the Commission raised numerous interesting issues and concerns. Believes that the open space and the gym would be the most permanent strategies on the site. Recognizes that the site is tight for the program and required level of parking. Believes that eleven units per acre is actually low density. Does not believe that the long term future of the site should be compromised.