

# Seattle Design Commission

## Approved MINUTES OF THE MEETING

15 December 2005

Gregory J. Nickels,  
*Mayor*

David Spiker  
*Chair*

Charles Anderson

Pam Beyette

Adam Christiansen

Karen Kiest

Anindita Mitra

Sheri Olson

Nic Rossouw

Dennis Ryan

Darrell Vange

Guillermo Romano,  
*Executive Director*

Layne Cubell,  
*Commission Coordinator*

### Projects Reviewed

South lake Union Streetcar  
Mercer Corridor Project  
Broadview Library Expansion

Convened: 8:30am

Adjourned: 3.00pm

### Commissioners Present

David Spiker, Chair  
Charles Anderson  
Pam Beyette  
Adam Christiansen  
Karen Kiest  
Anindita Mitra  
Sheri Olson  
Nic Rossouw  
Dennis Ryan  
Darrell Vange

### Staff Present

Guillermo Romano  
Layne Cubell  
Alison Maitland Scheetz



Department of Planning and  
Development

P. O. Box 34019  
1000 5th Avenue, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019  
phone 206/233-7911  
fax 206/288-7883

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**15 Dec 2005 Project:** South Lake Union Street Car

Phase: Design Development

Previous Reviews: 3 Feb 2005 (Schematic Design), 5 Aug 2004 (Design Update), 15 April 2004 (Briefing), 21 June 2001 (Briefing)

Presenters: Ethan Melone, Seattle Department of Transport  
Dennis Haskell, Parsons Brinckerhoff  
Don Miles, Zimmer Gunsul Frasca

Attendees: Ken Johnsen, Office of Policy and Management  
Art Borst, Parsons Brinkerhoff  
Daniel Mihalyo, Lead Pencil Studio  
Ruri Yampolskey, Arts and Cultural Affairs  
Lyle Bicknell, DPD  
Darby Watson, LMN Architects  
Eric Tweit, SDOT

Time: 1 hours (SDC Ref. # 169 – DC00330)

## Action

**The Design Commission would like to thank SDOT and the design team for the thorough presentation, and recommends approval by a vote of 9 to 1 of the design development of the streetcar project, based on the following comments. The Commission;**

- **appreciates the efforts to partner with various agencies, including Metro, and the attempts to integrate the project into the urban fabric of the city.**
- **as the Commission will not see this project again, they strongly encourage proponents to further co-ordinate with the designers of South Lake Union Park, and the design and construction of Valley Street, and to make sure that they adhere to the Terry Avenue Design Guidelines.**
- **hopes that the proponents will continue, and not interrupt, the quality and aesthetics of Terry Avenue, which the City is so carefully trying to mold.**
- **supports artist involvement in developing the system identity for the street car program.**
- **encourages continued cooperation with adjacent property owners, not only for the maintenance and the provision of the street furniture and lighting, but also in terms of the design and location of the station structures themselves.**
- **are concerned about a couple of the sub stations, particularly the north triangle, on the west side of Fairview and strongly encourages the team to consider putting it underground. If this is truly not an option, the Commission urges the design team to focus more on aesthetics and integrating the building into the neighborhood fabric.**
- **looks forward to future presentations of the maintenance facility, since that is running on a slower design schedule as a result of its relocation.**

## **Proponents Presentation**

This is the fifth presentation of the South Lake Union Streetcar. At the last presentation in February 2005, the Schematic design, the Commission questioned the proponent's commitment to the 1% art program, Terry Ave Street Design Guide Lines and the integration of the maintenance facility. Since that time, major funding and approval for the project has been secured, and SDOT has advanced the project to the design development phase.

The aim of this presentation was to give a brief overview of the project, the components and steps in project development, followed by a discussion on design development issues regarding final line alignment, stops, substation location, maintenance building location, the public art plan.

### Overview

Proponents presented an overview of the benefits of the streetcar, stating that it supports pedestrian friendly development patterns, reduces parking pressures, is easily accessible due to its low elevation, can be operated in mixed traffic environments, and typically has higher rider ship levels than buses. They also outlined the major elements of a streetcar system; a track in concrete, platforms and shelters, a power system composed of a single overhead line, poles and substations, and a maintenance facility. They advised that since February funding has been secured, a general contractor has been selected (the same streetcar manufacturer as Portland's streetcar) and operating agreements are underway with Metro.

### Design Development Issues

#### **Line alignment**

- This remains unchanged since February.

#### **Stops**

- The stops are located at Virginia/7<sup>th</sup>, Denney Way, Harrison/Thomas, South Mercer, N end of Boren serving the park, and the North terminal serving the Fred Hutch Center. Four of these stops are in conjunction with private developments
- The goal is to have prototypical stops. A bulb in the curb line will extend the sidewalk to a 10' platform. Ramps and stairs will accommodate the 4" elevation change from the sidewalk.
- The back side of the platform will be either a step or a planting bed, taking the run off from the platform.
- Each stop will have an off the shelf shelter canopy, which may or may not be glazed. This allows for easy maintenance.
- The stop reader board is likely to be separate from the shelter, but could be integrated.
- The stop identifier board is likely to be separate from the shelter, but could be integrated.
- The majority of platforms will be on the side, except for Fairview/Ward which will have a center platform, and Boren where access will be from two sides.
- The stop shelters at the park will be temporary until the park is built.

#### **Sub stations**

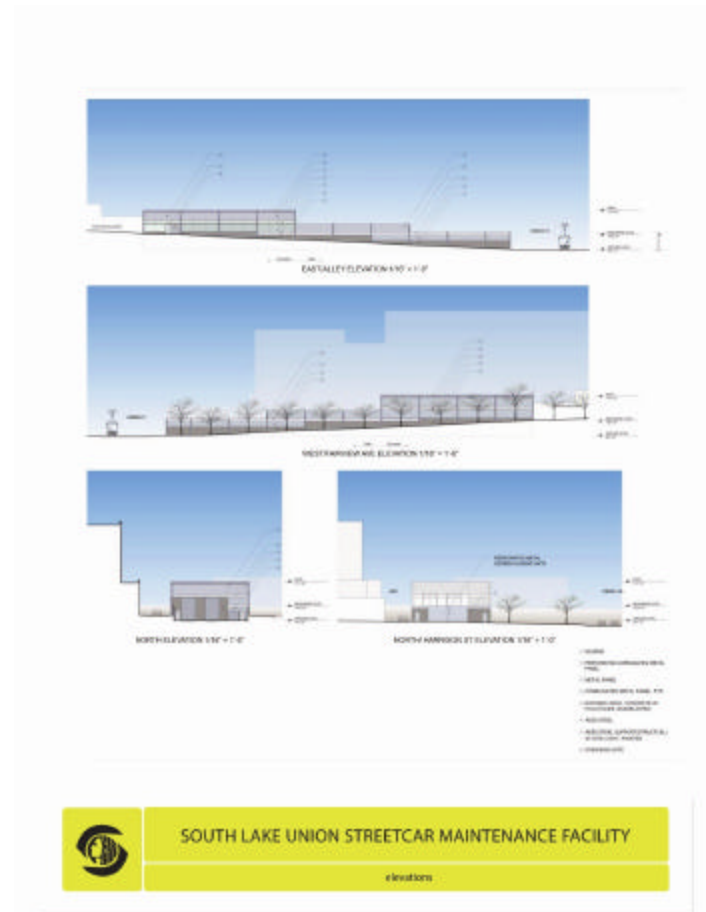
- Three substations are still required
  - Southern substation – below ground at the triangle
  - Middle substation – below ground at block 40 in the alley.

- Northern substation – above ground
- Metro requires an above ground access.
- The substations will be 10’ wide, 12’ long and 12’ high.
- The above ground substation will be integrated into the neighborhood.

**Maintenance facility**



- The location of this has changed to a Vulcan owned site on Harrison/Fairview. SDOT is currently negotiating a property transfer.
- Access will be off Harrison.
- The site is two blocks from the main track so a spur will be required.
- Will be screened from adjacent property.
- The yard will be low and will preserve view corridor for surrounding studios
- Building will be concrete and metal panels



### Arts funding

- SDOT and Office for Arts and Cultural affairs are working with Lead Pencil Studio
- Early ideas for the location of the art project include;
  - The station stops
  - The maintenance facility
  - Above ground substation
- Estimated funding is \$20,000

### Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Questions how long the Boren stop will be temporary.
  - Uncertain. Mercer/Valley project is scheduled to start in 2008. Park will be phased.
- Asks if the streetcar will have signal priority at traffic lights.
  - Yes, they will have the ability to change the signals, but the aim is to mix the flow
- Asks if the platform replaces the parking lane.
  - Yes

- Asks if the tram will change lanes.
  - Only northbound when crossing Mercer, and the turn at Terry.
- Asks if traffic can merge with the tram line.
  - Yes, the tracks are flush with the street.
- Asks if the back of the shelters are glazed.
  - Optional
- Requests clarification of the shelter signage.
  - Could be on separate poles or integrated into the shelter
- Questions the street furnishing and maintenance of the shelters.
  - Minimal, no trash cans or newspaper boxes
  - Off the shelf products that are easy to maintain
  - Hope to establish support and cooperation with nearby property owners
- Requests clarification of the maintenance facility.
  - Will be used for light and minor repairs.
  - Major repairs will be completed at the Metro or Light Rail Facilities.
- Asks if the shelters will be lit at night.
  - No, only ambient street lighting
- Is concerned with the noise and air quality at the maintenance facility. Environmental impact document describes how the noise is well below required levels.
  - Tram system is actually below current ambient noise level of the site.
- Expresses concern that the funding for art is too small and recommends pursuing community or private contributions.
  - Unfortunately not all funds are eligible for the 1% art program.
- Strongly questions the new location for the maintenance facility and wonders how this fits into the neighborhood plan. Feels that the old location was more suitable.
  - Have the support of the local community, although have yet to discuss it with the Cascade Group since they did not have a December meeting.
- Approves the simplicity and openness of the tram stops
- Commends the use of storm water to feed the plantings around the shelters. Recommends using street trees only, and not low shrubs and ground covers.
- Suggests that the stations should be unified with the same ramp and drainage systems. Feels consistency would have a stronger impact on the neighborhood, making them more recognizable.
- Disagrees that the stations need to be the same. Feels that each site offers unique opportunities.
- Hopes proponents will fully address and embrace the Terry Avenue guidelines.

- Vigorously dislikes the idea of an above ground substation. Feels it will be an eyesore to the neighborhood and disapproves of using the art budget towards hiding it.
- Is concerned that an above ground substation, in the right of way, contrasts with the principles behind the rest of the project.
- Recommends artist involvement in developing the system identity for the street car program
- Suggests that the Maintenance facility offers educational facilities
- Feels that the cars and system can be elegantly designed, independent of an art project, allowing the art program to focus on a different part of the project.

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**15 Dec 2005 Project:** Mercer Street Corridor Project

Phase: Design Update II

Previous Reviews: 3 Feb 2005, (Design Update), 5 Aug 2004 (Pre-Design)

Presenters: Eric Tweit, Seattle Department of Transports  
Darby Watson, LMN

Attendees: Ruri Yampolskey, Arts and Cultural Affairs  
Lyle Bicknell, DPD

Time: 1 hours (SDC Ref. # 169 – DC00336)

### **Action**

**The Design Commission thanks SDOT and the design team for the presentation and update on the Mercer Corridor Project, and recommends approval subject to the following comments;**

- **asks the team to further review the utility, safety and need for street parking on Mercer, repeating their earlier comments, but with the acknowledgement that a parking lane may serve as a traffic calming feature, especially west of Terry.**
- **appreciates that the theme of native planting is merged into the ‘formal’ cultural plan for the overall street corridor.**
- **strongly endorses the major landscape softening on either side of the WSDOT access ramps on Mercer east of Fairview.**
- **is also greatly concerned about the loss of the Republican Street connection to Capital Hill east of Fairview.**
- **is not convinced about the use of colored, stamped concrete paving at intersections and in on-street parking lanes and suggests that the design opportunities be focused elsewhere**
- **thinks the design team should concentrate on reinforcing the Terry Avenue design guidelines, especially at the Mercer and Valley intersections.**
- **Suggests celebrating the refuge plazas in the Mercer corridor, since these are necessary for pedestrian safety.**
- **feels the character of the art installations should not be scaled exclusively for the vehicular experience and that the art program should not be used to resolve way finding issues or features.**



## Proponents Presentation

This is the third presentation of the Mercer Corridor Project. The project is managed by SDOT and is part of the larger South Lake Union (SLU) Transport Investment study. The Object of the presentation was to update the Committee on the urban design themes the proponents have identified and outline the two design concepts that have emerged from the themes.

The design team stated that the urban design concepts aim to express the South Lake Union neighborhood and provide an elegant entrance to the City of Seattle.

General Design Principles aim to

- Provide directional signage to neighborhood landmarks and to other neighborhoods
- Use sustainable practices such as native/drought tolerant plantings, bicycle lanes, swales, and solar-powered lighting where possible
- Highlight movement to and from the park as a key destination for pedestrian, cyclists, and transit-users
- Allow signage, lighting, and planting, and open space to create a cohesive identity
- Utilize large bright dynamic elements on Mercer and fine-textured, detailed interpretative elements on Valley

From discussions with various community groups and an analysis of Seattle's street guidelines they identified three design themes;

- Reflecting sustainable grass roots community
- Identifying maritime and industrial history
- Integrating with park

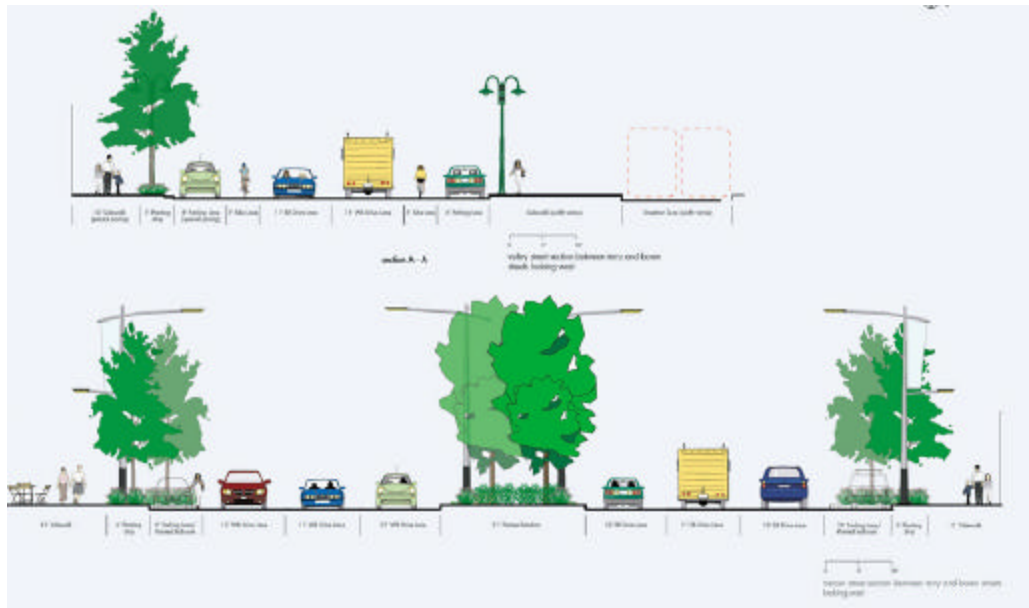
The design team presented two design concepts which reflect various aspects of these themes.

### Concept A: Natural





Design elements include;



- Step-down curbs on Valley Street to allow flexibility for ground floor uses to expand sidewalks to on street parking
- Text in paving /signage illustrating historical significance and changes throughout South Lake Union and neighborhood.
- Special paving repeated on sidewalks, crosswalks, and on street parking to narrow roadway.
- Use of industrial materials and/or reference to maritime tools and equipment.
- On Valley Street, five-foot wide tree pits alternate with permeable concrete in regular formal pattern
- On Mercer, tree pits alternate with permeable concrete, large deciduous trees in the median placed formally at an angle to allow through-lane visibility, and bull nose of median uses low gate or wall to protect pedestrians
- Use of industrial materials and/or referencing to maritime tools and equipment in street furniture and art features.

### Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Questions the need for parking on Mercer. Suggests removing or allowing only night parking.
- Is concerned temporary parking would cause more problems and could be confusing
- Suggests that the cultural scheme is more urban and ‘formal’.
- Thinks that aspects of the ‘informal’ natural concept, such as the use of native plants, should be merged with the cultural scheme.
- Advises that the two concepts should be brought together.

- Strongly discourages the use of colored, stamped concrete.
- Is concerned that the plantings will be challenged owing to the poor urban soils, compaction, and six lanes of cars, and therefore suggests using only trees.
- Worries about the length and safety of pedestrian crossings on Mercer, and suggests using bollards at the median to aid pedestrian safety.
- Is convinced that SDOT clearly understands the issue of public safety.
- Commends the bold and clear desire to address the problems for pedestrians on Mercer, Valley and Fairview.
- Feels the parking slows traffic and provides a much need buffer between the sidewalk and the street.
- Recommends creating larger parking spaces to allow easier access, while reducing slightly reducing the amount of parking.
- Likes the strong line of trees on Valley Street and recommends incorporating them into a green strip detention basin. The trees can be used to help clean the toxins in the road runoff, helping to clean the water before it enters the sewage system.
- Questions the use of conifers, owing to their rapid growth rate.
- Feels that the proposals focus on either integrated or object art and advises the importance of incorporating both. However, each type needs to respond to the site and the surroundings.
- Objects to the proposal of plop art. The art needs to connect to site, whether signature piece or not.
- Discourages the use of art for signage.
- Strongly recommends a variety of art installations to create a gateway, are visible to traffic, and are experienced by pedestrians.
  - The community did suggest that the gateway on Mercer should focus on Terry Avenue and not on Fairview for the freeway.
- Objects to the proposal of plop art. The arts needs to connect to site, whether signature piece or not.
- Discourages the use of art for signage.
- Is very concerned about the turn from I5 onto Mercer.
- Feels that WSDOT will support the use of gateway landscaping proposed for the road banks on Mercer Street east of Fairview.

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**15 Dec 2005 Project:** Planning Update

Presenters: John Rahaim, Department of Planning and Development

Time: 1 hours (SDC Ref. # 220)

The Commission would like to thank John for his updates on the continuing planning work on the Central Waterfront Concept Plan, the Viaduct and South Lake Union. The Design Commission expresses concern about the role and restrictions imposed on the Waterfront Plan by historic features, and urge a less literal, more creative approach.

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**15 Dec 2005 Project:** Broadview Library

Phase: Design Development

Previous Reviews: 2 June 2005 (Design Development), 7 April 2005 (Alley Vacation), 16 December 2004 (Schematic Design), 18 November 2004 (Concept Design), 15 July 2004 (Pre-Design)

Presenters: Brad Miller, Miller Hayahis Architects

Attendees: Justine Kim, Seattle Public Library

Time: 1 hours (SDC Ref. # 221)

### **Action**

**The Commission would like to thank the design team for another excellent presentation and recommends approval of design development. The Commission,**

- **is pleased with the way the design has evolved and responded to the Commission's previous concerns.**
- **approves of the changes to the parking lot and likes the simplified and clarified circulation.**
- **approves of relocating the existing wood panel artwork by Marion Oliver to the NE corner, creating a public beacon on the exterior and validating the unique architectural form of this corner.**
- **suggests that the rain garden on Greenwood Ave. N. might be extended to both sides of the entrance to create a stronger threshold experience and also that proponents consider extending the special paved area to the intersection of N. 130<sup>th</sup> and Greenwood Ave. N.**
- **hopes the height of the windows along the south side of the community room will continue to be studied as they may need to be dropped a few inches. The Commission also urges the proponents to revisit the interior layout of the lecture, storage and meeting rooms.**

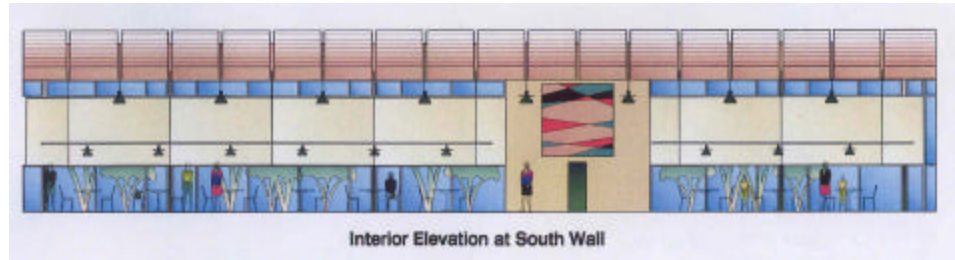


## Proponents Presentation

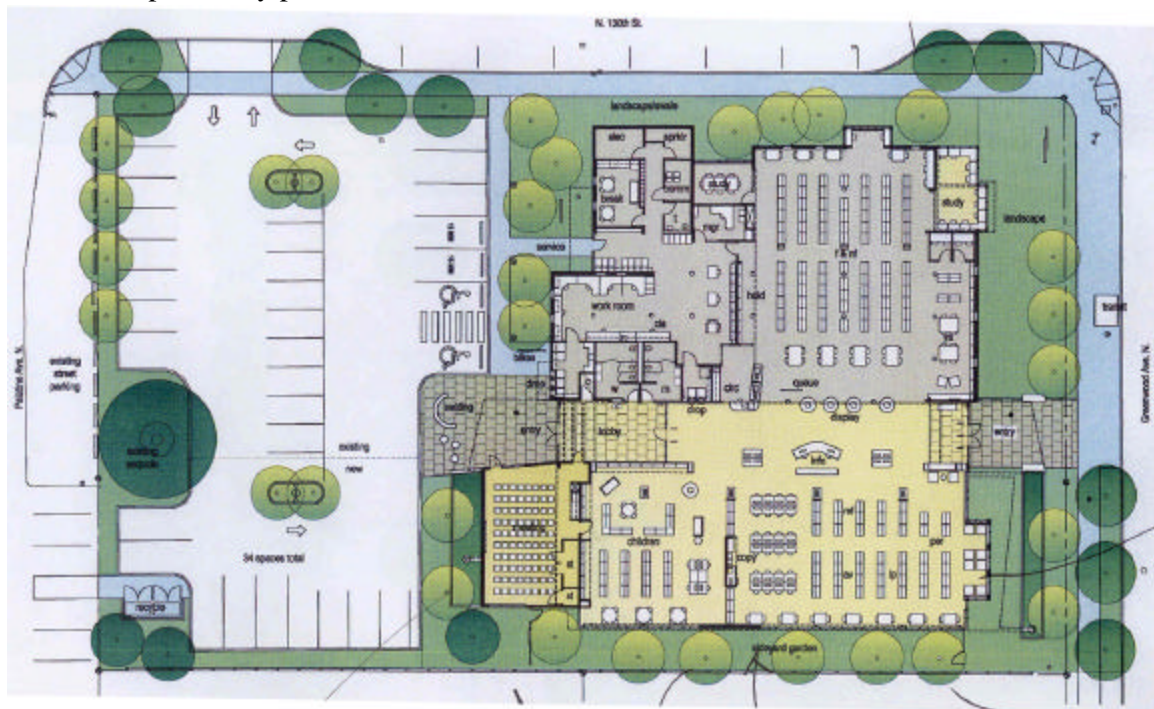
In response to the Design Commission's previous comments and further design developments the proponents presented the final design for the library. This design proposal was presented to, and well received by, the local community early in the week, on Monday.

The design of this project has changed little from the initial schematic design; this presentation outlined the minor amendments since August.

1. the south wall of the building is part screen and part window, looking out to lacy vegetation, and evergreen ground cover, which buffers the fence.



2. the existing fir and vine maples will remain, with consistent palette for the landscaping, with appropriate drought tolerant and water tolerant plants were needed.
3. there are new curb bulbs on N 130<sup>th</sup>
4. the interior layout is perpendicular to the building walls, as opposed to the angled book shelves previously presented.





5. storm water gardens detain rain water run off from the new extension. The soil does not allow percolation.
6. the parking lot has been simplified in order to clarify the circulation.
7. materials for the new building include metal panels and brick.

### Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Asks for clarification of the outside columns and wonders why they are so thin.
  - The vertical entry columns help support and stabilize roof
  - Mark entrance and set up the column sequence, but do not line up with interior
- Asks for clarification of the meeting room, especially capacity and suggests the use of double doors to accommodate overflow.
  - 10' wide with 7' high window
  - Feels the room can accommodate number of potential users
- Asks for details of heating system.
  - Jets, from ducts in the soffit, diffuse air at 12'
- Asks how the columns attached to the ground.
- Asks if the community is still keen to be involved in the upkeep of the gardening
  - No
- Appreciates delicacy of external columns
- Requests details of landscape plantings
- Likes the solution for the SE corner



- Endorses the use of the storm water planters but feels they should extend both sides of the entrance.
- Approves of experience created by the South wall when seated, but is concerned about the height of the screen from a standing position.
- Questions why the roofs only overhang on the East and West.
  - These directions suffer from the most glare
  - The site boundary on the south restrict the extrusion
- Commend the evolution of the design, especially the landscaping
- Reiterates the approval of the reading room lantern
- Feel the entrances work well, highlight the two different buildings while successfully joining them together.
- Feels that the design is very interesting since it takes on a different form
- Feels the lecture room is still unresolved
- Advocates for sustainable design practices as much as possible