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Dennis Ryan

Noria Sato

Guillermo Romano
Executive Director

Valerie Kinast
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Tom Iurino
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APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

December 3, 2009

Convened 1:00 pm
Adjourned 3:30 pm

Projects Reviewed

Westlake Transportation Hub Strategy
Admiral Way Safeway

Commissioners Present

Mary Johnston, Chair
Andrew Barash
Graham Black
Brendan Connolly
John Hoffman
Laurel Kunkler
Julie Parrett
Dennis Ryan
Norie Sato

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino
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December 3, 2009 **Project:** **Westlake Transportation Hub Strategy**

Phase: 60% Design

Last Reviewed: August 6, 2009

Presenters: Casey Hildreth

Attendees: Darby Watson, SDOT

Time: 1:09 pm - 2:10 pm

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ACTION

The Design Commission appreciates the design team for coming at 60% Design. Creating a secondary heart to this area is great. The Commission really appreciates the larger thinking in terms of streetcar and other things happening in the area and unanimously approves the 60% design with the following comments:

- One of the major concerns is the organization of the space and how well the various elements are pulled together within a larger concept. The proposed geometry of the channels seems a bit forced and arbitrary. Explore how to loosen up this geometry. Drawing on the idea of water conveyance, consider picking up on the surface water flows across the site as an organizing force.
- The commission believes an activity that could be good for this space is food vending because it could really help activate the space.
- The balance of permanent and mobile seating needs to be considered.
- There is some concern about the sequoia tree. It is suggested that the team look at a “grove” approach.
- The use of colored lights at night could become a strong focal point but it should be approached with care.
- There is concern regarding the ADA crosswalks location at the lowest point of the site. Drainage may render this crossing ineffective.
- A Bike shelter may be too large and may be a barrier instead of a feature.
- Optimize the design to be compatible with the streetcar expansion.
- Emphasize another look at the water channels and whether they are functional or just decorative. They should express the drainage pattern and not an arbitrary geometry.

Project Presentation

Casey Hildreth, of SDOT, stated that the last visit with the Design Commission was approximately two months ago. He then stated that the goal of this project is to knit together the transit around the Westlake Transit Hub.

Project information presented included:

- 60% designs to be completed shortly.
- Construction near end of 2010.
- Olive Way and Stewart St is the current South Lake Union Streetcar endpoint.
- Study area focus is bounded by 7th Avenue, Pike Street, 3rd Avenue, and Stewart St.
- This particular project is the “PreHub Study - Westlake Urban Design” draft.
- Many design iterations have occurred.

- The goal is to increase vitality, and prepare for possible extension of the streetcar.
- Use 5th Ave as the strong pedestrian connection along with Pine.
- Idea of “Times Square” theme, - expanding the hub through a series of public space improvements.
- SDOT looking at how to react if streetcar were be extended to 1st Ave. A phasing concept is proposed.
- New York City setting example with low cost improvements. Budget comes from state grant.

Two design options were presented for the 5th Ave. and Stewart St Plaza.

Option 1:

Design consists of:

- The idea of a second streetcar platform.
- A desire to enhance the plaza to activate space as a waiting area for transit riders.
- Emphasis on lighting for safety as well as provide the plaza an attractive appearance in the evening when space is less used by people.
- Historic statue has been integrated and goal is to highlight it within the new design.

Option 2:

“Big Tree/Water Splashes Alternative” consists of:

- Rain gardens and granite pavers to create an urban oasis.
- Pedestrian access across the site was an issue with this design.
- Rings of granite pavers inlaid in concrete to aid stormwater flow.
- A large, mature sequoia tree.
- An attempt to keep the feeling of movement and activity through the site.
- Utility issues exist to the east as well as too far to the north due to the statue.
- Vending is seen as a potential activity that may activate the plaza.
- Covered bike parking could potentially be a key feature.
- Four-foot grade difference from corner to the streetcar stop.
- Steps are proposed near statue to increase prominence of statue.
- The design team is looking into a public-private partnership.
- The design team is also looking to provide space for mobile food vending. Codes are being researched to help this effort.

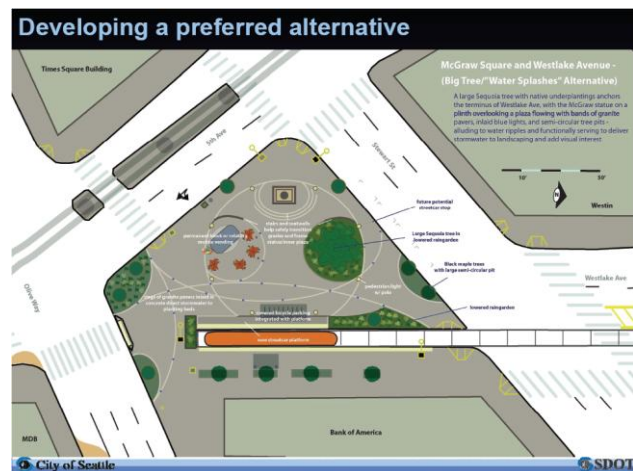


Figure 1: Big Tree/Water Splashes” alternative

Commissioners’ Comments & Questions

Covered bike parking is a good idea but is quite dominant.

An open question exists about the effects of covered bike parking and whether it's necessary. Exploring the option of an enclosed bike station that would become a large expression of the space. The larger it gets the more it takes over the space.

By "on-demand," do you mean it would be staffed? (referring to covered bike parking)

This issue is being looked into.

Regarding the water channels, how will the granite pavers work to channel water when not all are connected? Is this still just highly conceptual?

This particular rendering is conceptual and these details are being worked out. However, the channels won't be entirely functional. Three main catch areas but some channels remain purely visual.

Why was a sequoia tree chosen?

It is a strong tree that is iconic and long lasting.

This urban location lends well to the sequoia because other potential options are more difficult to relocate and are less likely to survive at the project location.

Did you consider a cluster of trees?

There is a chance they might be crowded and might not survive and therefore, maintenance would have to increase."

Have you been working with the streetcar team and is this compatible with the expansion? The plan as currently shown would cross a luminaire and crosswalk.

Yes. Nothing of major value is in the path. It has been considered.

What is the plan for the east side of the site?

Bank of America is being left to develop the site. Budget constraints are limiting the focus to the public side of the plaza.

Have you considered moving the bike parking on the east side?

There are spacial limits to the east side that would limit the ability to place bike parking.

Seating and the bike shelter are good. There is poor symmetry and there is a forced order to the current design.

The mobility for an ADA individual might be hampered by the current design where the tracks enter the plaza at east.

Olive & 5th: Why were the corners treated the way they were?

It is due to the geometry. Current placement attempts to accomplish good circulation through the site by placing people in a location where they're connection are clear.

Is there a reason why there's only a single kiosk vendor plan?

There is difficulty creating a single kiosk due to utility requirements.

We would like to see a messier site that is less green and possibly a place for a vending truck. A chance to add vendor space would be a strong component.

The tones seem a bit arbitrary. Maybe look at the patterning that might be less inhibiting so that all the pieces wouldn't have to fit a set shape. The planting area at 5th & Olive is of concern. It might get trampled. Encourage mobile seating as well as permanent seating in places so that the plaza will be flexible for vending and other activities. Encourage the development of little planting areas.

We appreciate the efforts of the whole. Consider the Commission's comments, there needs to be some sense of relationship. The presence of food vendors are very important ingredients. The lighting is important.

Concerning colored lights, consider that colored lights typically don't do well.

There is concern that colored lighting would look funky.

The Sequoia is a fine idea but should not dilute it. The statue and the tree are the two prominent features. Rethink the corner at Olive and 5th and the tree at that corner would really detract from the two features.

Reduce impediments to movement in the area. It's a great spot in the city.

I think at night, when lighting is active, there will be fewer people. There may be ways to make it much more active. Perhaps the light would flash when train is arriving. Maybe a sense that the lights move from features. The lighting could be a fantastic element. Really think about using it in an active way.