



APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Mike McGinn
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Julie Bassuk
Chair

Mary Fialko

Laurel Kunkler

Shannon Loew

Tom Nelson

Julie Parrett

Osama Quotah

Norie Sato

Donald Vehige

Debbie Wick-Harris

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Tom Iurino
Senior Staff



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April 19, 2012

Convened 12:00pm
Adjourned 4:30pm

Projects Reviewed

Mercer West II
SR 520 I5 to Medina

Commissioners Present

Julie Bassuk, Chair (excused 3:15-4:30pm)
Tom Nelson
Julie Parrett (excused from 12:30-2:30pm)
Shannon Loew
Osama Quotah
Don Vehige
Debbie Wick-Harris

Commissioners Excused

Norie Sato
Mary Fialko
Laurel Kunkler

Staff Present

Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino



April 19, 2012

Project: Mercer West II
Phase: 90% Design
Last Reviewed: Jan 20, 2011; Nov 3, 2011
Presenters: Eric Tweit, SDOT
Eric O'Brien, SDOT
Dennis Haskell, SRG
Tess Schiavone, GGN

Attendees: Jeff Hammerquest, citizen
Andrea Slusser, UW
Ashlynn Valicoff, UW
Audrey Maloney, UW
Gayna Nakajo, UW
Jessie Calder, GGN
Leila Swier, UW
Lindsey Yuen, UW
Monica Moravec, KPFF
Scott Jones, UW
Shane DeWald, SDOT
Stephen Triguero, UW
XA Bustamante, UW

Time: 12:30pm-2:30pm

Summary of Project Presentation

The design team presented its 90% design for Mercer West II. In conjunction with the Mercer East project, it will create a direct, two-way connection between I-5 and Elliott Ave. W.

Since the commission's last review at 60% design, the team further developed the design to reach 90% design. The team presented its most significant updates and changes to the project's design. The design team: placed most of the project's new trees on Mercer, with a goal of a 2-1 replacement for the project; added silva cells to improve health of trees; chose plantings (i.e. Mt Vernon Laurel, etc.) for Mercer that required less maintenance but had seasonal appeal and texture; configured the intersections, especially at N. Roy St. and Queen Anne Ave. N., to decrease conflicts for bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles; created a new sidewalk as an accessible route between the south side of Mercer and east side of Aurora which could be reconfigured to accommodate redevelopment when Broad Street is vacated; added large 4' x 2' pilasters to frame the artwork and serve as the ends of the retaining walls; extended the planters under the bridge to serve as a base for the art and to create a continuous design element both within and beyond the underpass; created the artwork as a 4.5' band due to limitations of the budget and a desire to keep the art at a pedestrian scale; and designed the wall with a smooth finish to serve as a minimal backdrop and showcase the art and vines.

ACTION (by Loew)

The Design Commission thanked the team for its presentation of the 90% design for the Mercer West II project. The commission appreciated the improvements made to the management of bicycle and vehicular traffic at intersections, the landscape concept and the plantings, and the inclusion of pedestrian lighting. By a vote of 1-5, the commission did not approve the design, and made the following recommendations:

Overall

- Improve the presentation, especially of the design of the underpass and its related elements; it lacked the details required for 90% design. Provide information and graphics for details such as finishes, joints, geometries, and how bridge elements come together. The presentation was too vague to comment on and to trust that the missing details would be successfully resolved and implemented.

Landscape of the redevelopment site

- Develop a long-term planting strategy for the southeast corner property at Aurora and Mercer. Given the site's size, configuration, and requirement to maintain ADA access from Mercer to Aurora in a future redevelopment, it is debatable how attractive the property is for redevelopment, or how soon it will be redeveloped.

Detailed design of bridge and underpass

- Develop the underpass design as a gateway element; make it a statement of excellence in the public realm at both night and day. This design is not a statement, not a gateway, and not a civic presence.
- Better integrate the art into the bridge design; just pulling out the pilasters doesn't do enough to frame and integrate the art. Disappointed that lighting, textures, color and other design strategies to fill the space and integrate the underpass with the artwork were discarded.
- Refine the massing, scale, finish, and geometry of the pilasters. The pilasters' formal style is mismatched with the minimalist art and finish under bridge; the termination of pilasters' pyramid form is not appropriately scaled for the ends of walkways.
- Use design and materials to deter graffiti and have a plan to remove it; the vast blank space under the bridge and above the artwork will attract it.
- Reexamine the widths of the planters and the rhythm created by the different planter treatments under and beyond the bridge.

Intersection improvements

- Document the need for the signal at Mercer and Warren.

Commissioner Quotah voted no because of the unresolved issues regarding the bridge's design and details.

Commissioner Nelson and Loew voted no because the project's details and documentation were not well developed. The integration of the artwork and the underpass and the design of the pilasters were not successfully resolved at 90% design.

Commissioner Wick-Harris voted no because the lack of the presentation's details didn't allow her to adequately judge the design. The design was developed much further than shown.

Commissioner Vehige voted no because the bridge underpass needed to be thought of as a significant experience and a gateway, at both night and day.