

Equity in the design of public space or public facilities

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Purpose

The City of Seattle has advanced the issue of equity as a cornerstone in its planning and development efforts, and in the provision of public services across all City departments. The Seattle Design Commission (SDC) holds the notion of equity as a fundamental component in its review of public facilities and spaces that are under its jurisdiction. Public facilities or public space, including their buildings, landscapes, and related programming, must be designed to address the needs and desires of all individuals, regardless of physical or mental capability, social or economic standing, and gender, racial or cultural identity. Designs of public facilities should arise from sophisticated and inclusive public outreach strategies, with an emphasis on outreach to groups or individuals that may have been historically or systemically excluded or marginalized in the public process, inadvertently or otherwise.

Applicability

The SDC will evaluate how designs of public facilities or public space were influenced by learning from outreach initiatives, and how concepts of equity are then reflected in the design of public facilities or public space. The SDC will continue to evaluate how equity is expressed in designs of public facilities or public space throughout all applicable phases of a project review.

Process

The SDC generally reviews capital improvement projects (CIP) at three distinct phases – concept (30%), schematic (60%) and design development (90%). The SDC also reviews projects that include publicly accessible open space or other improvements to the public realm for public benefit packages related to street or alley vacations and skybridges.

At its initial review of a CIP project, or at its initial review of public realm improvements related to a street or alley vacation or a skybridge, the SDC will ask the applicant for their summary of their approach towards addressing equity, how the applicant conducted its outreach on equity, and how that outreach influenced the design concept. Throughout project development, for street or alley vacations, the SDC will review how the concepts of equity have been further

developed and embedded within the project. Some of the questions that may be posed include:

1. A summary of the specific issues of equity the project will address
2. Understanding who is affected - who are the groups or individuals potentially impacted by this project
3. Your process for learning and engagement, including strategies for outreach and engagement:
 - a. How did you engage with the community?
 - b. What techniques did you use?
 - c. Were any third-party consultants used?
4. What organizations and/or public agencies did you contact to help with this engagement. What were the findings?
5. How is your outreach reflected in the project designs, including:
 - a. site selection,
 - b. the site design,
 - c. landscape and open space,
 - d. building exterior and/or interior, and
 - e. public art program.
6. How are ongoing operations, maintenance and programming influenced by the learning from the outreach?

The SDC will also inquire about how the proposal complies with City department policies, including outcomes resulting from application of the City's racial equity toolkit, developed through the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative.