

Thomas St Redefined

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Commissioners Present

Justin Clark
Laura Haddad
Mark Johnson
Rick Krochalis
Amalia Leighton
Lucas Whitesell
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused

Ben de Rubertis, Chair
Brianna Holan, Vice Chair
Vinita Sidhu

Project Description

The Thomas Street Redefined project includes urban design, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements along Thomas St between 5th Ave N and Eastlake Ave E as well as between Seattle Center and the Waterfront Greenway. The project builds upon and reflects significant changes made to the 2013 Thomas Green Street Concept Plan. Our review will focus on the proposed design along Thomas St between 5th Ave N and Dexter Ave N. Key project elements include a half block closure at 5th Ave N and Thomas St to create a public plaza, wide pedestrian and bicycle promenade along the north edge of Thomas St, and a protected intersection at Dexter Ave N and Thomas S. Additional design elements include street trees, vegetated areas, pedestrian seating, and unique paving.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the Thomas St Redefined project. The purpose of this meeting was to receive a briefing on the pre-concept design for the project. The SDC was not required to take an action during today's briefing. The SDC will review the project again as it continues to develop.

Recusals and Disclosures

Brianna Holan recused herself as her employer has a financial interest in the project

Vinita Sidhu recused herself as her employer is working on the project

February 6, 2020

3:00 – 4:00 pm

Type

CIP

Phase

Briefing

Previous Reviews

None

Presenters

Susan McLaughlin

SDOT

Attendees

Elizabeth Conner

Artist

Rick Cooper

Uptown Alliance

Jackie Kirn

OPCD

Kay Yesuwan

SDOT

Summary of Presentation

Susan McLaughlin, of SDOT, presented the pre-concept design for the Thomas St Redefined project. The presentation included a summary of the 2013 Thomas Green Street Concept Plan as well as a brief explanation of green streets, greenways and streets illustrated classifications and how both are applied to Thomas St. The 2013 Thomas Green Street Concept Plan called for pedestrian and landscape improvements within the public realm but was somewhat limited in addressing vehicular flow nor did it have adequate buy in from adjacent private development to be fully implemented. Thomas St is designated as a green street and greenway, both of which give priority to pedestrian circulation. 2018 Streets Illustrated classifies Thomas St as an Urban Village Neighborhood access street with narrower vehicular lanes and prioritized ROW space for landscape, public space, wide sidewalks, and street parking.

The Thomas Street Redefined plan built upon and changed some of the original design proposals from the 2013 concept plan. The updated plan prioritizes pedestrians and place, creating a space that is accessible for all ages and abilities. The updated plan includes a half block closure between 5th Ave N and the adjacent alley, public plaza, 36 foot wide pedestrian and bicycle promenade, traffic diverter at 7th Ave N intersection, and protected intersection at Dexter Ave N as well as proposing for landscape and street furniture improvements along Thomas St between 5th Ave N and Dexter Ave N. As the project continues to develop, the project team will address design elements such as lighting, street furniture, paving materials, and art. *See figures 1 & 2 for more details.*

Agency Comments

None

Public Comments

Rick Cooper, Uptown Alliance, mentioned that this project along with others in the area have been expedited so that they will be finished or near completion before the Seattle Center Arena opens. Rick then complemented SDOT for doing great work to help advance the project and for acquiring funding for the project.

Summary of Discussion

Following the presentation, the Commission had an informal discussion with the project team about the pre-concept design. Commissioners and the project team discussed issues around alley access, promenade & intersection design proposals, integration with Thomas St west of Seattle Center and east of Dexter Ave N, as well as integration with surrounding projects.

The Commission continues to have concerns with allowing alley access to properties located north of Thomas St along 5th Ave N, which will bisect the proposed Seattle Center Skate Plaza. The project team stated that Seattle Center and SDOT are coordinating with the adjacent business to create a solution to manage vehicular flow through the skate plaza and recommended the SDC reach out to that project team to hear about specific management plan.

The SDC then had questions regarding the half block closure and proposed width of the pedestrian promenade. The project team explained that the half block closure would divert traffic along 5th Ave N to Harrison St, which is

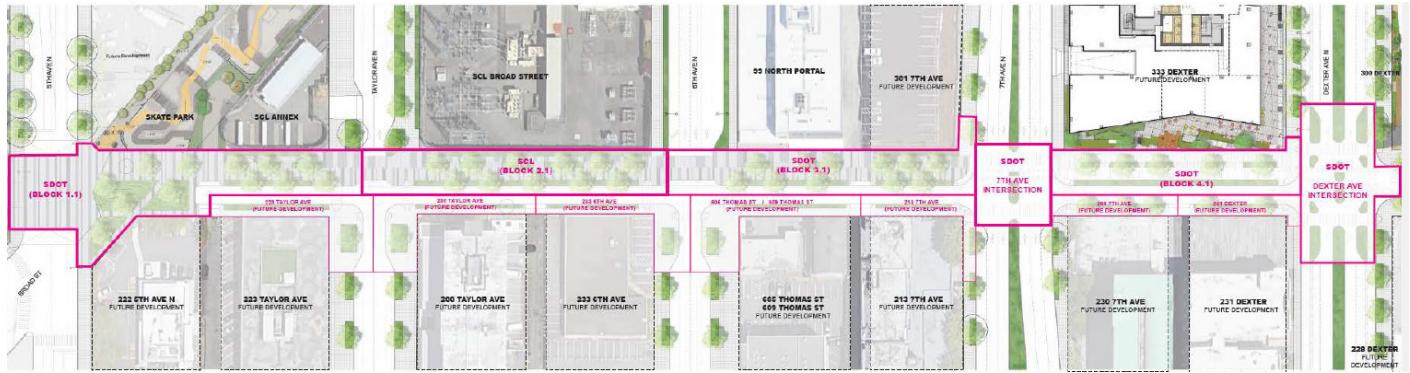


Figure 1: Thomas St design concept - 5th Ave N to Dexter Ave

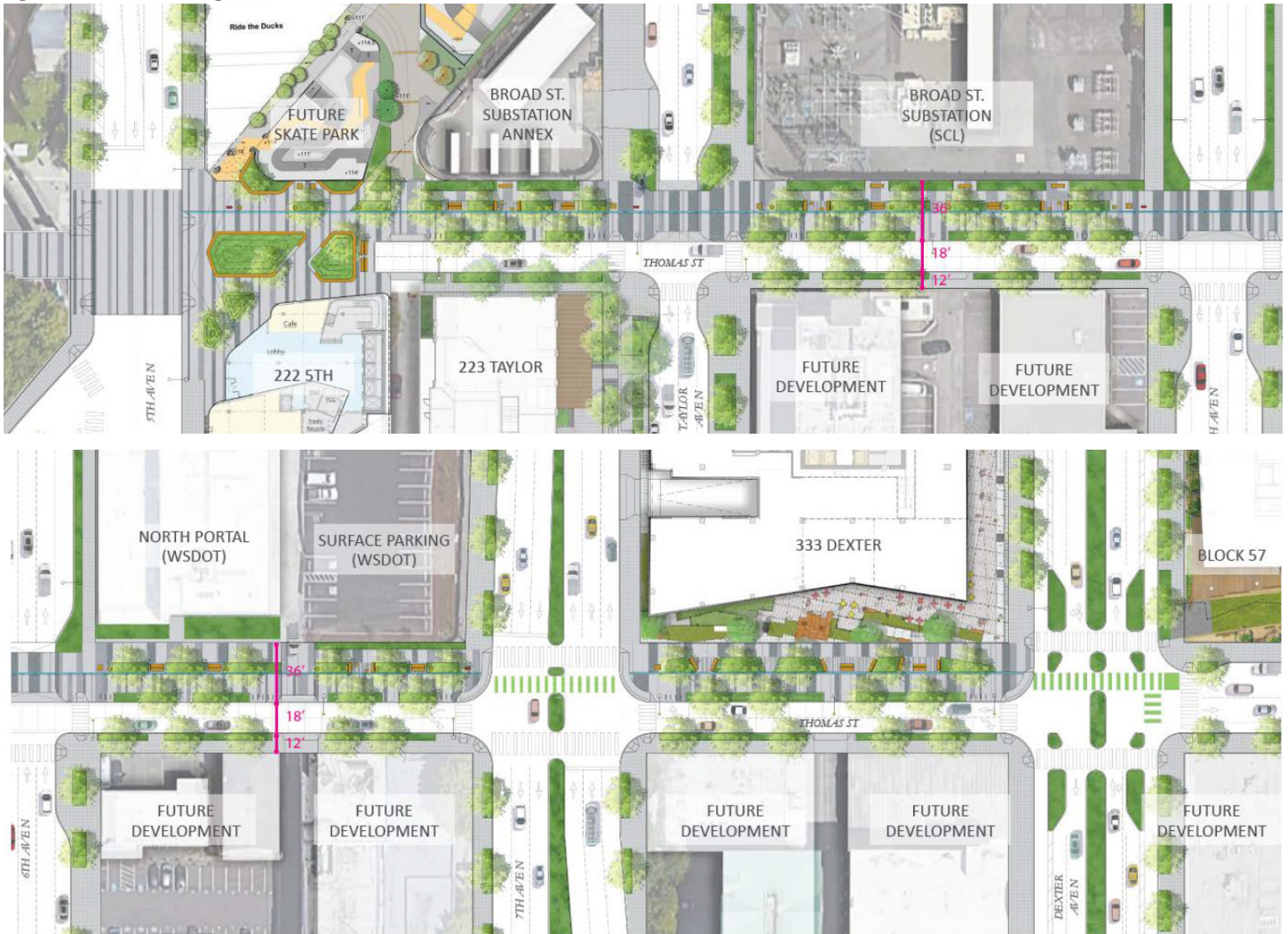


Figure 2: Thomas St design concept 5th Ave N to 6th Ave N (top) & 6th Ave N to Dexter Ave N (bottom)

identified as a vehicular through street and main connection to SR 99. The project team then explained that while the promenade appears to be very wide, it includes several different elements such as the pedestrian sidewalk, bike pathway, and landscape and seating areas, so that when viewed individually none of elements are wider than needed. The project team also reminded the SDC that Thomas St is an identified green street, which prioritizes pedestrian and cyclist movement through the corridor.

The SDC recognized that this concept plan includes a defined area of Thomas St between 5th Ave N and Dexter Ave N. Commissioners then asked the project team how future ROW development east of Dexter Ave N and west of Seattle Center will connect with this design proposal. The project team stated that it is their intention to continue the pedestrian sidewalk along the north side of Thomas St east of Dexter Ave N. The team then stated that while the proposed design will not continue along Thomas St. west of Seattle Center, it would include a generous pedestrian realm on both sides of the street.

The SDC then encouraged the project team to continue to think about materials, street furniture, and lighting as well as opportunities to incorporate sustainable infrastructure as the project continues to develop.

Action

The Commission did not take an action during today's briefing. The SDC looks forward to reviewing the project again as it continues to develop.