

WSCC Expansion

Edward B. Murray
Mayor

Samuel Assefa
Director, OPCD

Ross Tilghman, Chair

John Savo, Vice Chair

Lee Copeland

Ben de Rubertis

Thaddeus Egging

Rachel Gleeson

Laura Haddad

Brianna Holan

Rick Krochalis

Jescelle Major

Michael Jenkins
Director

Aaron Hursey
Planner

Juliet Acevedo
Administrative Staff

**Office of Planning and
Community Development**
700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000
PO Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

TEL 206-615-1349
FAX 206-233-7883
seattle.gov/dpd/cityplanning/

Commissioners Present

Ross Tilghman, Chair

John Savo, Vice Chair

Lee Copeland

Ben de Rubertis

Thaddeus Egging

Laura Haddad

Rick Krochalis

Jescelle Major

Commissioners Excused

Rachel Gleeson

Brianna Holan

Project Description

The WSCC is proposing to vacate three alleys and two streets below grade on three blocks bounded by Pine St, 9th Ave, Howell St, and Boren Ave. The petitioner is requesting the full vacation of the following three mid-block alleys:

- Block 33 (Site B) - bounded by 9th Ave, Howell St, Terry Ave, and Olive way
- Block 43 (Site C) - bounded by Terry Ave, Howell St, Boren Ave, and Olive Way
- Block 44 (Site A) - bounded by 9th Ave, Olive Way, Boren Ave, and Pine St

The petitioner has also modified their initial vacation petition to change the vacation of Terry between Olive and Howell to a subterranean-only vacation. The request for a subterranean vacation for Olive Way, between 9th Ave and Boren Ave, has not been modified.

The preferred scheme includes approximately 2.385 million square feet (sf) of development on three sites. The WSCC expansion would occur above grade on Site A only, and extend to a below grade loading dock on Sites B and C. These remaining two sites will include co-developments above grade. The preferred proposal includes 1,165,000 square feet dedicated to the convention center expansion, 385 residential units, 575,000 square feet of office space, 42,000 square feet dedicated to street-level uses, below-grade parking for 700-800 vehicles, and below-grade loading services.

Meeting Summary

The SDC reviewed the urban design merit presentation for the Washington State Convention Center (WSCC) expansion. Prior to today's meeting, the SDC had received several briefings on the urban design merit phase, where the impacts of the vacations on the remaining rights of way are evaluated. At this meeting, the Commission voted 7-1, to approve the urban design merit phase with several conditions and recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

Brianna Holan recused herself as her employer, LMN Architects, is working on the project.

March 16, 2017

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Type

Street and Alley Vacation

Phase

Urban design merit

Previous Reviews

[02/16/17](#) [01/19/17](#), [09/15/16](#), [04/21/16](#), [02/04/16](#)

Presenters

- Matt Griffin Pine Street Group
- Shannon Nichol GGN
- Mark Reddington LMN Architects

Attendees

- Bernie Alonzo GGN
- Margery Aronson Art Advisor
- Beverly Barnett SDOT
- McCaela Daffern Capitol Hill Housing
- Kathryn DeBenedetto MKA
- Chris Degracia Act Theatre
- Laura Durgenan BCRA
- Jim Erickson FHIA
- Ben Franz-Knight Pike Place Market
- Holly Golden HCMP
- Therese Graf GGN
- Pat Hansen-Lund MKA
- Anne Herrick LMN Architects
- Alex Hudson FHIA
- Bryn Kepler GGN
- Lindsay King SDCI
- Abby Lawlor, Unite Here Local 8
- Jane Lewis Pine Street Group
- Kelly Mann ULI Northwest
- Kelsey Mesher Cascade Bicycle Club
- Jessica Miller LMN Architects
- Gordon Padelford Seattle Neighborhood Greenways
- Paige Premelaar Citizen
- Bill Pollard Tallon Private Capitol
- Brett Richards Equity Residential
- Michele Sarlitto EA Engineering
- Martin Sicotte LMN Architects
- Mike Swenson Transpo Group
- Seiji Watanabe LMN Architects

Summary of Presentation

Matt Griffin, of Pine Street Group, Shannon Nichol, of GGN, and Mark Reddington, of LMN, presented the urban design merit proposal. The presentation addressed the following issues:

- Timing of co-development sites
- Truck egress on Terry Ave
- Impacts of WSCC truck ramp on public realm
- Olive Way streetscape
- Truck ingress at Boren Ave on site A
- Boren Ave. Streetscape

Timing of co-development site

Matt Griffin provided background information and site context for the project proposal as well as reasons as to why the co-development sites are necessary for the project. The proposed vacations and co-development sites will allow for loading facilities to occur below grade. The convention center facility and below grade infrastructure will be developed concurrently. Above grade facilities on the co-development sites are expected to be developed concurrent with the convention center although they could be developed later. The project team has proposed an interim condition if construction of the co-development sites is delayed. The interim condition includes developing a single-story building, which will provide street level activation while capping the below grade infrastructure. See figure 1 for more detail.

Truck egress on Terry Ave

The design of Terry Ave, which is designated as a green street, has been updated since the previous briefing on urban design merit. The updated design concept creates a cross-section more compatible with other segments of the green street that emphasizes pedestrian movement while also facilitating truck movement. The updated design concept includes an additional curb bulb on Howell St, tightened curb radii along Olive Way, increased vegetation, varied paving material, bicycle parking, and street furniture. See figure 2 for more detail. Loading activity will occur approximately 143 days per year. During those days, the garage doors will remain partially or fully open. Throughout the remainder of the year the garage doors will remain partially or fully closed.

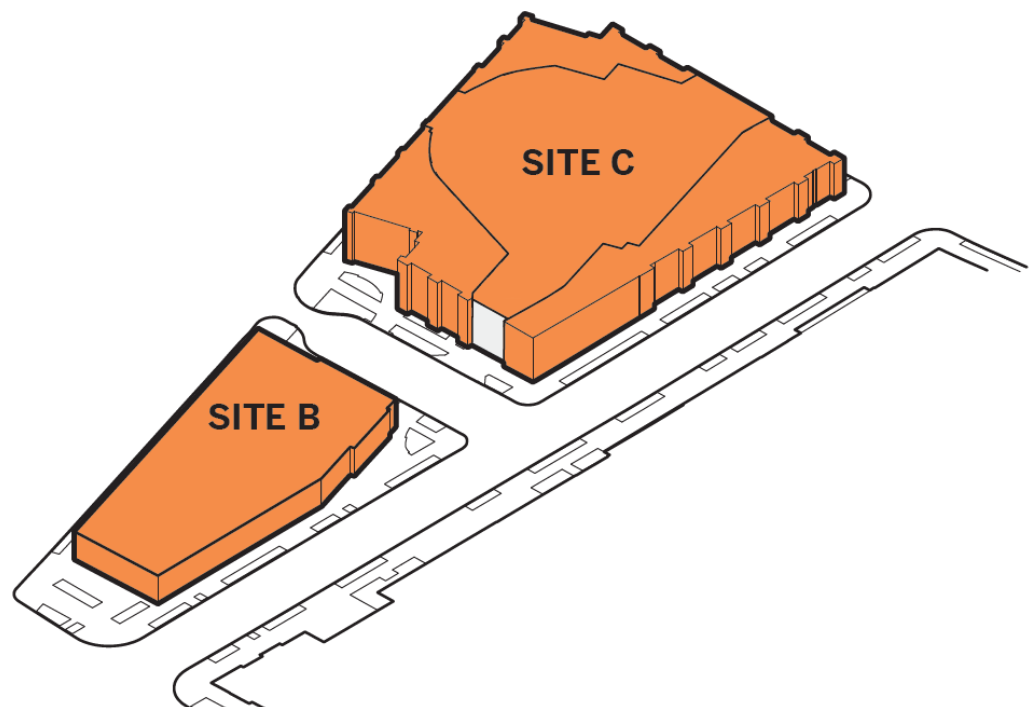


Figure 1: Proposed interim condition if co-development is delayed

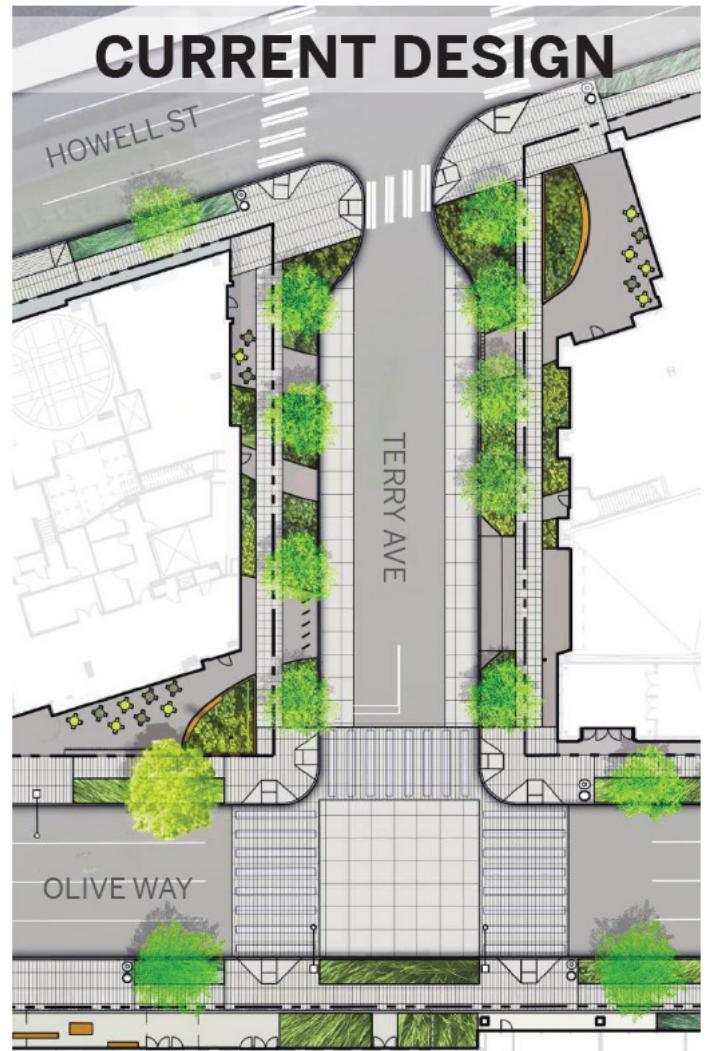


Figure 2: Previous (left) and updated (right) design proposal for Terry Ave

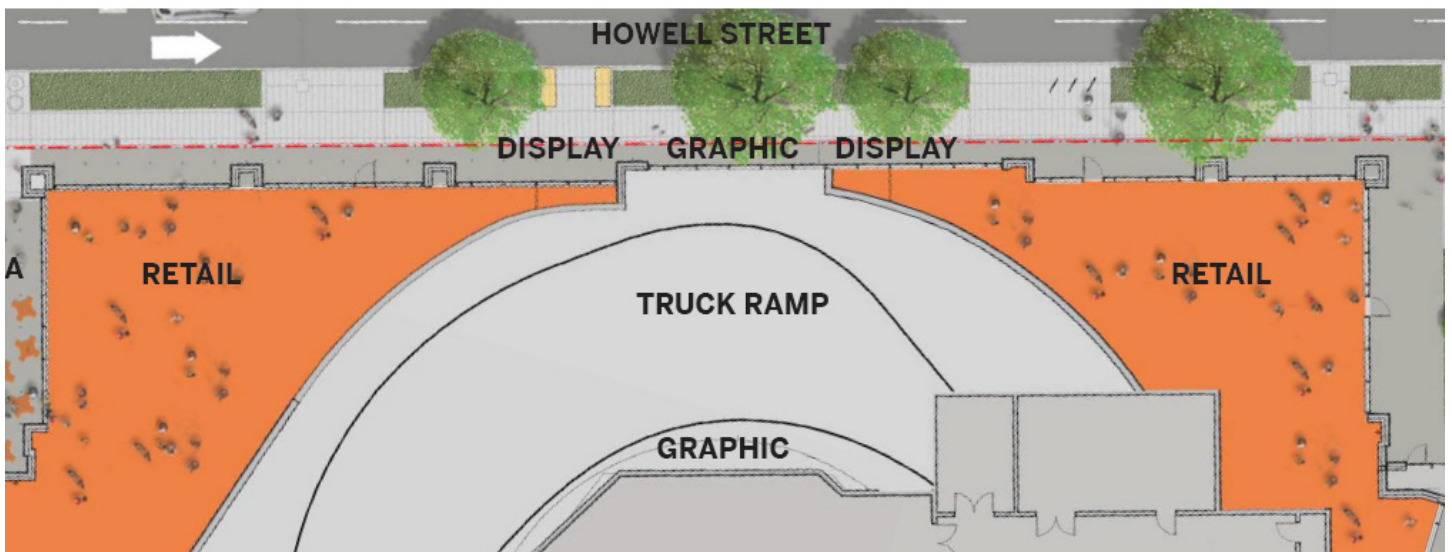


Figure 3: Proposed truck ramp near Howell St on site C

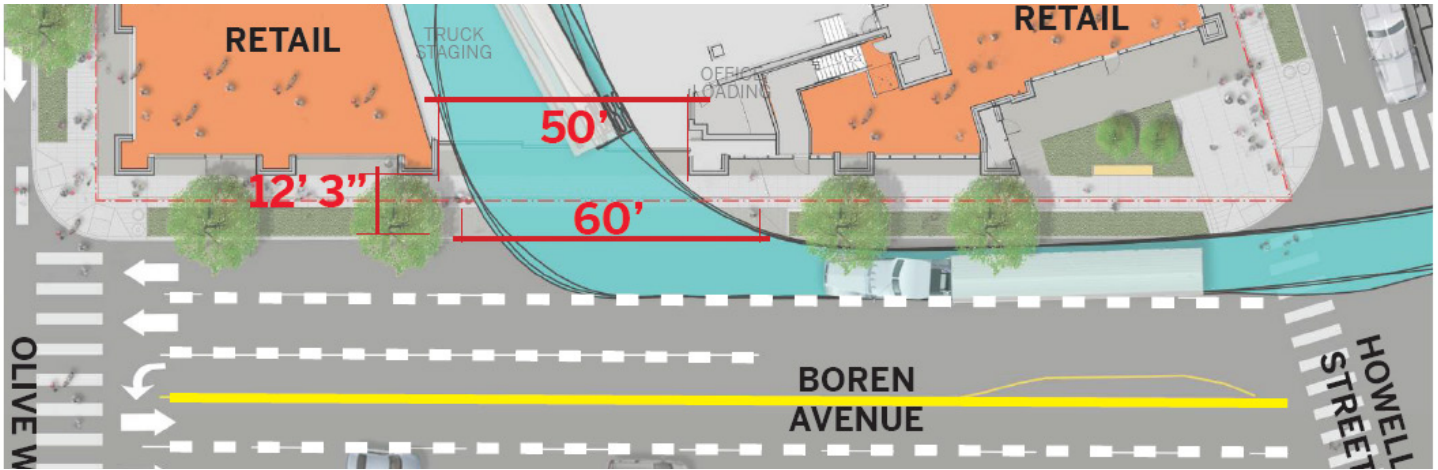


Figure 4: Proposed truck ingress on Boren Ave at site C

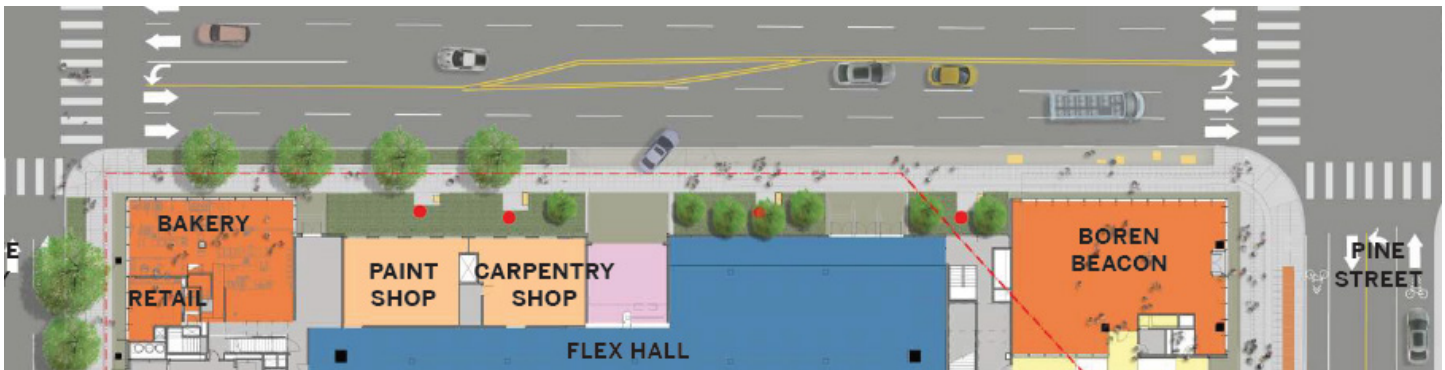


Figure 5: Proposed streetscape design on Boren Ave at site A

Impacts of WSCC truck ramp on public realm

The truck ramp will impact the façade along Howell St on Site C. The façade treatment will screen the truck ramp through the use of a graphic display or other artwork, while expressing a sense of the activity within. See figure 3 for more detail.

Olive Way streetscape

The street level façade along the south edge of Olive Way will include landscaping, street trees, and street furniture. The following design features will be used to visually break up the street level façade along Olive Way: storefronts with retail and programmed space; views into lower exhibit halls; textured and transparent glass with interactive lighting and expressive elevator movement; and entrances to the convention center and 9th Ave Market.

Truck ingress on Boren Ave at site C

The design proposal includes a 50 ft. wide one-way access point for loading facilities. In order to facilitate the turning radius of large trucks the access point will include a 60 ft curb cut along Boren Ave. This will accommodate trucks turning into the loading area without crossing into other traffic lanes on Boren Ave. See figure 4 for more detail.

Boren Ave. Streetscape on site A

The design of Boren Ave has been updated to include additional setbacks, increased landscaping, street furniture, and street trees. The streetscape will offer areas for respite which will include interactive artwork as well as framed views into the paint and carpentry shops, bakery, flex hall and other program areas. See figure 5 for more detail.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, noted that SDOT is still reviewing the final EIS and that they are starting to make decisions. Ms. Barnett stated that they still need to see how technical design features, such as access points and sidewalk widths, will affect the public realm. Ms. Barnett then mentioned that city staff are still working on making comments. She then stated that SDOT is analyzing mode split related to the proposed project, which could have impacts on what is required for the streetscape design.

Lindsay King, SDCI, stated that SDCI has exhaustively reviewed the access points for the project proposal. Ms. King mentioned that there is a code hierarchy for access points. She then stated that for this project Boren Ave is the preferred alternative when an alley way is not available for services and loading. Ms. King said 9th Ave and Terry Ave were the least preferred streets for access points due to their designation as Green Streets. Ms. King stated that SDCI needs to balance the flow of vehicles, transit, and pedestrian circulation needs surrounding the project location. Based on the current information provided, Ms. King said that SDCI recommends providing truck access along Terry Ave. Ms. King reminded the SDC that because they are still in the process of reviewing SIP, EIS, and MUP documents, the review of preferred access point locations is also ongoing. Ms. King stated that this will take some time to review.

Public Comments

Alex Hudson, FHIA and Community Package Coalition, stated that the vacation requests are critical and fundamental to the success of the WSCC Expansion project. Ms. Hudson then mentioned that the proposal includes commitments that benefit the surrounding neighborhood, create rich mixed-use neighborhoods, and strengthen the urban design framework. Speaking for the Community Package Coalition, Ms. Hudson stated that the group requests the project team create a public benefit package that reflects the aforementioned values.

Ben Franz-Knight, Pike Place Market PDA, thought positively of the work provided by the project team. Mr. Franz-Knight stated that the project team is not focused on what is happening inside a box, but rather, the team is focused on creating an experience that engages the city. Mr. Franz-Knight then described his role at the Pike Place Market PDA and explained how the proposed project could help in the further activation of space along Pike St and Pine St, which would help in expanding the seasonality for small businesses in the Pike Place Market. Mr. Franz-Knight then encouraged the SDC to consider and give weight to the long-term public benefit the project will have on the surrounding urban environment.

Abby Lawlor, Unite Here Local 8, mentioned her comments stated at the last SDC meeting, which addressed conflicts between the operations of the existing WSCC facility and City of Seattle values. Ms. Lawlor urged the convention center organization to consider how its current behavior as a public facility may color the public's consideration on granting street and alley vacations towards its expansion. Ms. Lawlor stated that the applicant needs to make a case as to why the vacations make for a better project from the perspective of the public realm. She then mentioned that the applicant did not provide a good explanation for the reason why the vacations are necessary to create a desired experience in the public realm. Ms. Lawlor then stated that the description of the pedestrian and streetscape environment along Terry Ave seems contingent on how the co-development programming progresses, development that the public and city officials have no certain expectation will occur, which may lead to an uncertain future for Terry.

Bill Pollard, Talon Private Capitol, mentioned that his employer is large owner of a high-rise office building within proximity to the proposed project. Mr. Pollard stated that he is excited to have the opportunity to evaluate purchasing the proposed co-development site. Mr. Pollard then mentioned the co-development site encompasses critical design elements such as an appropriate floor plate design, glass ratio, and pedestrian access. He mentioned that this is an investment his employer will pursue.

Brett Richards, Equity Residential, mentioned that his employer's residential presence is under allocated in this neighborhood and is currently looking to expand in this market. Mr. Richards stated that although he wasn't always excited about developing property in the Denny Triangle Neighborhood due to several uncertainties, he is now very excited about the current developments and opportunities. Mr. Richards mentioned that this area of downtown will now serve as a central hub within rather than as an edge to the downtown area.

Summary of Discussion

Given the number of prior meetings, and the issues discussed and resolved, the commission focused on resolving 7 remaining issues related to the impacts of the vacations:

- Timing of co-development sites
- Truck egress on Terry Ave
- Impacts of WSCC truck ramp on public realm
- Olive Way streetscape
- Truck ingress on Boren Ave at site C
- Boren Ave streetscape on site A

- Art

Timing of co-development sites

The SDC recognized the co-development sites as an essential part of the project proposal. Commissioners agreed the ability to locate loading facilities below grade is fitting with the surrounding urban context. The commission appreciated the project team providing more details about the constructability and marketability of the co-development sites as well as proposed interim design conditions. The SDC recommended the approval for Urban Design Merit be contingent on the completion of the co-development sites, and adopted that as a condition of their approval. If the co-development is delayed, the SDC also recommended the project come back to review the interim condition proposal in greater detail.

Truck egress on Terry Ave

The SDC appreciated the updated design along Terry Ave. Commissioners had differing opinions related to the paving material for Terry Ave, but concluded that the project team should think of pedestrian and bicyclist safety when deciding on pavement material selection. While the commission discussed the option of requiring a full vacation of Terry Avenue, due to its impacts on the Green Street, they opted not to adopt that requirement. The commissioners felt that there was sufficient design quality and character to balance and offset the impacts created by truck turning movements into the Green Street.

Impacts of WSCC truck ramp on public realm

The SDC recommended this area as a potential location for artwork. Commissioners thought the use of art and other screening methods could enhance the aesthetic quality of the façade along Howell St. The commission also recommended the street level building façade be highly transparent, including retail spaces that are light and open.

Olive Way streetscape

The SDC complemented the landscape scheme along Olive Way. Although they are satisfied with the proposed street level programming along the north side of Olive Way, the commission is concerned with the proposed pedestrian environment along the WSCC facility façade on the south edge of Olive Way near Boren Ave. Commissioners recommended the project team provide space for the public to interact with the programming of the WSCC facility. The commission also recommended the use of interactive art along Olive Way as a way to enhance the design of the area and to attract the public.

Truck ingress on Boren Ave at site C

Although the SDC appreciated the design of the entrance along Boren, commissioners are concerned the length of the curb cut will set a precedent for future projects in the downtown area. The Commission also recommended they review the development of the loading area that is visible when the access doors are open to the street.

Boren Ave streetscape on site A

The Commission appreciated the design updates along Boren Ave. Specifically, commissioners appreciated building setbacks, increased landscaping, and improved sight lines. The commission recommended the project team include artwork at multiple scales along Boren Ave. The variety of scale will attract users, allowing them to interact with the artwork.

Art

The SDC strongly recommended the two pieces of existing artwork be positioned within the public realm in a way that they honor the original design intent and do not become decontextualized. The commissioners adopted a condition to require an Art plan to be reviewed before SDC completes its review of the public benefit package.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for the presentation on Urban Design Merit. The Commission voted, 7-1, to approve the Urban Design Merit phase of the WSCC Expansion with the following conditions:

1. Prior to Council concept approval of the street and alley vacations, the applicant shall execute contracts on the co-development sites that specify time and completion requirements for development on parcels B and C. If the construction of the co-development projects has not commenced prior to the issuance of a certificate of

- occupancy for the WSCC facility, the applicant will return to the SDC with proposals for interim uses and designs for any structures at parcels B and C consistent with designs presented to the SDC at their approval of urban design merit
2. The art program, including two existing artwork pieces located on site, shall be reviewed prior to the approval of the public benefit package.

The SDC also provided the following recommendations:

1. Consider pedestrian and bicycle safety along Terry Ave in the further development of use, materials, art, landscape and development of the street.
2. Preserve current level of art and glazed storefront openings for retail and storefront spaces along Howell St
3. Continue to look at art as a way to enhance the pedestrian experience between the exhibit window and bakery on Olive Way
4. Reduce the width of the curb cut for the truck access point along Boren Ave
5. Study space within the truck loading bay along Boren Ave in terms of art, lighting and aesthetic treatment as part of the completion of the art package
6. Include the use of art at multiple scales and ensure art is expressive of the identity and culture of the surrounding area rather than identity of the institution
7. Integrate the two artworks to be retained on site into the public realm in a way that honors the original intent of the artists.

The following are comments from commissioners who voted against the project:

Ross Tilghman– I am very concerned about the truck access on Boren Ave and the precedent it will set for other major public projects by having the widest curb cut in downtown. It is a conflict with city practice and policy. Our city is increasing in density and we need to rethink truck circulation and delivery strategies in order to provide better guidance for future projects. I would like a greater consistency on the treatment of Boren Ave in terms of truck access. In regard to the Design Commission review process, we have had a lot of meetings over the year and the fact that we have to have another meeting after voting on Urban Design Merit to review the art program is distressing. We have asked repeatedly for an art plan in the past and are just now receiving information. The process benefits from earlier preparation on those items.

The Director also indicated that if any of the project elements (right of way widths, characteristics, access locations, setbacks, etc.) are changed as a result of the City's authority to condition the project's impacts, that it must return to the Commission to re-evaluate the project for Urban Design Merit. At the time of this meeting, the project had published its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). However, the City had not fully analyzed the proposal's environmental impacts.