

Introduction

In support of the Lid I-5 Technical Feasibility Study being led by the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) also engaged in an outreach process to better understand stakeholder community interest in the concept of lidding I-5 through a centralized area of Seattle. Since detailed feasibility information (i.e. what types of structures could be built in specific areas, how much would it cost) was being produced simultaneously by the OPCD study team, DON was limited to testing the general concept (areas of support and concern) within the broader Seattle community.

DON began the outreach process by identifying key goals for the research and engagement process:

To work with underrepresented community members to inform them of the feasibility study

The feasibility study was being led and spearheaded by community members representing traditional power centers in Seattle, so it was also important to ensure the research included voices and perspectives of those who have traditionally had limited input. Several communities were unaware of the concept of “lidding” a major roadway to secure additional urban space. Outreach into these communities was important to ensure a baseline knowledge to be able to meaningfully participate in future discussions as needed.

To hear and document community members’ visions, ideas and concerns for a lid over I-5

Once educated on the concept around a lid on I-5, DON wanted to document initial reactions to capture where there might be support and concerns around the City pursuing such a strategy. Each community has its own history with the City and how it has developed – it was important to understand how their history might impact their communities’ support and/or concerns.

To give them ways to keep informed and updated on the process

The communities and individuals DON connected with should feel included and respected as part of any City outreach process. A key to that inclusion is ensuring that they continue to have a voice at the table, so proactively keeping them informed around the lidding concept and process as pertains to Seattle’s central core is important.

With limited resources and time to conduct research and engagement, outreach meetings were prioritized to include those in closest proximity to the proposed project and impacted communities with intersecting or specialized development interests.

Each presentation or focus group opened with an overview of a lid concept and definition for a feasibility study. Presenters provided examples of local lids and asked attendees to share their thoughts on three primary questions specific to an I-5 Lid:

- What opportunities or uses would you want to see for this new “land” if it was built?
- How can the City ensure this space is welcoming to you and your community?
- Is there anything that concerns you about this potential project?

Outreach Meetings

July 17th – Community Liaison Focus Group representing outreach leads from immigrant, POC, unhoused, ESL, and disability communities

A diverse base of Community Liaisons was chosen for the first focus group in order to test initial outreach materials for comprehension, clarity, and to better understand the depth of discussion that

could be expected from designed focus group prompts. Adjustments to language and content were made based on extensive feedback. Community Liaisons are also great conduits for reaching out to community and sharing news and offering perspective and insights.

Key Takeaways:

- The concept of lidding was new, as most viewed local lids (Aubrey Davis Park, Mount Baker Ridge) as tunnels
- Some languages lacked a direct translation for the term “lid”, but “cover” was fairly-well understood
- Clear visuals were key to better understanding the concept and the potential
- Group was not interested in the history of I-5 in considering the concept of lidding. Much more interested in current lid projects and how land was being utilized.
- Questions around equity and access to newly created space were central to interest around support. Participants extremely intrigued by the concept of lidding I-5, but only if there was a greater realization of community benefits beyond just extending Downtown. Downtown currently does not feel welcoming to many diverse communities, and many avoid unless necessary.
- New land would have to have strong social services structures to gain support: public bathrooms, open park space, cultural inclusivity in use and design, and accessibility for all.
- Concerns expressed about people being forced out during construction and not having pathway to return once complete (those living near edges of construction and those living unhoused near I-5).
- Many liaisons were very interested to share lid idea with their communities and stakeholders, and wanted to continue to be a part of the conversation

August 14th – Five City Commissions Focus Group: Women’s, LGBTQ, People with DisAbilities, Human Rights, and Immigrant and Refugee

City Commissioners represent specific affinity groups for Seattle and are important stakeholders to engage better understand demographic inequities that may need to be addressed in City projects.

Key Takeaways:

- Extremely concerned around the equitable design and access around potential new land.
 - A question was raised about opportunities to lid I-5 in areas of South Seattle for an equitable expansion of space throughout City.
- Only one attendee present (from the LGBTQ Commission) had heard of the project idea and had previously attended a public meeting hosted by the Lid I-5 campaign group. That attendee, however, thought that the proposed land use had already been completed and designed, and was unaware that the engineering study around what was possible had not been completed yet.
- Not interested in dense development. Want greenery and open space.
- Space should be accessible for all people: visual aids for deaf people, ramps for wheelchairs, lights for low vision
- Look at existing studies on how different people use parks: parks with pockets of space attract people of all genders, big open space attracts mostly men
- Review environmental justice aspects. Also look at the environmental impact statement from noise and pollution for evaluation and analysis.
- Think about religion and culture and being thoughtful about how City brings neighborhoods together

- Discourage displacement of immigrant restaurant owners, put more types of food on the lid

August 19th – Horizon House Residents’ Council

As a senior living community closest to the proposed work area, it was important to meet with Horizon House to better understand their current and desired engagement with the area near I-5.

Key Takeaways:

- The Horizon House Resident’s Council meeting was very well attended - over 100 guests and the group was extremely engaged. They were predominately pro-Lid for a number of different reasons, including: managing sound and air pollution from I-5 and Hubbell Place, creating more and safer spaces for their residents to walk nearby, and the potential of building more affordable housing for their staff to live closer to work.
 - One resident was concerned around the safety of a lid in an earthquake prone area.
 - One resident was part of the original “Block the Ditch” protests when I-5 was being built and supported the Lid to re-connect neighborhoods.
- One resident believed we should cut car emissions by filling in / eliminating I-5 and creating green space.
- Phenomenal opportunity to solve our low income and affordable housing problems. Address housing with the space for ordinary working people to live close to work. Believed these could be places their caregivers lived to be closer to work and provide daycare space for their caregivers’ families.
- Against the commercialization of lidded space – equated to building a private stadium with public money and allowing private enterprise to reap financial rewards from public dollars.
- Would appreciate noise mitigation potential of lid. Ensure that new product is not louder than current roadway by creating tunnel and amplifying effect.
- Welcome and want more park space. Should be accessible and safe to walk for seniors and those with limited abilities.

August 20th – Olive Tower Residents’ Presentation

Olive Tower is a long-time, limited income community near the heart of the proposed lid study area. They have endured a significant amount of development and construction impacts and are concerned about being pushed out of their homes and the City in general.

Key Takeaways:

- Oliver Tower residents meeting was much smaller in size (5 guests), but deeply interested and engaged. Their living space has been very disrupted by the Convention Center expansion construction. There were some concerns around mitigation money going to study a lid for I-5 as opposed to addressing current social issues like housing or food insecurity. There were also concerns around whether a potential lid would threaten their homes/building.
- First priority should be subsidized housing because we need more of that in the city
- In general, they were interested and would support a space that was accessible and open to all. Feel the Convention Center and areas around it don’t benefit larger community.
- Interested in walking spaces that felt safe – expressed concern that greenery and design of freeway park made visitors feel uneasy/unsafe.
- Needed to include restrooms and consider the unhoused who need central resources. Concerned about displacement of those currently living in tents in I-5 side spaces.

October 1st – Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) Focus Group

DESC services some of the City's most vulnerable – homeless populations relying on public services, crisis help, and intervention.

Key Takeaways:

- Recognize the homeless population that already occupies that space. Ensure they are not displaced and provide more permanent, supportive housing for current residents
- Freeway Park has too many nooks and crannies that contribute to criminal opportunities. Needs to have space that's clear and safe, but still provides some privacy for those living unsheltered
- Don't want to see high rise zoning. Might be a revenue builder, but rents in area would go up and push current populations out
- Look at how themes can enhance the space and make it feel welcoming and well-programmed. Not just open space, but programmed and culturally inclusive
 - Open public mural space with art using local artists
 - Create space for a food forest and/or community garden(s)
 - Downtown farmers market
- Make it accessible with elevators, manage steep grades
- Lid should not be a money-making opportunity. City needs more service spaces and community spaces. Want to see activated and affordable, not speculative land ownership
 - Public restrooms, hygiene stations, and drop-in centers. Shouldn't have to buy things like water.

October 10th – Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) Advisory Board Presentation

EDI Advisory Board represents many in City who have been forced or are feeling pressures to leave their historical communities due to the impacts of gentrification. EDI focuses on bringing resources to underserved communities to strengthen, build, and grow a sense of place for those they serve.

Key Takeaways:

- Ensure new spaces are accessible – proximity to Pill Hill, senior adult homes, and others with mobility challenges
- Any construction planning should include ensuring project has provisions for priority hire like new Seattle Center arena
- If public funds are spent, then public should have direct access to new land provided. That land should provide a significant public benefit
- Concerns about displacement – construction would be an imposition and disruption to the areas in and just beyond the freeway (lidded areas)
- Financial modeling should include mitigation of negative impacts of I-5 on communities (current and historical)
 - Chinatown/ID opposed I-5 route when built – health concerns about those living immediately next to major freeway. What are impacts of potential lid on neighboring communities (e.g. wastewater run-off and other issues)?
- The Feasibility Study should include a health and environmental component. To know something is structurally possible doesn't demonstrate whether it is responsible or equitable
- Report should include who participated in providing input and feedback. EDI wants equitable voices represented in the report

- A portion of the money/tax revenue generated from new lid properties should be going to support impacted communities. Specifically, how could revenues support EDI work against displacement and gentrification?
- Environmental Impact Study should be required to include equitable analysis
- There should also be a Community Impact Analysis
- Concerns around who will own the property on top of the Lid: Better to do ground lease on land and retain asset than sell outright and have only one-time gain
- Questions about what policing would look like in this new space: Especially where houseless populations currently reside and ban on camping in parks
- Must ensure area is not environmentally hazardous: mitigation of carbon monoxide in land on top of the lid

November 1st – Central Area Collaborative Presentation

Central Area Collaborative is a predominantly Black/African American focused organization working to strengthen eroded economic, social, and cultural roots within the Central Area of Seattle.

Key Takeaways:

- Public projects of this scale must have a significant economic benefits package for marginalized communities and detailed/explicit community benefits agreement.
 - Must include local hire construction jobs, opportunities for minority owned businesses, inclusion by diverse artists. Processes for onboarding and outreach must be equitable.
- Project should have an ombudsperson onsite to ensure POC inclusion
- Would be a centralized location - expanded space should provide homeless services support
- Don't need another park, we already have too many underutilized spaces around Seattle

Online Surveys

In addition to focus groups, briefings, and presentations, interested community members were also invited to participate in an online survey. All Lid I-5 outreach materials were available online in five non-English languages (Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese) as well as an in-language survey with the same questions presented during our in-person meetings. DON received 24 surveys through its online portal. All surveys received were through the English language site.

Key Takeaways:

- All surveys were positive around supporting lid idea, but promotion for survey was primarily limited to previously engaged community members
- If this new "land" was built, what opportunities or uses would you want to see?
 - 21 out of 24 respondents said parks or open space
 - 13 stated housing
 - 7 mentioned improving City connectivity for bikes and/or pedestrians
 - 4 mentioned a school
- Is there anything that concerns you about this potential project?
 - "No" received 3 responses
 - Concerns around equity or equitable implementation received 3 responses
 - Delays in implementation received 7 responses

Common Themes

An overwhelming majority of stakeholders included in outreach mentioned the need for public restrooms, open space/greenery, and affordable housing as part of potential new lid. As a large publicly subsidized project, there is an expectation that the public inputs would generate significant public output.

Other common threads included:

- Accessibility - make sure it is accessible for all people (i.e. visual aids for deaf people, ramps for wheeled accessibility, lights for low vision)
- Connectivity - strong expectations for direct, connected biking and walking pathways
- Stewardship - if public funds are spent, then public should have direct access to new land provided and that land should provide a significant public benefit
- Programming - affordable housing, centralized human services, and placemaking that represents and welcomes a broader cross-section of Seattle's diversity than currently experienced in current downtown core

Next Steps / Recommendations

The focus groups conducted as part of this study were limited to a very cursory understanding of potential lid project details. Participants were provided the general concept of what a lid is and offers, but there was no information provided on cost, maximum load usage for specific areas, mitigation for potential grade transitions, or construction impacts on neighboring properties.

Next step recommendations would be to send a link for the final technical feasibility report to the constituency groups contacted for this study. In transparency and to build trust, the City should close the loop of communication with those stakeholders to demonstrate their importance in this process.

The City should then consolidate the technical data from the feasibility study and arrange a series of small charettes for external community thought leaders to better understand what would be needed to secure a political path forward for the lid concept. Community thought leaders should include representatives from the communities spoken to in the initial project outreach and ensure expansion to other impacted communities previously not reached (i.e. Native Communities, Youth and expanded reach to neighboring stakeholders in Chinatown/ID and Yesler Terrace). Many individuals across demographics were open to the concept, but without the benefit of any of the details.

Based on the feedback from the community charettes, City leadership would need to evaluate value of continued exploration of project and what type of investments would be needed for continued consideration. Since State support is likely needed, hosting briefings with key legislative leadership would also be a critical path element.

References / Documentation

[Attach raw data surveys and notes]

I-5 Lid Feasibility Study

July 2019



What is a Lid?

A lid (or a cover) is a type of structure built over a roadway. There are existing lids over I-5 (Freeway Park, for example) and other highways around the region and country.

A lid can be used to:

- Reconnect communities
- Create economic opportunities for residents
- Make new “land” available for new uses

Example of a lid- Klyde Warren Park, Dallas, TX



Before lid



After lid

Potential Uses for a Lid

- Parks and Open Space (walk/bike Paths)
- Buildings (housing, office space, school)
- Community Facilities (community center, museum)
- The Arts (amphitheater, music space, theater)
- ???

Examples of Local Lids

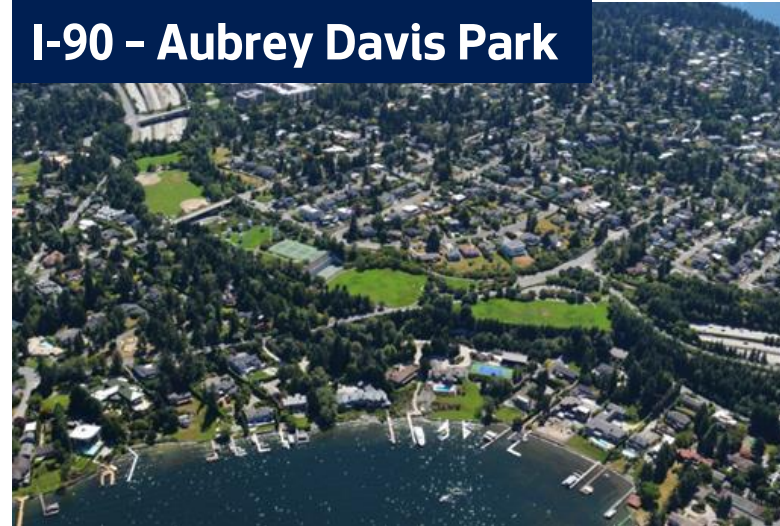
Seattle Municipal Tower, Downtown



Convention Center and Freeway Park



I-90 - Aubrey Davis Park



Purpose I-5 Lid Feasibility Study

- The City is currently performing a Feasibility Study to determine whether building a lid over I-5 through part of downtown is possible.
- No plans to build a lid at this point- just exploring.

Who is doing the study?

- Study is led by City of Seattle along with the Washington State Department of Transportation and a consultant team.
- An advisory group of community reps and stakeholders is providing input. All of their meetings are open to the public.
- Community input is being coordinated by Seattle Department of Neighborhoods.

What Does the Study Cover?

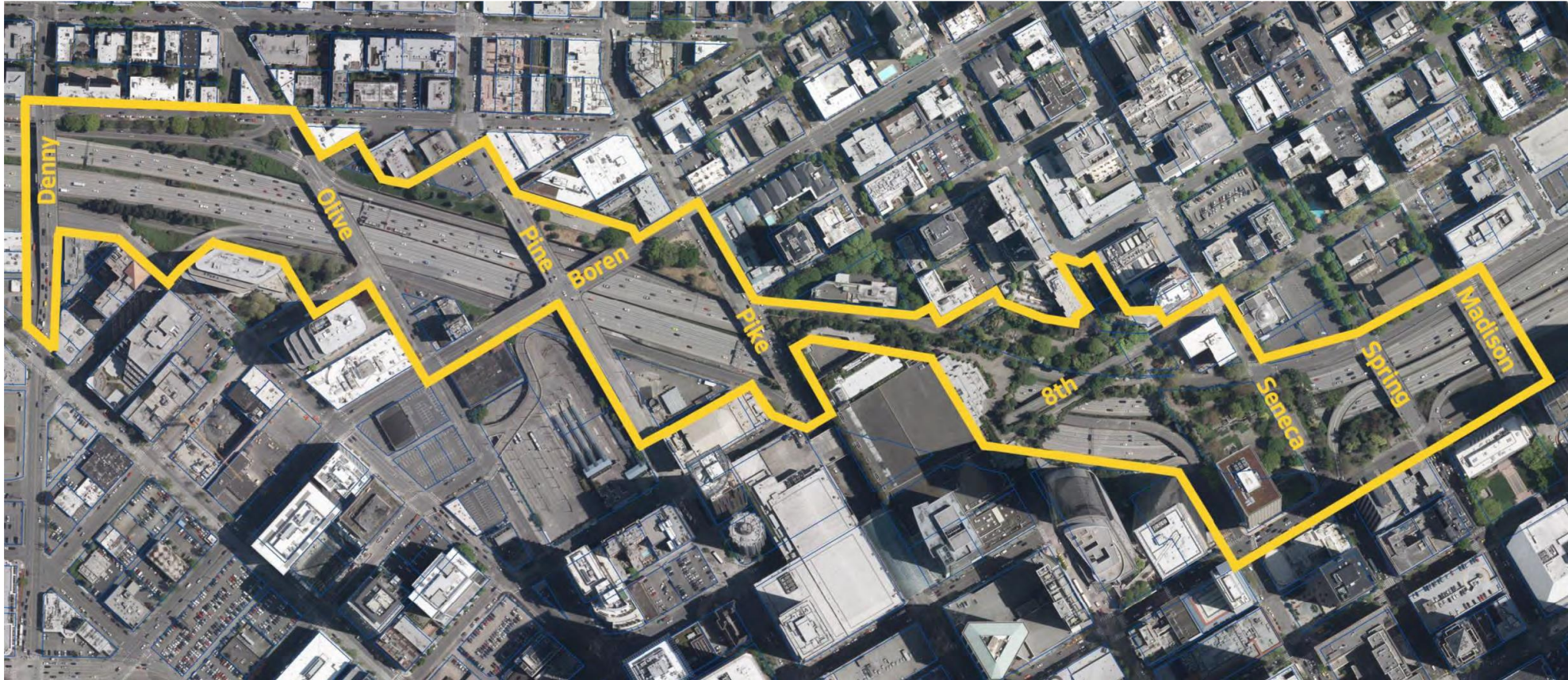
The study will include:

- Where and how could be built
- What it could physically support
- How it could be paid for
- Opportunities for community feedback
- Outline of next steps

The study will not include:

- Specific uses/program
- A preferred design

Study Area- Denny to Madison



Timeline - 1 year

- Technical analyses are underway
- Community feedback will help inform the analysis
- Study report due in April 2020

Study Funding

The study is being funded as part of the "community benefit agreement" related to the Washington State Convention Center's expansion.



Questions for you

- What opportunities or uses would you want to see for this new “land” if it was built?
- How can the City ensure this space is welcoming to you and your community?
- Is there anything that concerns you about this potential project?

Contact Info

Lid I-5 Feasibility Study Website

www.seattle.gov/opcd/ongoing-initiatives/lid-i-5-feasibility-study

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