



Approved MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Mike McGinn
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Tom Nelson, Chair

Osama Quotah, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Seth Geiser

Debbie Harris

Laurel Kunkler

Shannon Loew

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Michael Jenkins
Director

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July 18, 2013

Convened 8:30 am
Adjourned 4:30 pm

Projects Reviewed

Master Bike Plan
9th & Stewart Alley Vacation

Commissioners Present

Tom Nelson, chair
Osama Quotah, vice chair (excused from 1:00-4:30pm)
Bernie Alonzo
Brodie Bain
Seth Geiser
Laurel Kunkler (excused from 10:00-1:00pm)
Shannon Loew
Martin Regge
Ellen Sollod

Commissioners Excused

Debbie Harris

Staff Present

Valerie Kinast
Joan Nieman



July 18, 2013

Project: 9th & Stewart
Type: Alley Vacation
Phase: Urban Design Merit
Last Reviewed: Not previously reviewed
Presenters: Shauna Decker, RC Hedreen Co
Mark Reddington, LMN Architects
Marni Heffron, Heffron Transportation

Attendees:

Michael Abate	United Here Local 8
Lucas Amansec	United Here Local 8
Mark Brands	Site Workshop
Jeanne Cameron	United Here Local 8
Lisa Chen	United Here Local 8
Peter Dobrovolny	Office of Sustainability and Environment
Crystal Doll	United Here Local 8
Michael Dorcy	DPD, Land Use Planner
Ryan Durkan	HCMP
Joanne Engquist	Gethsemane Lutheran Church
Holly Golden	HCMP
Stephanie Haines	DPD, Land Use Planner
Greg Harris	R.C.Hedreen Co.
Natalie Kelly	United Here Local 8
Robert Kelly	United Here Local 8
Kate Lemly	LMN Architects
John Otto	Church Council of Greater Seattle
Liljenstolpe	
Jasmine Marwaha	United Here Local 8
Terry McCann	EA Engineering, Science and Technology
Linda Mitchell	Artist
Stefan Moritz	United Here Local 8
Anita Natn	Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action
Walt Niehoff	LMN Architects
Bruce Parris	United Here Local 8
Sandra Pon	United Here Local 8
Joe Raglans	United Here Local 8
Cindy Richardson	United Here Local 8
Michele Sarlitto	EA Engineering, Science and Technology
David Schneider	LMN Architects
Joe Stormer	United Here Local 8
Sharon Sutton	University of Washington
Melody Swett	United Here Local 8
Valerie Van Osdel	St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral
Maggie Wykowski	Puget Sound Sage

1:30 – 4:30 pm

Recusals and Disclosures

Osama Quotah was recused.

Purpose of Review

The purpose of this meeting was to review the Urban Design Merit of the vacation proposal. There were no previous reviews by the Design Commission. At future meetings the Public Benefit Package of the vacation proposal will be reviewed. Approval of the Urban Design Merit and Public Benefit Package make up the recommendation to the SDOT Director to approve the vacation. The ultimate vacation approval lies with the City Council.

Summary of Proposal

The applicants are proposing to vacate the L-shaped alley in the block bounded by 9th Avenue, Howell Street, 8th Avenue and Stewart Street in the Denny Triangle neighborhood in the Downtown Urban Center area of Seattle in order to facilitate development of a hotel, meeting space, residential units, and retail complex. The "L" was created in 1927 when the northern half of the original alley was vacated and the connection to 9th Avenue was dedicated. There is a small remnant stub at the angle of the alley left from the previous vacation. The alley is paved and provides access to existing buildings and parking lots on the block. The alley area is approximately 6,000 square feet.



The development proposed for the site, once the alley is vacated, is a hotel with large meeting spaces and retail, and residential units. The proposed hotel design includes approximately: 1600 guest rooms; 150,000 square feet of meeting space, including two very large ballrooms; 40,000 square feet of ground level retail, restaurant, and lobby space; 150 units of onsite affordable housing, and 700 below-grade parking stalls. A six story podium would contain the ballrooms, meeting and exhibit space, lobby, restaurant and a mid block through connection between 8th and 9th Avenues. Two towers would stand on the podium: the south portion of the project would contain a 35 story hotel tower; the north portion would contain eight stories of affordable housing. The approximately 20,000 square foot two way diagonal connection from 8th to 9th would provide two entries to the parking garage, guest drop off, and pedestrian entrances to the hotel lobby and retail spaces. A vehicular entry to the below grade service area would be located at the north end of 8th Avenue.

Summary of Presentation

Shauna Decker of RC Hedreen, Co provided background information on the development. She went over the community and stakeholder involvement the team had undertaken. She explained the hotel of this nature would allow Seattle to compete with other large venues on the west coast and provide a significant economic development boost. Also, while most developers gain development bonuses in this area by paying into an affordable housing fund, RC Hedreen, Co is planning to build the affordable housing on site, something the City has tried to promote.

Mark Reddington presented the *PowerPoint* dated July 18, 2013, which can be accessed on the Design Commission website.

[http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design Commission/Project Review Meetings/Minutes/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Commission/Project_Review_Meetings/Minutes/default.asp)

Agency Comments

Michael Dorcy, DPD: Project had two Early Design Guidance meetings, in April and June. The Design Review Board recommended project proceed to MUP.

Public Comments

Written comments dated July 17, 2013 were received from Dr. Sharon Sutton, urban design consultant to Unite Here Local 8.

Verbal comments were received at the meeting as follows.

Stephan Moritz, Unite Here Local 8: Struck by potential for project but vague details. EIS did not anticipate convention use in this area and hotel space. Area will morph into Convention Center district. Further study is needed for 1.5M sq ft of convention space in neighborhood and environment. Missing key info – asked for matrix with detailed info on what is proposed. What is required by code? Request all information.

Robert Kelly, Unite Here Local 8: Alley vacation will go against Denny Triangle plan. Difficult and unsafe. Pedestrian crossing not improved. SDC needs full understanding of traffic mitigation. Need info on impact. Requires further study.

Valerie Van Osdel, St. Mark's Episcopal Church: Current resident of affordable housing. Appreciates including housing and combo of both. Needs more consideration re: Denny Triangle plan. Alley vacation does not support residential element. Specifically affecting workers and residents of low-income housing. Should not advance project until low-income housing fully understood and questions answered. Parking, ped traffic, pocket park and other issues. Safety of residents and workers of hotel critical. Good idea, but urges commission to request more information.

Dr. Sharon Sutton, consultant: Great project that will put Seattle in the major leagues, but the devil is in the details. Needs development standards for parcel park. Needs calculations. Need to know effect of large development on pedestrian environment and managing people.

Maggie Wycowski, analyst at Puget Sound Sage: Project will change traffic pattern and numbers. 400 – 600 vehicles per hour- not accounted for in downtown EIS. City not prepared for size of project. Affordable housing advocate is the developer's choice, but not a public benefit.

Melody Swett, Unite Here Local 8, Westin hotel: Appreciates more landscaping, but more info needed on green street pocket park. Thousands of cars and people - not enough UDM. Green space not welcoming to neighborhood. Just sees benefit for hotel users. What makes it a parcel park exactly?

John-Otto Liljenstolpe, Church Council of Greater Seattle: Applauds effort for onsite housing but urges building truly affordable house for income level. Hotel space not part of Denny Triangle plan. Project has a much different impact. Requests more information on neighborhood impact.

Rev. Joanne Engquist, Gethsemane Lutheran: Church has 50 units of low-income housing. Need for design to look at housing piece. 150 units worthy of a lot of attention by itself. Our project was carefully studied. Massing of project works well. Concerned about impact of poor seeking services in neighborhood and the traffic patterns relative to those issues.

Summary of Discussion

The Design Commissioners reacted positively overall to the plans that were presented, although they did note the large scale of the project, especially as reviewers of the proposal to remove a piece of right-of-way from the grid in this location. Concern was expressed that the team was not looking enough at the context. Commissioners examined how the very large project would work within this busy part of town. The Commission was pleased by the overall massing of the development. The team had taken guidance from the Denny Triangle Plan and placed the lower, residential building on the north end of the block and the larger tower on the south, closer to downtown. The team reported that SDOT had provided early feedback on traffic circulation, and game changing concerns had not been identified for the plans presented. Commissioners would have wanted to see a more strategic sustainability approach and expressed an interest in that at future presentations. They talked about the mid block connector and

considered what the nature of the space would be., The pedestrian realm and edge conditions of the site were discussed. The transparency of the building at the ground level was applauded. There was question as to whether the mid block connector was a necessary public route within the pedestrian network. The Commission was glad to see the owner pursuing affordable housing on site.

ACTION

The Design Commission thanked the project team for their presentation of the Urban Design Merit of the proposal by RC Hedreen Co. to vacate the L-shaped alley in the block bounded by 9th Ave., Stewart St, Howell St, and 8th Ave. in order to facilitate development of a hotel, meeting space, residential units, and retail complex.

Urban Design Merit is the first of two Design Commission approvals needed before the Design Commission will recommend approval of the vacation to the SDOT Director. Approval of both the Urban Design Merit and Public Benefit package constitute a recommendation by the Commission to approve the vacation. The ultimate decision to grant the vacation lies with the City Council.

The Design Commission evaluated the Urban Design Merit of the 9th & Stewart project proposal to vacate the L-shaped alley in the block bounded by 9th Ave., Stewart St, Howell St, and 8th Ave, and made the following conclusions and findings:

1. The Commission did not receive a comprehensive context analysis of a nine-block area around the subject site, however commissioners are familiar with the area and the surrounding context. Future meetings with the Commission regarding this application should include the analysis, specifically identifying adjacent land uses, traffic patterns and volumes, existing building massing, potential new buildings or projects in being proposed, major open spaces particularly in association with green streets including 9th.
2. The Commission typically benefits from an overview by SDOT staff setting the context for the application and SDOT review to date. Unfortunately, we did not get SDOT input today but understand the design staff is working closely with SDOT (estimated at approximately 30% design review). The Commission would appreciate SDOT comment and feedback regarding the application, specifically as we transition to the Public Benefit discussion.
3. The Commission values and appreciates the applicant's inclusion of the affordable housing component within the design submittal. The Commission believes adding the housing (rather than paying into the "fund" to gain the additional development entitlements) makes the project stronger and provides for an overall better urban design solution.
4. The alley was previously reconfigured from straight to L-shaped, reducing its function.
5. Within the system of one way streets, access to and from the alley does not provide for efficient movement from the freeway and freight corridors to and from the site. Vehicles would need to circle around the block from 9th, a green street, clockwise, before heading to I-5, and the path to the site would also be circuitous.
6. Removing the alley would allow for a large building, as opposed to multiple smaller buildings, a scenario that was anticipated by City plans for the area.

With a vote of 6 to 2 the Design Commission approved the Urban Design Merit with the conditions listed below. At a future meeting the Public Benefit package will be considered.

Reasons stated for the dissenting votes:

- L. Kunkler: Opposed, due to affordable housing layout. With 80% of the affordable units defined as studio, the majority of the affordable housing will only be suitable for single individuals. This inhibits the ability for residents to grow families within the community. Strongly recommend providing more multi-bedroom units.

E. Sollod: Inclusion of affordable housing downtown compelling still concerned about not having level of detail. Questions how public is using through block crossing. Needs Denny Triangle plan information.

Conditions of Approval

1. As the project advances and more detail is developed, the Commission expects the through block connection to maintain the “openness and transparency” described and depicted in the presentation. With this, the Commission requests additional design detail relative to the potential programming of the through connection and retail layouts with the understanding that the space is open to the general public and accessible as often as possible.
2. The Commission would like to see additional detail regarding the programming and design of the 9th Avenue expanded green street parcel park. The Commission strongly suggest the park be oriented toward public use with allowance for spill-out cafes, etc. from adjacent retail space within the project.
3. The Commission requests SDOT’s formal response and concurrence with the current design approach regarding safety and security of pedestrian and vehicular movement through the mid-block through connection.
4. The Commission would like for the applicant to provide additional detail regarding alternative district energy options and more detail regarding site sustainability and architectural features proposed for the project.
5. The Commission requests the applicant provide detail information specifically in regards to the traffic analysis, and other pertinent data, currently being analyzed as part of the EIS Addendum in preparation for the MUP submittal.