



APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Ed Murray
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Osama Quotah, Chair

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Megan Groth

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Ross Tilghman

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Nicolas Welch
Planner

Joan Nieman
Administrative Staff

April 17, 2014

Convened 1:00 pm

Adjourned 5:00 pm

Projects Reviewed

E Howe Street Vacation

Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair

Brodie Bain

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Megan Groth

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Ross Tilghman

Commissioners Excused

Osama Quotah, Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins

Nicolas Welch

Joan Nieman

Department of Planning and Development

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Project: E Howe Street Vacation
Phase: Public Benefit
Previous reviews: 2/20/2014

Presenters:	Dawn Bushnaq	Bushnaq Architecture + Design
	Karen Kiest	Karen Kiest Landscape Architects
	Pat Hansen-Lund	MKA
	Mike Phifer	Artist

Attendees:	Patrick Ashman	Daly Partners
	Beverly Barnett	SDOT
	Jim Daly	Daly Partners
	Moira Gray	SDOT
	Garrett Hodgins	Daly Partners
	Sze Lyn Lim	Bushnaq Architecture + Design
	Donald Marcy	Cairncross & Hempelmann
	Eric Susanto	Bushnaq Architecture + Design
	Paul Wyckoff	Daly Partners

Recusals and Disclosures
none

Purpose of Review

The purpose of this meeting was to review the proposed public benefit package of the E Howe Street subterranean vacation. The Design Commission approved the urban design merit of the proposal on February 20, 2014. Public benefit is the second component of the Design Commission's two-step vacation review process. Approval of both urban design merit and public benefit constitutes a recommendation to the SDOT Director to approve the vacation.

Summary of Proposal

The applicant is proposing to vacate a 3,023 sf subterranean portion of the E Howe St right of way in order to construct a below-grade parking structure with 64 spaces accessible to two development sites at 1903 Yale Pl E and 1823 Eastlake Ave E. The proposed vacation allows for a single ingress/egress on Yale Pl E rather than one each on Yale and Eastlake, respectively.

The E Howe St ROW is currently unimproved at the project site and, if developed, would create a “fifth street” at this intersection. The proposed development straddles the E Howe ROW and the two sites together include 90 residential units, 5 live/work spaces, and two small-scale ground-floor commercial spaces. In a change from its last Commission review, the program now includes one fewer live/work space and one additional commercial space. Both buildings are four stories.

The proposed public benefit package has four primary components:

1. 30' wide and 70-120' long at-grade public open space in the E Howe ROW

2. Public art
3. Voluntary setbacks on both sides of the E Howe ROW
4. Enhanced ROW improvements along Eastlake and Yale

Summary of Presentation

Dawn Bushnaq introduced the project, discussed the neighborhood context, and reviewed the urban design merit proposal presented in February 2014. Ms. Bushnaq noted the important connections this project would create along the Eastlake corridor and through Colonnade Park to Capitol Hill. Several slides showed the existing conditions; Ms. Bushnaq stated that the team has coordinated with the Department of Neighborhoods regarding the removal of the existing restaurant onsite.

Ms. Bushnaq then presented the four components of the proposed public benefit package. The full presentation dated April 17, 2014, and available on the [Design Commission website](#) provides detail on each one. Of note, the proposed design includes one fewer curb cut than allowed, seating in the public open space, and a public stairway connection to the adjacent 1818 Fairview project.

In a change from the previous review, the design team has reconsidered how the Eastlake building addresses the ROW. Reorientation has allowed for a stronger corner for the commercial space at the southeast end of the E Howe ROW. The windows and massing have also evolved to create a continuous setback along the ROW. Due to concern that they obstructed views through the ROW, the triangular decks in the Yale building have been eliminated. Previously the design team discussed a potential curb bulb at the intersection of Eastlake and Yale. Because potential future bicycle infrastructure along Eastlake, the curb bulb is no longer included in the proposed public benefit package. There is potential for a removable curb bulb instead.

Karen Kiest then presented the updated landscape plan and conveyed the design team's intention to make the open space feel more public. Formerly, the paving reflected a more organic approach that embraced the unique or awkward angles at the site; in the current design the ground plane is organized around the E Howe grid and includes a more regular paving pattern based on the standard city 2' x 2' sidewalk pavement. The design team is considering permeable pavers, though they are somewhat constrained by the below-grade parking structure.

The terraced approach for the open space at the west end of the ROW has given way to an amphitheater lawn concept. According to Ms. Bushnaq, the team has sought to decouple the architecture from the landscaping design and is exceeding Green Factor.

Mike Phifer described the rationale and inspiration for his piece "Reunion." Two criteria informed his design: an appropriate scale for the public space and a sense of openness that invites people through the space. Mr. Phifer stated that design team has debated internally whether to align the piece with the grid. They are still discussing lighting, one option being LED uplighting set into the pavement.

Ms. Bushnaq described smaller details for the ROW design. For signage, the team seeks to balance conveying the public nature of the open space with minimizing visual clutter. The current proposal includes a single green SDOT street sign indicating that the E Howe ROW continues west through the site. The team is coordinating with Bill Ames on the selection of street trees and is considering the vase-like *Zelkova serrata* "Musashino." The proposed light takes a modern, minimalist approach; Ms. Bushnaq

acknowledged the Design Commission’s ongoing review of SDOT pedestrian lighting fixtures. Finally, she discussed materiality and the team’s intention to differentiate the two buildings.

Summary of Discussion

Overall, the Commission was pleased to see specific design improvements in response to the feedback given at the last review. Modifications to the materiality of the buildings and the east end of the public open space succeed in helping to differentiate the public space from the private development. Commissioners appreciated that the ground-level commercial spaces and outdoor seating elements will help activate the space.

The Commission focused on two primary questions during their discussion of the public benefit package: First, is the level of public benefit proposed adequate and appropriate given that this is a subterranean vacation? Second, are the elements of the public benefit package inviting and welcoming enough to convey that this is a public space? While the overall response to these questions was positive, the Commissioners honed in on several elements for further attention, include signage, lighting, and materials, all of which Commissioners believed warranted further refinement before they could approve the public benefit proposal. For many Commissioners, there was still concern that someone standing at the intersection of Eastlake and Yale may not know what lies at the east end of the open space or that it is somewhere they can go. There was consensus across the Commission that the public open space must feel very inviting.

To that end, there was discussion around the detailing, lighting, and location of the proposed sculpture. The Commissioners felt that siting an iconic piece in one specific location was a missed opportunity to extend the art through the ROW to pull people in and through the space, especially since the complementary element at the west end of the ROW appeared to have been removed from the elevation the art piece since the previous Commission meeting. They expected the sculpture to have evolved to a greater degree since the project’s first review, and one Commissioner stated that its coloration seemed corporate and dated.¹ That said, the Commissioners supported borrowing the orange from the sculpture for the tops of the seat cubes and appreciated the team bringing a model of the sculpture to the meeting.

Given the complexity of developing a new pedestrian connection along a public ROW through two separate private developments both currently in the permitting stage, there was substantial discussion about what specifically constituted the public benefit for the E Howe vacation. The Commissioners emphasized that the project must be evaluated under current conditions and not contingent on potential connections to the adjacent 1818 Fairview project.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, stated that overall the public benefit proposal has come a long way and is much stronger than before. Ms. Barnett is interested in Design Commission comments on whether it looks public enough. Since it is public space, SDOT wants to see that it is separate enough from the project. Ms. Barnett applauded the removal of the triangular decks and the improved connection to the adjacent

¹ In the subsequent review of the draft minutes, all of the other Commissioners agreed with and endorsed this view.

1818 Fairview project. She also reminded the Commission that the vacation is subterranean only; the ROW at grade remains public. As a result, only the enhancements to the ROW are part of the project, and responsibility for operations and maintenance of the public open space would fall on the developer through a PUDA or SUP that indemnifies the City.

Public Comments

none

Action

The Design Commission thanked the design team for the presentation of the public benefit package for the E Howe St subterranean vacation. The applicant proposes to vacate a 3,023 sf below-grade portion of the E Howe St right-of-way extending west from Eastlake Ave E 121'3" along the north side of the ROW and 73'5" along the south. The Commission noted several improvements to the design since the last review, particularly in the definition of the prow and the consistent building setbacks along the ROW. Overall, the project succeeds in opening to the complicated intersection of Eastlake Ave E, Fairview Ave E, and E Howe St and will improve pedestrian connections between Capitol Hill and Lake Union.

The Commission also commended the team's intentional use of street trees and the opportunity for a variety of activities in the public open space. The Commission particularly appreciated that the team brought a physical model of the art sculpture and emphasized that relocating the power pole at the east end of the E Howe ROW was a good move.

With a **vote of 8 to 0**, the Design Commission approved the proposed public benefit package, which consists of the following four elements:

1. 30' wide and 70-120' long at-grade public open space in the E Howe ROW
2. Public art
3. Voluntary setbacks on both sides of the E Howe ROW
4. Enhanced ROW improvements along Eastlake and Yale

The approval is subject to the condition that the project return for an administrative review of three items:

1. Greater detail on material selection and detailing of the elements within the E Howe ROW to ensure it is up to the level expected for public benefit
2. The overall approach to lighting in the E Howe ROW, including lighting of the art piece, and the degree to which the entire lighting scheme contributes to the public setting and complements the art
3. Design of the termination of the prow at the west end of the E Howe ROW and its potential integration with a future stairway connection to the 1818 Fairview project

The Commission also made the following recommendations for the design team:

- Explore how the placement and number of 1) seat cubes and 2) lighting can create a more inviting entry to the open space from Eastlake Ave E. There is concern that the proposed location of lighting might divide the space too much.
- Given the first condition above, provide a higher level of detail overall for the proposed materials and lighting in the E Howe ROW.

- Address the southeast corner of the Yale building with the goal of making the open space feel more accessible to the public, perhaps through transparency.
- Clarify the choice of the sculpture. Consider refining the shape and location of the piece so that it invites people into the public space. Explore opportunities to integrate lighting to support this goal as well.

This is the final time the project will come before the full Design Commission. Pending the aforementioned administrative review, approval of the urban design merit and public benefit package for the project constitutes the Design Commission's recommendation to the SDOT Director that the subterranean vacation of the E Howe ROW be approved. Ultimately, the final decision to grant the vacation lies with the City Council.