

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

December 18, 2014

The Whittaker Alley Vacation 4755 Fauntleroy Way SW

Ed Murray
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Osama Quotah, Chair

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Grant Hromas

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Ross Tilghman

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Nicolas Welch
Planner

Joan Nieman
Administrative Staff

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Commissioners Present

Osama Quotah, Chair
Bernie Alonzo
Lee Copeland
Thaddeus Egging
Grant Hromas
Ellen Sollod

Commissioners Excused

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Martin Regge
Ross Tilghman

Project Description

The applicant proposes to vacate part of the alleys in the block bounded by SW Alaska St, Fauntleroy Way SW, SW Edmunds St, and 40th Ave SW in the West Seattle neighborhood. The proposal would vacate the 258-foot-long T-shaped alley that connects 40th Ave SW, Fauntleroy Way SW, and SW Edmunds to facilitate a mixed-use development. The southern 275 feet of the existing alley would remain. The project includes 66,000 square feet of retail in two 70-foot-tall buildings and 370 residential units.

The Design Commission has reviewed this project four times in the past. In March 2014, the City Council granted concept approval for the vacation in [Clerk File 312783](#) conditional on additional Commission review of the public benefit package when further developed. The approved public benefit package is listed in detail on the following page and includes:

- Voluntary street-level building setbacks
- Plazas
- Artwork
- On- and off-site streetscape improvements
- Cash contribution towards design of new City park

Meeting Summary

The Commission voted unanimously that it had reviewed the public benefit items at the design development phase and that their implementation was likely to be successful. The Commission offered several recommendations primarily focused on refinements to the green wall and the artwork.

Recusals and Disclosures

Ross Tilghman recused himself. Thaddeus Egging disclosed that his employer, KPFF Consulting Engineers, worked on this project, but he did not.

December 18, 2014**9:00 – 10:30 pm****Type**

Alley Vacation

Phase

Public Benefit Review

Previous Reviews[March 7, 2013](#)[April 18, 2013](#)[May 16, 2013](#)[June 20, 2013](#)**Project Team Present****Jessie Clawson**

McCullough Hill Leary, PS

Jeremy Febus

KPFF Consulting Engineers

Kelley Kohout

Lennar Corporation

Josh McDonald

Weber Thompson

Tejal Pastakia

Pastakia + Associates, LLC

Troy Pillow

artist

Andy Rasmussen

Weisman Design Group

Lance Sherwood

Weingarten Realty Investors

Robert Smith

Weingarten Realty Investors

Attendees**Deb Barker**

West Seattle resident

Beverly Barnett

SDOT

Jim Guenther

West Seattle resident

**Summary of Presentation**

Jessie Clawson summarized the project's progression since the last Commission review, noting that it returned to the Design Review Board (DRB) and received concept approval for the alley vacation in March 2014. In its approval, the Council adopted the Commission's conditions from its June 2013 review and added several others.

Andy Rasmussen provided an overview of the project and showed the alleys to be vacated. Mr. Rasmussen then identified the following public benefit items on a site plan:

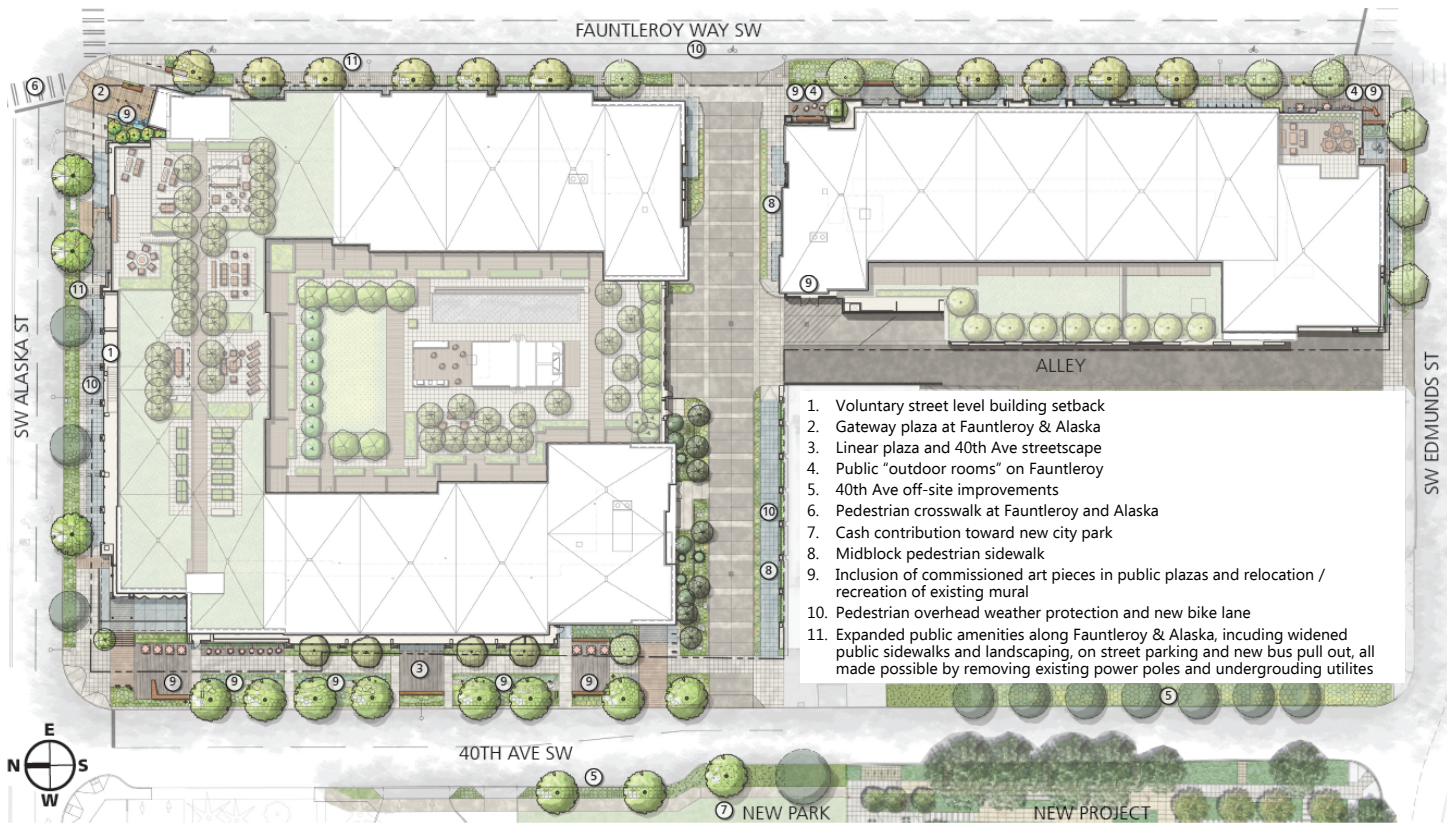
DESCRIPTION	EXISTING	REQUIRED	QUANTITY	COST
1. Voluntary Street Level Building Setback	No	No	5,134 s.f.	n/a
2. Gateway Plaza at Fauntleroy & Alaska	No	No	542 s.f.	\$37,820
3. Linear Plaza and 40th Ave Streetscape	No	No	1,356 s.f.	\$147,140
4. Public "Outdoor Rooms" on Fauntleroy	No	No	1,088 s.f.	\$85,120
5. 40th Avenue off-site improvements	No	No	2,550 s.f.	\$93,260
6. Pedestrian Crosswalk at Fauntleroy & Alaska	No	No	n/a	\$15,000
7. Cash Contribution for Public Outreach and Schematic Design (to 30% complete) for new City Park	No	No	n/a	v\$25,000
8. Mid-Block Pedestrian Sidewalk	No	No	1,672 s.f.	\$10,030
9. Art: Inclusion of Commissioned art pieces in Public Plazas and Relocation/Recreation of Existing Mural on-site	No	No	27 pieces	\$50,000
10. Pedestrian Overhead Weather Protection & New Bike Lane	No	No	5,666 s.f.	\$853,680
11. Expanded public amenities along Fauntleroy & Alaska including widened public sidewalks and landscaping on-street parking and new bus pull out, all made possible by removing existing power poles and undergrounding utilities.	No	No	1,300 s.f.	\$1,100,000
			TOTAL	\$2,417,050

Mr. Rasmussen summarized the conditions of Council's concept approval for the vacation in [Clerk File 312783](#) and the Commission's previous conditions. The full presentation is [available on the Design Commission website](#).

Josh McDonald described how the building architecture has evolved since the Commission's last review. Mr. McDonald particularly focused on the vertical element at the gateway corner at SW Alaska St and Fauntleroy Way SW, which he described as a "light beacon." Mr. Rasmussen stated that the ground-plane paving at this corner is intended to activate the plaza and make it feel public.

Troy Pillow described how the artwork at the site is inspired by the water's edge. Mr. Pillow showed materials for the pieces, including driftwood, beach stones, weathered steel, and glass. A series of images showed the following proposed artwork in plan and perspective:

- "Gateway Piers" at SW Alaska St and Fauntleroy Way SW
- "Passageway" along the 40th Ave SW Green Street
- "Stacked Stones / Cairns" at the midblock plaza at Fauntleroy Way SW
- "Mountains and Sound" at the corner of SW Edmunds St and Fauntleroy Way SW



Finally, Mr. Rasmussen showed the green wall design in detail and presented the planting palette, which includes drought- and shade-tolerant plants.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett outlined the purpose of today's review. She stated that Council often wants a project to return to the Design Commission after approval to verify that the vision for the public benefit package is carried forward and its implementation likely to be successful as the project moves from concept to construction. She stated that in this case SDOT wants to determine that the project is on a path to succeed in fulfilling the Council conditions. According to Ms. Barnett, SDOT has not identified any problems to date. She appreciates the Commission's input because it can evaluate materials and particular design elements in more detail and offer guidance.

Public Comments

Deb Barker stated that she is a West Seattle resident and former DRB member. She summarized her involvement with the project in the past and her comments at Design Commission, DRB, and Council meetings. First, she listed the project elements she likes, including the 40th Ave SW Green Street, the connection across 40th Ave SW to the future park, the relationship of the southern building to Fauntleroy Way SW, and the direction of the artwork. Ms. Barker then described her continued disappointment in the gateway plaza. She stated that the plaza is too small and the vertical tower essentially an elevator shaft. She remains concerned that the gateway feature is merely an elevator lobby and called that a slap in the face to West Seattle. Furthermore, Ms. Barker stated that the midblock connector will be a scary place due to the quantity of delivery vehicles serving Whole Foods; while a midblock connection is an asset to pedestrians, mixing them with vehicles is a mistake. Finally, she criticized the location of the main Whole Foods entrance because she believes it is below grade.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission appreciated seeing the artwork and green wall in detail. The primary focus of the discussion was the design and siting of the art pieces. The Commissioners struggled to understand the rationale for the location of each art piece and remained interested in how the landscape design could reinforce or reflect the artwork. The Commissioners recognized that the project is nearing construction but nevertheless expressed its longstanding concern that the artwork is too scattered throughout the site in several quite different moments. They recommended continued exploration of how the artwork can activate and enhance the circulation of each plaza, especially at the Gateway Plaza, which the Commission found cluttered.

The Commission also discussed the design of the green wall. They recommended the team continue evaluating which plants will be most successful by pre-growing the trays. The Commission encouraged the team to consider the overall planting palette as it selects plants for the green wall so that The Whittaker feels like a single cohesive project as opposed to an agglomeration of distinct parts and pieces.

Action

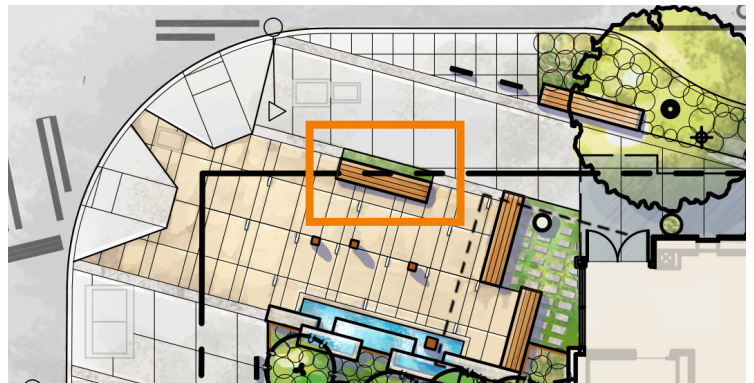
The Design Commission thanked the team for presenting the public benefit items as a condition of the Council's concept approval for the vacation, as stated in [Clerk File 312783](#). The Commission appreciated seeing additional detail on the artwork and green wall in particular and the overall approach to the public benefit package in general.

The Commission saw significant improvements in the overall design and appreciated the team's effort to accommodate the requests of the various groups involved in the project. The Commission recognizes that the design is near completion. However, while the individual sculptures are well designed, collectively the artwork would benefit from more focus in certain areas. Furthermore, clarifying and/or reducing the number of different treatments and materials dispersed throughout the pedestrian environment would improve the public realm and the overall project concept. The Commission also believed a stronger dialogue about how the art is informing the ground plane would have been beneficial.

With a **vote of 6 to 0**, the Design Commission acknowledged that it had reviewed the public benefit items at the design development phase and concluded that their implementation was likely to be successful. The Commission made the following recommendations as the team finalizes the design of the public benefit package:

Gateway

1. Reevaluate the placement of or consider removing the bench shown at right on the Fauntleroy Way SW side of the Gateway Plaza at SW Alaska St and Fauntleroy Way SW in order to allow easier passage through the plaza.



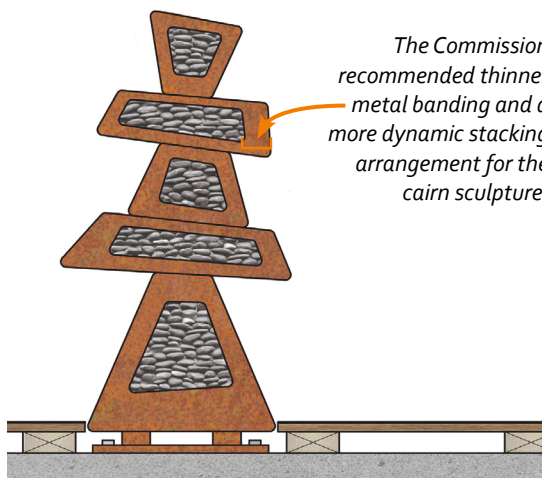
Green wall

2. If the construction schedule allows, do a full growing season for the plants proposed for the green wall in order to inform decisions about plant selection.
3. Be intentional about plant selection so the green wall has a clear composition. Consider plants not only in the context of the green wall but in relationship to the overall project as well.
4. Eliminate the vines growing adjacent to the green wall to clarify the panels as a compositional element.
5. Consider refining the width of the metal screens on either side of the green wall so that the screens provide relief from the brick columns but are not the same width as equal modular section of the green wall.

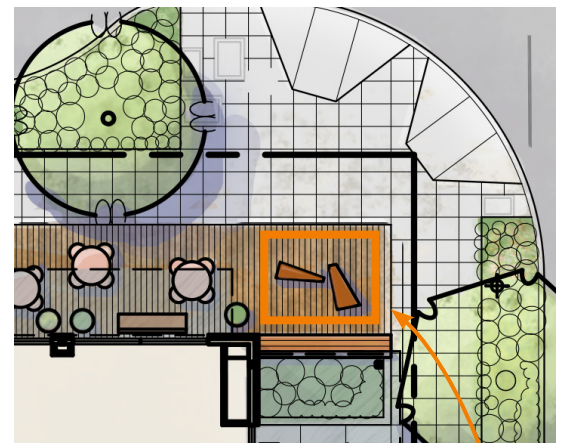
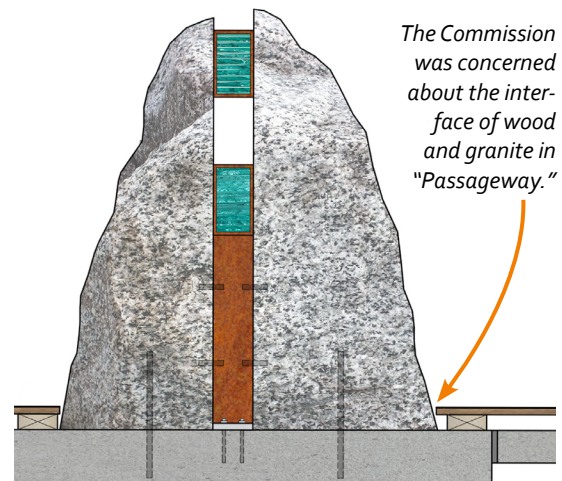


Artwork

6. Reconsider the thickness of the metal banding on cairn piece, which feels excessive as currently designed. Consider the relationship of the stones within the cairn to the thickness of the banding.
7. Explore stacking the cairn pieces in a more dynamic way rather than in a flat plane.
8. Refine the edge detail where the wood slats meet the granite boulder for the "Passageway" sculpture to ensure the interface of these two materials is successful.
9. Ensure the sculptures at the corner of SW Edmunds St and Fauntleroy Way SW have the dimension and depth represented in plan, which is a more intriguing scale than what appears in the perspectives.



On the green wall, the Commission recommended eliminating the vines and suggested modifying the width of the metal screens adjacent to the plantings.



The Commission encouraged the artist to ensure that the sculptures at Edmunds and Fauntleroy would have the depth and scale shown in plan at right, which the perspectives to the left seem not to reflect.