



# Seattle Design Commission

**APPROVED**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**1 May 2003**

Gregory J. Nickels,  
*Mayor*

Donald Royse  
*Chair*

Laura Ballock

Ralph Cipriani

Jack Mackie

Cary Moon

Iain M. Robertson

Nic Rossouw

David Spiker

Sharon E. Sutton

Tory Laughlin Taylor

John Rahaim,  
*Executive Director*

Layne Cubell,  
*Commission Coordinator*

### Projects Reviewed

Upcoming Projects Briefing

2040 East Madison Street

Seattle University

Bitter Lake Reservoir Open Space

I-5 Open Space

Mt. Baker Rowing and Sailing Boathouse

Cowen Park Shelter House Improvements

Convened: 8:30am

Adjourned: 5:00pm

### Commissioners Present

Donald Royse, Chair

Laura Ballock

Ralph Cipriani

Cary Moon

Iain M. Robertson

Nic Rossouw

David Spiker

Tory Laughlin Taylor

### Staff Present

John Rahaim

Layne Cubell

Brad Gassman

Anna O'Connell



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**1 May 2003 Project: 2040 East Madison Street**

Phase: Alley Vacation

Previous Review: None

Presenter: Carlos de la Torre, Sclater Partners Architects

Attendees: Scott Kemp, Dept. of Design, Construction, and Land Use

Jay Reeves, Sclater Partners Architects

Barry Lamb, Barry J. Lamb, Inc.

Marilyn Senour, Seattle Dept. of Transportation

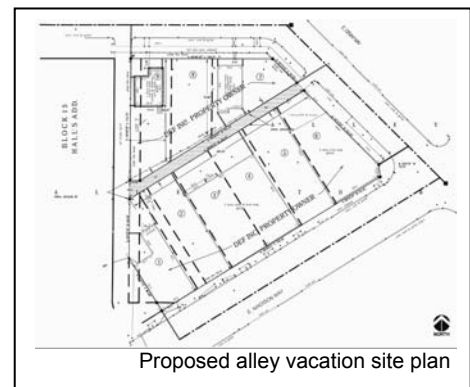
Beverly Barnett, Seattle Dept. of Transportation

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 170 | DC00304)

**Action:** The Commission appreciates the strong contextual framework for a complex set of issues and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.

- The Design Commission requests that, at the next review, proponents present a strong diagram that shows public use such as pedestrian patterns, vehicular traffic, and neighborhood needs, and present a nine-square block urban design analysis;
- urges proponents to more fully explore the urban design aspects of giving up the alley and address this within the context of the development including looking at the impacts of scale modulation with the alley, the way the alley provides a transition between the commercial mixed use zone and the residential zone, and how the service aspects of the alley function, and to acknowledge all of these within the design proposal;
- would like to see substantive public benefit in the context of what is appropriate to this neighborhood;
- urges proponents to think more carefully about the public benefit—it must be a workable space that can be used by the public—and questions an enclosed space, which could be a throw-away space that does not enliven the neighborhood;
- would like to see proponents clarify the public benefit versus what the project would bring regardless of whether or not the alley is vacated;
- encourages proponents to further investigate the possibilities of scheme C, a reduced vacation alternative, and bring the same level of creativity and energy to its design as were given to schemes A and B so a true comparison can be made; and
- does not recommend approval of the alley vacation.

This vacation is in the Madison-Miller neighborhood and is an east-west alley between two properties owned by one person. The main reason proponents would like the vacation is to get the best development use for the property as a whole rather than as two properties. The proposed project will be a multiuse residential and retail development. An alley vacation would make underground parking, construction, design flexibility, and a continuous façade easier. The existing alley is 10 feet wide and does not function for either fire or garbage collection. Because of safety issues in the



neighborhood the Police Dept. asked that it be gated and closed from 6 PM–6 AM. This site is located in the central part of the urban village. The urban village plan called for the area to be redeveloped and included this vacation. The project is bordered by multifamily development to the east and by E. Denny Way and 20<sup>th</sup> Ave. E. Madison St. to the south is zoned 65-foot residential with retail on the first floor and East Madison St. to the north is zoned 65-foot residential with residential on all floors.

There is a hodgepodge of commercial and institutional buildings in the area and further to the north is a more residential neighborhood. It has Miller Park Community Center and a playfield, while the residential area to the south has a YMCA and two parks. The area to the north is seen as the pedestrian core and with a new mixed use development, a Safeway, and other supporting retail coming in at an existing signaled intersection. There are two bus stops near the site and people come through the alley and around the site to get to E. Madison St. East Denny Way is not an arterial and other surrounding streets are also residential.

The team is looking at a development that will encompass the whole block. Currently surrounding the site, there is a vacant lot for parking on E. Denny Way to the west of the site across the north/south alley and several small multifamily (3–4 stories) that create a transition from the smaller residential scale to a larger scale. All of the existing buildings along the Madison St. elevation will be demolished, as will two existing single-family homes along E. Denny Way.

#### *Scheme A*

This is a larger scale project than what is existing, although on the Madison St. façade a node is created with by a courtyard. The public benefit is the provision of this public space off of Madison St. that breaks up the façade and provides space on a long block. Adjacent to this space will be retail and the space will provide links to an existing private park for Planned Parenthood. There is also the possibility of an interior community room for the public within the building. On the upper level there is a private terrace for apartment residents.



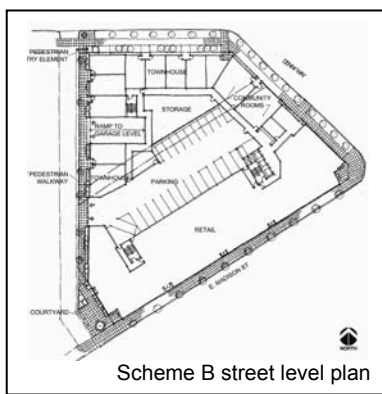
Scheme A street level plan



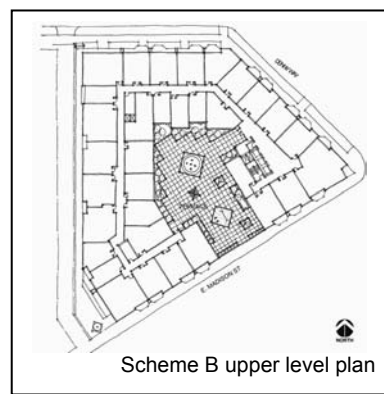
Scheme A upper level plan

#### *Scheme B*

In this scheme, the team looked at the current use of the site and at the urban design analysis to address the amount of pedestrian and car traffic. The north-south alley is the main entrance for the development and is a pedestrian link for people who come down Madison St. This alley has an extra 8 feet of pedestrian space with landscaping and raised paving and links Madison St. and Denny Way. An



Scheme B street level plan

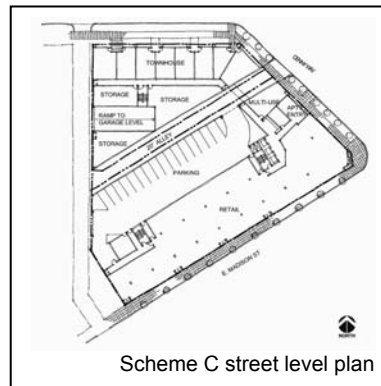


Scheme B upper level plan

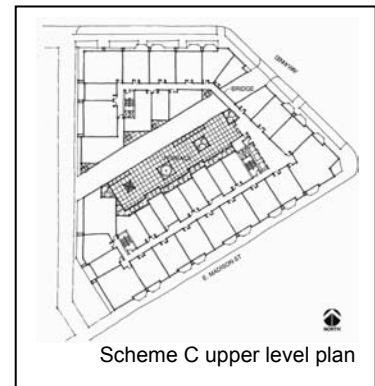
entryway at the end of the alley will make the pedestrian link apparent. The corner of the building is brought in a little so it is not so imposing on the streetscape. Again, in this scheme, the upper terrace is for residents of the development.

### *Scheme C*

Scheme C retains the alley. With redevelopment, the alley will need to be improved and will increase from 10-feet to 20-feet wide. The development loses some area for the first floor of the building. The alley remains for pedestrian and vehicular use. The building will be built out to the full envelope and developed to 65-feet high on all sides as in A and B. The upper sides of the building will be pulled in about 10 feet. The team would need a subterranean easement for a parking garage.



Scheme C street level plan



Scheme C upper level plan

The elevations of schemes A and B have the feeling of two separate buildings with an interior courtyard, whereas the elevation of scheme C is continuous. The materials will give the building a corrugated texture.



### **Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns**

- Would like to know if there are utilities in the alley.
  - Proponents stated that there are not.
- Would like to know if all schemes have the same number of residential units.
  - Proponents stated that there are at least ten less in scheme C.
- Would like to know how many residential units there will be.
  - Proponents stated that there will be between 192 and 200, depending on the mix.

- Would like to know the current land use for each of the properties currently on the site.
  - Proponents stated that they are as follows: a commercial building with a grocery store on the first floor and residential above; a restaurant and bar with residential above; an apartment building; a restaurant and bar; three vacant parcels; and two vacant single family residences.
- Commends the team for the thorough analysis and clear graphics.
- Would like proponents to summarize the pedestrian desire lines and nodes of activity.
  - Proponents stated that there are nodes on Madison St. and 21<sup>st</sup> Ave. in front of the grocery store and bus stop on the other side; at the private Planned Parenthood park that is open to the public at Madison St. and 20<sup>th</sup> Ave.; at the park and ball fields further south; and at Miller Park to the north. There is no main connecting alley east-west and people generally travel on the sidewalks.
- Would like to know whether the use of those alleys across 21<sup>st</sup> Ave. that are platted, but taken over is not a legal use.
  - Proponents stated that they are not legally taken over and that they are still officially alleys.
- Would like to know if the building is still stepping back in scheme C with less residential units.
  - Proponents stated that scheme C does not step back.
- Does not see a substantial difference in the number of units in scheme C.
  - Proponents stated that all schemes require higher lot coverage and scheme C would require an even greater lot coverage than 75 percent and less open space.
- Believes that in the no vacation scheme the alley does not count as open space and feels that proponents could ask for less open space and more coverage.
- Sees that proponents are not showing open space on the roof.
  - Proponents stated that they are not looking at the roof right now. At this point, it's a basic design and they haven't looked at the roof yet because of the difficulty in running an elevator and stair core and there would be roofing complications.
- Feels that two principle public benefits have been presented: relieving a nuisance for fire and garbage collection and increasing safety and decreasing loitering around the area. Believes that the safety and loitering issues have more to do with adjacent land uses. In addition, sees that "could have affordable housing" is listed as a public benefit so there is no commitment to that. Would like clarification on what the public benefits are.
  - Proponents stated that with scheme C, you will not see much of the public benefit. In the other schemes, public benefits are community rooms, the widening of the pedestrian space and public access, use of the traffic pattern in the area, and the courtyard on either end for public linkage. Proponents further stated that this development is much closer to what the community has requested, the requirements of the master plan, and the urban village plan.
- Feels that the team is being respectful of the neighborhood plan and other plans, however they are still getting use of additional space. They must conform with guidelines set forth, but also must go beyond these.

- Believes that proponents are proposing the public benefits as widening of pedestrian area, landscape, and paving in the alley; the courtyard; and the community room space. Sees only the work in the alley and the courtyard as public benefits and feels all the other features are things that would be there anyway in a new development.
- Would like to know if the 20 percent affordable housing rule is in effect.
  - Proponents stated that it is not.
  - Proponents stated that they would like direction from the Commission on a scheme and that schemes A, B, and C are progressively more difficult for the developer.
- Feels that scheme C is the clearest and simplest diagram of the site and believes there are about the same number of residential units as in the other schemes. Would be interested to see a section of the alley that shows what it could look like and feels that it could be like Post Alley with the upper units over the alley and the alley spatially still in place.
  - Proponents stated that Post Alley is a different kind of development and the activities and uses of this alley will not be comparable to Post Alley. One of the main items on C is that by opening up the development to the south side, they are losing the dialogue with Madison St. and are not able to create the mural of façade. The alley will also be dark and possibly unused and does not create a transition between densities or allowable height.
- Feels that the alley constructed for schemes A and B would be dark.
- Does not agree that scheme C is best. Feels that often the scheme of keeping the alley in a vacation petition is a throw-away scheme, but is not the case this time.
- Feels that all three schemes are interesting for their own reasons. Encourages the team, when they return, to have a larger diagram of how things work and what the public needs on this site. Is not confident that what they need is another commercial courtyard and is not sure that the alley is not needed.
- Would like to know if the southeast corner is available.
  - Proponents stated that it is owned by an adjacent property owner and is currently just a paved lot.
- Would like to clarify that this corner is shown as a courtyard, but is not owned by the proponents.
  - Proponents stated that half of the lot is owned by the proponent and they are talking to the other property owner about the lot.
- Feels that if proponents look at C more closely, there is the possibility of having parking accessed directly off the alley to create more green, open space and less impervious surface. Also feels that when there is a bias at the outset for the vacation, there is less effort put into the non-preferred alternative. Feels that there are possibilities that would make scheme C more positive and attractive.
- Suggests that proponents could also look into making the bridge over the alley wider so it functions more as a terrace.
- Is not convinced that trading open space off Madison St. for an indentation on Madison St. is a good urban design solution.
- Believes that to remove currently undesirable land use cannot be used as a public benefit.

#### **Key Visitor Comments and Concerns**

- A representative from SDOT stated that the alley improvements in scheme B are not taking into consideration what happens to the other side of the alley. Feels that it is tough to control or predict what happens to the other side and is concerned with the public streetscape. Does not want to see an

alley created that ends up conflicting with what happens on the other side.

- Proponents stated that, in any version of what happens on the other side, the improvements proposed in the scheme will be a public benefit. They are using elements to separate pedestrians from cars and adding green space to the project.