



**Seattle
Design
Commission**

REVISED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

21 August 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

Seattle Center Theater Commons
2040 East Madison Street
CityDesign Updates
Design Commission 35th Anniversary Project

Convened: 8:30am

Adjourned: 3:00pm

Commissioners Present

Donald Royse, Chair
Jack Mackie, Vice Chair
Laura Ballock
Ralph Cipriani
Cary Moon
Nic Rossouw
David Spiker
Tory Laughlin Taylor

Staff Present

John Rahaim
Layne Cubell
Brad Gassman
Lisa Baker



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Construction & Land Use

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21 Aug 2003 Project: Seattle Center Theater Commons

Phase: Schematic Design

Previous Reviews: 20 March 2003 (Pre-Conceptual Design), 21 September 2000 (Seattle Center Theatre District – Schematic Design), 19 February 1998 (Mercer Theater District Master Plan – Concept Briefing)

Presenters: Dave Buchan, Seattle Center
 Jerry Ernst, Urban Designer
 Richard Yancey, Weinstein AU
 Shannon Nichol, Gustafson Guthrie Nichol

Attendees: David Graves, DCLU/Monorail

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 169 | DC00187)

Action: The Commission thanks the team for the thorough presentation and appreciates the integration of ideas from the previous meeting into a strong concept and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.

- the Design Commission suggests that the team develop one simple idea that unifies all of the other ideas;
- acknowledges that the curved ledge element could unify the project, but urges the team to reconsider how this curve connects to Mercer St so that it is more welcoming from the sidewalk as well as from across the street;
- encourages the team to locate the social spaces of the project along the central promenade;
- appreciates the amphitheatre at the center of the space, but is concerned about its connection to the upper plaza in front of Seattle Repertory Theater and encourages the team to either develop a more direct connection between the amphitheatre and the upper plaza or to make it more clear that it is not a direct connection;
- urges the team to recognize and preserve intimate spaces of solitude along the smaller pathways;
- also urges the team to strengthen the east west connection across the Intiman courtyard; and
- recommends approval of schematic design

This project is located between The Seattle Repertory Theatre and the Intiman Theatre, on Second Ave between Mercer St and Republican St. There is no funding for the development of the project at this time. The team is primarily concerned with developing the planning and land use aspects of the project and determining design principles that can guide future development. Work on this project will likely be put on hold for up to five years.

This project is the first step in the development of a plan for the entire theater district. The design team has been working with an advisory group consisting of three representatives each from Seattle Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre, and Seattle Center. Each theatre has been represented by their managing director, their artistic director, and a member of their board.

The project team has determined the following goals for this project:

- make an existing auto-oriented space into a pedestrian-first space.
- provide clear entry points to Seattle Center and both theatres.

- create symbolic and physical connections between the two theatres.
- increase visibility between Seattle Center and Mercer St.
- make activity in the Intiman courtyard more apparent from the outside while preserving the intimacy of the space.
- create understated marquees for both theatres to announce their presence on Mercer St.
- maintain the grassy slope on the south side of the Intiman Theatre

The future configuration of the streets to the north and south of this site is undetermined. A plan for the theatre district includes narrowing Mercer St to allow wider sidewalks as well as drop off lanes on the south side of the street. This plan may need to be revised to accommodate a monorail line along Mercer. There is also a proposed monorail alignment along the south side of Republican St. The design team has considered how these future changes might affect their design. They have determined that their design principles would not change regardless of these future developments. The team has decided to focus on what is known now about the site and on the larger site issues and expects that future projects will respond to the principles developed in the Theater Commons design.

The design team has been considering the project from three different scales. They are looking at the city scale, the civic scale, and the proposed theatre district plan. On the city scale the Theater Commons is the only passageway on the north side of Seattle Center that connects to a street, which makes this passageway an important connection between Seattle Center and the Queen Anne neighborhood. At the scale of Seattle Center the design team wants to respond in a respectful way to the Worlds Fair buildings. They would also like to set a precedent of using high quality materials and simple design, which they hope will be followed throughout Seattle Center. Additionally the design team thinks it is important to create a flexible space that can accommodate the large crowds that come to Seattle Center while also creating spaces that are interesting even when they are relatively empty. The third scale that the team is responding to is the proposed theatre district plan. The Theater Commons corridor is one of three corridors within the theatre district. It is the widest and the greenest of the three corridors. It is also the only corridor that connects both to a street outside of Seattle Center as well as a corridor within Seattle Center.

The circulation within the Theater Commons will encourage east west connections across the space but will also respond to the long linear proportion of the area between the two theatre buildings. Vehicular access to Second Ave will be maintained but will be limited to occasional service vehicles. The use of the Theater Commons will be primarily for pedestrians and the existing pedestrian path will be extended to Mercer St.

The design diagram that the team has developed includes three different spaces. The first space will be the welcoming space and will open onto Mercer St and will include entries to both of the theatres. The second space will be more enclosed and be a shared space between the theatres. The third space will connect to Seattle Center and the International fountain.

The welcoming space will have a consistent design which will unite the two theatres without trying to make them identical. Special paving will continue the axis of the historic colonnade in front of the Intiman Theatre. The welcoming space will also include a water feature. The water feature will help cast light on the north faces of the buildings and will also help to activate the space even when it is empty. The fountain will reflect the sky during the day and will glow with color at night. The design team is proposing glass walls where the water feature intersects with the buildings to help bring the water into the buildings. The team is also suggesting colored lighting on the underside of the roof overhang of the Intiman building. This will help announce the activity of the Intiman courtyard without disturbing the

privacy of the space.

Lengthwise from north to south the site will slope gradually up to Mercer St. The central commons space will curve in plan to focus movement and views toward the International Fountain at the south end of the space. The commons space will be defined by symmetrical terraces on either side. These terraces will help to unify the space despite the very different articulation of the two theatre buildings that frame it. The Repertory Theatre is interested in having an outdoor space that functions similarly to the Intiman Courtyard. There is the potential to have circulation inside of the Repertory building rearranged in order to provide a direct connection between the Repertory Theatre and the new terrace space being created adjacent to it.

An amphitheatre will be cut into the grade from east to west across the center of the commons area. This amphitheatre will create opportunities to move crosswise within the Theater Commons. It could also be used to hold outdoor theatre events. Each side of the amphitheatre will be flanked by balcony like terraces. The articulation of the balconies will help balance the “personality” of the buildings. The balconies at the base of the Repertory Theatre will have a more open and receiving form to balance the outward jutting nature of the building. The balconies below the Intiman will have a more outward thrusting form that will balance the more reserved articulation of the building. The balconies will also help create a more welcoming edge along both buildings which functionally turn their backs on the commons.

The design team is working with a “planes of color” concept in considering the planting for the space. This scheme would include a trellis form which could be an adaptation of the cruciform shape of the Intiman Theatre’s columns. The trellises would support climbing flowering plants with translucent leaves and petals. The planting would draw on Asian heritage in the Northwest and would include vibrant exotic colors. One landscaping idea is to include dense clipped azaleas to create vibrant lozenge shaped masses of color.

Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns

- Notes that the master plan for Seattle Center includes an edge beyond which vehicles cannot penetrate. Wonders where the edge is in this scheme.
 - Proponents stated that the edge will remain where it is at Mercer and Warren. Public vehicles will be discouraged past this point, but occasional deliveries and service vehicles will still be permitted.
- Questions how festivals will be accommodated within this space given the revised and narrowed topography.
 - Proponents stated that they have done layouts for all three of the major festivals that take place in Seattle Center. They feel that there may actually be more usable space for the festivals than there is in the current configuration. Proponents noted that refrigeration trucks may need to be relocated to avoid having them on the new paving.
- Wonders how this space will function as the main festival entrance given the changes.
 - Proponents stated that the revised scheme includes a 20 ft paved fire lane as well as a larger flat grassy area. They feel that this width will be more than sufficient. Proponents also noted that festivals are very adaptable and creative in their use of the space.
- Wonders if the steps in the amphitheatre space are primarily for seating or primarily for access.
 - Proponents stated that the details of the amphitheatre have not yet been designed. They are imagining a balance between steps scaled for sitting and steps scaled for walking.

- Is concerned that the amphitheatre steps in front of the Seattle Repertory theatre will seem like steps to nowhere. Notes that this side of the building already feels like an entrance to the building even though it is not.
 - Proponents stated that the amphitheatre steps would not lead directly up to the Repertory Theatre building. They explained that the steps would split to either side before connecting to the plaza at the Repertory Building level.
- Notes that the drawings do not show the larger context of the Theatre Commons. Feels that there are potentially conflicts between how this space functions on a larger scale and the intimate areas that the team is trying to create. Expects that this space will function primarily as a transition area from the north to the south. Does not see the three distinct spaces that the team was trying to create.
- Agrees that the team needs to give more consideration to the larger context. Feels that they need to push one big idea rather than a collection of small ideas. Suggests that the symmetrical nature of the curve from north to south does not respond to the larger context. Urges the team to explore how the curve connects to and across Mercer St
 - Proponents stated that they have studied how the curve will meet Mercer St, but that they did not present this material. They agree that this issue could use further consideration.
- Wonders how the new water feature will interact with the existing fountain in the Intiman courtyard.
 - Proponents stated that the paving around the fountain in the Intiman courtyard is not original. They feel that the paving that was revised around the fountain detracts attention from the fountain itself. Proponents explained that they are interested in reworking the paving around the fountain in order to simplify it and make it more in keeping with the original design intention.
- Questions how the new water feature will meet the building.
 - Proponents stated that the water feature will be a simple shallow trough with water sheeting across the surface. They imagine that it will butt into the new glass surfaces on the faces of the buildings.
- Encourages the team to focus seating within this project along the central corridor. Notes that people prefer to sit where there is activity to watch.
- Cautions the team not to eliminate hidden intimate places where people can hide and get away from crowds.

21 Aug 2003 Project: 2040 East Madison Street

Phase: Alley Vacation

Previous Review: 1 May 2003 (Alley Vacation)

Presenter: Carlos de la Torre, Sclater Partners Architects

Attendees: Scott Kemp, Department of Design Construction and Land Use

Beverly Barnett, Seattle Department of Transportation

Marilyn Senour, Seattle Department of Transportation

Barry Lamb, Lamb Incorporated

Jay Reeves, Sclater Partners Architects

Dean Falls, DEF Inc

Andrew Taylor, Miller Park Neighborhood Association

Ann Rennick, resident

Rene Soulard, resident

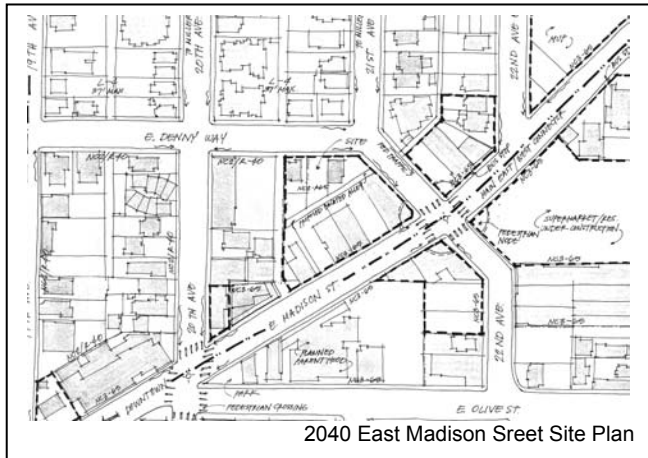
Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 000 | DC00000)

Action: The Commission thanks the team for updating them on this project and appreciates the challenging nature of working in this changing neighborhood and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.

- the Design Commission reiterates its previous request for a more complete urban design analysis including a nine block area that considers pedestrian and vehicular circulation, as well as the transitional and service functions of the alley;
- urges the team to consider the street and alley system as a fundamental component of the urban infrastructure and to take a long view in considering the future benefits of these public amenities;
- feels that there was insufficient consideration given to scheme “C” which could have included creative combinations of subterranean or aerial vacation alternatives; and
- does not recommend approval of the alley vacation at this time.

This project involves a request for an alley vacation in order to accommodate a proposed residential building with a retail base. The project would include five stories of residential units above a first floor retail level. It would also include 2 levels of underground parking. The alley proposed to be vacated runs roughly east west from E Denny Way to another alley on the west. The alley is 10 feet wide and is not currently used for services or any other purpose. The alley dead-ends into the other alley to the west but continues to the east. Although it continues as a right of way to the east across Denny Way the path is blocked by a tree and continues as an unpaved area with grass and bushes.





The project team considers the alley more of a hazard than a benefit to the neighborhood. Currently the police have closed the alley from 6pm to 6am in an attempt to stop the illegal activities that have been taking place there. The project team has spent a considerable amount of time on the site asking community members what they think about the alley and if they would miss it if it were gone. They received a unanimous response from the neighborhood that they do not use the alley and they would not miss it. The design team proposes to mitigate the loss of the alley by creating something positive for the community.

Madison St, which passes to the south of the site, is one of the few roads that connects from the Lake Union to the Elliott Bay and is very busy. The development on Madison surrounding the site is currently one story, but it is zoned to be developed to 65 feet high. The neighborhood is concerned that future development will make Madison St feel like a canyon. The neighborhood would like Madison to be developed as a boulevard with wide sidewalks on either side.

The project team's preferred scheme (scheme A) proposes to set the building back from the existing property line to create a consistent 12 foot sidewalk along Madison St. Additional setbacks mid-block and on the corners would create small public spaces. The total square footage of these setbacks would exceed the square footage of the vacated alley. Scheme A also includes a break in the building façade along Madison St in order to mitigate the canyon like feeling. With this proposal the 1st floor retail would run consistently along Madison St, but the residential portion of the development would break at the middle of the block.



The team has also explored a scheme that would not require an alley vacation (scheme C). In this scheme the alley would be widened to 20 ft in order to be more usable. Scheme C would include two separate underground parking garages rather than one large underground garage. In this case the smaller of the two garages would be one story below ground and the larger garage would need to be at least three stories underground. Even if the allowable lot coverage were to be increased scheme C would only accommodate 150 units while scheme A could accommodate 200 units. In the scheme A the building would step down along the north side of the property, below the maximum allowable height, in order to lessen the impact on the residential area across Denny Way. In scheme C the building would need to be built to the maximum allowable height along the north side of the property and the façade would be continuous along Madison without the mid-block break.



The project team has determined that they would need to build 200 units in order to make this project financially viable, and therefore could not realistically pursue scheme C.

Key Visitor Comments and Concerns

- Has studied and measured sidewalks to determine what would be a suitable sidewalk width along Madison St. Feels that 12 feet is slightly too narrow to accommodate outdoor seating or other uses, but that 15 feet would be ideal. Many other community members feel that a widened sidewalk alone is not an adequate public benefit. Some residents have proposed that there could be a public area at the east end of the site at the corner of Denny Way and Madison St.
- Noted that Planned Parenthood to the south of the site across Madison St voluntarily included 15 foot sidewalks when developing their project.

Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns

- Questions why the team is proposing to vacate this alley and not the perpendicular alley to the west. Feels that the alley proposed to be vacated is useful in mediating the scale change between development along Madison and residential development to the north.
 - Proponents explained that the alley to the west is currently being used and that their plans called for using this perpendicular alley to access the proposed parking garage. They also noted that the 65 foot zoning area extends until Denny Way. They clarified that Denny Way is the mediator between the two zoning areas, not the alley.
- Questions if the alley could have a future productive use once there is increased traffic pressure on Madison St.
 - Proponents reiterated that this alley dead-ends to the west and does not continue as a paved right of way to the east.
- Appreciates the complexity of issues surrounding this project and the proposed alley vacation. Suggests that in considering the usefulness of the alley the team should not look at the next 5-10 years but should take a longer view of perhaps the next 300 years. Also notes that responding to social predators by limiting public space is not an appropriate response.
- Suggests that if the alley were maintained it would not need to be expanded to a 20 ft right of way. Feels that the alley could be utilized by pedestrians rather than garbage trucks or other service vehicles. Believes that there would be an exciting potential to access some units directly off of the street if the alley were maintained. Urges the team to consider examples of lively alleys in the city such as Post Alley as models for this project.
 - Proponents explained that this alley condition is very different from Post Alley. They clarified that they are proposing controlled access points at the entrance to the parking garages and that outdoor spaces associated with the building would not be accessible directly from the public right of way. Proponents do not feel that this area would be appropriate for on grade access from the alley unless access to the alley was controlled through gates at either end.
- Wonders if the team considered a subterranean vacation of the alley. Feels that a subterranean vacation could alleviate underground parking issues.
 - Proponents stated that they only explored the scheme involving the on-grade vacation or the scheme that involved no vacation whatsoever. They explained that with underground or aerial vacations there would be four different potential combinations. They noted that they did not have the resources to explore all four schemes.
- Notes that the intersection of Madison St and Denny Way is an important one. Explained that this intersection marks the entrance to the Miller Park neighborhood to the north. Also remarked that the angle of Madison St shifts at this intersection. Feels that the building massing on this corner is critical to the urban design of the neighborhood.

- Suggests that if the vacation were pursued the corner of Madison St and Denny Way could have a two story retail space to activate the public area requested by the neighborhood.
 - Proponents stated that the proposed retail would already be 15 feet tall. They suggested that awnings, planters and places to sit could be considered as ways to help add to the public environment on the corner.
- Feels that widened sidewalks would be typical of this sort of project and does not see this as a substantial public benefit to mitigate the loss of the alley. Stresses that alley vacations are not to be used as a means toward financial viability of a project.

21 August 2003 Commission Business

ACTION ITEMS

- A. TIMESHEETS
- B. MINUTES FROM 7 AUGUST- APPROVED

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- C. PROJECT UPDATES- CUBELL

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY STREET AND ALLEY VACATIONS

BEVERLY BARNETT AND MICHAEL JENKINS UPDATED THE COMMISSION ON THE SEATTLE UNIVERSITY PROJECT. THE ENTRY FOR THE BOOKSTORE WILL BE DEVELOPED IN THE CENTER OF THE BLOCK ON 12TH AVE. TRANSPARENCY BETWEEN THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR WILL BE IMPROVED AND STREETScape ELEMENTS WILL BE ENHANCED. THERE ARE TWO PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFITS PACKAGE FOR THIS PROJECT. OPTION 1) WOULD DEVELOP PEDESTRIAN PLAZAS ON TWO CORNERS OF THE LOGAN FIELD SITE AND PROVIDE \$75,000 FOR SDOT PROJECT WORK. OPTION 2) WOULD PROVIDE \$150,00 FOR A PROJECT TO BE DETERMINED WITH THE PARKS DEPARTMENT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE COMMUNITY.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- D. DC/PC WATERFRONT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING- AUG 21ST, 3:30-5PM
- E. COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE OF CITY HALL- SEP 5TH, 5-7PM, 36TH FLOOR, COLUMBIA TOWER
- F. RICHARD FLORIDA LECTURE- SEP 4TH, 7:30PM, TOWN HALL

21 Aug 2003 Project: **City Design Updates**

Phase: Staff Briefing

Previous Reviews:

Presenters: John Rahaim, CityDesign

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 220 | DC00209)

Summary: John Rahaim updated the Design Commission on CityDesign's current work.

There will be a waterfront subcommittee meeting following the Design Commission meeting to discuss the next steps for the Central Waterfront Plan. CityDesign recently briefed the Mayor on the Blue Ring Open Space Strategy and an action strategy for the implementation of these projects. The Mayor gave verbal approval of this plan. The Central City Wayfinding project needs to go through an inclusive public process before it can proceed any further. Funding has been secured for this work, and the schedule for implementing the new signage is being developed to coincide with signage needs for new transportation projects including Sound Transit, King County Metro, and the Monorail. CityDesign will be moving to the 19th floor of Key Tower on August 24th in order to be in better proximity to other planning functions. John Rahaim has recently accepted the position of Planning Director for DCLU and requested the Design Commission's assistance in hiring the new director of CityDesign, once that strategy is approved.

John Rahaim updated the Design Commission on CityDesign's projects and staffing. He did not discuss the progress of the Central Waterfront Plan as there was a subcommittee meeting scheduled to review this project after the Design Commission meeting.

CityDesign recently briefed the Mayor on the Blue Ring project and also an action strategy that CityDesign has developed for implementing the Blue Ring project. This action strategy is based on a format used by the office of sustainable development. This matrix includes individual projects as well as policy decisions. The Mayor gave initial verbal approval to the plan and the action strategy. CityDesign is hoping that the mayor will formally sign off on this plan in the fall. They would like to obtain City Council approval of the plan by early 2004.

The Commission questioned what tools the city will use to implement this plan. John Rahaim stated that they are considering code changes. He also explained that they need to get a better understanding of how much they can expect from developers. There are many interest groups that would like to give developers bonuses if they respond to their agendas. The City needs to be cautious in how many development bonuses it can offer without undermining the code. Not all of the projects included in the Blue Ring strategy will be developer and land-use driven.

A lot of progress has been made on the Center City Wayfinding project. At this point there needs to be a public feedback process before the project can proceed. Funding has already been secured for this work from a federal matching grant that matches funds at a ratio of 2:1. The schedule for adding the new signage will coincide with signage needs for new transportation projects from Sound Transit, King County Metro, and the Monorail. There will be a pilot/test project of the new signage at the ferry terminals.

CityDesign will be relocating to the 19th floor of Key Tower on August 24th. They are moving in order to be in closer proximity to other planning functions. John Rahaim has recently accepted the position of Planning Director for DCLU. He will be working to define CityDesign's relationship to the other planning functions.

Due to the latest budget analysis the Mayor has announced a hiring freeze. CityDesign will need to apply for a waiver from the hiring freeze in order to hire a new director for CityDesign. John Rahaim requested the Commission's help in hiring the new director if the waiver is granted. He stated that he would like their assistance in the following areas:

- Recruitment
- Defining the position – both as director of the Commission and director of CityDesign
- Reviewing and commenting on the job description
- Interviewing

John Rahaim questioned if there should be a subcommittee formed to assist with this process. The Commission felt that this would be a good idea. Tori Laughlin-Taylor, David Spiker, and Don Royse will form a subcommittee for this purpose. CityDesign will keep the Commission updated on the status of the waiver, and the schedule of the hiring process.

21 Aug 2003 Project: Design Commission 35th Anniversary Project

Phase: Staff Briefing

Previous Reviews: 17 July 2003 (Staff Briefing)

Presenters: Brad Gassman, CityDesign
Mieko Ishihara, CityDesign Intern
Mark Griffin, CityDesign Intern

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 220 | DC00310)

Summary: CityDesign staff met with the Design Commission to continue discussing preparations for the upcoming 35th anniversary of the Design Commission this December. The project team is working on a brochure and exhibit celebrating the history of the Commission. They are also developing a related graphic layout for this year's Design Commission letters of commendation. The project team continued to solicit the Commission's input on the graphic design and content of the brochure and began discussion on the selection of projects for the letters of commendation.

CityDesign staff has continued to work on the design of the brochure for the 35th anniversary of the Design Commission. They have modified the brochure in order to make it bolder graphically and also to clarify how the two sides of the brochure are related to each other. At the last meeting with the Commission the Commission suggested that the design team try other formats for the brochure. The team has explored other formats, but has determined that the original format would be the most affordable option. They have also determined that they can print in up to four colors without the cost being significantly more than black and white.

The team has begun to include text in the brochure and to try and select 5 or 6 representative projects. They are considering grouping the projects according to categories and questioned whether the Commission thinks this would be a good idea. The Commission agreed that this would be a good way of organizing the projects. They were concerned that including too many projects would dilute the impact of the brochure. The design team and the Commission both felt that the text should describe each broad project category while the images should focus on only a small number of exemplary projects.

The team has also revised the graphics of the brochure to make it more visually interesting. On the front of the brochure they would like to include a single image that can be read from a distance. Initially they had used an image of salmon roe and mature salmon as a placeholder for this image. The team had then replaced this image with a map of Seattle. They have been experimenting with ways of screening the image to allow more usable area where text can be included. They have also tried including sketches of different areas in the city on top of the map. The Commission felt that the sketches were not reading effectively from a distance. The Commission did like the simplicity of the salmon image but agreed that salmon has been overused as a theme. The team suggested using an historic picture of Seattle and a contemporary picture of Seattle taken from the same spot. The Commission felt this would be a good solution.