



# Seattle Design Commission

**Approved**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**May 4 2006**

Gregory J. Nickels,  
*Mayor*

David Spiker  
*Chair*

Pam Beyette

Adam Christiansen

John Hoffman

Karen Kiest

Anindita Mitra

Sheri Olson

Nic Rossouw

Dennis Ryan

Darrell Vange

Guillermo Romano  
*Executive Director*

Layne Cubell,  
*Senior Staff*

Convened: 8:30am

Adjourned: 2:30pm

### Projects Reviewed

Arboretum – Pacific Connections

Arboretum – Japanese Garden Entry Improvement Project

City Hall Park Improvements

500 Mercer (Lumen project) – Alley Vacation follow up

Fire Station 10 Improvements – update

### Commissioners Present

David Spiker, Chair

Pam Beyette

Adam Christiansen

Karen Kiest

Anindita Mitra

Sheri Olson

Nic Rossouw

Dennis Ryan

Darrell Vange

### Staff Present

Guillermo Romano

Layne Cubell

Tom Iurino

Valerie Felts



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Development

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**04 May 2006 Project: Arboretum – Pacific Connections Project**

Phase: Design Development  
Previous Reviews: November 2004  
Presenters: Milenko Matanovic, Pomegranate Center  
Dennis Meyer, Portico Group  
Michael Shiosaki, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Attendees: Michael Michalek, University of Washington  
Elizabeth Umbanhowar, University of Washington  
  
Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. #169/RS0605)

**Action**

**The Commission appreciates the Portico Group, Pomegranate Center, and Department of Parks and Recreation for their presentation and update of the Arboretum’s Pacific Connections project. As presented, the overall plan seems to be in the design development stage, while the pavilion and its associated wayfinding elements are lagging. The Commission recommends approval of the overall site plan, but would like to see further design development of the shelter and the interpretive program.**

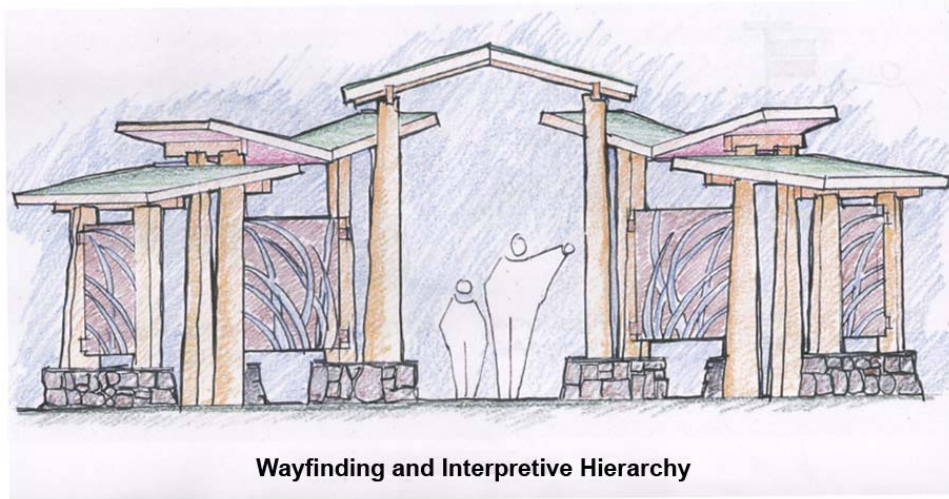
**The Commission makes the following comments and recommendations:**

- **is concerned about the aesthetic complexity of the shelter and its elements. There is a lot going on in a small footprint. Further design development is urged to simplify the structure and elements.**
- **appreciates the strategy of the overall site plan and the framing concepts, including the attention given to the views and vistas.**
- **recommends the team look into the SR-520 project for possible funds to support improved cycling connections through the Arboretum.**
- **recommends thought be given to public transit access to the Arboretum and encourages improved wayfinding from the existing public transit access points to the site.**
- **appreciates the function of the extensive trail system, but would encourage the circulation system to support two kinds of park visitors: those who come with an aggressive learning objective and those who come merely for a walk in the woods.**
- **urges consistency in the design of the 3D architectural wayfinding and interpretive elements and how they relate to existing signs.**
- **agrees the biggest challenge to the plan is the phasing. The Commission supports the team’s effort to acquire the means, tapping public and private funding sources both, to expedite the process of full development, but also encourages the team to find a first phase segment or loop that works to capture the excitement of the overall plan.**

**Note: Commissioner Karen Kiest dissented as she does not support the extensive trail system**

### Proponents Presentation

Proponents outlined design elements of the park. The project was last seen by the Design Commission in November 2004 under the name: South Gate/Madrona Terrace. Its origin is in the 2001 Arboretum Master Plan. The project is a collaborative effort by University of Washington, City Parks, and the Arboretum Foundation, funded through the ProParks levy.



The site encompasses 12-14 acres at the southeast side of the Arboretum. The project scope includes plant collections, a wayfinding and interpretive hierarchy, trail improvements and site amenities such as pavilions and benches. The interpretive shelter column structure reflects five cultural links, one of which is the Moari culture. The central garden area, Pacific Connections Meadow, is surrounded by gardens containing plants representative of Cascadia, Chile, South East Australia, China, and New Zealand. A trail system connects the gardens. The plan also addresses educational and ecological goals of University of Washington.

### Commissioner Questions and Comments

- What material is used in the globe?
  - Rustic terrazzo and colored concrete has been used in the past.
- How much of the plan will be built?
  - It depends on fundraising by the Arboretum Foundation. It will likely be built in phases. The total price tag based on schematic design was approximately \$6 million. It will need to be done in phases.
- What are the phases?
  - There have been donations of \$1 million for the Chilean gardens and a donation for the shelter. The shelter, Chilean gardens, and the Meadows are organizing elements and should be in the first phase. All of this is dependent on funding.

- Should not trails and infrastructure go in first? If not the park could end up in a piecemeal condition 30 years from now.
- What is the construction schedule?
  - With funding, construction should start next spring.
- The 300 sq.ft. shelter structure is small. There is concern about the complexity of the roof on such a small structure. It needs a more cohesive design, otherwise there is no sense of enclosure.
  - Community input made the same comment. The team and Portico have not had a chance to integrate the elements.
- The trails are too small for cyclists. The Commission would urge the team to widen and enhance the trail system where possible.
  - The trails are not designed for bikes, but for walking. The road is for biking.
- What about the Americans with Disabilities Act? The trails are extensive and should be simplified. What about the North/South direction? It is hard to take a shortcut through the park.
  - The team has an obligation to provide accessible routes per ADA requirements. Shortcuts could be disorienting. Visitors could find themselves suddenly in an area they did not intend, such as the New Zealand garden abruptly connected to the East Asia garden. It is a positive experience for park visitors to meander and explore. Short cut routes are available along multi-use trails with the trail paralleling Arboretum Drive.
- Simplifying some routes could save money and would expedite implementation of the plan. However, this would be at the cost of limiting access to the plant collections – the primary purpose of this project.
- The need to tie the expression of five cultures together is challenging, maybe there are too many wayfinding elements, but they seem too disparate and dissimilar.
  - Each sign will be unique but will fit into the hierarchy of the wayfinding system.
- Is the design of the shelter and wayfinding system at a different stage of review from the master plan?
  - The entire project is in design development. The shelter has gone through several iterations, but is perhaps not as far along in design refinements. The team made a decision to have a public meeting, review by the client, and review by the Design Commission in the midst of design development rather than presenting the final plan.

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**04 May 2006 Project: Arboretum - Japanese Garden Entry Improvement Project**

Phase: Schematic Design

Presenters: Michael Shiosaki, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Bob Hoshide, Hoshide Williams Architects

Kenichi Nakano, Nakano Associates

Cathy Tuttle, Seattle Department of Parks

Attendees: Michael Michalek, University of Washington

Elizabeth Umbanhowar, University of Washington

Time: 1 hour

(SDC Ref. #169/RS0605)

**Action**

**The Commission thanks the Parks Department and design team for their presentation of schematic design of the Japanese Garden entry structure. The Commission recommends approval of the schematic design with the following comments and recommendations. The Commission:**

- looks forward to seeing a more fully developed landscape design to complement the architectural design.
- would appreciate seeing development of the entire pedestrian entry experience from the parking lot to the garden.
- agrees the design of the entry structure is elegant and refined and in keeping with the spirit of the garden and the community.
- recommends the wall on the street-side of the courtyard be stronger to create more of a buffer and a sheltering spot from Lake Washington Blvd.

**Proponents Presentation**

The proponents presented an overview of their design exploration of options for a new entry scheme of 1700 ft. which will serve as a replacement for the existing gate. The existing gate no longer serves present needs of the garden. The proposed entryway includes a ticket window, gift shop, restrooms and a reading room and is funded by the Pro Parks Levy.

**Commissioner Questions and Comments**

- How is the garden supported financially?
  - o The Parks Department provides funding for maintenance, operations, and ticket booth attendees. The budget for the building only is \$1 million. Volunteers provide support for activities such as tea ceremonies. Docents are also volunteers.
- The corner of Lake Washington Blvd. needs improvement and a stronger design treatment. The low wall should be made of stone and needs to speak of the place.

- The original designer from Japan did not want the gate to overshadow the garden entry
- The scale of the entryway is just right. It has a subtle yet bold design. It provides clues to visitors that they are approaching a garden. So, a parking lot at the entry would not be recommended. The pedestrian experience should be emphasized. Flags and landscaping could accomplish this.

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**04 May 2006 Project: City Hall Park Improvements**

Phase: Schematic Design

Presenters: Michael Shiosaki, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Kenichi Nakano, Nakano Associates  
Cathy Tuttle, Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation.

Genna Nashem, Department of Neighborhoods

Attendees: Noelle Higgins, University of Washington  
Theresa Neylor, Nakano Associates

Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. #169/RS0605)

**Action**

**The Commission appreciates the presentation by the Parks Department that references key components of the project: history, topography, and existing conditions of the park. It recommends approval of schematic design and the preferred scheme with the following comments and recommendations. The Commission:**

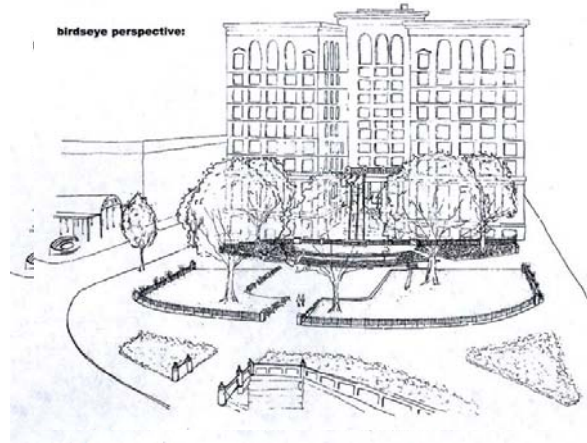
- **appreciates the overall scheme and how the elements all contribute to a successful design, especially the balance of lawns and hardscape, the axial arrangement around the new focal point of the belvedere, and the retrofit of Dilling Way for pedestrians only**
- **agrees a challenge to the park is the southeastern triangle, which needs to be better connected to the rest of the site; look at ways to minimize or remove driveway access and consider a future structure in this corner of the park that could be a good anchor and segue or transition to busy Yesler Way**
- **acknowledges the historic vs. contemporary context of the park and agrees the proposed basic architectural design strategies are strong. It encourages the team to look beyond evocative photos to actual design of site elements and furnishings as it develops the project and beyond historic references to other, more modern expressions**
- **commends the display of site sections and the value of a strong overarching diagram**
- **recognizes that good design alone will not make the park a success, ultimately real success depends on programming events, management of the park and how the park is deliberately designed for specific activities.**
- **makes reference by comparison to the success of Bryant Park in NYC and urges the team to use that as a good example**
- **supports whatever tree removal is necessary to best serve the design**
- **supports ongoing work with the homeless community**

**Proponents Presentation**

The proponents presented an overview of the schematic design of City Hall Park improvements. This is the first review of the project by the Commission and the PSRB is also reviewing the project concurrently. An advisory group

has weighed in on six different design concepts and a preferred alternative has recently been identified.

The scheme works with the site's prime features and seeks to improve the existing park with the goals of catering to multiple users and working on program, management and design altogether. The design solution selected features a new central belvedere or stage set against the building edge that may require some thinning of the trees, the creation of an axial plan and path system, removing Dilling Way and replacing it with a promenade, a mix of hardscape and greenspace throughout the site and restrooms that will replace existing portapotties.



A few breakthroughs were realized in the design process. Most significant was the decision to lift the funding constraint and provide ample funds for the project to make significant enough design and programming changes. The original budget was \$400k, but current funding is now at \$1-2m, with a total full project estimate of \$3.5m. A more flexible design approach was taken as well, one that mixes and allows for program and management options on site. Design details feature a low fence or perimeter wall, historic lightposts, rails, bollards and benches. The fence could create a sense of protection, like in Bryant Park in NYC, but should not be gated. The site is a challenging one, sitting on a slope at several busy intersections – and backing up to the south entrance of the King County courthouse which will remain closed, a decision made with recent seismic renovations to the building.



### Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Eliminating Dilling Way as a through street is a good idea
- The Commission commends the team's focus on what needs to be done at the park within financial constraints. The team has come up with an elegant solution without an oppressive feeling by visitors.
- Restrooms are needed somewhere in the park, not sure about the proposed playground
- Is Prefontaine Place S. used or could it be closed?
  - Yes, it's an active Metro bus route, so that's not an option.



- Could the park use crushed gravel for paths? The Commission would recommend using it on the promenade especially.
  - One early scheme included it, can revisit that idea.
- Will homeless people be displaced during construction? Are you looking at the site as a possible installation of *Footprints*, the homeless memorial?
  - The site is being designed with sensitivity to the homeless population, but is not being considered as a site for the installation at this point.
- The Commission applauds the Parks Department for increasing the budget. The park is in a difficult location, which makes the design challenging.
- Consider making the belvedere larger, more formal and symmetrical; providing walled sides rather than the planted terraces proposed would make it a bolder design gesture.
- Program all spaces for community uses, don't leave leftover spaces that aren't driven by programmatic purpose.

**Action Items**

**A.** Timesheets

**B.** Minutes from 04/20/06/Felts

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**C.** Fire Station 10 Update/Monica Lake, Fleets & Facilities Department

The Commission appreciated the project update and understands the budget concerns and rationale for the latest design changes, featuring a surface parking lot with landscape buffer rather than a 2-story parking structure, as originally proposed.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**D.** Outside Commitments Update/All

**E.** Council Meetings Update/ Layne Cubell

**F.** Urban Design Letter/ Anindita Mitra

**G.** Sound Transit Central Link Light Rail Tour  
May 12, 11:30am – 2pm

**I.** John Norquist, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 12-1:30pm, Council Chambers

**J.** Alaskan Way Viaduct/Seawall Seawall Public Meetings, late May, dates vary

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**04 May 2006 Project: 500 Mercer (Lumen Project) – Alley Vacation Follow Up**

Previous Reviews: March 2003  
Phase: Alley Vacation Follow Up  
Presenters: Don Carlson, Carlson Architects  
Attendees: David Hewitt, Hewitt Architects  
Kevin Ryden, Hewitt Architects  
Gerhard Kleinschmidt, Landstar  
Alan Winningham, Landstar  
Eileen Alduenda, University of Washington

Time: 1 hour

(SDC Ref. #170)

**Action**

**The Design Commission thanks the team for the presentation of the streetscape design and public benefits and recommends approval of both which is a follow up condition imposed by City Council with its conceptual approval of the alley vacation. The Commission:**

- **appreciates the level of thought that has gone into the streetscape refinements and graphics package and their consistency with the architectural elements of the project.**
- **finds development of water features is sophisticated and a good example of such features now popular in Seattle.**
- **agrees the project sets a high standard for design of the public realm for other projects in the area.**

**Proponents Presentation**

The proponents presented an update of an Alley Vacation approved by the Commission in 2003 and subsequently by City Council. The team focused its presentation on the public benefits package associated with the project.

The team provided a brief contextual design overview and background information on the project. The site consists of 50% commercial and 50% residential zoning, with a 40-foot height limit. The form of the building is defined by the site's topography which slopes diagonally to the southeast. Curb bulbs at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Roy will create a sense of plaza there while a sense of enclosure will be created by trees lining the street.



Public amenities outlined and revisions made include generous sidewalks on both Fifth and Roy, a more visible rain garden water feature along Roy Street, and chairs made of punched metal that provide public seating on 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. These playful, custom made benches will replace benches originally proposed of concrete blocks. Signage and project identity is well thought out with a mix of



View to the Northeast from 5th Avenue North

blade signs along the perimeter storefronts, colorful painting of the interior of the loading bays and exterior walls that are translucent, tying into the master plan concept for Mercer Corridor of illumination. The design of new two sliding doors at the Taylor Street loading bay entry will offer a visually appealing effect as they pass over each other.

### Commissioner Questions and Comments

- What were the public benefits requested at the last review?
  - o To enhance the SDOT standard of a 2 x 2 grid. The plan now has a wider sidewalk on both Roy and Fifth Avenue NE; richer landscaping, and a seating area which serves as sculpture during rain.
- Will the loading bay paint treatment be visible much of the day?
  - o Yes, a traffic mitigation issue required by the MUP limits grocery store deliveries from 3 to 6pm daily, but the doors will be open otherwise
- Are there interpretive possibilities with the site?
  - o Less so now, but they were envisioned with the Potlatch Trail concept back in '03.
- The design is smart and sophisticated, carried out with a light touch, very European and raises the standard for streetscape design.
- What's envisioned for Mercer? Make sure that façade remains transparent and lively.

- o The current design will preserve existing trees, create an 18' wide sidewalk and provide full streetwall glazing.
- What about Taylor St.?
  - o Street design there will feature paving patterns, street trees, specially designed loading doors and respect for the streetwall.
- Will the runnels really work on Roy?
  - o 5' troughs, rainwater will fill varying with the seasons and years.
- Appreciate the good attention to context, especially on Roy which shows sensitivity to residential buildings across street and further west, too.