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Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Chair
Ellen Sollod, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Theo Lim
Martin Regge
John Savo
Ross Tilghman

Project Description

The applicant is proposing a 34 story, mixed use project on the block bounded by University Street, 1st Avenue, Seneca Street, and 2nd Avenue. The petitioner plans to develop the project on three-fourths of the block, with the remaining portion of the block, which is currently occupied by the historic Diller Hotel, to remain. The project assumes a partial alley vacation, with 2,560 square feet to be vacated and 1,280 square feet to remain.

The vacation will allow for the construction of an "L" shaped building to include 690,000 sf of office space, 43,000 sf of retail and mixed commercial space, and below grade parking. The entire building will be elevated above the ground plane in order to provide publicly accessible open space, a mid-block plaza, and several through-block passageways.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the proposed urban design merit package. Following the presentation, public comment and SDC review and deliberation, the SDC voted 8-0 in favor of the urban design merit package, with several conditions and recommendations. The petitioner will present their proposed public benefit package at a later date.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

Commissioners Excused

Thaddeus Egging
Rachel Gleeson

October 15, 2015
9:00 - 10:30 am

Type
 CIP

Phase
 Pre Concept

Previous Reviews
 None

Presenters

Lisa Picard
 Skanska

Anthony Markese
 Pickard Chilton

Barbara Swift
 Swift and Company

Jim Graham
 Graham Baba

Marni Heffron
 Heffron Transportation

Jeff Peterson
 Coughlin Porter Lundeen

Attendees

Sean Canady
 GGLO, Neighbor

Jessica Clawson
 McCullough Hill Leary, PS

Nancy Clayton
 Pickard Chilton

Tom Diller
 Owner, Diller Hotel

Lloyd Douglas
 Cascade Neighborhood Council

Clair Enlow
 Daily Journal of Commerce

Brandon Glenn
 CBRE

Christian Gunter
 Skanska

William Justen
 West Edge Neighborhood Assoc.

Gareth Loveridge
 Swift Company

Daniel Matheson
 Skanska

Andrew McConnico
 Swift Company

Murphy McCoullough
 Skanska

Jach McCullough
 McCullough Hill Leary, PS

Linda Mitchell
 Consultant, Neighbor

Anne Pflug
 Consultant

Darby Watson
 SDOT

October 15, 2015

Summary of Presentation

The proposal was presented by Lisa Picard of Skanska, Anthony Markese of Pickard Chilton, Barbara Swift of Swift Company, and Marni Heffron of Heffron Transportation. Ms. Picard and Mr. Markese provided background and contextual information for the project site (see figures 1 & 2). In highlighting the site location as an area where the waterfront, cultural, and central areas of downtown Seattle blended, both Ms. Picard and Mr. Markese emphasized the importance of creating a sense of community with the proposed project.

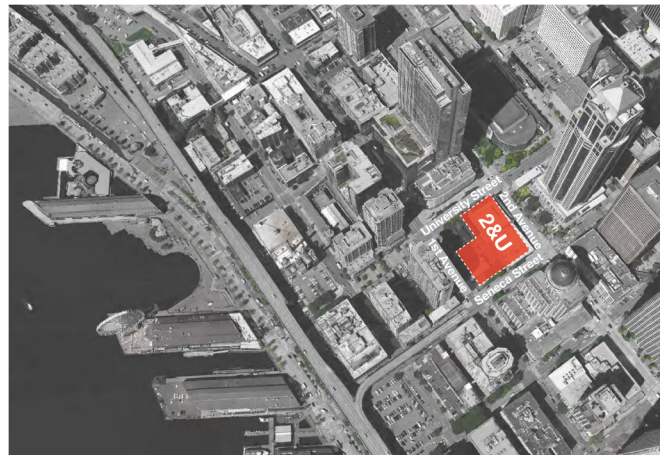


Figure 1: Proposed project site location

Ms. Heffron then provided information on the existing transportation network. She stated the alley located on the project site is no longer connected with the existing street grid and that vacating the alley would not alter the downtown alley system. The design team is proposing two curb cuts along the mid-block of Seneca Street for vehicular access in both vacation and no vacation schemes. Ms. Heffron then stated that several surrounding projects, such as the 1st Avenue Streetcar, 2nd Avenue cycle track, and the demolition of the Alaskan Viaduct, as well as the relatively steep slopes, will greatly reduce the amount of pedestrian traffic along Seneca St. between 1st and 2nd Avenue.

Anthony Markese presented three site strategies for the project - no alley vacation, alley vacation with an at-grade building, and an alley vacation with the building lifted above the ground plane (the proposal). The no alley vacation project includes a commercial office tower on 2nd Avenue and residential tower on 1st Avenue (see figure 3). The two buildings are separated by the existing alley and would not include

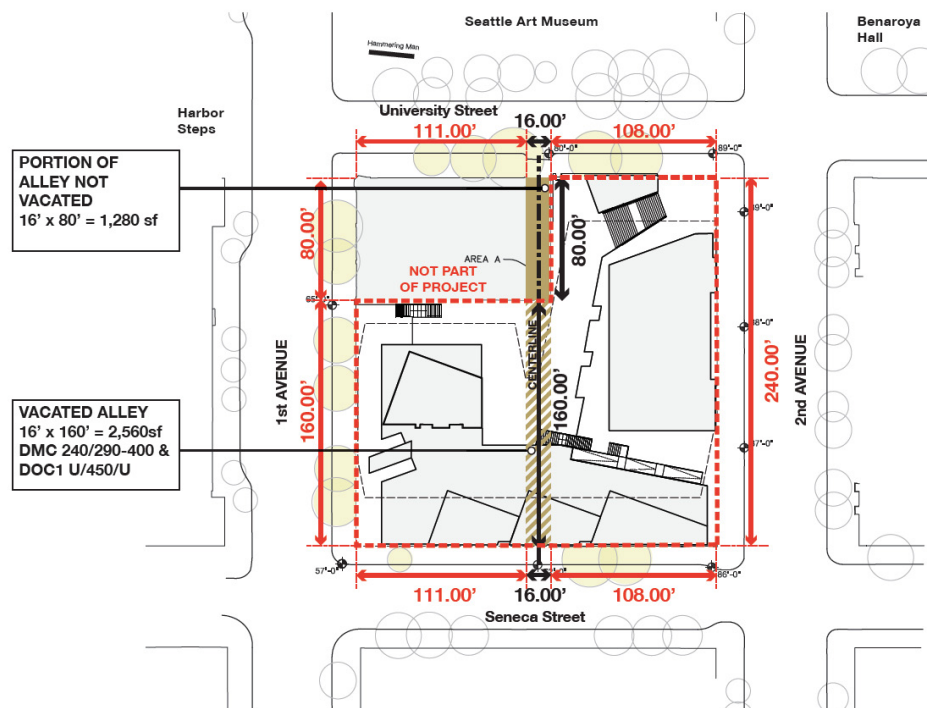


Figure 2: Project site boundary

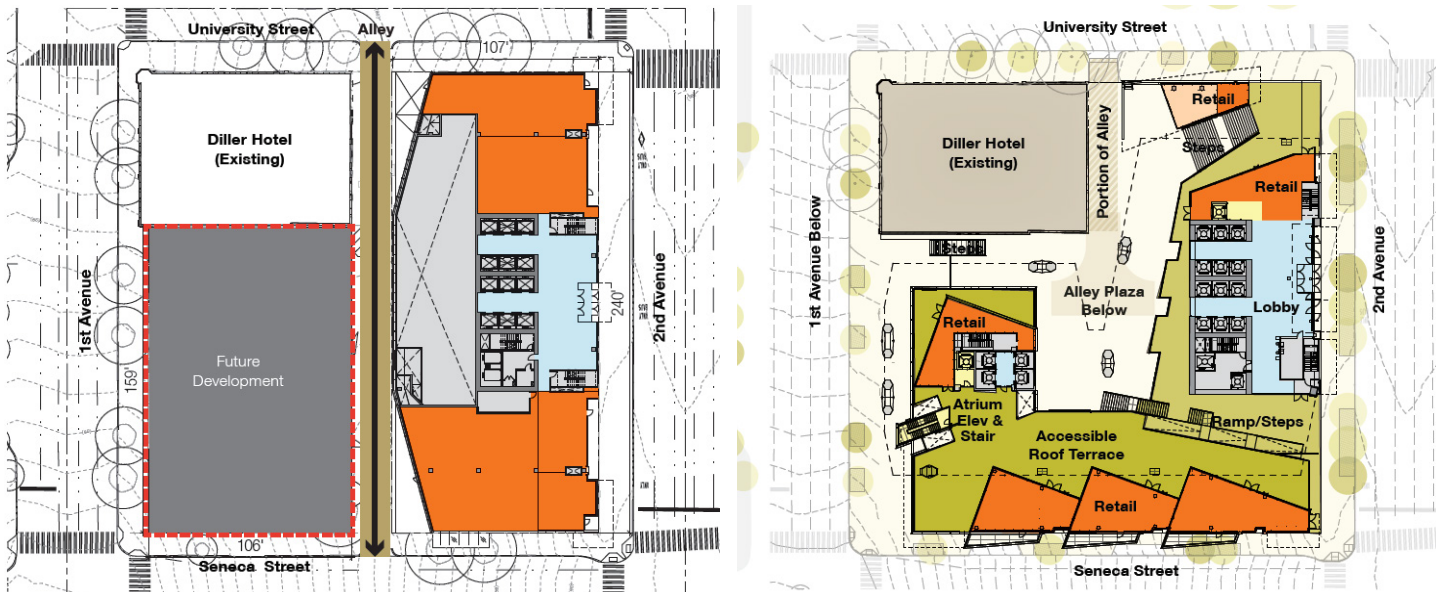


Figure 3: Proposed no vacation (left) and vacation (right) scenarios

public space. The alley vacation proposal with an at-grade building would include an L-shaped office tower with ground level retail, parking, service, and lobby space. Like the no vacation strategy, this proposal would not include public space.

In order to create an area for public space while maximizing the FAR of the building, the design team has proposed a preferred proposal that includes an L-shaped building that is elevated above the ground plane in order to provide publicly accessible space with surrounding retail, terraces, and through block passages (see figure 3). Because of the grade changes along Seneca and University Streets, the proposed building is lifted 52 feet above 2nd Avenue and 78 feet above 1st Avenue. Along with providing below grade vehicular and loading access along Seneca Street, the proposed design will continue to provide access to the Diller Hotel through the partially remaining alley along University Street. The design will include a turnaround in the public plaza for loading trucks accessing the hotel through the partial alley (see figure 5).

As shown in figure 6, the design of the preferred proposal would allow for access and circulation within the site boundary, which would not occur under the no vacation design scheme. Under the preferred proposal, pedestrians would be able to access 1st Avenue, 2nd Avenue, University Street and Seneca Street by walking through the site. Because of the increased accessibility from the surrounding area, the public space is intended to serve visitors, neighbors and employees during all hours of the day. Although it is sheltered by the building above, Mr. Markese stated the public space will have access to air and natural light (see figure 7).



Figure 4: Rendering of proposed public space

Agency Comments

Darby Watson, SDOT, stated that the project team should maintain

access for the largest service vehicle that able to access the hammerhead through the partial alley. Ms. Watson also stated that she is concerned that the hammerhead overlays with the area where pedestrians are walking along 1st Avenue. She not only questions how truck drivers will know when and where to turn around safely, but also how pedestrians will know where to walk when loading vehicles are moving through space.

Ms. Watson is also concerned with accessibility to the designed public space. More specifically, she is concerned with access to and from 1st Avenue, which is expected to increase in pedestrian volume once the 1st Avenue Streetcar line is finished. The current design plan includes publicly open space that is 13' above 1st Avenue street level, which will only be accessible by using a narrow stairway. Ms. Watson would like the design team to think about creating an entrance along 1st Avenue that is more welcoming to pedestrians.

Ms. Watson also stated that this the first time she has seen the proposal for two garages along Seneca street. She said SDOT is concerned with the separation of the two-way garages and would need to look at it in further detail.

Public Comments

Tom Diller, Owner of the Diller Hotel, said he had several concerns early on in the design process, but, in learning more from the design team, is very impressed with the design. Mr. Diller supports the project in the raised form that the design team is proposing and is happy that the hotel will continue to have access to the remaining portion of the alley. Mr. Diller feels that the project activates the space for the entire community.

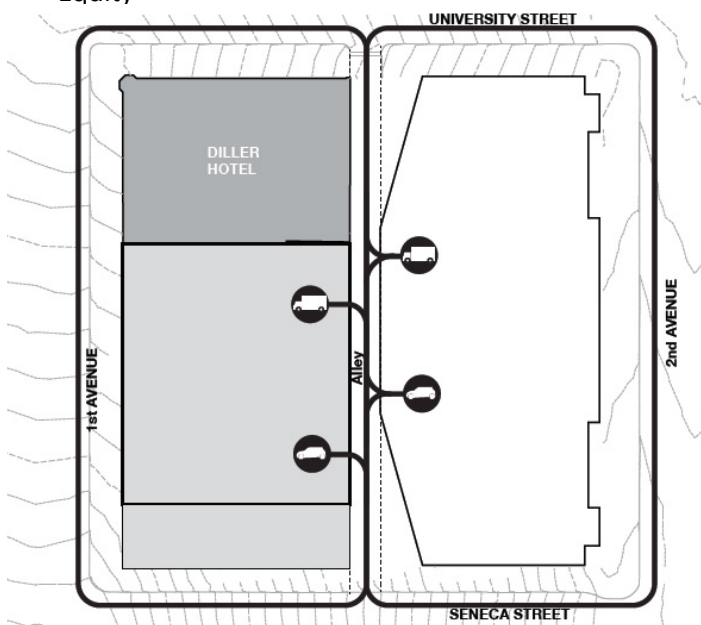
Liam Justin, with the west edge neighborhood association, stated that the association likes the project. He appreciates the urban merit for what it does for the pedestrian realm and feels that the project will be very successful

Shaun Cannedy, GGLO design, strongly advocates for the lift scheme. Mr. Cannedy has worked in the west edge neighborhood for 25 years, goes walks every day, and knows the area very well. He stated that the project will bring a needed sense of community to the neighborhood. Mr. Cannedy said the architectural response is incredibly thoughtful and will be a great addition to the community.

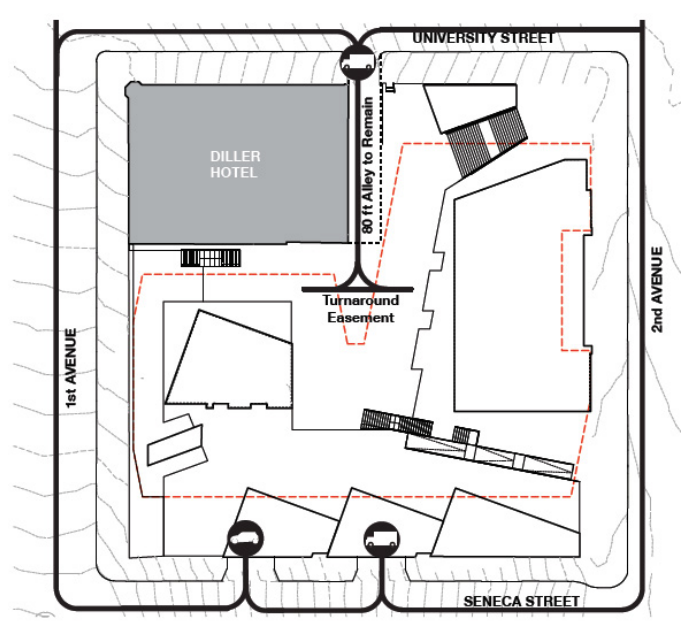
Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Pedestrian access and open space
- Vehicular circulation
- Light, air, & views
- Service and utilities
- Building mass and scale
- Equity



Composite Site Plan Diagram



Composite Site Plan Diagram

Figure 5: Circulation - no vacation (left) and vacation (right) scenarios

Pedestrian access and open space

Although the Commission supported the lifting of the building to allow light and views throughout the public space, they are concerned with the level of accessibility throughout the space. Commissioners encouraged the design team to focus on creating entrances that are visible and inviting to the public, especially along the corner of 1st Avenue and Seneca Street. The commission would like the design team to consider creating visible pathways throughout the plaza that connect to the streets surrounding the site. Commissioners also encouraged the design team to use more landscaping to invite pedestrians into the public space.

Vehicular circulation

The commission supported the hammerhead design that will serve both the Diller Hotel and provide additional pedestrian plaza area. Commissioners requested that the team continue researching how vehicular access along the portion of the non-vacated alley will be managed during the daytime hours.

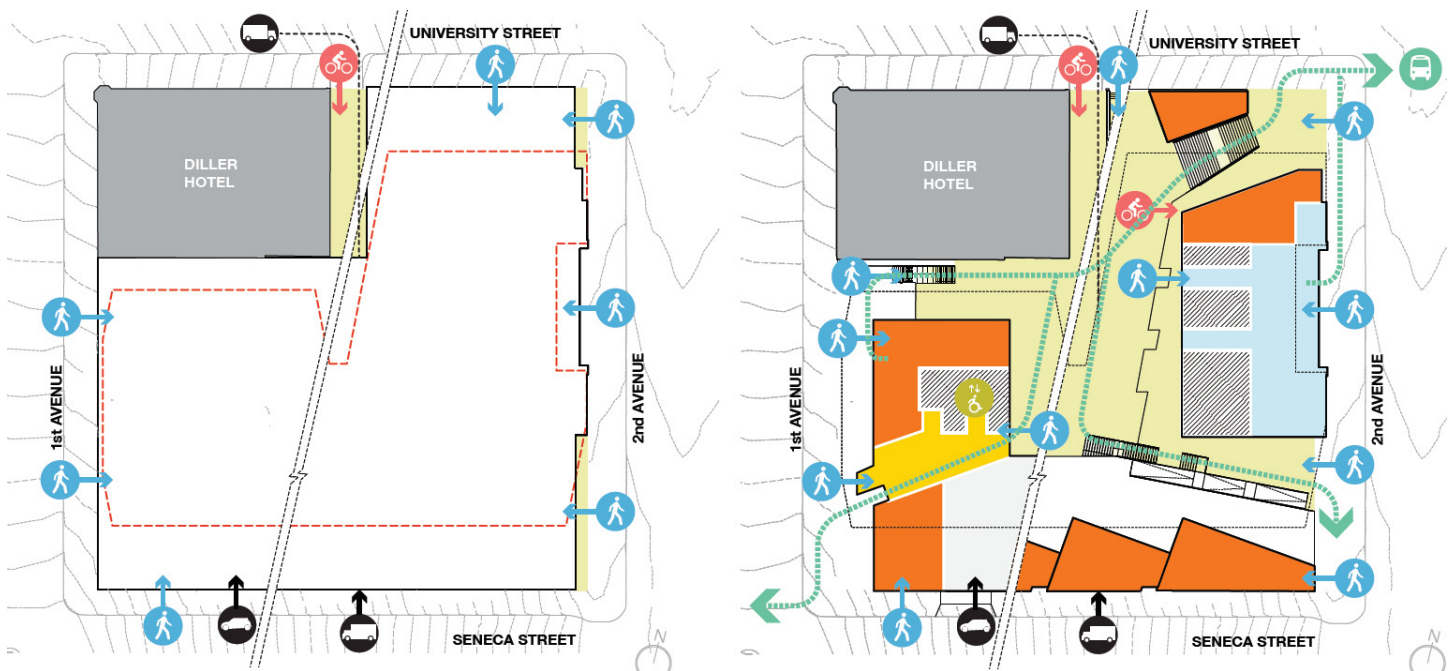


Figure 6: Access - no vacation (left) and vacation (right) scenarios

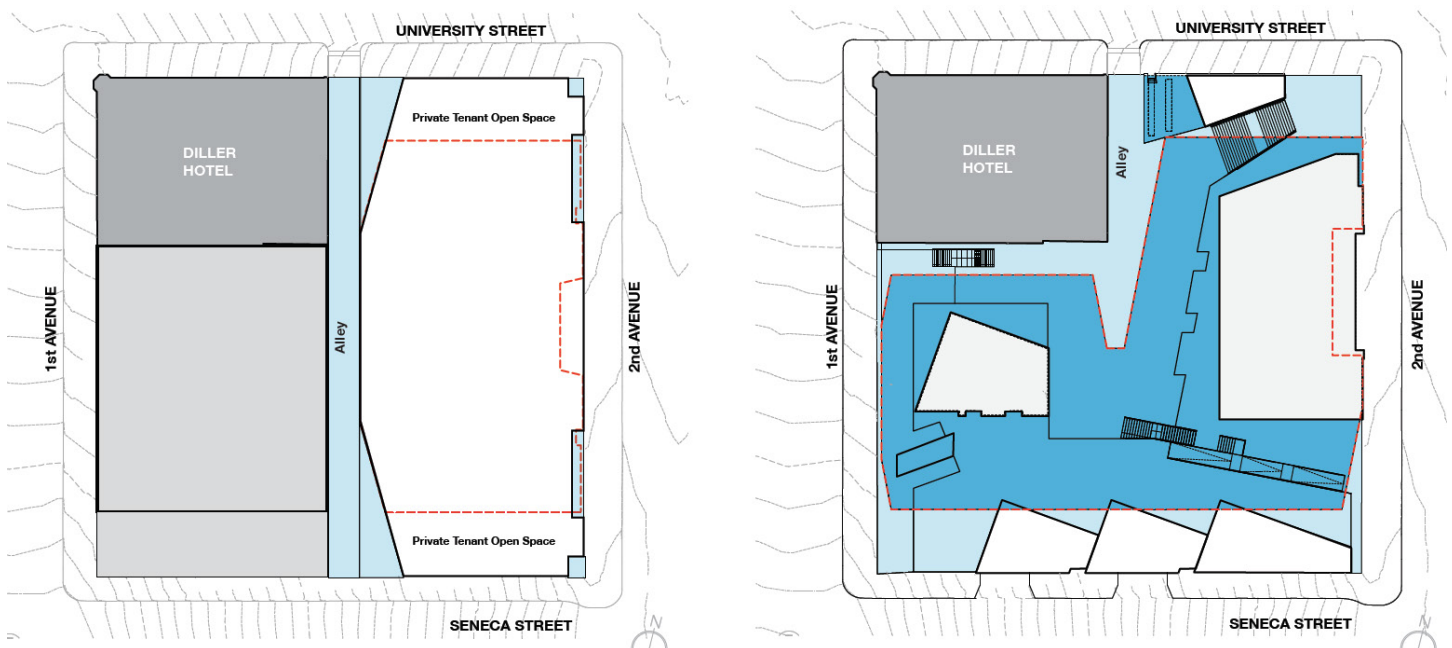


Figure 7: Light - no vacation (left) and vacation (right) scenarios

Light, air & views

The Commission appreciates the design team's attempt to bring light and air into the open space under the building by maximizing how much the building was lifted above grade. Commissioners encouraged the design team to think about how lighting within the open space can be used to create a level of comfort during the day, evening, and night hours.

Services and utilities

While they understand the degree of difficulty it takes to coordinate on site utilities, the Commission would like the project team to continue researching potential locations for onsite utility vaults. Commissioners would prefer the applicant place the vaults in areas outside of the main pedestrian sidewalks and pathways.

Building mass and scale

Commissioners agree that the overall scale of the building in relation to the Diller Hotel works very well. They cautioned the design team from labeling the project as an "urban village" and encouraged the team to develop the site as a downtown urban center. Although the design of specific building elements will be a challenge, the Commission agreed that the project would serve as an opportunity to do something distinctive within the downtown core.

Equity

The Commission has stressed that equity is fundamentally important when reviewing projects and will continue to evaluate every decision made through an equitable framework. Although the project team has provided a unique solution for creating public space, Commissioners highly encourage the project team to continue making equitable design decisions.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for the urban design merit presentation. The Commission particularly appreciated the multi-level open space concept, the protected pedestrian passageways through the block, and the building scale as it relates with the Diller Hotel. The SDC approves, **8 to 0**, the urban design merit with the following conditions for administrative review prior to the next meeting:

- The proposed pedestrian access points along 1st Ave should be redesigned to reinforce their role as access to and through the site, increasing their visibility and presence along 1st Ave
- Provide a conceptual landscape plan for the site. As part of this plan, please include information on how the ground plane will be treated and how planting will reinforce pedestrian routes in and through the site
- Provide additional details about the hammerhead design. Your designs should show how the hammerhead relates to alley function, how pedestrian movement will be accommodated and how it reinforces the open space network

The SDC also included the following recommendations:

- Incorporate a lighting design to highlight events occurring during the late afternoon and evening within the interior of the site
- Provide and illustrate a stronger sense of permeability through the loading dock as an access corridor into the plaza from Seneca
- The design team emphasize the service vehicle loading area as an active pedestrian space
- Work with SPU to better understand the placement of the utility bulbs so they don't conflict with public accessibility
- Use caution with the notion urban village; don't confuse it with the land use code definition
- Developing the open space under the building to be open and accessible to the general public