

WSCC Expansion

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Commissioners Present

Ross Tilghman, Chair
John Savo, Vice Chair
Lee Copeland
Ben de Rubertis
Rachel Gleeson
Laura Haddad
Rick Krochalis

Commissioners Excused

Thaddeus Egging
Evan Fowler
Brianna Holan

Project Description

The Washington State Convention Center (WSCC) is proposing to vacate three alleys and two streets below grade on three blocks bounded by Pine St, 9th Ave, Howell St, and Boren Ave. The petitioner is requesting the full vacation of the following three mid-block alleys:

- Block 33 (Site B) - bounded by 9th Ave, Howell St, Terry Ave, and Olive way
- Block 43 (Site C) - bounded by Terry Ave, Howell St, Boren Ave, and Olive Way
- Block 44 (Site A) - bounded by 9th Ave, Olive Way, Boren Ave, and Pine St

The petitioner has also modified their initial vacation petition to change the vacation of Terry between Olive and Howell to a subterranean-only vacation. The request for a subterranean vacation for Olive Way, between 9th Ave and Boren Ave, has not been modified.

The preferred scheme includes approximately 2.385 million square feet (sf) of development on three sites. The WSCC expansion would occur above grade on Site A only, and extend to a below grade loading dock on Sites B and C. These remaining two sites will include co-developments above grade. The preferred proposal includes 1,165,000 square feet dedicated to the convention center expansion, 385 residential units, 575,000 square feet of office space, 42,000 square feet dedicated to street-level uses, below-grade parking for 700-800 vehicles, and below-grade loading services.

Meeting Summary

The Seattle Design Commission (SDC) reviewed the public benefit package for the WSCC Expansion. Prior to today's meeting, the SDC had received several briefings on individual public benefit elements. The Commission voted, 4-3, to approve with public benefit package for the WSCC Expansion with several conditions.

Recusals and Disclosures

Thaddeus Egging recused himself as his employer, KPFF, is working on the project.

Brianna Holan recused herself as her employer, LMN Architects, is working on the project.

November 16, 2017**1:00 – 4:00 pm****Type**

Street and Alley Vacation

Phase

Public Benefit Briefing - Freeway Park

Previous Reviews

[11/02/17, 10/5/17, 7/6/17, 5/18/17, 3/16/17, 2/16/17, 1/19/17, 9/15/16, 4/21/16, 2/4/16](#)

Presenters

Bernie Alonzo
GGN

Margery Aronson
Art Advisor

Mark Reddington
LMN Architects

Kate Rufe
LMN Architects

Attendees

Bob Anderson | Freeway Park Assoc.

Brenda Baxter | Pine Street Group

Cath Brunner | 4Culture

Riisa Conklin | Freeway Park Assoc.

Matthew Coombe | Seattle 2030 Districts

Jill Fleming | Community Package Coalition

Holly Golden | HCMP

Genevieve Hale-Case | Shiels, Obletz, Johnsen

Brian Hawksford | Mayor's Office

Nicki Hellenkamp | HDC

Alex Hudson | Community Package Coalition

Bryn Kepler | GGN

Bruno Lambert | Lid I-5

Amalia Leighton | Toole Design Group

Jane Lewis | Pine Street Group

Kelsey Mesher | Cascade Bicycle Club

Brandon Macz | Capitol Hill Times

Jessica Miller | LMN Architects

Gordon Padelford | Seattle Neighborhood Greenways

Sam Russell | Pine Street Group

Martin Sicotte | LMN Architects

November 16, 2017

Physical Public Benefits

- Public Open Spaces & R.O.W. Improvements
- Historic Building Lighting
- Additional Improvements Beyond Code

Public Benefit Art**Funding Neighborhood Improvements**

- Pike Pine Renaissance: Act 1 Funding
- Bicycle Master Plan Funding
- Lid I-5 Study Funding
- Freeway Park Association / Seattle Parks and Recreation Funding

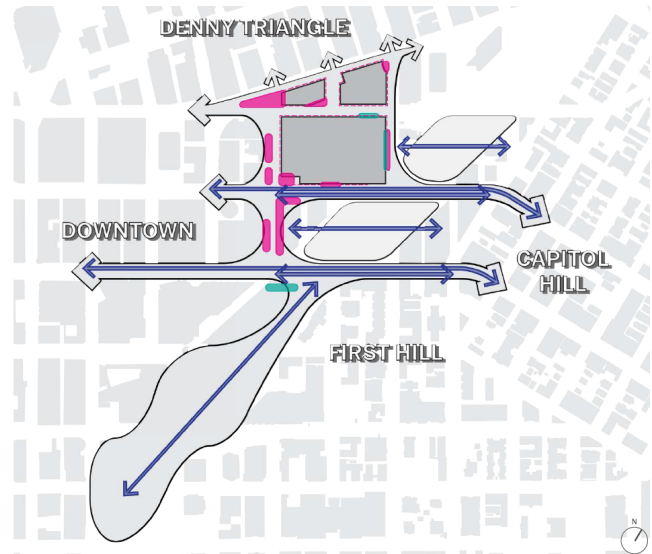
Affordable Housing Funding

Figure 1: Proposed public benefit elements

Summary of Presentation

Bernie Alonzo, of GGN, Margery Aronson, of WSCC, and Mark Reddington and Kate Rufe, of LMN Architects, presented the public benefits package for the WSCC Expansion project. The presentation included an update on the overall public benefit package. A comprehensive presentation related to the public art program was also provided, including the response to the SDC's UDM condition on public art and the public benefit public art program.

The public benefit elements included a mix of public realm improvements at or near the site as well as funding for neighborhood initiatives such as Pike Pine Renaissance Project, Bicycle Master Plan, Lid I-5 feasibility study, and Freeway Park improvements. The public benefit package also includes funding for affordable housing, which was not reviewed by the SDC. Rather, the proposed funding for affordable housing is being analyzed by the Office of Housing. The project team addressed how they have updated and/or provided clarification for several public benefit elements. *See figure 1 for more detail.*

The project team presented their public art plan. This plan includes an overarching vision for all artwork located on or adjacent to the project site. The WSCC approach includes categories of artworks in compliance with SDC requirements for public benefit public art (*See figure 2*), to meet their UDM condition (*See figure 3*), and to meet requirements of the project's purchase and sale agreement with King County. The public benefit art framework presented by the project team provides locations for future artwork on Boren Ave, Olive Way, and at the intersection of 9th Ave and Pine St.

A key element of this art plan included seeking SDC support for their proposed public benefit art in lieu of complying with SDC policy on public art as part of a public benefit package¹. The WSCC developed their proposed public benefit art framework in an attempt to be consistent with these policies. The WSCC will include additional reviews by the SDC at critical decision points throughout the Art selection and design process.

In September 2017 the SDC requested that the WSCC Art Advisory Committee review the proposed framework. The WSCC Art Advisory Committee area group of independent art professionals who advise the WSCC on art. The SDC felt it was essential for the WSCC Art Advisors to provide their concurrence on the work proposed by the

¹The SDC policy on accepting public art as part of the public benefit package was adopted in February 2016

WSCC development team before the SDC accepts their proposal. Although the WSCC Art Advisors provided some initial input on the art plan, their representatives informed the commission that they do not have sufficient time, nor is there sufficient staffing, for their group to provide the overview and concurrence requested by the SDC. As a result, the public art plan has not been thoroughly vetted by any public body other than the SDC.

Finally, the project team requested the SDC reconsider the UDM condition adopted in March 2017 regarding the timing of construction for the co-development sites.

Agency Comments

None

Public Comments

Bob Anderson, Freeway Park Association, stated that the public benefit package proposal was a result of collaboration with community organizations and is something that should be celebrated. Mr. Anderson then provided an example of how the collaboration helped improve the public benefit package proposal.

Alex Hudson, Community Package Coalition, thanked the members of the Community Package Coalition for contributing the vision that was presented by the project team. Ms. Hudson stated that the proposed benefits reflect the needs of the surrounding community. She then said that the public benefit package proposal will allow for 380 units of affordable housing, prioritization of freeway park maintenance, and safe mobility to and from Capitol Hill and First Hill, which together are commensurate to the project impacts. Ms. Hudson then encouraged the SDC to approve the public benefit package proposal.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Art
- Reconsideration of the UDM condition
- public benefit elements
- Adequacy of the public benefit package

Art

Although the SDC complimented the project team for providing an adequate vision for the project proposal, the Commission was very concerned about statements made by the project team at this final meeting that the art process was originally envisioned to begin after the start of construction, an approach that is inconsistent with the commissions policy on accepting public art as public benefit. Commissioners agreed that would have been too late to create a meaningful art program that is integrated with the building design and open space and would be inconsistent with the SDC's policy on accepting public art as part of a public benefit package. Because the proposed facility was designed

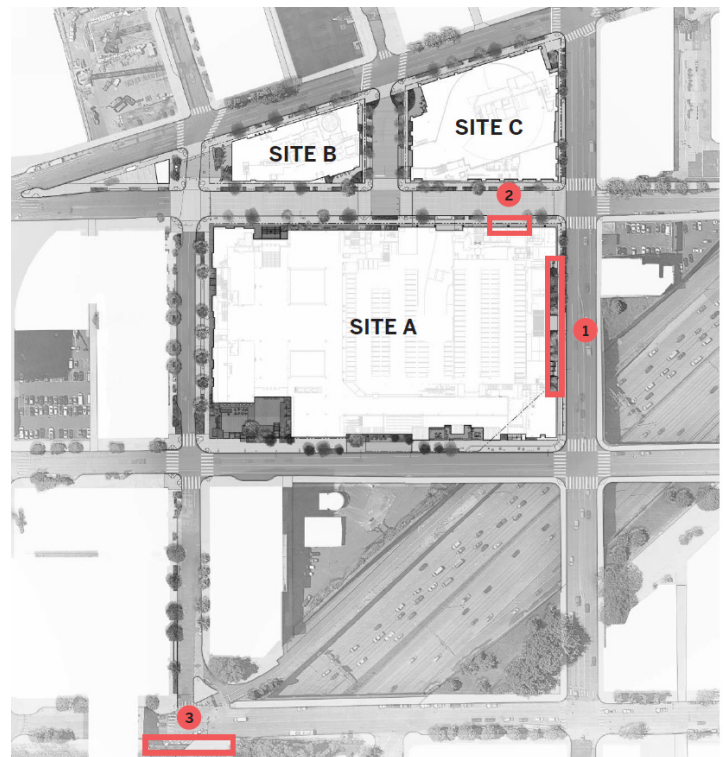


Figure 2: Locations of public benefit artworks

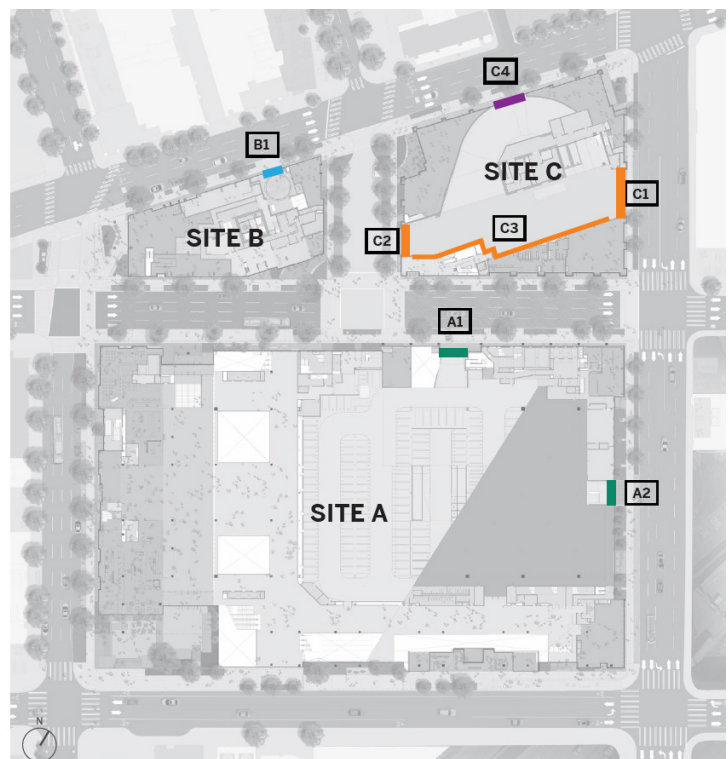


Figure 3: Locations of urban design merit artworks

prior to and without regard for an art program, Commissioners are very concerned the proposed art will be an after thought to areas that are being considered as onsite public benefits. The SDC agreed there would have been much better art integration between the public spaces and building if artists had been consulted much earlier in the design process and believe that an integrated art vision could have had an impact on the overall design of the public realm to create a more unique place, in addition to influencing the individual artworks. However, this opportunity has been lost. Commissioners also suggested the project team address diverse populations in their art vision.

The Commission then voiced their strong disappointment in how the project team has handled the art plan up to today's meeting. Several Commissioners were disheartened to hear that the WSCC Art Advisory Committee had not convened for a complete review of the art proposal and questioned why the project team waited so long to provide this information. The Commission stated that the continual lack of information from the WSCC project team makes it difficult for the SDC to trust that the team will provide an adequate art plan at a future date.

The SDC discussed the recent change to the Art proposal that would include the SDC in the review and selection process. Several Commissioners recommended that the selection panels be changed to include more art professionals not associated with the project, and to include additional community members, and reduce the members of the project art and design team, as they have already had a large influence on the art. The Commission believes it is not necessary nor in the public's best interest to have both the project Consulting Artist and Art Advisor as voting panelists and suggested the project team select just one of those team members to participate. Likewise, the Commission thought the design team should participate in artist selections in an advisory role only, rather than in a voting role.

The SDC desired to see stronger managerial support for the public art program and recommended the project team coordinate with a professional public art consultant, such as 4Culture, throughout the entire process from selection to implementation. The Commission also recommended that the professional art consultant determine the best format (RFQ or RFP) for selecting artists.

Commissioners recognized the proposed artwork at 9th Ave and Pike St as a positive addition to the concrete façade on the existing WSCC facility but expressed interest that the artist look at ways to connect the art to Freeway Park, Pike and Pine, and 9th Avenue and to explore using art to link the existing and proposed WSCC facilities. This could involve extending the artwork beyond the wall.

Reconsideration of UDM condition

The SDC accepted the project team's request to reconsider the condition that was approved by the SDC at the meeting held on March 16th, 2017. The Commission rephrased the condition to time the execution of binding contracts for the co-development sites to no later than December 31st, 2018. The updated condition also indicates that if construction of the co-development sites has not commenced prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy for the WSCC, the applicant will return to the SDC with proposals for interim uses and designs on Site B. Commissioners expressed that parking may not be a suitable interim condition.

Commissioners then proposed the project team consider providing open space as an interim use on co-development Site B if the site cannot be developed prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy for the WSCC facility.

Public benefit elements

The SDC began the discussion by recommending the proposed contributions to the Pike Pine Renaissance Plan focus on improving the Pike and Pine streetscape between 9th Ave and Melrose Ave., in the event the local improvement district (LID) funding strategy for the Pike Pine Renaissance Plan does not materialize.

The Commission discussed whether the lighting of historic structures is needed or should be recognized as a public benefit using the Council policies. While the Commissioners questioned whether the lighting of a landmark was consistent with Council vacation policy on preservation of a landmark, the proposed lighting agreed that the lighting will improve the surrounding pedestrian realm.

The Commission agreed the open space elements were driven by architectural programming, which was never flexible enough to accommodate on-site open space. The SDC was disappointed that the project team did not include alternatives for providing open space on-site. Several Commissioners voiced their concern that the proposed on-site open spaces do not feel connected to each other and do not rise to the proposed vision of providing a community hub. Other Commissioners commented that the success of the proposed "mixing zone" inside the building is contingent

on getting the right commercial tenant. However, commissioners did believe that the proposed on-site and off-site investments do function well together than when viewed individually. The SDC also agreed the off-site public benefit elements provided a greater connection to the public realm, but that the public benefit package relies on having elements come to the building's foot print.

The SDC then discussed the Freeway Park element. There was disagreement on the level of connectivity being proposed between Freeway Park and the project. Several Commissioners acknowledged the importance of including Freeway Park, but felt there was not a strong connection being made between the park and the WSCC expansion facility. To address this concern, Commissioners indicated that a stronger connection could be made through the current WSCC facility. The SDC then recommended SPR and WSCC coordinate how funding will be spent on Freeway Park improvements and long-term maintenance.

The Commission then stated that the I-5 lid can increase connectivity between Freeway Park and WSCC Expansion facility. Commissioners recognized the increased funding for this public benefit element will help answer questions regarding the feasibility of creating a lid over I-5. If feasible, the SDC recognized that a lid would provide more open space than could have been provided on site. However, Commissioners were concerned that accepting a study as public benefit went against policy and then recommended that this element not be viewed as a precedent for future public benefit elements.

Adequacy of public benefit package

The SDC thanked the project team for their increased commitment to providing an adequate public benefit package and for their continued collaboration with the Community Package Coalition. Commissioners recognized the vital role the Community Package Coalition played in ensuring the proposed elements truly benefit the surrounding community. The Commission agreed the proposed public benefit package will have a significant impact on the neighborhoods surrounding the WSCC facility. Commissioners also commended the project team for investing in affordable housing, which is not a part of their review.

The Commission expressed their disappointment that they were never allowed to look at each vacation request individually. Specifically, Commissioners questioned why they were never allowed to analyze the feasibility of providing significant open space on the co-development sites. The SDC agreed this was one flaw in the review of the overall proposal, which they viewed as favoring the architectural program over on-site public space. The Commission then commented that there should be some reconsideration about the role of the Design Commission in reviewing significant projects. Commissioners then reiterated their concern with the lack of a substantive and vetted art program.

Action

The Design Commission thanked the project team for today's presentation on the public benefit package for the WSCC Expansion project. Overall, the SDC appreciated the completeness of the day's presentation, engagement with the Community Coalition, the increase in funding of the public benefit package, and changes to the art plan and reuse of existing on-site art. While the SDC saw positive changes in the art framework, they remained concerned about designing the art so late in the process and the lack of public involvement in the process of developing the art plan. The SDC voted, 4-3, to approve the public benefit package with the following conditions:

1. Stronger managerial support of the art program must be provided throughout the process from artist selection through implementation. The Design Commission strongly recommends that this be provided by an organization that specializes in managing public art.
2. The artist selection panels should be changed to include fewer WSCC project representatives in favor of more independent art professionals.
3. Provide the Pike Pine Renaissance Project Public Benefit funds to the City of Seattle whether or not the Waterfront Local Improvement (LID) or other funding sources are secured by the City for the project. If the Pike Pine Renaissance project does not secure full funding, dedicate the public benefit funds to improvements from 9th Ave to Melrose Ave along Pine and Pine Streets.
4. The WSCC and Seattle Parks and Recreation shall enter into an agreement that clearly states the responsibilities of each entity for maintaining the improvements funded by the Freeway Park Public Benefit funds. While the Design Commission agrees there should be seamless integration of the physical improvements, the agreement shall lay out responsibilities of each party for maintenance of the park space on WSCC land and City of Seattle land separately. The agreement shall also list the approximate amount of the public benefit funds to be expended

for improvements on WSCC land and the approximate amount to be expended on Seattle Parks and Recreation land.

The SDC also approved the updated UDM condition on the timing of the co-development sites:

1. If Council approves the vacation requests, then WSCC should execute binding contracts with the new owners that specify time and completions requirements on Parcel B and C by December 31st, 2018. If construction of the co-development sites has not commenced prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy for the WSCC, the applicant will return to the SDC with proposals for interim uses and designs on Site C.
2. The Commission strongly encourages publicly accessible open space as an interim use if construction on Parcels B is delayed.

The following are comments from commissioners who voted against the project:

Rachel Gleeson- I don't have a disagreement with any of the public benefit elements nor a disagreement with overall size of public benefit package. My main disagreement has to do with whether the site itself was ever considered for the onsite public benefit elements that we would expect to see on a project this size.

Ross Tilghman- Understanding the possibilities for better on site open space would have helped a lot. I get the sense that that decision was made early on and there wasn't a chance to consider development of alternatives. That makes approval very difficult. That direction is the root of many difficulties throughout this process. You have good partners and I think that was a strategic error on how to do a major public project. This is a project of exceptional size, location, and vacation requests and it has asked for exceptions at every point in the review process. When we have granted exceptions on past projects we have had good reasons to do so, but here the hand is simply forced. You did not even produce an art plan and never intended to have one. Since this is a major public project the policy states clearly that art is very important. You diminished the ability to achieve an integrated design.

Laura Haddad- I am very disappointed in the lack of meaningful art integration into the public spaces. The art vision didn't come together until a week ago so was not developed in a way that could have had a meaningful integration and influence over the conception and design of either the art projects or the design of the public spaces. I was horrified that the project team didn't think it was necessary to start planning for artwork until construction on the facility began. I also echo previous comments about lack of onsite open space.