Seattle design Commission

APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Greg Nickels
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Raymond Gastil
Planning Director, DPD

Mary Johnston
Chair

Andrew Barash

Julie Bassuk

Graham Black

Brendan Connolly

Lauren Hauck

John Hoffman

Julie Parrett

Dennis Ryan

Norie Sato

Guillermo Romano
Executive Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Tom Iurino
Senior Staff

Department of Planning and Development
700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000
PO Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

TEL 206-615-1349
FAX 206-233-7883

October 1, 2009

Convened 8:30 am
Adjourned 3:30 am

Projects Reviewed

DPD Planning Division Update
Street and Alley Vacation Process
Fire Station 9 Fremont
Alaskan Way Viaduct South End
Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement

Commissioners Present

Mary Johnston, Chair
Andrew Barash
Julie Bassuk
Graham Black
Lauren Hauck
John Hoffman
Julie Parrett
Norie Sato

Commissioners Excused

Brendan Connolly
Dennis Ryan

Incoming Commissioners Present

Lolly Kunkler
Jack Sidener

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino

Celebrating 40 Years 1968-2008

October 1, 2009	**Project:**	**DPD Planning Division Update**
	Phase:	Briefing
	Last Reviewed:	July 2, 2009
	Presenters:	Ray Gastil, DPD
	Attendees:	Vince Lyons, DPD Geoff Wentlandt, DPD

Time: 1 Hour (220)

SUMMARY

The Design Commission appreciates Ray's presentation about cities in the region, how they relate to Seattle, the Gehl Architects report and the Center City Public Realm Strategy. The Commission reiterates its interest in providing advice not only in relation to good design as an aesthetic but also as an important contributor to economic sustainability and social responsibility. Regarding the Center City work, the Design Commission recommends adding a social aspect by laying out the social services locations, alternative energy practices and opportunities, and priorities so it can be phased and gaps identified. The Commission understands the three dimensionality of the plan, and this needs to be expressed to convey the context and condition of Seattle's topography.

October 1, 2009	**Project:**	**Street and Alley Vacation Process**
	Phase:	Briefing
	Last Reviewed:	March 5, 2009
	Presenters:	Beverly Barnett, SDOT
	Attendees:	AJ Yang. UW Bob McElhose, DPD Cheryl Mosteller, DPD MillieAnne Vandevender, DPD

Time: 1 hour (121)

SUMMARY

The Seattle Design Commission thanked Beverly Barnett for explaining and discussing the City's street and alley vacation process.

Presentation

Beverly Barnett manages the street and alley vacation process in SDOT. The Design Commission weighs in on vacations in two phases; urban design merit and public benefits. The only person who can petition for a vacation is an abutting property owner. They can ask for the property up to the centerline of the right-of-way and the width of their property and nothing more. In the Design Commission's urban design merit phase of review, land use impacts, context, and urban design issues are examined. The Design Commission analyses the impact of the project on its surroundings and makes recommendations to SDOT. While the urban design merit is generally fairly clear to deduce, deciding if the proposed public benefits are adequate is a complex and somewhat unclear matter. Over the past 15 years, the bar has been raised on what is considered acceptable public benefit in exchange for giving away right-of-way that belongs to the public. Increasingly the City has liked to see something physical and tangible, onsite, and in rare cases offsite, as a public benefit. The issue of whether the amenities offered give the impression of being public or quasi public is important in deciding if a true public benefit is being offered. There has been more latitude toward vacations in industrial areas, and less in residential areas, where the use of the right of way serves a number of purposes. Once the Commission has reviewed the vacation proposal, and SDOT has made recommendations, Council grants conceptual approval. After the project is built, an Ordinance is passed by Council, which contains information on the public benefit and applies for the life of the project. When the project is redeveloped, the ordinance no longer applies. Vacations differ from other projects in a number of ways. With private land the owner has an absolute right to develop something. With the public right of way there is not a right to use it, it is at the City's discretion to decide if and how it can be used to public benefit. This is an important responsibility because the streets serve a number of important functions for the public. So while there is a tendency to look at alley or street vacations as single projects, a broad public interest is actually at stake. The effects of the decision last a very long time. Beverly predicts that the City will continue to see alley and street vacations for fewer, but larger scale projects. The Design Commission would like to place more scrutiny on vacations in industrial areas than in the recent years. Open space in these areas too, becomes more valuable as the city becomes more dense. The Commission will also be looking at larger geographic areas when assessing the context of the projects.

October 1, 2009	**Project:**	**Fire Station 9 - Fremont**
	Phase:	Concept Design
	Last Reviewed:	N/A
	Presenters:	Teresa Rodriguez, Fleets and Facilities Department Casey Huang, Mithun Doug Leigh, Mithun
	Attendees:	Christina Faine. FFD Craig Skipton. Mithun David Kunselman, FFD Dove Alberg. FFD Evanne Vaivadas, FFD Jason Huff, Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs Lindsay King, DPD Molly Douce, Fire Department Peter Reiquam, New Art Projects Company

Time: 1 Hour (169/RS0609)

ACTION

The Design Commission thanked Teresa Rodriguez of SDOT and the design team from Mithun for their clear and concise presentation of the conceptual design for Fire Station 9 in Fremont. The Commission approves the concept design unanimously.

The Commission appreciates the background information that was provided about the site and on the existing historic structure on the site. While Commissioners understand the desire to retain that building, they understand the difficulty that would entail. Now that the design team has come up with a way to fit the program onto the very constricted site, the Commission asks the team to think of the following things while moving forward with the design:

- **Work freely, going beyond just decorating the massing model.**
- **Consider how the softscape and hardscape can work together. Move beyond delineating functions of the outside space, and blend the areas so that they become a tapestry.**
- **The Commission applauds the effort to start working with the artist early in the process, to integrate art thinking throughout the site.**
- **While appreciating the existing "number nine" personality of the site and the enthusiasm for the logo, Commissioners encourage the artist to be free and take the artwork to the next level in the expression of this.**
- **Make a gesture toward the existing, historic building in some way, such as perhaps drawing on the materials, color, and textures. Perhaps recycle part of the building and integrate into the design.**

Presentation

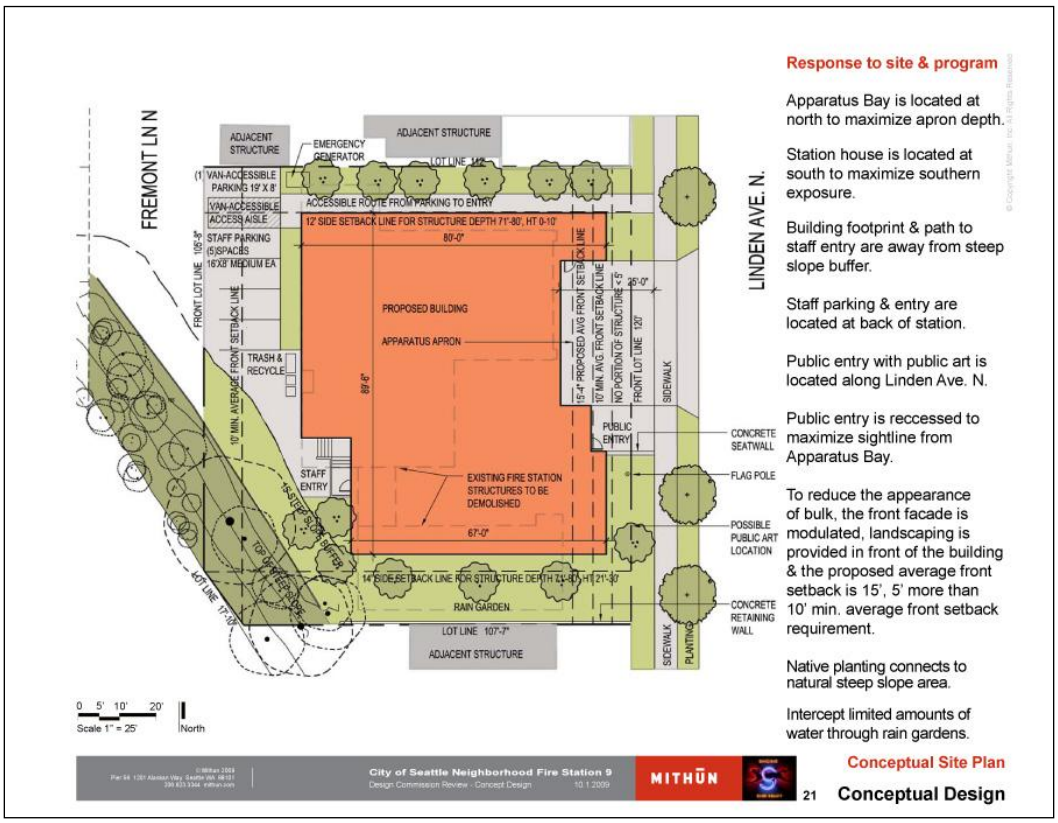
Fire Station 9 replaces the current building, built in 1953, with a new one. A dispatch building, called the annex, is also on site. They documented the history of the annex to see if it was a landmark. The Landmarks Board did not designate it as a landmark. The designers determined through studies of alternative designs that incorporated the existing annex building that substantial operation and program components would be compromised. After it was determined that incorporating the annex into the design that they would lose the second bay in the station, it was decided not to keep it and it will be documented and torn down. They plan to honor the annex in a graphic display in the public lobby of the new building.

The designers will hold two community outreach meetings. The community has seen the plans as part of the landmarks process.

The site is located on Linden between 38th and 39th. A remodel of the existing station would be more costly than a rebuild. The new station will be 8,000 sq ft. An interim facility will be located elsewhere while the new station is under construction. They aim for LEED Silver. They have an artist, Peter Reiquam, on board.

The site is located in an L1 zone. The structure to the south is right on the property line. From the eastern side of the site there are good views to downtown. On the west side of the site there is a wooded Environmental Critical Area, a steep slope with a 15' buffer, and a fair amount of traffic noise generated from Fremont Way North. They've completed a tree evaluation with the city forester; a hazard tree was identified on the steep slope and was removed. Plans for maintenance, protection and replacement are in place.

The primary design challenges: it is a public facility in a residential zone; there is a steep slope; and there is limited



Site Plan

visibility of the site from streets, so few people are aware it is there.

The designers were inspired by the station crew's adoption of the "Ever Ready" motto and 9 lives cat logo that was incorporated in the existing building signage, fire truck and crew apparel. The design concept "be ever ready" will be employed in the design of the station.

The initial site plan studies analyzed site access alternatives. The analysis determined it was not possible to develop a plan with a drive-through apparatus bay. The access for the fire truck can only be from Linden. Parking for the crew is best accessed from the west, from Fremont Lane N. The highlights of the conceptual site plan are: apparatus bay is located to the north to maximize apron depth; station house is located to the south to maximize southern exposure; development has been kept out of steep slope buffer; staff entry and parking are located at back of station on the west; public entry and art is located on most accessible side at Linden; public entry is recessed to maximize sightline from apparatus bay; front façade has been modulated with an average front setback of 15' which is 5' more than required; landscaping using native planting in front setback to connect to steep slope; the hose tower is located at the back of the station but will likely not be visible from Linden and rain gardens and LID strategies will be used in the landscaping They have begun to do massing studies to see how it fits into neighborhood and to gauge modulation.

They have 7 departure requests. The two key ones are: 1) right of way departure from the requirement to make street improvements to the lane and 2) structural width and depth departure because they are in the L1 low rise zone. To meet the program requirements, the additional depth and width is required.

Commissioners' Questions and Comments

It is a really tight site. Did you try to swap out the site for another?

> *Yes*. Looked but the issue came down to response time and its close proximity to Aurora. The site is not small, but is constricted due to the lowrise zoning.

You might save the annex façade as a freestanding wall. That corner could become really interesting.

> We studied it. It's in the wrong location. We couldn't fit the whole building program.

Think about a fire station with a porch. Where is the public face component?

> It's at the entry. There will be an opportunity with the grade change at the entry for seating walls and other opportunities.

Where is trash and recycling? Will it affect car access?

> Recycling occurs from the front. The firefighters roll the containers out to the curb.

Consider the residents who are on the south in the design of the deck.

> We may use a solid wall rather than an open railing.

What about the edge between the buffer and the lot? There are 3 pinch points.

> The design is just conceptual right now. We will study it more. We want to minimize the impervious area.

How much native planting will there be?

> All the way around. A lot is required by LEED Silver. We want to tie it into the steep slope.

Your challenge is to work the proportion of the masses. What we've seen with previous fire stations is that the massing just gets fenestration applied. Relax on the rigidity of the massing.

The temptation is to break down the massing to match the houses. But you may have broken it down too much, more than the houses.

Can you include pervious paving?

We're looking at it. We need to resolve the alley issue. Maybe the staff parking area and the public entrance could be pervious. We're limited by program, but we're looking.

Who uses the path on the north?

It's an both an accessible route and for hauling garbage.

What about art integration? You have an interesting situation because of the existing art.

We haven't gotten that far yet. The "ever ready" logo is a jumping off point.

We would encourage a freer expression of the art. Don't feel enslaved by the" ever read"y logo.

I don't feel enslaved. I feel inspired by it.

I encourage you to think about how hardscape and softscape are integrated. They can intermingle.

When we see you again, it would be nice to see the materials.

October 1, 2009	Project:	Commission Business
	Phase:	N/A
	Last Reviewed:	N/A
	Presenters:	N/A
	Attendees:	None

Time: 1 Hour (168)

Discussion

The Commission awards ceremony: please send the votes. We have made a formal request to the mayor's office for a date. The ceremony will be from 4-6pm. The Commission needs to schedule a tour of projects.

Viaduct subcommittee on 9/24 was very successful. Next meeting in 6 weeks.

We are waiting for date from Council to consider our new members. We have a pool of 10 intern candidates. We may hire two.

SR520: new round and new committee formed at the state level. Should we reintroduce the letter the commission wrote to them? Or write a new one? Write an introduction to the letter and resubmit.

No minutes reviewed.

October 1, 2009	**Projects:**	**Alaskan Way Viaduct - South End/Bored Tunnel**
	Phase:	Design Update
	Last Reviewed:	October 16, 2008; July 3, 2008; April 3, 2008; December 20, 2007; October 4, 2007
	Presenters:	John White, WSDOT Ali Amiri, WSDOT Susan Everett, WSDOT Boris Dramov, ROMA Design Rick Browning, PB World
	Attendees:	AJ Yang. UW Bonnie Fisher, ROMA Cary Moon Peoples Waterfront Org. Darby Watson, SDOT Diane Hilmo, WSDOT Jim Friesz, Oska Architects John Savo, NBBJ Kenn Rupard, Rupard Architecture Mike Johnson, SDOT Steve Pearce, SDOT Steve Leach, WSDOT

Time: 1 Hour (228/RS0615)

SUMMARY

The Seattle Design Commission thanks the project team for the update on the Alaskan Way Viaduct South End project and the Bored Tunnel project. The Commission recognizes that the schedule is very tight.

With regard to the South End project, the utilitarian character of the design is understandable in this area of the city with its working waterfront. Still, there is concern that an attractive enough environment may not have been provided at such a critical place in the city and at such a critical time in the process of replacing the viaduct. The design as presented provides strong "bones" that can be built upon once a contractor is hired and the design build process is undertaken.

With regard to the south portal of the Bored Tunnel project, a balance needs to be found because design work is taking place ahead of the central waterfront phase of the project. Some of the vision of that area must be anticipated and incorporated into the design build contract and portal areas so there is some relationship to and interface with those areas. The Commission appreciates an approach that includes consideration of urban ecotones. The bridge system on the south portal would be constructed after the tunnel is built. There would be a separate design build contract for the South portal and North portal. The South portal is characterized by the arrival into the city, the view of the city and the larger scale architecture. Options should be sensitive to their

surroundings and attentive to their own function. It is recognized that portal areas are different parts of city and portals should fit into their context.

North portal – There is an opportunity to repair the street grid that was bisected by the construction of SR 99. The architectural feel of the area is eclectic with the Space Needle, midcentury buildings and hotels. Wayfinding was identified as something significant to be addressed. With ramps on left at north portal people need a clear understanding of where they are being led so they avoid taking a two mile detour.

The Commission was interested to see the approach of looking at a spectrum of how to treat the portals as either "landmark" or "background" structures, and as being able to have a "monolithic" vs. "neighborhood character."

As NBBJ is on board now with a contract to consult in preparation for the RFP on the architectural design of the vent buildings, there will be opportunity to discuss that with them.

The Commission is glad to hear that the project team is looking at ways to minimize the scale of the proposed elevated East Marginal Way connector. This part of the project would not be constructed until a late stage in the project when the tunnel has been constructed.

It was stressed that a balance must be found with how prescriptive the design framework is set in the RFP architectural requirements. Expectations must be managed with regard to design. The document must provide design guidance such that once the design build process has started it will just be a matter of fine tuning by the agencies and the Design Commission.

The Commission appreciates that the design team looked at recent example from around the world of portals, including ramp and wall design.

The Commission looks forward to a more detailed discussion of the visual vocabulary of the portals and vent houses and to helping define expectations for the elements of the design.

Presentation

Holgate to King Project
The project to replace the south end of the viaduct is the first phase of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall project. It is one of many parallel running projects that must be coordinated. The project received approval from the Design Commission earlier this year. Numerous contracts will be required as a part of the overall project. The team has refined some of the urban design elements. There will be a supplemental EIS coming out soon on the bored tunnel proposal.

Bored Tunnel Alternative Project
Ventilation buildings in the bored tunnel concept initially were not going to be included in the design build contract for the tunnel but now they are. The RFQ went out a few weeks ago to short list teams and submittals are due in November. The selection process continues in December. It is likely that three firms will be selected for the short list. A draft RFP is expected to be complete in January and a final RFP document should be ready in late March. Construction of the tunnel is slated to begin in 2011.

Holgate to King Project
Next to the relocated tailtrack, the cross section has not changed. Seating areas would be located about 400 feet apart and there would be four total. They were simplified and made more utilitarian, as the Design Commission recommended. A section of the security fencing was improved. The treatment of precast panels on main portions of SR 99 are textured finish, not overly thematic. The landscaping has been simplified, but not since the last presentation to the Design Commission. On the advice of the Commission the designer chose not to use dogwoods. The trees are still spaced the same, but the lighting has been spaced more closely and in alignment with the trees. The planting strip has been made continuous the whole length of the project to allow for more

robust planting. In response to Commission recommendations the use of more utilitarian materials has been balanced to be appropriate to the character of this segment of SR 99 and South Downtown.

Tunnel Portal and Ventilation Buildings
WSDOT, ROMA and Parsons Brinkerhoff presented their thoughts on architectural and urban design concepts. To what extent should the north and south tunnel portals be the same? Should they be striking or recede into the cityscape? The same questions apply to the ventilation buildings.

Commissioners' Questions and Comments

I would like to see the mile markers still be part of the design.

The multi-use path seems to be in a gulch. Because this is the first part of the project that will be built, it will be an important gesture, so it should be more than just a standard trail.

The bench design may be an important element in this regard. If designed well it could be carried on up the waterfront.

Basic bones are there, so these kinds of things would be able to enhance it. The trees will be given a very good environment to grow well and be healthy.

Applaud the trees and the mixed species of ground cover, and not just low groundcover. Check in with the bike board on selection of bike racks.

Selection of bike racks, benches etc. will be done in next contract.

Not many bike racks are needed because bikes will be moving through quickly. I'd rather see the money spent on benches.

There's nothing to look at, so if considering where to spend money, not sure if so many benches needed in this segment. (Later this idea was reconsidered and the value of the benches confirmed.) Understand Port issues and fencing, but the feel of that part of waterfront is Port and fence transparency would allow people to experience this.

Four sitting areas doesn't seem that much. With a 20 ft. trail a respite area is needed if you're going to stop. Ferry users head south to work places, so there are pedestrian users now.

You need to think about how things will work many years from now. Perhaps more pedestrians will use the area in future.

Can you get from trail to stadium?

Yes, at Atlantic and at King Street.

Fences can be interesting. Transparency important, but also would subtil moves to fencing be possible to make it look less formidable. Could it be made more friendly in a simple way.

Originally planned vegetation along fence, but Port/Homeland security didn't like the safety issues it cased. Any variation, such as of fence, narrows area down more.

Painting posts another color, for example, could bring relief and be very simple to implement. It's not just a port issue, it's the city's appearance of friendliness that is at issue.

Painting posts, or changing transparency of fence in some way, could also be good element for bikes.

There's time and if the idea could be developed and not cost extra and not create more maintenance cost it will be pursued.