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Foster + Partners
Atelier Dreiseitl
GGLO
Arup

Seattle Civic Square
Response to EDG-2 comments
November 2007



Seattle Civic Center

This report addresses each of the concerns raised by the Early Design Guidance Two document. We hope that the explanations and solutions offered show our enthusiasm to work with the City of Seattle to create a scheme that both furthers and completes the vision for this area of downtown Seattle.

Our scheme for Seattle Civic Center is a holistic plan for an urban realm that evokes the history of Seattle and responds to the geography of the site. Sensitive to the City Center Masterplan and driven by an understanding of the importance of civic space, our scheme will create a strong sense of visual identity for the area.

Designed to be highly permeable, our design solution offers a network of routes and spaces that will reinvent Seattle's downtown experience. We have followed the aims of the 1999 Civic Center Masterplan and redefined these to open new pedestrian routes through the square from 3rd Avenue, rather than following the closing off of the plaza to the street which seems contrary to its aims. Our strategy is to open the Center out to the people which will result in a reinvigoration of Seattle's civic identity. We have addressed both the rich cultural heritage of the site as well as the harsh extremes of the Pacific climate – maximising sun exposure to the site as well as creating shelter from wind and rain in winter.

Our landscape treatment follows the basic recommendations of the masterplan and the sculpting of the water is the defining characteristic of the plaza design, linking the new Civic Square to Seattle's civic buildings. The massing of the buildings on the site has also been adjusted from the original masterplan in order to bring more sunlight into the site, one of the key aims of the masterplan, and our scheme places the taller building at the North of the site in order to accomplish this, creating an attractive and sunny environment at ground level.

With these adjustments, the scheme should create a successful and active space, as it will be inhabited at all times of day – by those who linger over a coffee, attend a performance, or even just pass through the square from the Light Rail station. With retail at all levels of the suite, facing both onto the square and the street, the fringes of the Square will be enlivened at all times. The shops and food and beverage outlets will provide a valuable commodity for the workers and residents of the square as well as creating a new node for living, working and playing for Seattle.

A variety of spaces at different scales within the embracing whole will provide flexible facilities for a full spectrum of activities, from intimate spaces for conversation to spaces for small performances as well as city-scale events. Multiple uses for the plaza will contribute to its vibrancy, injecting life to downtown Seattle that will stretch from the working day, into the evenings and weekends.

Following our workshop on public space activation with Project for Public Spaces, we have refined the plaza design, reiterating the importance of the plaza as a multi-faceted civic forum for Seattle, rather than enclosing the dialogue within

an enclosed pavilion structure. We have dissolved the people's pavilion, and brought the spirit that drove its creation to every element of the square, creating a multitude of flexible spaces that allow for wider possibilities in programming and shifting the centre of this new forum to the centre of the Square. An iconic gesture – a circle of perfect geometry marks the heart of the square replacing the concept of the People's Pavilion, with the People's Plaza. Physically separate from the retail, office and residential buildings surrounding it and marking the turning point in the treatment of the water cascade, this will be the heartbeat of the square. The treatment of this element of the landscape design such as inlaying a glass surface pattern, or creating an intricate design in the paving will mark this as a place of particular significance for the Square, and the city as a whole.

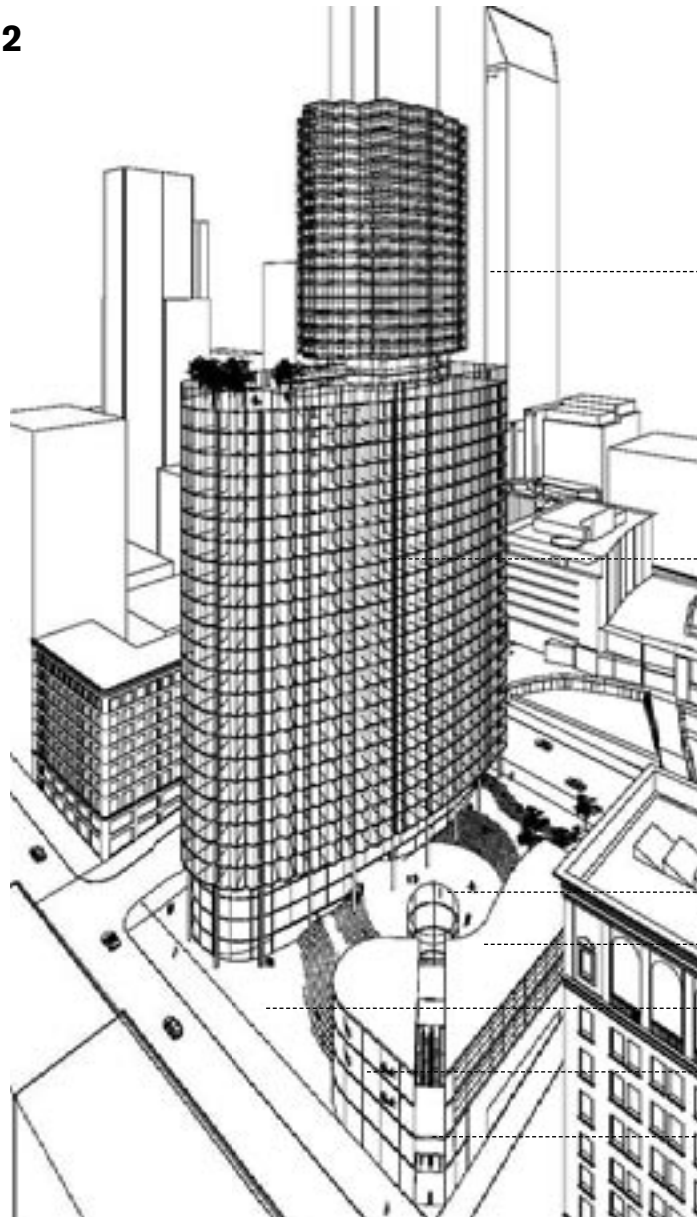
The landscaping of the square is conceived to enliven different spaces in the square, and help way finding, as well as celebrating the natural slope of the site and the geography of Seattle. We propose a cascade with two distinct treatments – a cascade with boulders which enlivens the rush of water and a smoother treatment where the water will flow gently, therefore creating distinct areas for action and relaxation within the Square. The water feature recalls the rich geography of Washington State, and will encourage people to treasure and protect the natural environment that surrounds the city. The landscaping could also be successfully exploited by means of a special paving treatment to join the site of City Hall Plaza with the People's Plaza, allowing city-wide events to fill both sites and tie in the new intervention with the established City Hall Plaza.

Sustainability has been a key driver in the design, both by ensuring that the built elements achieve the coveted LEED Gold or possibly Platinum ratings, but also so that the unbuilt elements serve an educational purpose to promote an awareness of the principles of sustainable living. A Sustainability Pavilion punctuates one corner of the square, shifting the onus of the built elements of the square from civic uses to sustainability. This pavilion will provide a space for exhibitions and leisure, and promote the ideas and principles of sustainability. The outer edge of this Sustainability Café has been reserved for an art wall, drawing people to the building and what it represents through art which could be in the form of a projection panel, sculpture or two dimensional artwork.

The buildings on the site have been designed and planned carefully to maximize the passive environmental benefits as well as to create meaningful ties with the surrounding streetscape, with the tower building placed on axis with city hall. We have also maintained a datum line throughout the scheme which matches the frieze of the King Country Court House, and links the new elements with the rich historic fabric around the site.

Developments Since EDG2

Overview



Improved Relationship Between the Residential and Office Forms

Relation of Tower Massing to Plaza

From a People's Pavilion to a People's Plaza with Multiple Gathering Spaces

Accessible Green Roof on South Retail

More Retail on 3rd Avenue

Introduction of Pedestrian Weather Protection

Metro Access on 3rd Avenue with Escalator on James Street

EDG2 Massing



No Auto Exit or Entrance at Pedestrian Connection to Cherry

Vallet Circulation Contained within Project

Open Connection to Plaza at 3rd Avenue and James Street

Auto and Trucks Enter on James, Exit on Cherry



EDG3 Massing



EDG-2 Comments: Legend

A Site Planning and Massing

- A-1

Respond to the physical environment. Develop an architectural concept and compose the building's massing in response to geographic conditions and patterns of urban form found beyond the immediate context of the site.

Pg. 6, 10, 32, 40, 44
- A-2

Enhance the skyline. Design the upper portion of the building to promote visual interest and variety in the downtown skyline.

Pg. 10, 32, 33, 53, 54,

B Architectural Expression

- B-1

Respond to the neighbourhood context. Develop an architectural concept and compose the major building elements to reinforce desirable urban features in the surrounding neighbourhood.

Pg. 8, 9, 25, 34
- B-2

Create a transition in bulk and scale. Compose the massing of the building to create a transition to the height, bulk, and scale of development in neighbouring or nearby less-intensive zones.

Pg. 10, 25, 33
- B-3

Reinforce the positive urban form and architectural attributes of the immediate area. Consider the predominant attributes of immediate neighbourhood and reinforce desirable sitting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.

Pg. 16, 18
- B-4

Design a well-proportioned and unified building. Compose the massing and organize the publicly accessible interior and exterior spaces to create a well-proportioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole.

Pg. 10, 28, 32, 33, 34

C The Streetscape

- C-1

Promote pedestrian interaction. Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should be open to the general public and appear safe and welcoming.

Pg. 11, 12, 15, 20, 22
- C-2

Design facades of many scales. Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and materials compositions that refer to the scale of human activities contained within. Building facades should be composed of elements scaled to promote pedestrian comfort, safety and orientation.

Pg. 11, 12, 22, 35
- C-3

Provide active, not blank, facades. Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.

Pg. 12, 20, 22, 27
- C-4

Reinforce building entries. To promote pedestrian comfort, safety and orientation, reinforce the building's story.

Pg. 11, 12, 15, 22, 29
- C-5

Encourage overhead weather protection. Encourage project applicants to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major pedestrian routes.

Pg. 28, 35

D Public Amenities

- D-1

Provide inviting and usable open space. Design public open spaces to promote a visually pleasing, safe and active environment for workers, residents and visitors. Views and solar access from the principal area of the open space should be especially emphasized.

Pg. 11, 16, 18, 22, 25, 28, 29
- D-2

Enhance the building with landscaping. Enhance the building and site with substantial landscaping-which includes special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, and site furniture, as well as living plant material.

Pg. 12, 16, 18, 27, 29, 33
- D-3

Provide elements that define the place. Provide special elements on the facades, within public open spaces, or on the sidewalk to create a distinct, attractive, and memorable "sense of place" associated with the building.

Pg. 16, 18, 24, 25
- D-4

Provide appropriate signage. Design signage appropriate for the scale and character of the project and immediate neighbourhood. All signs should be oriented to pedestrians and/or persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighbourhood.

Pg. 11, 12
- D-5

Provide adequate lighting. To promote a sense of security for people downtown during night time hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building facade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.

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- D-6

Design for personal safety & security. Design the building and site to enhance the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security in the immediate area.

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E Vehicular Access & Parking. Minimizing the Adverse Impacts

- E-1

Minimize curb cut impacts. Minimize adverse impacts of curb cuts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

Pg. 26
- E-2

Integrate parking facilities. Minimize the visual impact of parking by integrating parking facilities with surrounding development. Incorporate architectural treatments or suitable landscaping to provide for the safety and comfort of people using the facility as well as those walking by.

Pg. 26, 27
- E-3

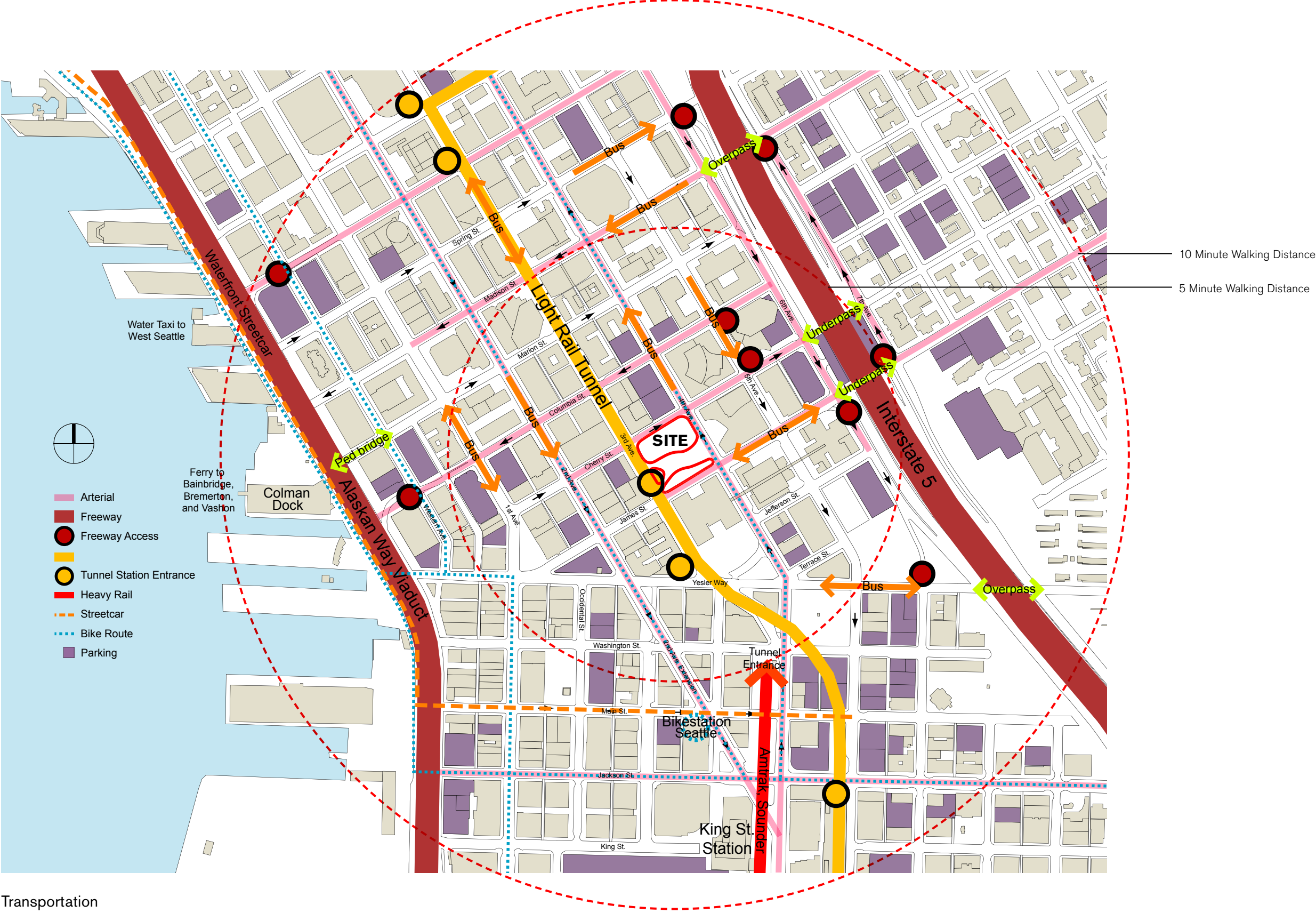
Minimize the presence of service areas. Locate service areas for trash dumpsters, loading docks, mechanical equipment, and the like away from the street front where possible. Screen from view those elements which for programmatic reasons cannot be located away from the street front.

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Site Context

Urban Connections

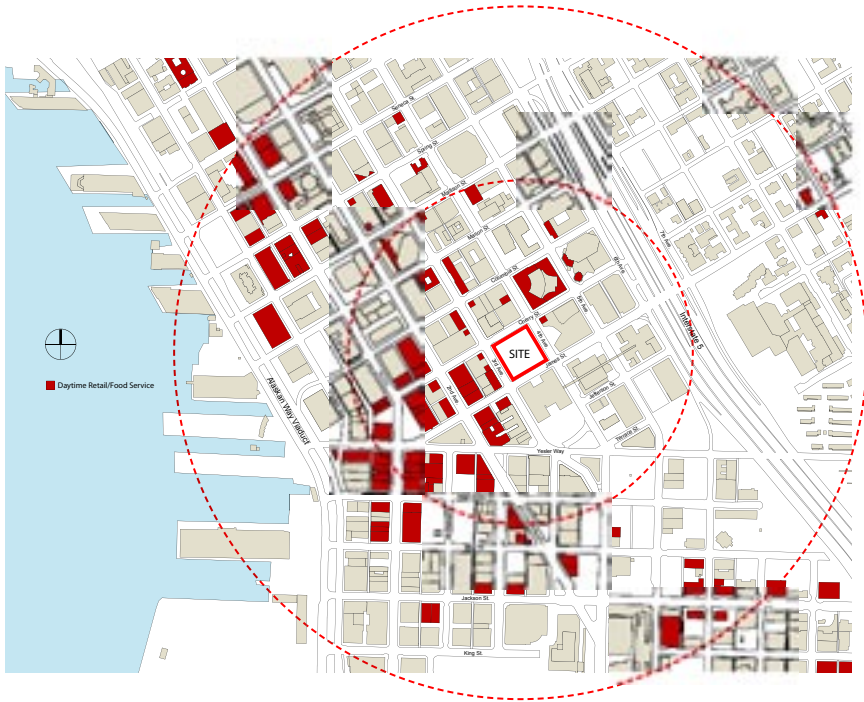
City Comment A-1



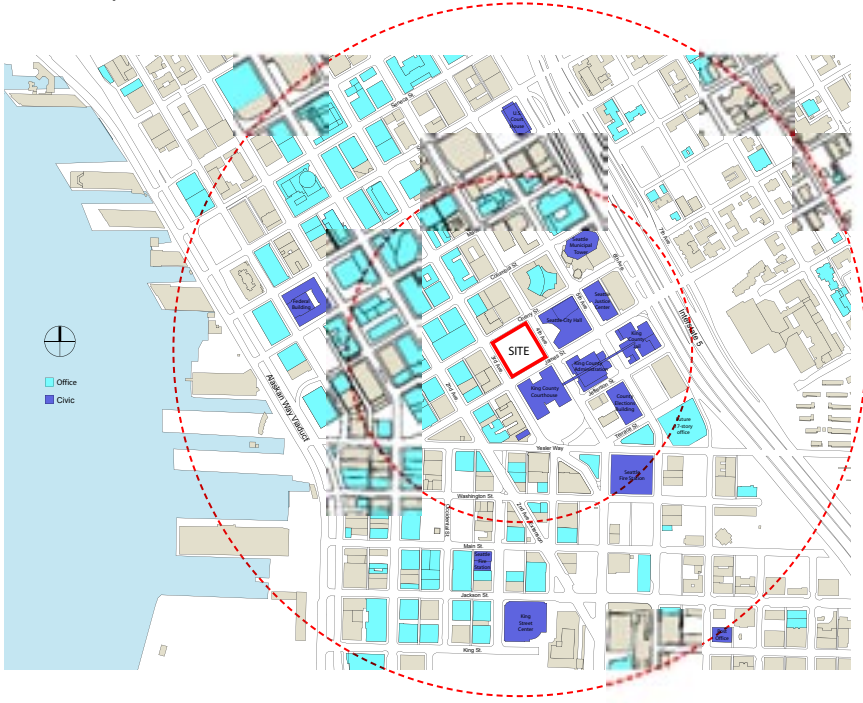
Site Context
Urban Connections



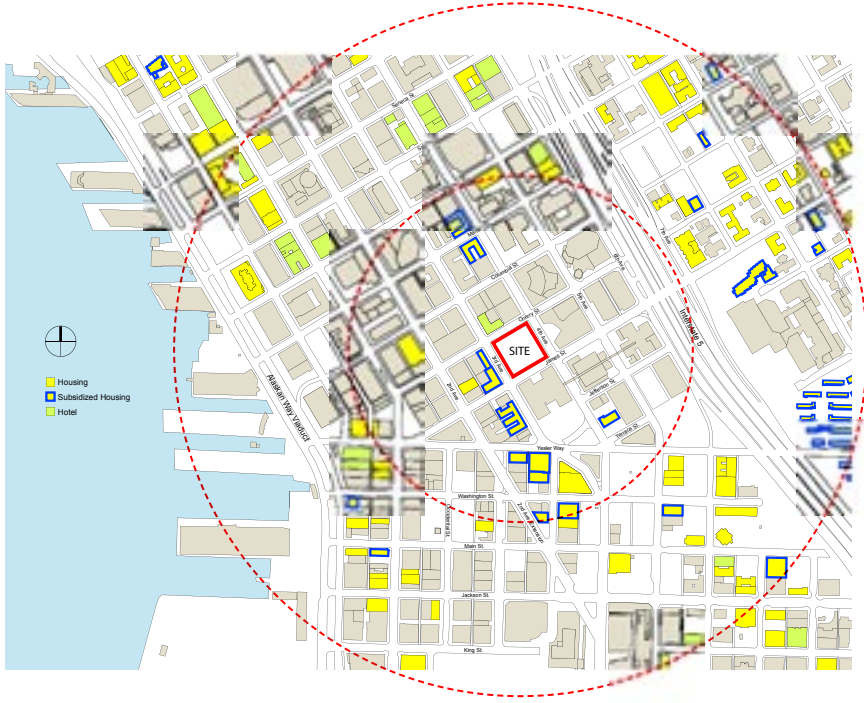
Green Spaces



Retail



Civic Offices



Housing and Hotels

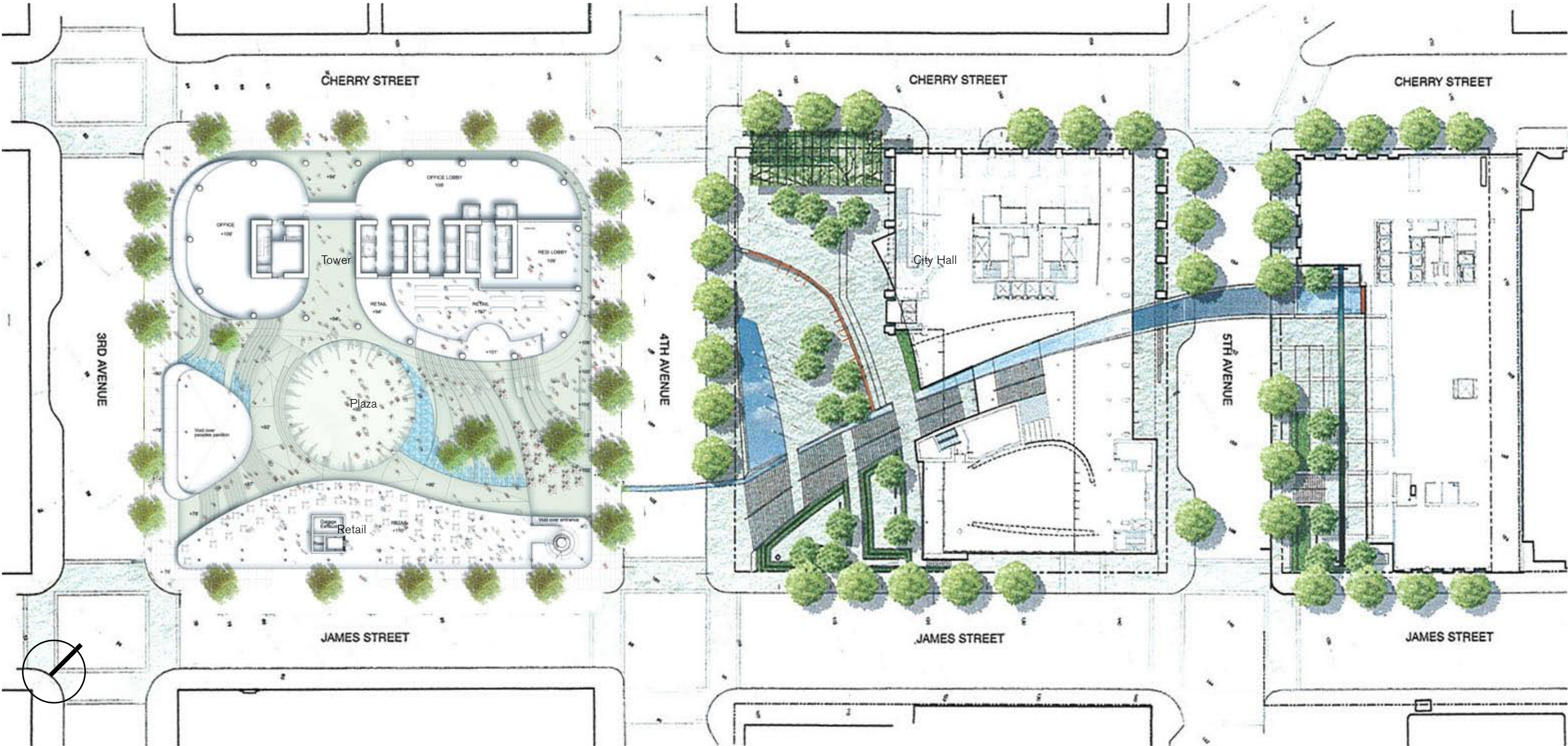
The Masterplan and the Scheme
Civic Center Masterplan and proposed Scheme

City Comment B-1



Civic Centre Site Plan, GGN, NBBJ, Bohlin Cywenski Jackson, 1999

Porposed Scheme



Summary of the Masterplan and the Scheme

City Comment B-1

Seattle's 1999 Civic Center Master Plan expressed a “vision to bring to life a new heart for the City - a legacy of future generations that can inspire a physical and philosophical relationship between citizens and their government.”

The Master Plan offers a coherent civic campus identity for the blocks between Cherry and James Streets, from 6th Avenue down to 3rd Avenue, including the Seattle Justice Center, City Hall and the Seattle Municipal Tower, providing for accessibility, uses that support 24-hour downtown life, clear connections to adjacent neighborhoods, and a strong commitment to sustainability. The Civic Center blocks extend across a dramatic slope with broad views and connections to many neighborhoods, that also help guide the Master Plan principles.

The key master plan principles:

- The Civic Center is primarily about public life
- Bring in the sun
- Celebrate the slope
- Activate the public space
- Views for the public have priority
- Extend the edge of Cherry Street
- Integrate the Master Plan composition
- Showcase sustainable design
- Make a positive gesture to the Government Center

City Hall Plaza

City Hall Plaza is the open space with the most direct relationship to the development site. The plaza is slightly elevated above Fourth Avenue, with multiple elements of water. The curving design places a focus on the Civic Plaza spaces and occupants, with an implied connection across Fourth. In addition to the main plaza, there is an upper level terrace overlooking both the City Hall Plaza and the new development, adding a three dimensional quality to the open spaces. The space is programmed for art shows, concerts and other activities.

Seattle Design Commission

The Seattle Design Commission's recommendations made in 2006 for the site confirm and elaborate on the Master Plan principles.

The new Civic Square site is the last key piece of the plan, with two program components that complement and complete the Master Plan vision: a significant public space and a privately developed structure.

Public Open Space

“The public open space is arguably the most important part of the Civic Square, as an unenclosed living space, or front porch, welcoming all of Seattle's citizens and visitors.”

The open space is a visual and ceremonial gateway into the CBD, and should have “civic but human scale,” offering a variety of scales and uses within a strong unified concept. Opportunities for conversations over coffee or lunch-time concerts and even city-wide celebrations should be apparent. The public space will anchor the neighborhoods' civic identity, accommodate ceremonial and public functions, and be a gathering space for citizens, workers and visitors.

The open space concept cascades in a series of terraces down the slope, from Fifth Avenue to Third Avenue, creating spaces both formal and informal, grand and intimate, and expressive of nature and urban life. Permeable edges of the plaza should engage with streetscapes allowing flexibility for uses to spread, and the design of the tower can connect the streets with site circulation patterns. The public space concept should extend across Fourth Avenue for public gatherings with flat surfaces relating to spaces and buildings on both sides. Views to and from City Hall should be maintained.

Water as a defining character of Seattle is inherent in the design, a concept to be carried forward, highlighting the topography of the site, creating focal points in the open space, and guiding pedestrian circulation. Art should also be used to create an identity.

The plaza is to be open air, easily accessible, oriented for solar exposure and warmth, with links between indoor and outdoor spaces. An amphitheater, pavilions, multiple seating areas all help draw people to the plaza for activities, and the transit station on Third Avenue can provide a direct links into the plaza spaces. Indoor gathering spaces will help ensure people to linger during bad weather.

Programming of the public space should be diverse, attract diverse people, and should extend throughout the hours of a day into the evening. Activity should be based on uses beyond retail, and should be deliberately managed. Residential will help to activate the space, as will other destination uses like cultural, educational and kid-focused places. Finally, explicit demonstrations of sustainability can become a part of the activity of the site through art, education and built elements.

Buildings

Locating the structure on the north edge of the site allows for solar exposure, and integrates with the massing of City Hall. The building design is integrated with that of the Civic Square, so that it enhances public and pedestrian life in the open space. Porous, transparent facades of shopping, entertainment, dining and other active uses make a strong connection to the plaza and streets. The base will respond to the topography with multiple entrances and routes stepping down the slope.

The Alaska, Dexter Horton, St. Charles Hotel and Arctic Buildings lining Cherry Street create an historic corridor leading to Pioneer Square, and the master plan respects this richness of texture, patterning, rhythm, and scale of early 20th century architecture. As such, the building must convey a sense of permanence, timelessness and respect for regional character.

Building uses may include retail, entertainment, dining, commercial and institutional offices, community services, or housing. Clear and protected accommodation of ADA routes should be made. Parking under the plaza can accommodate short term users.

Sustainability

The design should clearly convey sustainability, celebrated as a core value with a whole systems approach that balances social, economic and environmental factors. Site planning should reinforce natural systems including solar patterns, wind patterns, hydrology and local geology. Buildings should include design features and signage that communicate Seattle's global philosophy toward sustainability.

Recognizing water's role in the life of Seattle, the master plan calls for water to be celebrated, both for aesthetic reasons and for protection of water resources through innovative methods such as harvesting on-site flows by reclaiming gray water, roof runoff and or groundwater.

Tower Massing and Relationship to Plaza

City Comments A-1, A-2, B-2, B-4



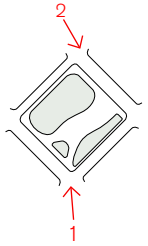
1. 3rd Avenue View



2. 4th Avenue View



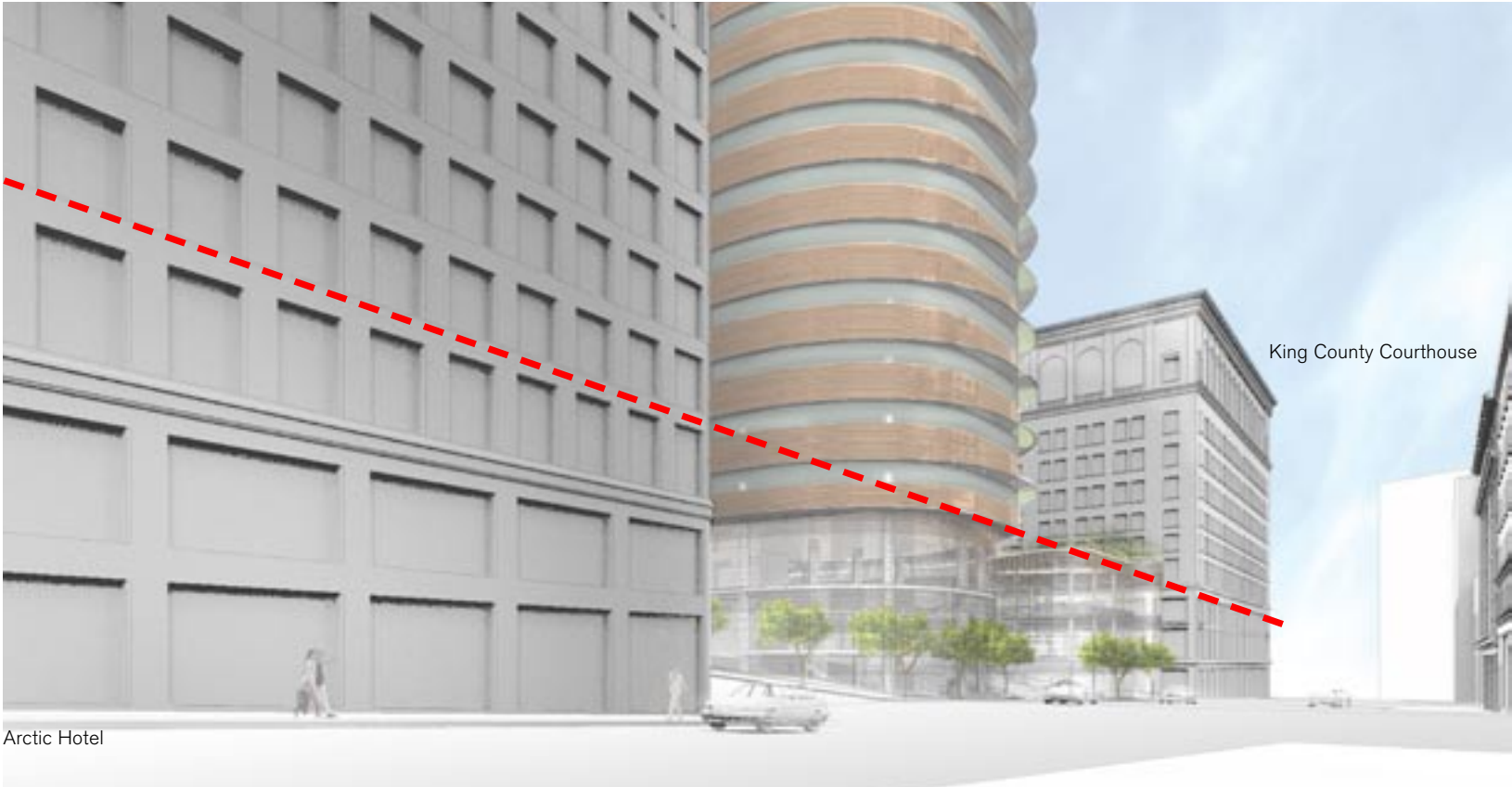
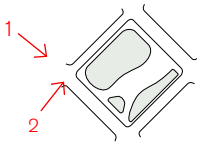
View of Plaza from Above



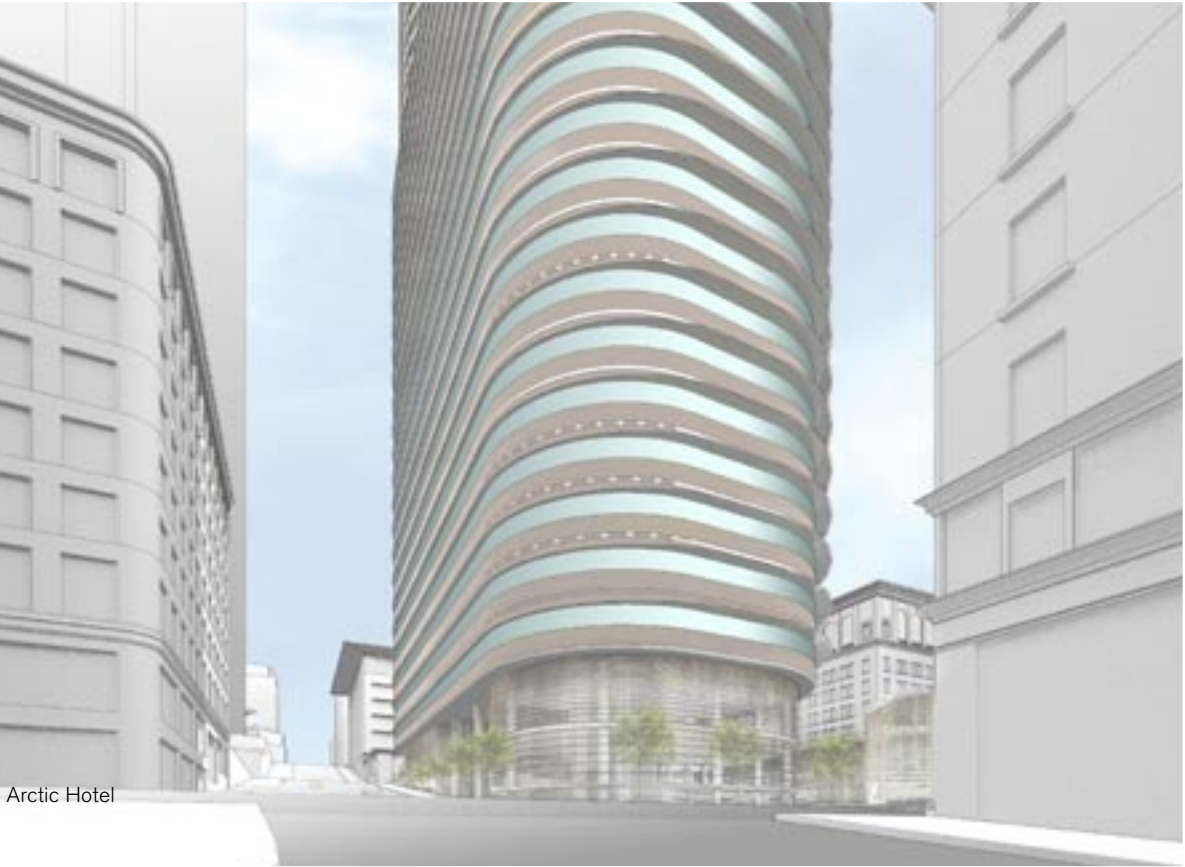
Views of Street Edge

Streetscape Perspectives

City Comments C-1, C-2, C-4, D-1, D-4



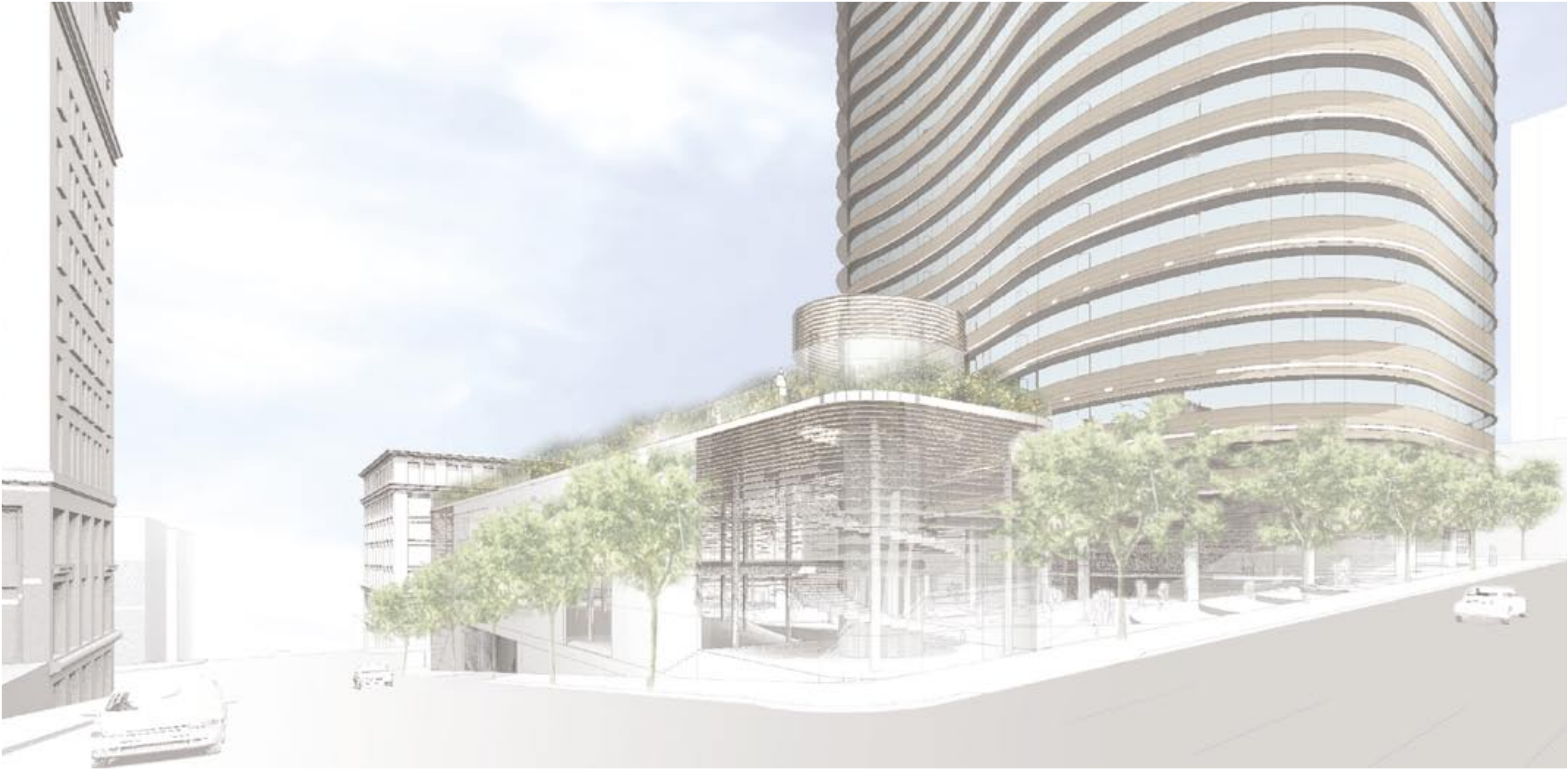
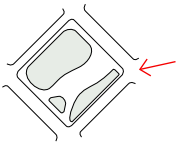
View Down 3rd Avenue with King County Courthouse Datum



View up Cherry Street with Arctic Hotel to Left

Views of Street Edge
Streetscape Perspectives

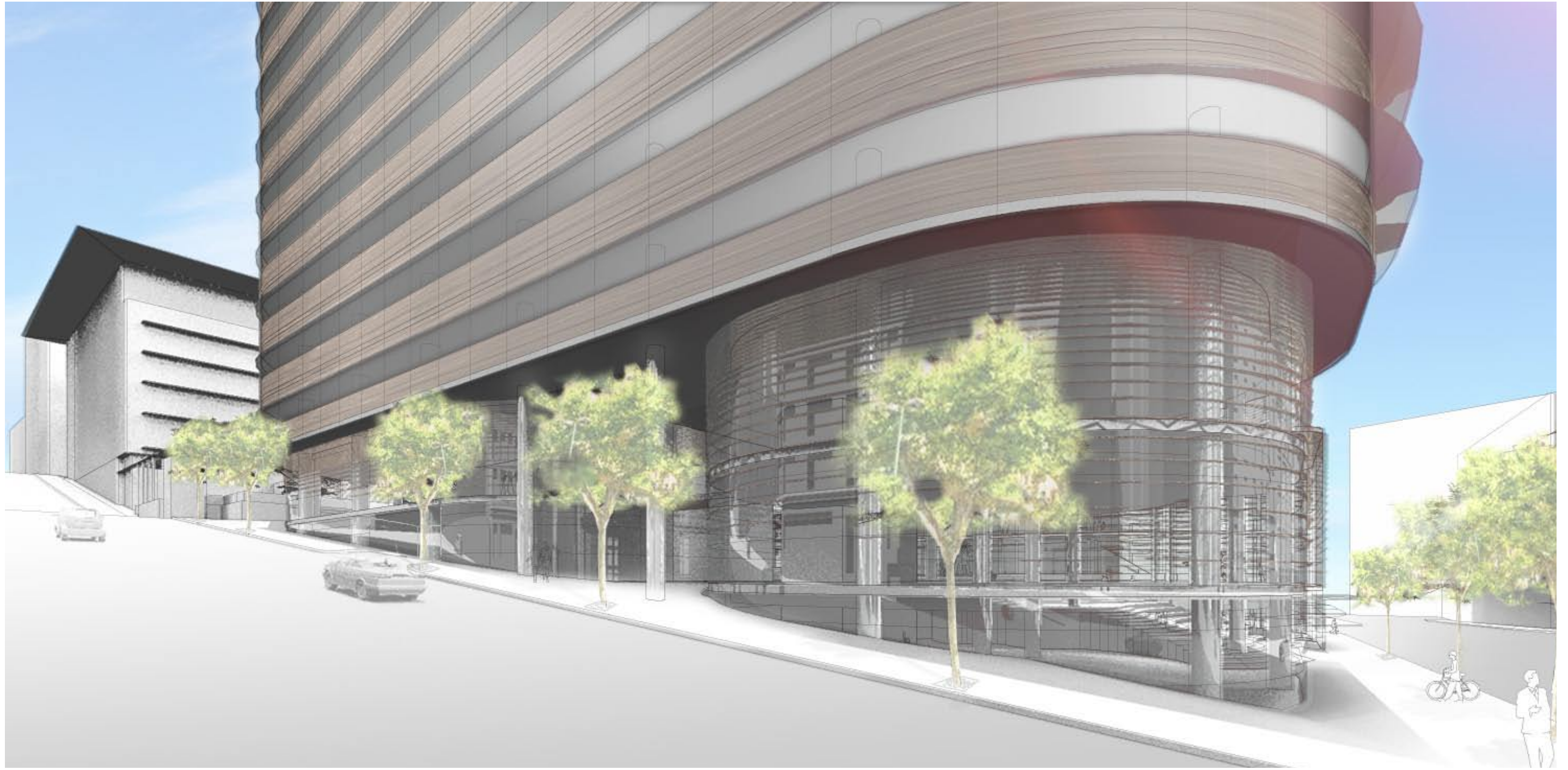
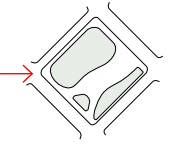
City Comments C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, D-1, D-2, D-4



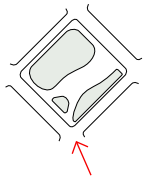
Corner of James and 4th

Views of Street Edge

Streetscape Perspectives



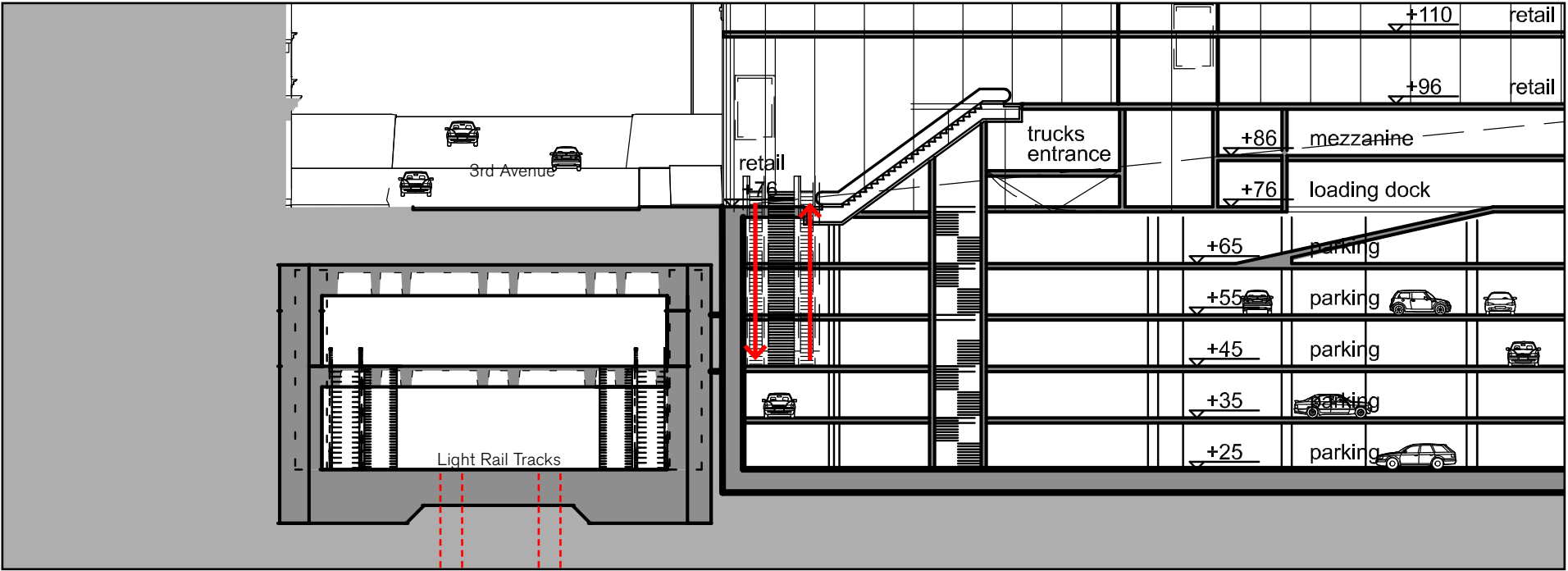
Corner of Cherry and 3rd



Corner of 3rd Avenue and James Street, Looking North

The Light Rail Connection
Light Rail Connection with Plaza

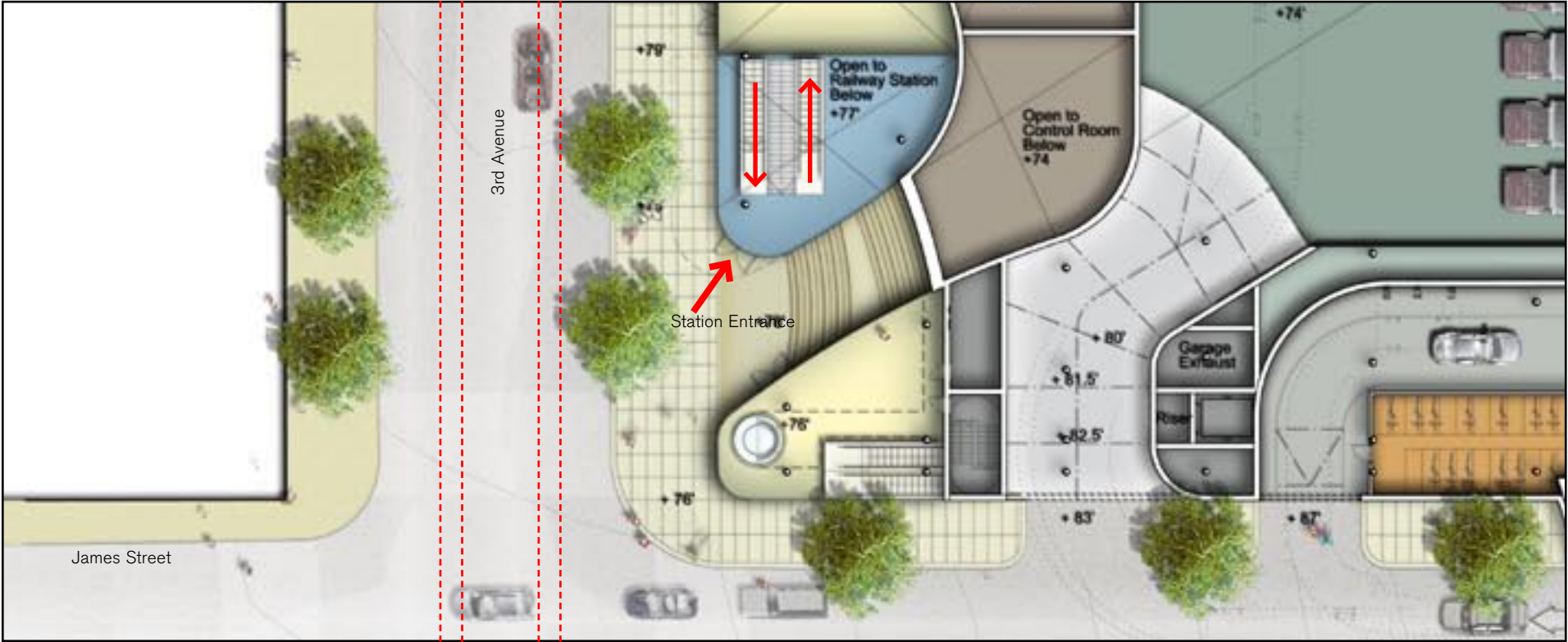
City Comments C-1, C-4



Section Through Light Rail Station



Light Rail Station Entrance

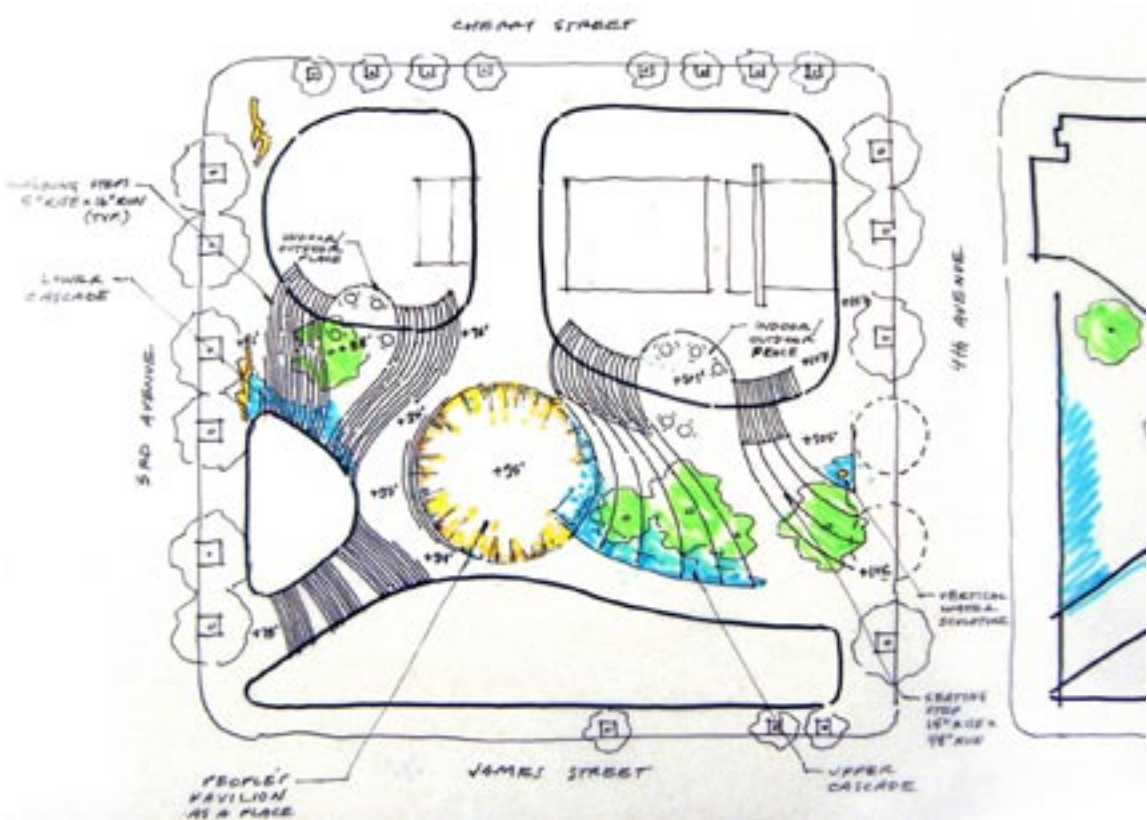


Plan of Light Rail Station Entrance

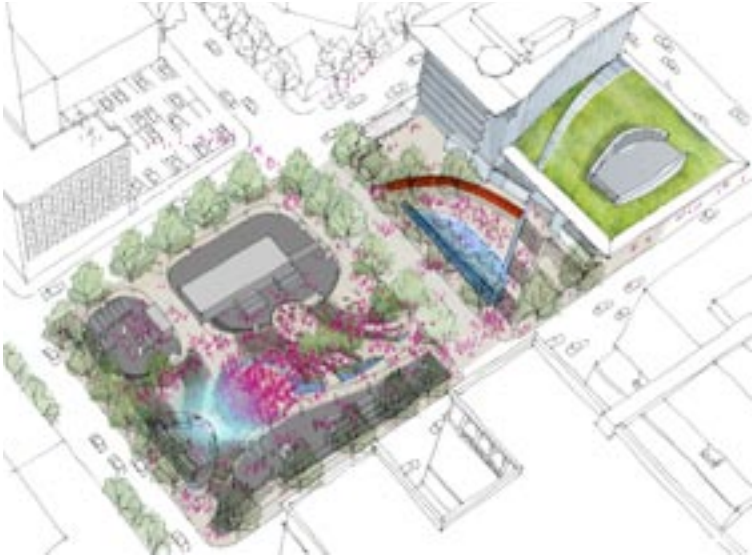
Conceptual Sketches

Plaza

City Comment B-3, D-1, D-2, D-3



Conceptual Sketch of Plaza Showing Landscaping and a Variety of Spatial Types- Atelier Dreiseitl



Plaza During a Large Event- Atelier Dreiseitl



Plaza During a Mid-Sized Event- Atelier Dreiseitl



Plaza During a Small Event- Atelier Dreiseitl



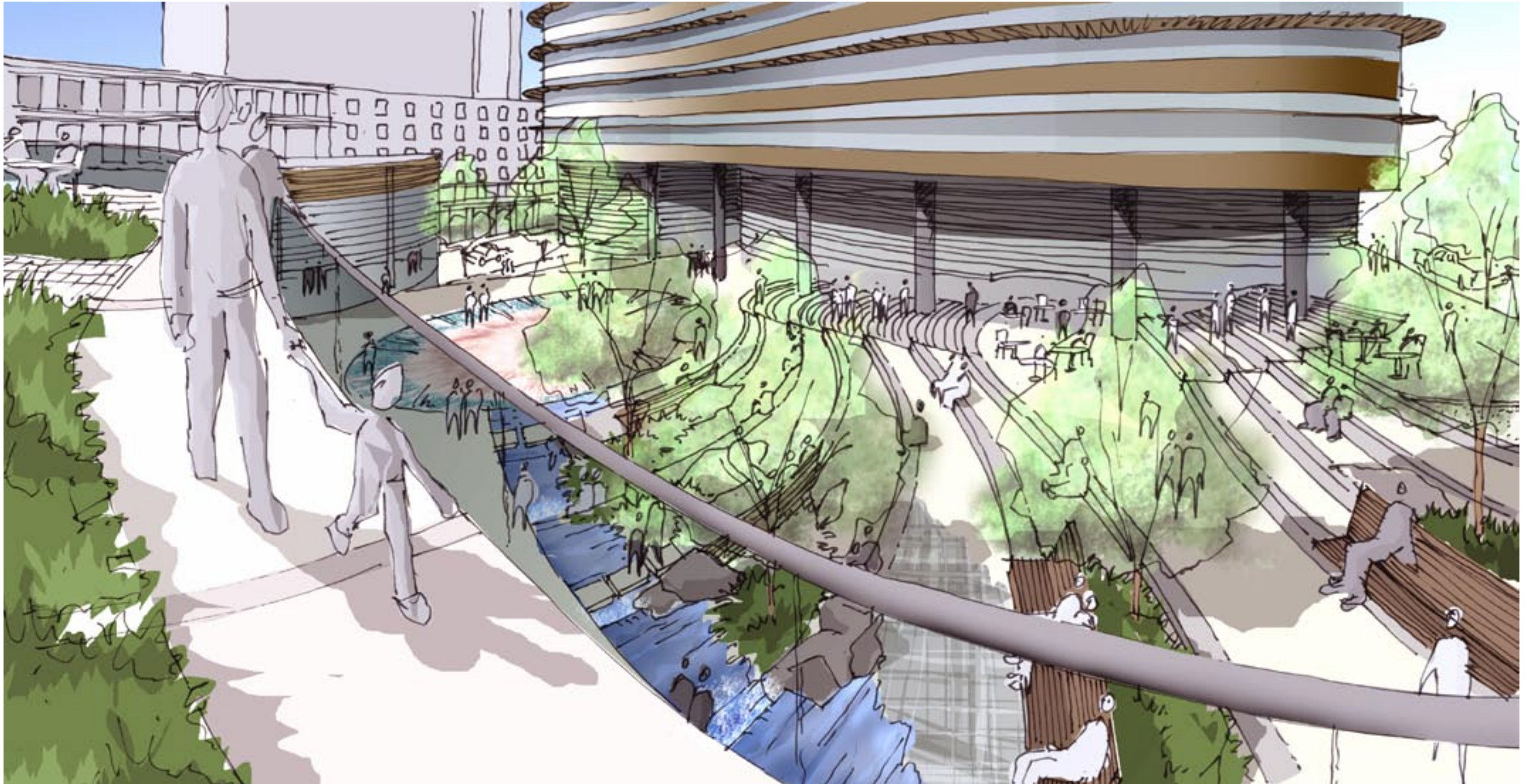
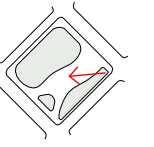
Plaza During Lunch Time- Atelier Dreiseitl



Trafalgar Square with a Diversity of Spatial Types



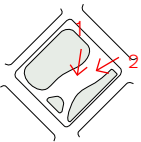
Plaza



View From Roof Garden into Plaza- Atelier Dreiseitl

Plaza Spaces

City Comment B-3, D-1, D-2, D-3



1. Plaza During an Event- Atelier Dreiseitl

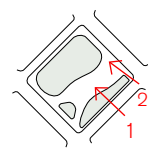


2. Looking into Plaza from 4th Avenue Entrance- Atelier Dreiseitl



Material and Spacial References

Plaza Spaces



1. Plaza During Informal Events- Atelier Dreiseitl



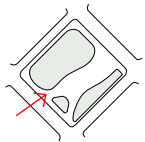
2. 4th Avenue Seating- Atelier Dreiseitl



Material and Spatial References

Plaza
Small Scale Spaces

City Comments C-1, C-3, D-1



Looking from Cherry Street into the Plaza Through Breezeway