

Seattle **design** Commission

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APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

January 7, 2010

Convened 2:17 pm
Adjourned 5:14 pm

Projects Reviewed

Seattle Center Fun Forest South
University of Washington West Campus

Commissioners Present

Mary Johnston, Chair
Andrew Barash
Julie Bassuk
Graham Black
Brendan Connolly
John Hoffman
Laurel Kunkler
Julie Parrett
Dennis Ryan
Norie Sato

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino
Tim Trujillo



January 7, 2010

Project: University of Washington West Campus

Phase: Alley Vacation

Last Reviewed: October 15, 2009

Presenters: Anne Schopf, Mahlum Architects
Mark Cork, Mahlum Architects
Jennifer Guthrie, Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd.
Anne Shuks, Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd.

Attendees:

Jan Arntz, University of Washington

Jon Lebo, University of Washington

Michele Sarlitto, Blumen Consulting Group

Terry McCann, Blumen Consulting Group

Beverly Barnett, SDOT

Laura Lohman, Seneca Group

Tom Walsh, Foster Pepper

Tess Schiavone, Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd

Time: 3:52 pm – 5:14 pm

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ACTION

The Design Commission thanked the University of Washington West Campus team for their presentation of the public benefits proposed as part of the alley vacations at a site north of NE Campus Pkwy and west of Brooklyn Ave NE (32 West), and one south of NE Campus Pkwy and east of Brooklyn Ave NE (35 West).

The public benefits proposed include a public plaza at the northwest corner of NE Campus Pkwy and Brooklyn Ave NE. The plaza is approximately 11,680 sq. ft. in size and contains a large, mature elm tree. Also a public benefit is the inner courtyard of block 35 West which will be open during normal business hours. Both blocks 32 West and 35 West allow for pedestrians to cut across the blocks. The public benefits also include increased sidewalk widths achieved with voluntary setbacks and extension of curbs in some places, as depicted in the proponent's presentation materials. Extensive pedestrian amenities around each of the two blocks 32 West and 35 West, such as street trees and bus stops, which go beyond what is required by code, are also included. Increased landscaping and transit user amenities along NE Campus Pkwy are also public benefits, as are new landscaping of the median of NE Campus Pkwy from 12th Ave NE to University Way NE. Although not considered a public benefit, the Commission appreciates the plans for a grocery store and café which will add much needed retail services in the area and activation of the public spaces along the buildings.

The Commission approved the alley vacation with a six to one vote with the following comments:

- As the design is refined, continue to consider the changes the area might undergo in terms of pedestrian patterns, transit use, and increased density, especially once light rail is in place.
- The inner courtyard at Block 35 West continues to appear private and not particularly inviting. The details of the design will help determine how well the courtyard reads as public.
- Consider a celebratory approach to the south entry to the courtyard at Block 35 West so that even when it is closed it can add value to the area. Consider use of art for the fence and gate or screen element.
- The lack of transparency is a concern, but the Commission recognized and appreciated the team's efforts to work with the proposed grocery store and the incorporation of glass to mitigate potential negative effects.

- Continue to collaborate with the UW entities such as the Landscape Advisory Committee and the Henry Art Gallery as well as SDOT when making median improvements to NE Campus Parkway.
- As the design is refined, continue to consider changes the area might undergo, especially once light rail is in place.
- Consider waiting to install the proposed bus shelters until they are needed.
- While recognizing the need to protect the elm tree, allow closer contact to it by people using and passing through the plaza.

Note: The dissenting vote was due to concern that the extent of the public benefit might not be sufficient as well as issues with the private nature of the courtyard/pedestrian cut through on Block 35 West.

Project Presentation

Mark Cork, of Mahlum Architects, stated that the University of Washington has a unique opportunity to create an environment within the goals of the administration and staff. This will revitalize and energize an area of the community. Residents will benefit from community space, enhanced pedestrian areas, and retail activity.

Mark next spoke about the public benefits of the alley vacation. The scope includes UW West Campus housing projects. Site 31W apartments and site 33W residential hall are both scheduled for 2011 occupancy while site 32W and 35W residential halls are scheduled for 2012 occupancy. Sites 31W and 33W are planned to contain 619 beds while site 32W and 35W contain 1,026 beds. The team is proposing to make enhancements to Campus Parkway, particularly the median. Also they intend to develop open space and create Brooklyn as a Green Street.

Green areas are to be developed along NE 41st street. The ultimate goal is to enhance the pedestrian realm of the area, according the Cork. "Given the density of the development at the corner of Brooklyn and Campus Parkway, this is the heart of the area," he added.



Figure 1: West Campus Plan

Jennifer Guthrie, of Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd., stated that the vision is to create a great neighborhood through various means including sidewalk improvements, a pocket park, and improvement of the median along Campus Parkway.

Next, she stated that Brooklyn Avenue is targeted to become a Green Street, while Campus Parkway is to be enhanced as it is the primary East-West connection.

Historically, this community has always been a neighborhood connected by a trolley. It was recommended that strong connections be made, particularly between the University and downtown. Campus Parkway development took place in the early 1950s.

Today, the landscape has not evolved well. It feels like a transit corridor as opposed to a pedestrian space. Many of the trees have been performing poorly due to poor soil conditions and overcrowding. Furthermore, this is a major

route for Metro as well as a major bicycle route and a future corridor for the trolley extension. Campus Parkway is bounded by student housing buildings to the north and south.

The design team is looking to the spirit of Parkways as they have been historically intended. The intent is to create the feeling of park. Ravenna Avenue in north Seattle is a relevant precedent.

Strategies to creating this parkway concept include:

- Tree thinning (remove underperforming species)
- Soil amendment
- Installation of irrigation
- Turf planting
- Additional tree planting

Site 32W

Elm Plaza: Northeast corner of Brooklyn and NE Campus Pkwy

There is a significant slope of approximately 9 degrees at the site.

Programming includes street entrances, public seating perched above green space due to slope conditions, and private seating nooks underneath a giant elm tree centered in the park space.

Reasons stated for the desired alley vacation include:

- Enhance pedestrian circulation,
- Maximize development capacity,
- Integrate housing above grade,
- Create significant new public open space.

The western portion of the site is designed to be student centered. A café would be open to the public and exist on the northeast corner of site. The service entrance has been centrally located along 41st Street. There is a desire to eliminate conflict between service areas and pedestrians. Bollards are utilized to define the space. The north portal includes garage doors that are electrically powered and made to appear like the rest of the wall. See rendering.

Summary: Site 32

Development potential: 241,200 sf without alley vacation

Proposed development: 134,570 sf with vacation

Vacated land, 2876 sf

Elm plaza: 11,680 sf

Café: 3,025 sf



Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd mahlum



mahlum

Figure 2: Site 32W Plans

Right-of-way Improvements Quantitative Summary:

3,450 square feet of additional pedestrian improvements

840 square feet of voluntary setback

12,057 code required improvements

Additional facts about the development:

- There are four existing trees that will be removed due to poor performance.
- There will be 17 new plantings in addition to the four replacements.
- There will be 2,240 square feet of additional planted area as well as 2,415 square feet of specialty pervious paving.
- Canopies will be integrated in key locations complete with lighting for a total of 1500 square feet.
- Street furniture is being provided, including benches, lean rails, transit shelters, and bike racks.

The objective is to pull from existing plantings in the neighborhood. American elms are being utilized along Campus Parkway which are appropriately scaled for this context, according to Jennifer Guthrie. Consideration is also been taken for the context of each street.

Site 35W

Site 35W is similar to Site 32W. However, the design team is creating a through-block pass-through with a courtyard activated by a retail function. Unfortunately, NE 40th Street does not allow for 8-foot sidewalks. Additionally, a 7,500 square foot urban grocery store is being designed with a café and service window near the existing bus stop. As currently designed, the service access occurs along NE 40th Street near the University Way corner.

Concerning the alley light and viewshed, the block to the south has a vacated alley. Thus, the view may not always exist if the University develops a taller structure on the site.

The design team took another look at the pass-through. Transparency, a café, and a wide passage were designed to create an inviting space. The design team feels that clear visual cues exist through the site.

The team has coupled the pedestrian and service access. The entry is being treated architecturally. Wood elements, glass, and café transparency are utilized for this purpose.

There is an entrance to the grocery store on the northeast corner of the development. The store is being designed to include diagonal shelving to aid in

Site 35W
View from NE 40th Street



Figure 3: Site 35W Plans

the building transparency.

Development potential: 247,200 square feet without alley vacation

Proposed development: 192,640 square feet with vacation

Vacated land, 2,240 square feet

Open Courtyard: 4,765 square feet

Market: 7,490 square feet

Right-of-way Improvements Quantitative Summary:

4,430 square feet of additional pedestrian improvements

1,595 square feet of voluntary setback

10,442 square feet of code required improvements

The design team has added 6-feet of right-of-way for pedestrians along Campus Parkway as well as setting back the façade of the building. Similar right-of-way improvements are being designed into this site as that of Site 32 including bus shelters, benches, and lean rails. Additionally, the curb lines are being adjusted to accommodate a bike lane and a sharrows moving south.

The design team perceives the open spaces to be significant developments that enhance the entire community.

Commissioners' Comments and Questions

Can you provide input regarding the 8-foot sidewalk?

It appears consistent with recommendations provided by SDOT.

How much is Green Factor and how much is additional?

Team went above and beyond the Green Factor

Why is a custom bus shelter being provided?

They are an amenity, they are not required. We are attempting to maintain a consistency in materials. We took cues from the SLU streetcar.

Who will be maintaining the amenities?

The University of Washington.

Can you walk up to the elm tree in Elm Plaza?

There will be a protective zone around the tree. It is quite large.

So students will not be able to lounge in the pocket park?

No, we went with ground cover and texture instead of a lawn under the tree.

I have uncertainty about the amount of new street trees. Where is there consistency in tree species?

There are no existing street trees along Brooklyn. Along Campus Parkway, most are American Elm but the other species are failing. The trees along 41st Street are a variety of species. The team came up with a pallet of trees that are compatible with existing trees.

Is the end goal to create a strong urban form with a tree canopy?

The goal is to create a strong edge. The edges are intended to strengthen the parkway concept.

Is it still intended that the pass-through area have limited hours?

Yes

Will the courtyard entrance be the main access to the grocery?

The main entrance will be at the street corner.

The setbacks from the sidewalk, were they requested?

The setback is the result of façade articulation.

Overall, this presentation is much improved from the previous one. The urban design features are much improved. I am troubled by the interior corridor. I do not believe it to be a public amenity due to its interior location. Perhaps look at lighting and paving treatments to emphasize the opening to the courtyard. There is not a lot of street activity along "The Ave." Maybe there is a way to create a stronger and more inviting south pedestrian access."

You have done a wonderful job creating transit oriented building facades. Maybe hold back the bus shelters to see how the demand may change due to other changes in the area such as the potential streetcar.

Try to not concentrate on the interior courtyard space. The courtyard is handsome. I hope that it becomes a nice, secret space. It will work great for the residents but will not be a big public space.

Concerning the median, I hope the design team will work with SDOT.

We have not seen any images of what the interior courtyard might look like when it is closed to the public. It is hard to envision how this might work.

One of the previous main concerns is the view through the courtyard. The light is still a concern. From the courtyard side, it is much better.

It may be a good idea to look at a celebratory gate. Look at how an artist might approach the courtyard entry. How far back will the gate exist?