

WSCC Expansion

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Ross Tilghman, Vice Chair

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Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Chair
Ross Tilghman, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Rachel Gleeson
Laura Haddad
Jescelle Major
John Savo

Commissioners Excused

Ben de Rubertis
Thaddeus Egging

Project Description

The 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. (*see figures 1 & 2 for more detail.*)

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 SDC was briefed on the Washington State Convention Center's (WSCC) proposal as it relates to the proposed street and alley vacations. The purpose of this meeting was to brief the SDC on how they have progressed the project designs since their previous meeting. The SDC did not take an action at this meeting and will not take an action until the final environmental impact assessment (FEIS) is released.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

January 19, 2017

1:00 - 4:00 PM

Type

Vacation

Phase

Briefing

Previous Reviews

[09/15/16](#), [04/21/16](#), [02/04/16](#)

Project Team Present

Mark Reddington | LMN Architects

Shannon Nichol | GGN

Matt Griffin | Pine Street Group (PSG)

Attendees

Bernie Alonzo | GGN

Margery Aronson | Art Advisor

Beverly Barnett | SDOT

Cath Brunner | 4Culture

Zachery Clements | PSG

Chris Degracia | ACT Theatre

Abigail DeWeese | HCMP

Tammy Frederick | SDOT

Pat Hansen-Lund | MKS

Anne Kerrick | LMN Architects

Bryn Kepler | GGN

Jane Lewis | PSG

Jack Mackie | Citizen

Katherine MacKinnon | NYHUS

Jessica Miller | LMN Architects

John Price | Community Leader

Michele Sarlitto | EA Engineering

Martin Sicotte | LMN Architects

Ellen Sollod | Sollod Studio

Mike Sewnson | Transpo Group

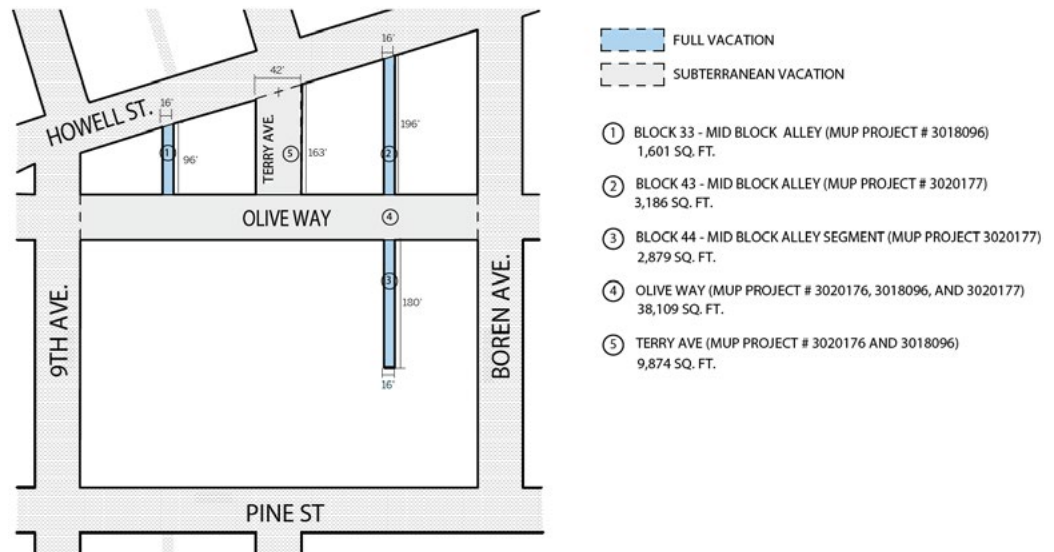


Figure 1: Proposed vacation petitions



Figure 2: Project site location

Summary of Presentation

Matt Griffin, of Pine Street Group, Mark Reddington, of LMN Architects, and Shannon Nichol, of GGN, presented the project briefing for urban design merit. Matt Griffin and Mark Reddington provided an overview and site context for the proposed project. Matt Griffin discussed the Council policies that are addressed during the urban design merit phase. The project team then addressed the eleven recommendations provided during the previous project briefing held on September 15, 2016 including:

- proposed massing of the co-development sites under a vacation and no vacation scenario,
- details on the location and design treatment of all access points
- location of transit facilities
- bicycle improvements
- addressing proposed planning efforts being implemented in right of way (ROW) improvements
- addressing how the landscape plan reflects the surrounding urban context, pedestrian and vehicular circulation
- Addressing how street furniture reflects the surrounding urban context

- ongoing community outreach efforts
- a table that illustrates land use code, SEPA requirements, and proposed public benefits
- public art, and;
- sustainability

The team provided an overview of the vacation and no-vacation alternatives, including additional analysis on the development potential from the vacations. The team provided information on the Site B co-development residential tower. The proposed residential building will include a podium height of 65 feet and tower height of 290 feet, which is below the 400 foot height limit at this location. The team indicated that the height for the residential tower is constrained due to the structural loads needed for the tower and the location and extent of the WSCC loading docks. (see figures 3-5 for more detail.)

The team also provided an overview of all of the access points for the project. The WSCC expansion facility will include a 22.5-foot-wide two-way vehicular access point on Olive Way as well as a 25-foot-wide two-way vehicular access point on Boren Ave. Site C includes a 50-foot-wide point of ingress for loading along Boren Ave and a 40' wide point of egress along Terry Ave. The point of ingress along Boren Ave will also include a 60-foot-wide curb cut to accommodate the turning radii of large trucks without crossing into adjacent lanes. Site B will include an 18 foot wide point of ingress and egress along Howell St, which will provide access for building services and residential loading. (see figures 6-10 for more detail.)

The team also provided a detailed overview of the concept designs for each right of way both abutting and across from the project sites. The concept divides the exterior of the project into several zones, of which the design for each zone will reflect the surrounding context. Proposed site materials and street furniture will transition from city standard materials, such as metal benches and bicycle racks, in the city owned ROW to specialized materials, such as wooden benches and unique lighting features, in the publicly accessible private space located on WSCC property. The proposed landscape plan is intended to include a visual narrative of landscapes throughout the state of Washington and will include a variety of plants that are native to the Pacific Northwest.

Agency Comments

Cath Brunner, 4Culture, mentioned she has submitted documentation that clarifies the

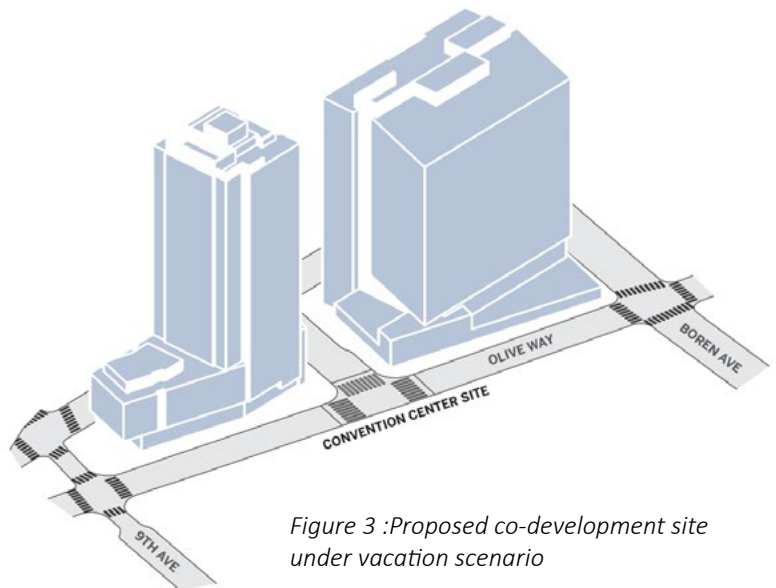


Figure 3 :Proposed co-development site under vacation scenario

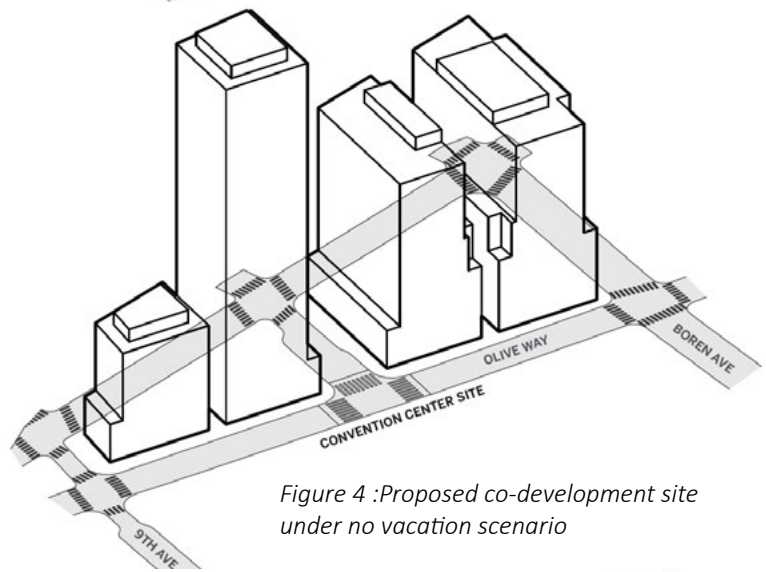


Figure 4 :Proposed co-development site under no vacation scenario



Figure 5 :Proposed below grade loading docks and service area

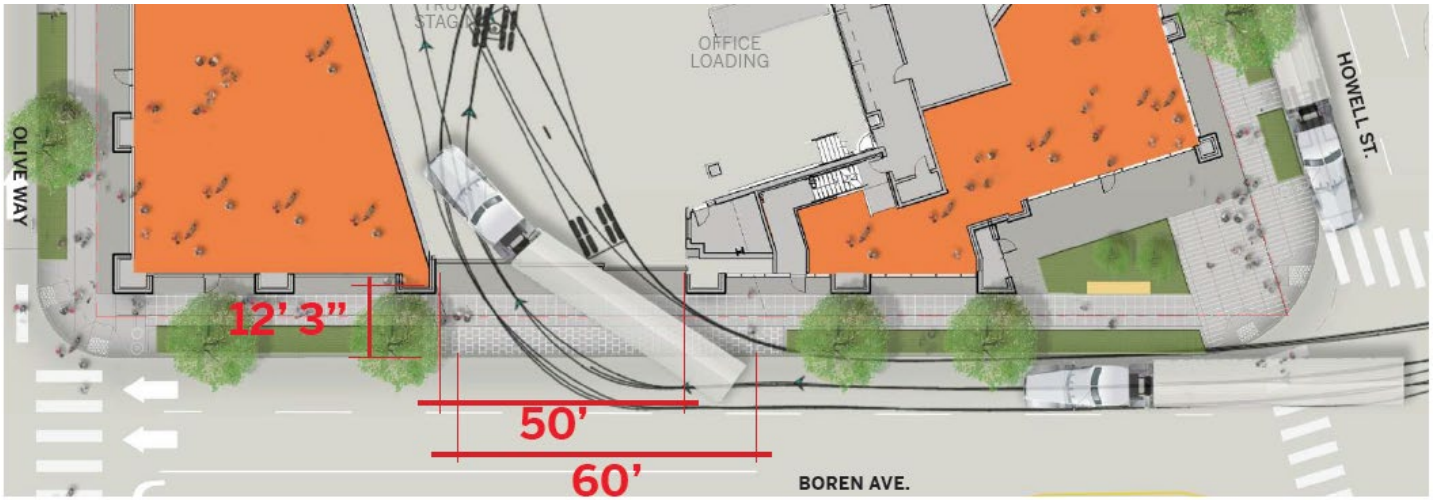


Figure 6 :Proposed curb cut on Boren Ave. for co-development site c

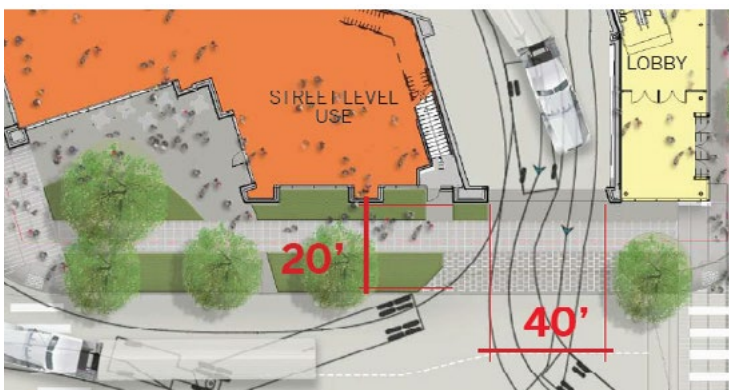


Figure 7 :Proposed curb cut on Terry Ave

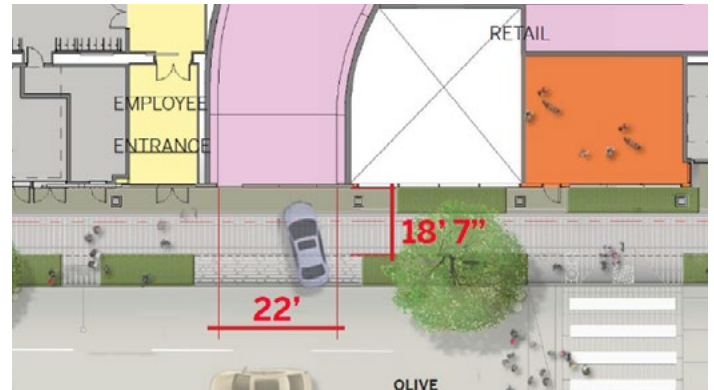


Figure 8: Proposed curb cut on Olive Way

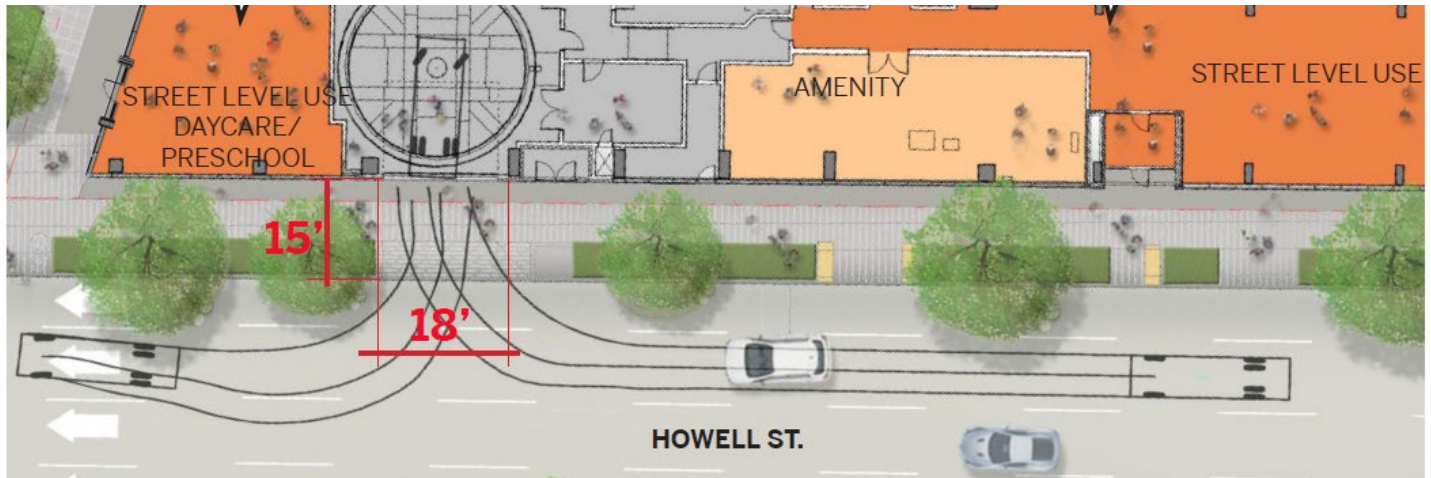


Figure 9: Proposed curb cut on Howell St

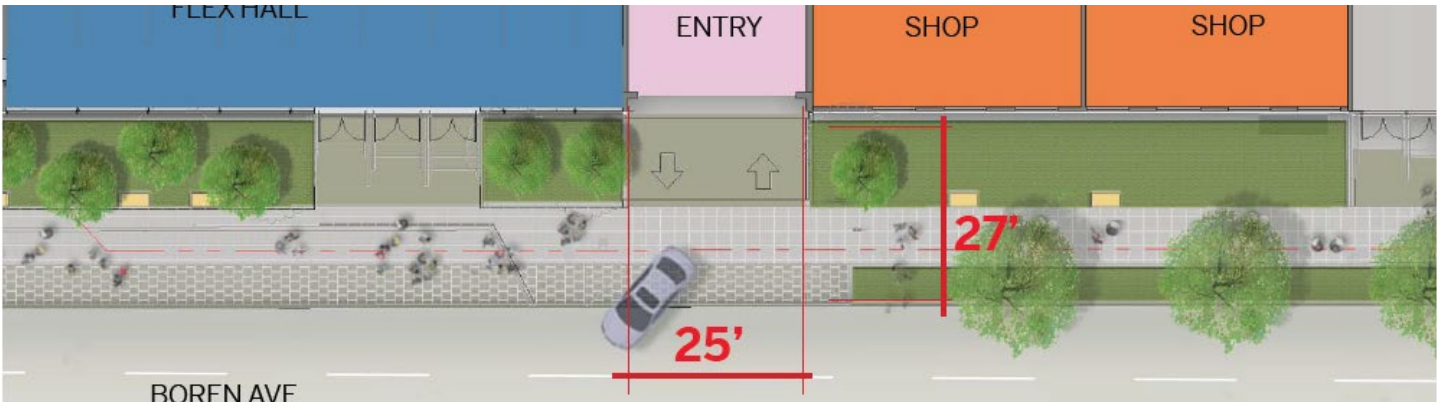


Figure 10 :Proposed curb cut on Boren Ave for Convention Center expansion

recommendations provided by the 4culture Public Art Advisory Committee to executive and county council. She then mentioned 4culture has shared the documentation with the Pine Street Group as well. Ms. Brunner stated that as an advocate for public art, 4culture strongly supports the inclusion of both ideas and the works of artists in the built environment, especially within important civic environments such as this project. Ms. Brunner hopes to see an ambitious publicly accessible art program that will celebrate the culture of this region, provided the project moves forward.

Public Comments

Jack Mackie, Citizen, stated that the SDC's mission is to "ensure Seattle is a world class example of sustainable urban design that strengthens community, public life and urban prosperity". Mr. Mackie then stated that this project fails to rise to that mission. He then said this commission cannot approve urban design merit until the project team makes fundamental program design changes that will fully support other downtown plans. After which, Mr. Mackie said that the convention center expansion proposal requires large amounts of parking, creates horrible edges, provides low wage jobs, and will sit empty, creating another dead zone in Downtown Seattle and questions how small spaces will attract local businesses. Mr. Mackie then stressed that Boren Ave. will be reduced to functioning as an alley due to the large curb cuts, minimal sidewalk widths, questionable plantings and back of house services. Mr. Mackie claims that this type of use is neither civic, iconic, nor relatable to any of the surrounding neighborhood pattern and will never serve as a great addition to the City of Seattle.

Ellen Sollod, Sollod Studio, in acknowledging the level of difficulty, said the design team has made efforts to make it this project fit in with the surrounding environment. Ms. Sollod then said that she is deeply concerned about the public realm surrounding the expansion facility, which should not be designed to satisfy program. Ms. Sollod then asked that if everyone thought about the project as a public facility for the public, then how might that affect the design? Ms. Sollod is very concerned about the design along Boren Ave. She mentioned that other projects along Boren have done nothing to improve the pedestrian experience and that this project is no different. Ms. Sollod is also very concerned with having large trucks exiting onto Terry Ave, which is a green street. Ms. Sollod then stated her concern about the location and viability of three walk up spaces near the freeway along Pine. Ms. Sollod is against approving the vacation requests and suggested the project team rather think about either a no vacation scenario or providing a different use entirely.

John Price, Community leader, mentioned that art and artists are an extremely important part of our community. Mr. Price appreciates how important it is to see and experience the thriving world of art. He is tremendously impressed with how the WSCC has presented artwork for visitors and community members in the past. Mr. Price is in strong support of the WSCC expansion and is excited to have art continue to be a major complement of the convention center programs in the future.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Circulation and access
- Street level uses/pedestrian realm
- The art program
- Urban form

Circulation and access

The SDC requested that the WSCC team and SDOT finalize the elements of the Boren Avenue truck ingress at the co-development site, including the width of the curb cut and the width and height of the garage opening. This will help the SDC determine the urban design impacts of these features on Boren and the related pedestrian environment. Commissioners encouraged the design team to seek the narrowest possible curb-cut and recommended the design team be very clear as to why a 60-foot wide curb cut is needed and that it is supported by SDOT. The Commission sees this as a larger opportunity regarding practices and policies by SDOT related to large truck movement throughout the downtown area.

Commissioners appreciated the wide sidewalks that are proposed at the co-development sites along Terry Ave and Olive Way. Because Terry Ave is designated as a green street, SDC strongly recommended the project team create a design that is very welcoming to pedestrians and cyclists.

The SDC reminded the project team that the discussion of impacts on utilities is required during the urban design merit phase. The commission expects the project team to discuss potential impacts on utilities during the next presentation.

Street level uses/pedestrian realm

As in previous reviews for urban design merit, the SDC expressed its concerns with the overall design of the pedestrian realm surrounding the expansion facility and co-development sites. Specifically, commissioners are concerned with the proposed conditions along Boren Ave, between Pine St and Howell St, which includes one large curb cut for loading access north of Olive Way and an additional curb cut for parking south of Olive Way as well as limited opportunity for interaction between the expansion facility and pedestrians. The commission recommended the project team continue to advance designs of the public realm to address the pedestrian conditions created by the vacations, including the conditions along Boren Ave at both the WSCC facility and the co-development site.

The SDC recommended the project team explore opportunities for street level cultural amenities along Boren and Olive at the WSCC site instead of retail, with the goal of creating street level activation throughout the project site. The commission is concerned about the viability of the proposed retail spaces on Boren and Olive and believes that cultural facilities could provide better street level activation. The Commission also recommended the project team create a cohesive streetscape design that will be implemented on both sides of Pine Street and 9th Avenue. The current proposal appears to focus only on the portion of these rights of way abutting their project.

The SDC is concerned with the lack of implementation of framework elements presented during the presentation. Although the project team spoke about creating experiences within the public realm along Pine Street and Boren Ave where pedestrians can appreciate elements of the building (artwork, activity, architectural features etc.) and including sustainability elements (materials, natural drainage, etc.), Commissioners are concerned that there will not be enough space within these rights of way to accomplish their goals.

The art program

The SDC requested more information about what artwork is required and what is being considered as public benefit. The SDC feels strongly that most public artwork should be displayed in public areas, including areas visible from the street. Commissioners recommended the project team consider placing artwork that can be viewed from the street level to enhance the pedestrian experiences. The commission recommended including an artist or artists as part of the design team, allowing them the opportunity to integrate artwork within the design and programming of the facility.

Urban form

The SDC recommended the project team communicate how this project merits the loss by the public of the streets and alleys that are being vacated. The project team needs to show what the public is gaining because of the vacations, and not simply the benefits that are provided to the development. The SDC also requested further clarification on the pedestrian experience at the intersections of 9th Ave, Olive Way, and Howell St.

The SDC understands the relationship between the convention center expansion facility and the two co-development sites and acknowledges that both co-developments could have a positive impact on the streetscape. The commission requests that the WSCC team clearly state their commitment to constructing the co-development sites if the proposed vacations are approved.

Action

The SDC did not take an action during today's meeting. The Commission provided the following recommendations that should be addressed prior to the next SDC meeting:

1. Show necessity for a 60-foot wide curb cut truck access location on Boren, with the goal of reducing the length of the curb cut.
2. Refine designs for the Terry Avenue and Olive Way sidewalks at the co-development sites in a way that continues to enhance the pedestrian experience.
3. Provide additional design details that further enhance the pedestrian network on Boren, in part due to the impacts created by the curb cuts at the WSCC site and the co-development site.
4. Provide an updated presentation on the impacts of the vacations on utilities.
5. Provide opportunities to include cultural amenities, in particular on streets where ground level retail is not viable.
6. Show how the enhancements to sustainability, art, views of the structure's interior are enhancing the public realm, in particular on all sides of the facility.

7. Provide more information on where public art that is required to be retained will be located and where opportunities to provide public art will be provided, in particular those areas that are within the public realm. This includes having an artist join the team.
8. Provide detailed information on the pedestrian experience at the intersection of 9th, Olive and Howell.
9. Provide a clear statement about what the development is gaining as opposed to what the public is gaining as a result of the vacations.
10. Provide a commitment from the project team that the co-development sites will be constructed if the vacations are approved.