



APPROVED

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
April 17, 2008**

**Seattle
Design
Commission**

Convened: 8:30am
Adjourned: 4:30pm

Greg Nickels
Mayor

Karen Kiest
Chair

Tasha Atchison

Brendan Connolly

John Hoffman

Mary Johnston

Juanita LaFond

Dennis Ryan

Norie Sato

Darrell Vange

Darby Watson

Guillermo Romano
Executive Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Projects Reviewed

Fire Station 21 – Greenwood
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen
Rainier Vista at University of Washington
Blume Yale Campus Woonerf & Swale
West Seattle Wayfinding System
Street and Alley Vacation Process
Greenwood Avenue North Improvements

Design Commissioners Present

Karen Kiest, Chair
Tasha Atchison
Brendan Connolly
John Hoffman
Mary Johnston
Juanita LaFond
Dennis Ryan
Norie Sato
Darrell Vange
Darby Watson

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino
Ian Macek



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17 April 2008 **Project: Rainier Vista at University of Washington**

Phase: Concept Design

Last Reviews:

Presenters: Kristine Kenney, University of Washington

Attendees: Rebecca Herzfeld, City Council Central Staff

Martha Lester, City Council Central Staff

Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

Time: 1.0 hour

(SR169 /RS0613)

ACTION

The Design Commission thanks the team for the briefing and unanimously supports the project with the following comments:

- **The Commission feels this concept provides a strong foundation for preserving the power of the Vista.**
- **The concept presented is a superior solution to solving various connections (ST, UW communities, UW Hospital) as well as enhancing the Vista itself.**
- **Concerns that without a funding and implementation strategy, the concept faces many difficulties in keeping to the Sound Transit schedule requirements.**
- **The concept resolves many of the issues and concerns the Commission had at the December briefing on the University of Washington light rail station by Sound Transit. The goal of protecting the vista and simplifying it has been achieved.**
- **Appreciates the ongoing interaction with Sound Transit.**
- **Encourage the team to reassess the phasing and move Phase III, the Montlake Triangle, higher on the list.**
- **Concern over the funding challenge and donor base. Encourage expanding donor base to include other partners in the Phase III portion of the project.**

Disclosures: Commissioner Watson’s firm is working on the University of Washington Transit Station. Commissioner Johnston and Commissioner Ryan both work at the University of Washington.

Project Presentation

Project Background

The Rainier Vista at the University of Washington is a cherished, major open space. The perimeters extend from Red Square to the intersection of Pacific Street and Montlake Boulevard, encompassing all the open space between the buildings that frame the vista. The plan for the transformation of the vista was created due to the changes that are happening in the area. The goals of the project are to wrap the following concepts together: Sustainability, Identity, Accessibility, and Scale. The vista is made up of many different parts and pieces. The overall goal was to simplify and reinforce the buffer. The concept includes reinforcing the center and the vista, while bringing functionality into the

landscape. There is no funding in place, but a concept that has been broken into four phases that will be presented to potential donors for financial support.

Phase I: Donor Garden

The scale of the fountain dominates this space and the surrounding landscape does not contribute to setting the fountain into the context.. This is the only level area along the vista, and the plan proposes creating a garden landscape with taller canopy trees to provide scale and an plaza area that could be used for University events.

Phase II: Upper Vista

This includes the area between Mary Gates and Johnson Halls. Here the lawn and shrub areas along the buildings would be switched. This provides an elevated lawn area where people-watching can take place and puts the texture of shrub planting and additional seating directly adjacent to where people are walking.

Phase III: Montlake Triangle.

The University is working closely with Sound Transit on the needs for the pedestrian bridge. This plan lowers Pacific Place and slightly raises the end of the Vista to provide a grade separated crossing for pedestrians. A spur of the Burke-Gilman Trail would follow the alignment of Pacific Place to ensure the mandated separated crossing. This plan re-integrates the triangle into the overall landscape of the campus and makes it an active hub of pedestrian activity.

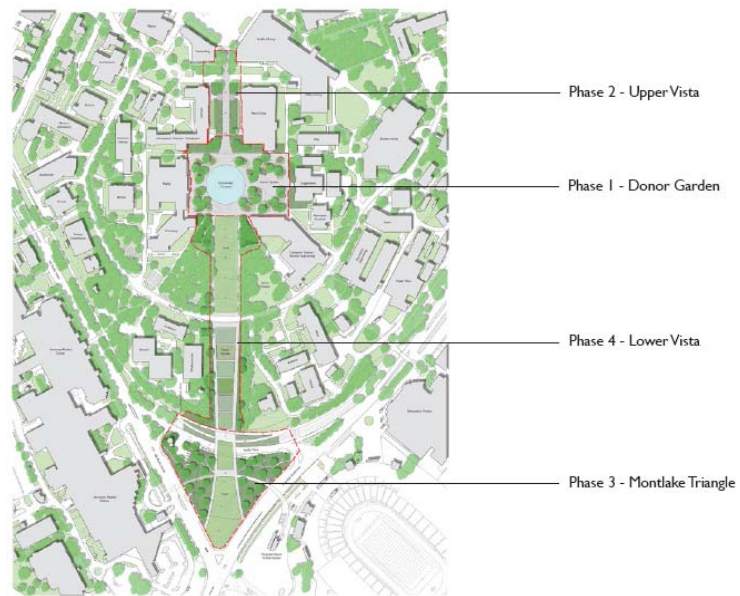


Figure 2: Rainier Vista Phasing Plan

Phase IV: Lower Vista

This lawn area is currently used for active and passive recreation and would likely remain in some form. However, the southern portion is proposed to be used as a rain garden that will provide additional seating and create a memorable gateway to the University.

The plan proposes collecting stormwater runoff all along the vista. Roof water would be collected and stored in the cisterns within Drumheller Fountain. Runoff from Stevens Way would be collected in a series of raingardens that would filter out pollutants and then stored in a cistern under the raingardens.

This information was submitted by the presenter after the meeting for clarification:

Schedule for a possible Sound Transit pedestrian bridge redesign to accommodate a U of W approved and funded Rainer Vista master plan.

Before Bid:

Sound Transit will need direction from the U of W before the end of the 3rd quarter of 2009. This allows the bridge to be redesigned prior to Issue for Bid. This requires remobilization of the design team. This allows the Issue for Bid documents to contain the redesigned bridge.

Before construction and after Notice to Proceed:

Sound Transit will need direction from the U of W before the end of 2011. This allows the design team to delete and reissue drawings to the bridge contractor for re-pricing and construction. This is a change order to an existing contract at this point in time. Again, this requires remobilization of the design team.

Public Comments

Suggest collaboration to Councilmember Drago. The City Council has the final decision on the Sound Transit skybridge. If the Council wants to see this possibility, it will need to be worked out how to structure the decision amongst all parties.

Commissioners' Comments

- Is there an update on the UW collaboration with Sound Transit?
 - The Sound Transit team has given a timeframe on when the design of their bridge can be altered. When UW has committed to the lowering of Pacific Place, then it would be clear the bridge could be changed.
- How would the grades work?
 - Sound Transit requires 25' from top of structure to elevation of road (including Montlake and Pacific Place)
- What is the node?
 - An elevator that goes to a Sound Transit proposed bus stop at the tip of the triangle.
- What is the status of this plan?
 - This plan has gone through a UW steering committee and various other University review committees. It is being packaged into a marketing report to present to donors. It isn't something that needs to go before the Regents at this time.
- An assessment of pedestrian traffic flow needs to be conducted on where pedestrians will want to go and how they will get there. The station will change things dramatically over time. The functional demands are not being addressed by any of the plans.

- Sound Transit has done studies on users, but only as far as who will arrive at the station. This plan focuses on the entire vista and how to enhance it, not just on the Montlake Triangle. How people disperse will need to be addressed. This plan does allow people to freely choose where to go.
- Appreciate the effort to pay someone to come in with a strong vision.
- Montlake Triangle should be the first priority. Unifying King County, Sound Transit, and the University. This should be moved to Phase I.
 - The phasing was built around what donors would want to see, and centered on the fountain. It was a way to segment out manageable sized projects. The Montlake Triangle is the most expensive portion and is beyond what is expected from donor contributions. It should be a combined effort amongst the agencies.
- Much of this is in the city ROW.
- This bridge option respects the vista more.
- How do people go to the health science center?
 - They would go over the bridge to the triangle and across the triangle to the existing pedestrian crossing. In the future, if funding was available, the plan shows a potential pedestrian bridge, mirroring the bridge from the station.
- It is important and doable to find donors to fund Phase III first. It is a crucial piece of the overall project.
 - There are two different timelines. UW could commit today and the bridge could be redesigned to go out in the first bid package. The second timeline would be to design the bridge as is, but the plan would be shelved before it would be bid, so there is an option to have the bridge redesigned. Have about two years, potentially a little more, to make a decision.
- The vision should be bigger. It should resolve other transportation issues such as bus stops and traffic flow as well as pedestrians and bicycles.
 - This portion is only conceptual. Focusing on the entire vista.
- This should be a joint study tied into other efforts.
- Appreciate graceful arc of the bridge.
- There will be a lot of at-grade surface crossings of Montlake with the amount of parking near the station with both plans.
- Concern over aesthetic of the water retention area of the vista.
 - Good example at Wellesley College, the newly created Alumnae Valley design by the same consultant, Michael VanValkenburgh Associates.
- The challenge will be how to make this a successful inter-modal area.
- This component solves some of the issues that were seen in the Sound Transit skybridge. This proposal makes sense out of the triangle.