



## APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**Mike McGinn**  
Mayor

**Diane Sugimura**  
Director, DPD

**Marshall Foster**  
Planning Director, DPD

**Mary Johnston**  
Chair

**Andrew Barash**

**Julie Bassuk**

**Graham Black**

**Brendan Connolly**

**Lauren Hauck**

**Laurel Kunkler**

**Julie Parrett**

**Norie Sato**

**Donald Vehige**

**Guillermo Romano**  
Executive Director

**Valerie Kinast**  
Coordinator

**Tom Iurino**  
Senior Staff

**April 15, 2010**

Convened 10:00 am  
Adjourned 5:30 pm

### Projects Reviewed

West Seattle Reservoir Park  
Councilmember Tom Ramussen  
Childrens Hospital Design Guidelines  
Childrens Hospital Laurelon  
Westlake Transportation Hub Strategy

### Commissioners Present

Mary Johnston, Chair  
Andrew Barash  
Brendan Connolly  
Julie Bassuk  
Graham Black  
Lauren Hauck  
Laurel Kunkler  
Julie Parrett  
Norie Sato  
Donald Vehige

### Staff Present

Guillermo Romano  
Valerie Kinast  
Tom Iurino  
Jenny Hampton



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**April 15, 2010**      **Project:**      **Westlake Transportation Hub Strategy**

**Phase:**      Design Update  
**Last Reviewed:**      December 3, 2009; August 6, 2009  
**Presenters:**      Casey Hildreth, SDOT

**Attendees:**      Brian Holloway, SDOT  
                          Lloyd Douglas, Cascade NC  
                          Darby Watson, SDOT  
                          Geoff Wentlandt, DPD  
                          Karen Janosky, community member  
                          Barbara Grey, SDOT  
                          Brooks Kolb, Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks  
                          Gary Johnson, DPD

**Time:** 4:10pm – 5:20pm

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## **ACTION**

The Design Commission thanks Casey Hildreth of SDOT for the update on the design for the McGraw Streetcar Plaza. Commissioners appreciate the big design move to close part of Westlake to traffic and integrate it into the plaza. There is strength in integrating it into an overall strategy for the larger Westlake Transportation Hub Strategy.

The Commission approved the design as presented with a four to two vote. The dissenting votes were because Commissioners didn't see the level of refinement as constituting complete design. The Commission provided the following recommendations:

- Although the idea of providing flexibility for various future uses on the space is a strong one, the design does not meet this intent sufficiently, it is too rigid.
- The design should provide a strong framework that inform and be flexible enough for later design strategies.
- Activate the area east of the streetcar tracks.
- The Commission offered to work with SDOT to refine the design.

**NOTE:** Subsequent to the meeting a subcommittee of the Commission participated in a small workshop with Casey and other City staff on revisions to the design. The approved plan and the revised plan are both posted under this meeting's minutes on the Design Commission website.

## **Project Presentation**

Casey Hildreth presented the proposed Westlake Transportation Hub Strategy to the Design Commission. The team's goal is a strategic plan for the hub focusing on making connections and a seamless transit network.

The site is a triangular space called McGraw Square Park. This area contains the statue of John McGraw and two trees placed within brick triangle paving. It is an isolated island in the middle of the Seattle streetscape. This space is noisy with traffic. However it has the potential to link transportation and the retail core of downtown.

Presently, this area has been reviewed by the Department of Planning and Development and Hewitt Architects for its urban connections which have been used as a reference for this design. In this proposed concept, the idea is to look at the street car connection and how it can activate the plaza and create a new space in this triangle. After securing grant funding to make improvements for this space, the team proposed the following elements for the site within the constraints of the budget:

- a second streetcar platform that will connect the triangle
- focus on natural drainage and landscaping
- covered bike parking
- lighting emphasis on nighttime safety and visual “pop” of the island
- spatial program/utilities for future vending or retail and secure bike parking facility

The development of this program will be phased in over time and this design will act as a foundation from which these components can grow. The preferred design includes the above elements in a loose circular form that includes a rain garden, vendor area, a focus on the statue, a street car platform and a bike parking structure. The proposed design also incorporates a phased landscape plan that utilizes native species for seasonality and survival.

From here, we are going to be focusing on a management and maintenance for the site. That conversion is the next phase.

The project grant calls for construction in 2010. Accounting for this deadline, we are nearing completion on the design and are awaiting landscaping details, traffic flow information, and maintenance plans for the site. The team is also developing phased strategies for bike parking and vendor facilities.



Site Plan

## Public Comments

### Brooks Kolb, Friends of Seattle Olmstead Parks

We were unaware of how far along this design has advanced. At its current state, we have some broad concerns. First we think that it's terrific that we are going to get a new open space, however we think that there is a missed opportunity because the design does not link to Westlake Plaza. We have specific concerns about the lack of street trees, narrow sidewalks and that it is not specifically green in any sense. This would present an opportunity to have some green into the city that has very little here in this area. When dealing with such a significant space downtown, it would be encouraged to have a highly rigorous design process in order to provide the public with something great.

### Gary Johnson, DPD

Casey did really extensive outreach for this project. The stakeholders want this to be done right and not tacky. In terms of landscape, stakeholders mentioned that the space needs to be active and in this scheme, the landscape holds to this. Additionally, I like the idea to collaborate with City Design and the Design Commission in a conversation, but I wouldn't want to slow down the process either.

## Commissioners' Comments and Questions

*What is the blue line in the plan?*

It is the path of water that will be draining to the rain gardens.

*Is there a reason why there might be few trees in this area on the south side?*

There are technical reasons why not to put plant trees in some places.

*How does the design relate to the Blue Ring study and broader connections? I feel that those questions need to be answered. If this is supposed to be a linkage like Times Square how does this design relate to the surrounding areas? Why is the design that Hewitt did not the ultimate goal?*

There has been a lot of visioning for this space, but nothing was happening. Opportunities come up where now this is valued as a transportation priority. This is supposed to lay the framework for the space. The funding was very quick and we are trying to move forward without trying to eliminate future designs. We are getting a lot more elements on the ground since we are designing it internally.

*For the shared bike/passenger structure, what is its capacity?*

We are trying to go with a 10-12 foot structure, which will fit between 4-6 racks.

*Can you talk about what is happening on the south side by the streetcar?*

We are leaving the platform in place. The vision is that the private side will be able to go up to the streetcar at this time.

*Is this design intended to be interim? If so, is it intended to be phase one of a multiple phased project?*

Yes, it is within this plan.

*So this is the ultimate plan or goal for the future?*

Yes, it is less than an interim design, but a flexible one that is going to incorporate future features.

*Have you discussed the drainage structures and how drainage might be incorporated?*

We have talked about this detail.

*I have concerns about connections to the larger context and the landscape strategies with this proposed design.*

*Can you get some other vertical elements into the space? Right now it feels really exposed. Giving it more of an edge might give it more of a heart. I would like to see a few more trees and maybe lighting.*

*I encourage figuring out the detail of how the train will work and how this alignment might work. Get a firmer handle on this.*

*It is a very urban environment surrounded by tall buildings. My concern is the look of the bicycle structure. Having a design competition could be a way to incorporate new ideas.*

*Maybe there is an opportunity to incorporate vertical elements without making it about incorporating trees. It is important to keep activation there beyond the vendors. Signage will also be really important for tourists. Is there any way that you could make some sort of symbol for public transit wayfinding consistent throughout the city?*

*I think that this is a fantastic urban design move and connection. Your initiative to take advantage of the funding you have is very smart and the idea of phasing is very progressive. However the design does not take this into account. My concern is that you are not actually doing that and you need to have a clear notion of where you want to go. What I really feel needs to happen is to take a look at how this space relates in context around the site, it needs to be expressed in terms of experience and what will happen here, what will ultimately happen here and what will it feel like. You can set certain parameters, but you need to design what it is going to be in the future. When I look at the proposed design, it looks haphazard and it isn't very flexible because the geometry is so determined. Before it goes to bid, it would be good to stop and think about the ultimate goal.*

*This plaza is not just north of the streetcar, but in this total space. This site could be a testing ground to see what might work and what might not for the urban environment.*

*I would like to see what plants you are putting into the site, A lot of these plants are going to be exposed and natives might not be the best fit.*

*What are the budget requirements and timeline?*

We need to start construction in 2010 and build it.

*I appreciate the "get it done" approach, but it is decision that will last for 50-100 years and we need to do get it right.*