



APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Ed Murray
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Osama Quotah, Chair

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Megan Groth

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Ross Tilghman

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Nicolas Welch
Planner

Joan Nieman
Administrative Staff

August 7 2014

Convened 12:00 pm

Adjourned 4:30 pm

Projects Reviewed

Swedish Ballard Skybridge

Northgate Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge

Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Vice Chair

Bernie Alonzo (arrived at 3:45 pm)

Brodie Bain

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Megan Groth

Commissioners Excused

Osama Quotah, Chair

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

Ross Tilghman

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins

Valerie Kinast

Nicolas Welch

Joan Nieman

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August 7, 2014
1:30 – 3:00 pm

Project: Swedish Ballard Skybridge
Phase: SDOT Term Permit
Previous reviews: 8/1/2013

Presenters: Steve Gillespie Foster Pepper
 Jennifer Graves Swedish Medical Center
 Rex Kerby Swedish Medical Center

Attendees: Lily Jung Henson Swedish Medical Center
 Thomas Whittemore DON
 Amy Gray SDOT

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

Purpose of Review

The purpose of this meeting was to review and provide recommendations to SDOT on a new term permit ordinance for an existing skybridge across Tallman Ave NW north of NW Central Pl in Ballard. Ballard Community Hospital originally obtained permission to construct the skybridge in October 1982 by [Ordinance 110823](#).

The City of Seattle Skybridge Review Committee (SRC) reviewed the proposal and on July 23, 2013, recommended that the term permit ordinance for the existing skybridge be approved. The SRC found recently completed improvements at Swedish Ballard to be sufficient public benefit but recognized that the Design Commission may recommend additional elements.

Today's meeting was the second time the Commission reviewed Swedish Medical Center's proposed public benefit package. The Commission first reviewed the proposal on August 1, 2013, and postponed voting because they found the public benefit items inadequate. As part of that decision, the Commission acknowledged the necessity of keeping the skybridge.

Summary of Proposal

Swedish Ballard is seeking a new term permit ordinance for its existing skybridge across Tallman Ave NW. The skybridge connects the third floor level of the hospital with a parking garage, sterile processing facility, loading dock, water chiller, and emergency power generators. It provides a pedestrian crossing, utility connection, and passage for transporting medical supplies. The skybridge also provides the only ADA access between the hospital and parking garage.

The proposed public benefit package was adjusted since the August 1, 2013, review and includes:

- A publicly accessible, 8,000-square-foot private open space at NW Market St and Barnes Ave NW called Eldridge Garden
- New ADA seating area at Barnes Ave NW
- Landscaped plaza at 17th Ave NW

- Sidewalk improvements on the north side of Tallman Ave NW southeast of the skybridge
- An easement for a publicly accessible through-block connection from Tallman Ave NW to Russell Ave NW along the north property line of the Swedish Ballard parking garage
- A street mural at the intersection of Tallman Ave NW and NW Central Pl
- Landscaping along Tallman Ave NW where the skybridge meets the hospital

Previously the Design Commission had recommended exploring improving at-grade crossings. In response, the applicant has proposed a street mural at Tallman Ave NW and NW Central Pl. SDOT has agreed that this location meets the criteria for a mural. The proposal entails a request for designs from the community, a community vote for the winning design, and a block party to paint it.

Summary of Presentation

Steve Gillespie introduced the project team. Jennifer Graves described the Swedish Ballard hospital and its operations. She noted some of the unique programs Swedish Ballard offers, its role as a neighborhood hospital and nonprofit healthcare provider, and recent changes in the Ballard neighborhood. She said Swedish provided \$3.5 million in community benefit last year, including education, uncompensated care, and medical services at Ballard High School.

Steve Gillespie gave the presentation dated August 7, 2014, and available on the [Design Commission website](#). A photograph showed the skybridge, which was built in 1982 in conjunction with the garage and sterile processing facility it connects to the hospital. A series of diagrams explained the Commission's previous conclusion that the skybridge is necessary to retain. Of particular note, Mr. Gillespie said that Tallman Ave NW, though not an arterial, sees relatively high vehicle speeds because of its oblique connection to NW Market St; vehicles use it to shortcut to the Ballard Bridge. Accordingly, an at-grade crossing is problematic for mobility-impaired people.

Mr. Gillespie detailed the public benefits package. The 8,000 sf Eldridge Garden at NW Market St and Barnes Ave NW replaced a large concrete plaza and structure with landscaped open space and a rain garden. Mr. Gillespie described this as an important amenity given the recent housing growth and relative dearth of green space in Ballard. He also illustrated the value of Eldridge Garden through a cost comparison to other similarly sized pocket parks and to the 7,500 sf hardscape plaza at Grange Insurance Group, which was public benefit mitigation for that project's skybridge.

Mr. Gillespie stated that such existing improvements ought to count as public benefit since electing to develop Eldridge Garden before the term permit expired resulted in over a year of extra community use. He stated that the City and Design Commission ought to encourage private development to do this sort of gratuitous public benefit however possible.

The proposed easement along the north property line of the Swedish Ballard parking garage would facilitate a landscaped, lighted, and accessible pedestrian connection on the adjoining property between Tallman Ave NW and Russell Ave NW; this route is already heavily used by the public. While at a previous review the Commission had scrutinized the fact that Swedish is not paying for the landscaping in this space, Mr. Gillespie stated that the easement is nevertheless an encumbrance on several thousand square feet of property owned by Swedish that could otherwise be put to institutional uses.

In describing the landscaped areas included in the public benefit package, Mr. Gillespie mentioned that Swedish Ballard has retained a full-time groundskeeper to maintain these spaces.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission was pleased with the additions to the public benefit package. While using existing improvements as public benefit items may limit how much design direction the Commission can effectively provide, the Commission recognized that this approach allows the public to benefit earlier from these improvements. There was consensus that formalized signage is essential to clearly and directly indicate the public nature of these spaces, particularly where the design does not intrinsically signal public access: the pathway between Eldridge Garden and Tallman Ave NW, the ADA seating area on 17th Ave NW, and the easement for a through-block connection between Tallman Ave NW and Russell Ave NW. In one Commissioner's words, knowing you can use the space is as important as the space itself.

The Commissioners made several suggestions for refining these public benefit items in particular and Swedish Ballard's connection to the public realm in general. Given that it no longer provides hospital access, closing the defunct porte-cochère at Barnes Ave NW would improve the street frontage and the experience at the adjacent ADA seating area. The Commission appreciated the design quality of spaces like Eldridge Garden but questioned the reliance on lawn from a sustainability perspective and encouraged Swedish Ballard to pursue less industrial and institutional furniture and materials in the future.

Agency Comments

Amy Gray, SDOT, noted that included in the Skybridge Review Committee memo was the recommendation that all public open space have signage indicating that is open 24 hours a day to the public. However, she didn't see this mentioned in the presentation. In particular, the path leading to Tallman Ave NW could use signage. Ms. Gray also requested that the public access easement be recorded on both abutting properties.

Public Comments

none

Action

The Design Commission thanked the team for presenting the updated public benefit package for the Swedish Ballard Skybridge. The Commission found the scale of the public benefit items was commensurate with the retention of the skybridge and provided a positive benefit for the community. The street mural at Tallman Ave NW and NW Central Pl was a particularly positive addition.

The Commission appreciated the high quality of places like Eldridge Garden and looks forward to seeing that level of design incorporated into other public benefit items, such as the ADA seating area along Barnes Ave NW. The Commission also encouraged further use of the edges of the Swedish Ballard campus as opportunities for occupiable spaces that are transitions with the public realm while recognizing that certain places, such as the aforementioned ADA area, warrant better integration into the street frontage as a whole.

With a **vote of 5 to 0**, the Design Commission approved the public benefit package for Swedish Ballard's petition for a new term permit ordinance for the existing skybridge over Tallman Ave NW. The public benefit package includes the following items, some of which are existing improvements:

- A publicly accessible, 8,000-square-foot private open space at NW Market St and Barnes Ave NW called Eldridge Garden
- New ADA seating area at Barnes Ave NW
- Landscaped plaza at 17th Ave NW
- Sidewalk improvements on the north side of Tallman Ave NW southeast of the skybridge
- An easement along the north property line of the Swedish Ballard parking garage allowing public access between Tallman Ave NW and Russell Ave NW
- A street mural at the intersection of Tallman Ave NW and NW Central Pl
- Landscaping along Tallman Ave NW where the skybridge meets the hospital

Given the applicant's responsibility to maintain the Tallman Ave NW sidewalk as an abutting property owner, the sidewalk improvements mentioned above shall go beyond any code-required obligations.

The approval includes the condition that Swedish Ballard install signage clearly indicating that these features and spaces are available and accessible for public use, particularly the ADA seating area along Barnes Ave NW, the path from Eldridge Garden to Tallman Ave NW, and the easement along the north side of the Swedish Ballard parking garage.

In addition, the Commission acknowledges the Skybridge Review Committee's recommendation that the easement should be recorded on both abutting properties. We also recognize that there may be practical or legal reasons that make this difficult to achieve, most notably that Swedish has no authority to encumber its neighbor's property with an easement favoring the City. Nevertheless, the intent of this request, and the expectation of the Commission, is that the through-block pedestrian connection shall be preserved and maintained for the life of the skybridge term permit. Swedish shall record an easement allowing public access over its property for the life of the skybridge term permit. Swedish is also encouraged to work with the adjoining landowner to keep the pathway north of the property line open to the public at least during the life of the skybridge term permit.

The Commission also made the following recommendations for further refinement of these public spaces and amenities:

- In addition to installing the required signage, explore ways to better define the ADA seating area space on Barnes Ave NW with planting.
- Pursue furniture choices that are less institutional and reflect current design options, such as movable seating, to enhance the public feel of the places.
- Continue working with SDOT on and ensure that the community is involved in the planning, design, installation, and maintenance of the street mural at Tallman Ave NW and NW Central Pl.