



APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Mike McGinn
Mayor

Diane Sugimura
Director, DPD

Marshall Foster
Planning Director, DPD

Julie Bassuk
Chair

Seth Geiser

Laurel Kunkler

Shannon Loew

Tom Nelson

Julie Parrett

Martin Regge

Osama Quotah

Ellen Sollod

Debbie Harris

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Tom Iurino
Senior Staff

April 4, 2013

Convened 8:30 am

Adjourned 4:30 pm

Projects Reviewed

10th Avenue Hillclimb
Railroad Avenue
Arena

Commissioners Present

Osama Quotah
Debbie Harris
Laurel Kunkler (joined at 11:00am)
Shannon Loew
Tom Nelson
Martin Regge
Ellen Sollod

Commissioners Excused

Julie Bassuk
Julie Parrett
Seth Geiser

Staff Present

Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino

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April 4, 2013
2:30pm – 4:30pm

Project: Arena
Review Type: Street Vacation and ROW Design Review
Phase: Urban Design Merit – Part 1
Previous Reviews: January 17, 2013

Presenters: Anton Foss, 360 Architecture
Jack McCullough, McCullough Hill Leary, PS
Barbara Swift, Swift Company
Brook Jacksha, Magnusson Klemencic

Attendees:
Tom Backer, Ballpark PFD
Beverly Barnett, SDOT
Calvin Chow, SDOT
Jessie Clawson, McCullough Hill Leary, PS
Cale Doornbos, 360 Architects
Matthew Hallett, 360 Architects
Amy Lindemuth, Swift Company
Sandra Mallory, OSE
Garry Papers, DPD
Susan Ranf, Mariners
Bryan Stevens, DPD
Nathan Torgelson, FAS

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

Purpose of Review

At this meeting the project proponents presented Part I of II of the Urban Design Merit aspect of the proposal to vacate the portion of Occidental Ave S between S Massachusetts St and S Holgate St. They familiarized the Commission with the development proposal at a meetings on December 6, 2012 and January 17, 2013. A presentation of Part II of the Urban Design Merit is anticipated for May 2013.

Besides the Urban Design Merit, the commission will review the Public Benefit aspect of the street vacation at future meetings. Approval by the Design Commission of both the Urban Design Merit and Public Benefit constitute a recommendation to the SDOT Director to recommend approval of the vacation to the City Council, which makes the ultimate decision on the vacation. Besides the vacation, the Design Commission will also review the design of the public realm at the project site, and provide recommendations to the SDOT director on this.

The Design Commission review is one component of the vacation review, which is led by SDOT. The project is receiving a number of other reviews also, including Design Review by the Downtown Design Review Board, Environmental Review by DPD, and Street Improvement Permit review by SDOT.

Summary of Proposal

The applicants are proposing to vacate the portion of Occidental Ave S that lies between S Massachusetts St and S Holgate St. in order to consolidate lots and build an approximately 700,000 sq ft, 20,000 spectator arena. The area of vacation would be approximately 40,800 sq ft (680 ft by 60 ft.). It is currently improved paving and gravel on either side, curbs, gutters, no sidewalks. According to early information, this part of Occidental is currently being used as a staging area for trucks for events at the existing stadiums to the north.

The public benefit they are proposing consists of:

1. A publically accessible private plaza on the site north of the stadium building.
2. A publically accessible private plaza off-site, north of S Massachusetts St.
3. Elevated View Decks
4. Two publically accessible basketball half-courts.
5. Increased building setbacks and sidewalk widths.

6. Public art.
7. Sustainable building features.

The development proposal is for a sports stadium of approximately 700,000 sq ft with seating for approximately 18,000 to 20,000 spectators on a 276,000 sq ft site (approximately 397 ft by 680 ft). The structure is about 400 ft wide by 700 ft long and 165 ft high. The program includes a field and seating, two practice courts, associated administrative, services, and support functions, as well as retail. Primary open space is a plaza at the north. Vehicle access points would be off of Holgate, Massachusetts, and a private drive along the east edge of the site, next to the BNSF right of way. The primary pedestrian entrance would be at the north, with a secondary one at the corner of Massachusetts and Holgate.

Summary of Presentation

The proponents presented background and context information. The project is in an industrial area south of downtown, just south of the two existing stadiums, between port uses to the west and railroad tracks to the east. To the south are industrial uses, and increasingly offices and a retail presence along 1st Ave. S. The site is at the south edge of the stadium district overlay, and DPD is in the process of working with stakeholders to update this planning.

The area where the arena is proposed is low, nearly at the level of Elliott Bay, which is to the west beyond the port facilities. Heights to the north gradually decrease from the skyscrapers of downtown, to the midrises of Pioneer Square. The two existing stadiums as well as the cranes to the west, SR-99 and the railways, are large forms in the industrial landscape. To the east beyond is Beacon Hill, and to the west the expanse of Elliott Bay. Current development at the site and areas to the south, east, and west is lowrise and industrial or commercial in character. Viewed from the south, the site is in the north of a low-lying industrial area punctuated by the historic landmark building which now houses Starbucks, and beyond it are the two existing stadiums and the downtown skyline.

The street grid in this part of the city varies between the fine grain of Pioneer Square, the larger industrial blocks east and south of the site, very large swaths where the stadiums, railyards, and Port are located. To either side of 1st Ave S, from downtown through the industrial area, there the smaller scale grid is retained in part.

Circulation in the area is complex. Rail lines run along the east side of the site, freight moves on trucks along Holgate and 1st Ave, light rail is a block away to the east, and people come to the area by car for work and events at the stadiums. To the north beyond the other stadiums is King St Station and west of that Colman Dock. SR-99 to the west is currently being reconfigured in preparation for boring the tunnel, and in the future the last opportunity to exit before entering the tunnel will be a few blocks north of the site.

The team went through their *powerpoint* presentation which is posted on the Design Commission website:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Commission/Project_Review_Meetings/Minutes/default.asp

They covered: Site conditions, city planning goals, history, existing uses, urban form, and connections, neighborhood character, corridor views, district street grid analysis, parking, and access, and utilities inventory and planning. They also presented analysis of two scenarios for development: Without street vacation, proposed arena.

As a general update on the overall design, they showed the most recent design, that was recently reviewed by the DRB and given approval by them to proceed into the MUP process.

Summary of Discussion

The conversation circled around the lack of analysis and conclusions of the information that was presented. The commissioners talked about what areas they would like to see addressed in more depth. Those are reflected in the Action below.

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, received petition last week.

Garry Papers, DPD, DRB had fourth EDG and passed on to MUP. Applaud more ped space on 1st, improvements to loading on Holgate, plaza orientation, needs work on visibility of turbine, including that it's obstructed by 20ft wall along top of building. Recommended removing or reducing fin wall of wrapper.

Public Comments

Susan Ranf – Mariners. Will submit written comments. Occidental serves important function must be thoroughly addressed. Private access is planned, but part listed as open space shouldn't be, because it's mitigation for loss of Occidental function.

ACTION

No action was taken. The second half of the Urban Design Merit presentation will be given at the May 2, 2013 Design Commission. A vote is anticipated at a later date.

The following summary was provided:

While information about the context was provided, it needs to be augmented and synthesized in order to fully explain how the new facility will become a valuable part of the urban fabric in this location. By giving up a part of Occidental, the public is losing a piece of functionality of the grid and the City is allowing for a much larger structure that brings with it visual, traffic, and other environmental impacts. There must be an explanation of how the design responds to and functions within the urban systems it is placed into. The commission needs to understand what design choices were made and how they add value to the city. It must be illustrated how the functionality of the right of way system is changed by removing a segment of Occidental and adding a large number of users to it, and that the various users of this important public service, right-of-way, will be served to a level expected by the City.

The area is changing rapidly and the tunnel project and ancillary improvements will bring changes too. It must be clear how this project works within those trends and affects the area in relation to this.

For next presentation of Urban Design Merit the Commission recommends addressing the following items:

1. What is the Urban Design Merit?
 - What is the overall value of adding this building, its uses, and functionality to our urban systems in this place.
 - How does the scale of the impacts of allowing a for a larger facility, by allowing vacation of Occidental, stand in relation to the value of what is being added here?
 - Given the observations the team had of the neighborhood, how is that analysis impacting the urban design of the building or the project enhancing/ changing those characteristics.
2. Pedestrian, transit, and bike movements along the edges of the site, and in the network as far out as it is affected.
 - Both the arena patrons and other users of the ROW must be considered. Also, it must be clear how the modal systems work in various seasons, times of days, event timing, etc..
 - Information such as pedestrian and vehicular counts, as well as trend information must be used to explain changes to the area.
 - Some specific areas: Holgate, 1st Ave S, loading at the north, RR crossing to east, Massachusetts.
3. Replacement of functions of this segment of Occidental as well as in the portions of occidental that are losing connectivity after the vacation.
4. Utility redundancy and safety.
5. The ways sustainability has driven the placement and integration of the building on its site, in this location.
6. The pedestrian experience of the arena in its context at the site, a short distance from the site, and from afar on game day, on non-game days.
7. What the site offers the non-paying, general public, and specifically how they are anticipated to use it on game days and non-game days.
8. The value of the fin wall and building edges in relating to the larger and immediate urban context.
9. The role of the plaza in the urban design context, at event and non-event times.
10. In the context of connections to major employers in the area, what does this project offer.

11. Systems were presented, but it remains to be shown how the proposal will affect or enhance them. For example it must be shown that the new arena won't hinder such functions as freight mobility, and commissioners will want to know how the design will enhance pedestrian and bike circulation. Trends in the area, parking, and fluctuations in schedules, are some of the considerations that must be explained.