

# Westin Hotel Skybridge

**Edward B. Murray**  
Mayor

**Samuel Assefa**  
Director, OPCD

**Shannon Loew**, Chair

**Ross Tilghman**, Vice Chair

**Brodie Bain**

**Lee Copeland**

**Ben de Rubertis**

**Thaddeus Egging**

**Rachel Gleeson**

**Laura Haddad**

**Jescelle Major**

**John Savo**

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## Commissioners Present

Ross Tilghman, Vice Chair  
Brodie Bain  
Lee Copeland  
Ben de Rubertis  
Thaddeus Egging  
Rachel Gleeson  
Laura Haddad  
Jescelle Major  
John Savo

## Commissioners Excused

Shannon Loew, Chair

## Project Description

The Westin Hotel is requesting approval to retain an existing skybridge that connects the hotel to an adjacent parking garage. The skybridge crosses Virginia Street between 5th Avenue and 6th Avenue and is located within the public right-of-way (ROW). In addition to providing direct access from the garage to the hotel, the skybridge provides internet services from servers located in the garage to the hotel and also serves as a connecting point for King County Metro's electrical bus lines, which are attached to the underside of the skybridge.

Because it is located within the public ROW, the Seattle Design Commission (SDC) is required to review projects requesting the reauthorization of an existing skybridge. The SDC will then provide a recommendation to SDOT and City Council regarding the applicant's request, including a public benefit package to mitigate the impact of the skybridge on the ROW.

## Meeting Summary

This meeting was to review the proposed public benefit package only. On July 16, 2015, the SDC voted to recommend the approval to retain the existing Westin Hotel Skybridge with the condition that required the project team to return with an expanded public benefit package. At this meeting, the SDC voted to approve, 9-0, the proposed public benefit package with a condition and recommendations. The Commission did not support the following proposed elements of the public benefit package: 1) Cleaning and painting & 2) illuminated identity sign.

## Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

**November 3, 2016****9:00 - 10:30 am****Type**

Skybridge

**Phase**

Public benefit

**Previous Reviews**[07/16/15](#)**Project Team Present****Jerry Coburn**

GCH

**Peter Krech**

Graphite Design Group

**Attendees****Beverly Barnett**

SDOT

**Jessica Clawson**

McCullough Hill Leary

**Louisa Galassini**

SDOT

**Diane Germain**

Westin Hotel

**Amy Gray**

SDOT

**Glen Hoffman**

Westin Hotel

**Kim Krech**

Graphite Design Group

**Qian Liu**

Student - UW

**Marc Oplinger**

Graphite Design Group

November 3, 2016

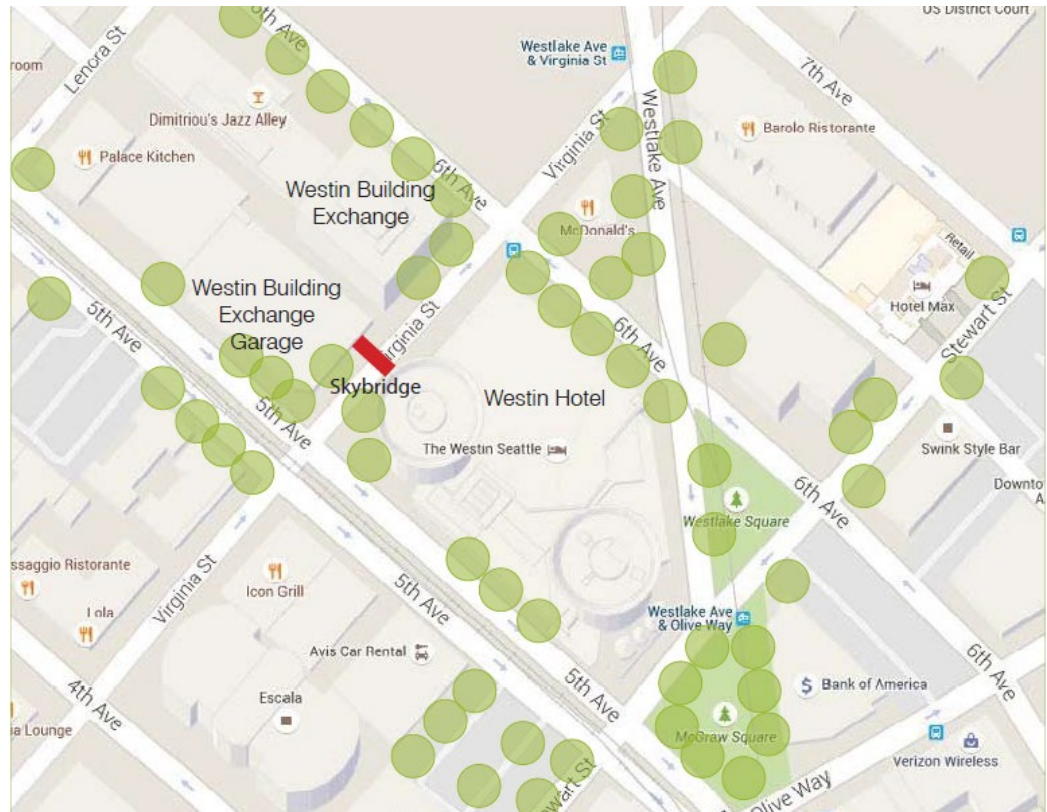


Figure 1: Site context map

**Summary of Presentation**

Prior to the presentation, Jessica Clawson with McCullough Hill Leary reminded the SDC that they had recommended approval to retain the Westin Hotel Skybridge on June 16, 2015 and that the purpose of this meeting was to review the public benefit package only.

Peter Krech with Graphite Design Group presented the public benefit package for the Westin Hotel Skybridge permit renewal. Mr. Krech provided project background and site context. The proposed public benefit package includes 15 elements spread throughout Virginia Street, between 5th and 6th Ave, and Westlake Square (See *figures 2 & 3*). The proposed elements on Virginia Street will provide improvements to the existing skybridge, bus stop, and building façade. The proposal includes the replacement of glass and the illumination of the existing skybridge, illuminated medallion elements, illuminated identity sign, two street trees, landscaping, The replacement of hotel exit doors with translucent glass, lighting improvements, two canvas awnings, three lean rails, and a continuation of the building façade in front of an unused portion of the mid-block garage entrance. The proposed medallions will include iconic images that are specific to the hotel, City of Seattle, and pacific northwest region. The proposed façade will include a porcelain stone oxide veneer in order, which will provide a backdrop for the medallion elements.

Proposed elements at Westlake Square include the repurposing of a planter bed to include permeable paving material near 6th Ave. as well as the addition of lean rails and benches along Westlake Ave. See *figure 3* for more details.

The package also included 6th Ave right of way improvements that were installed in 2015 by Westin as part of general upgrades to their facility.

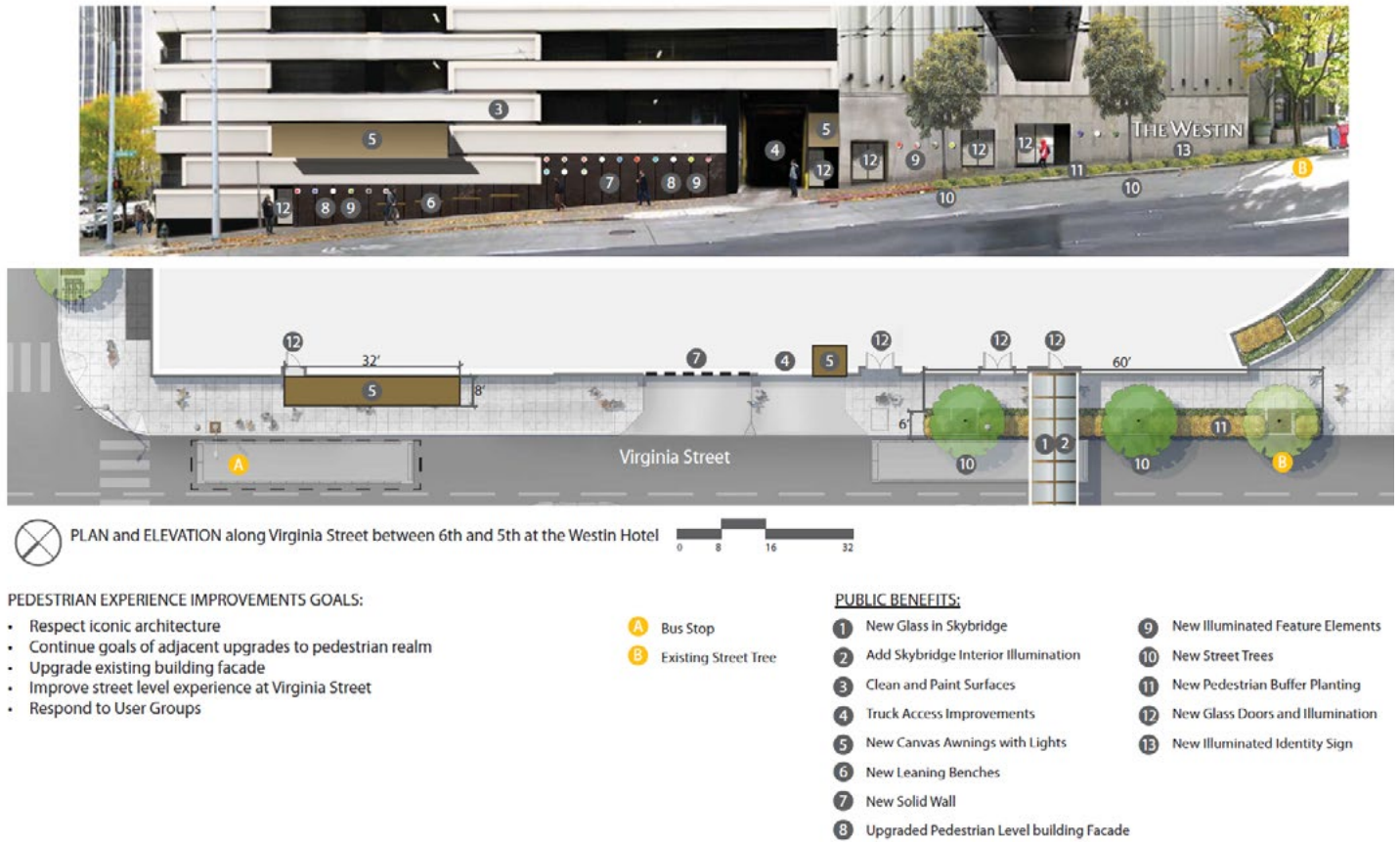


Figure 2: Proposed public benefit - Virginia St

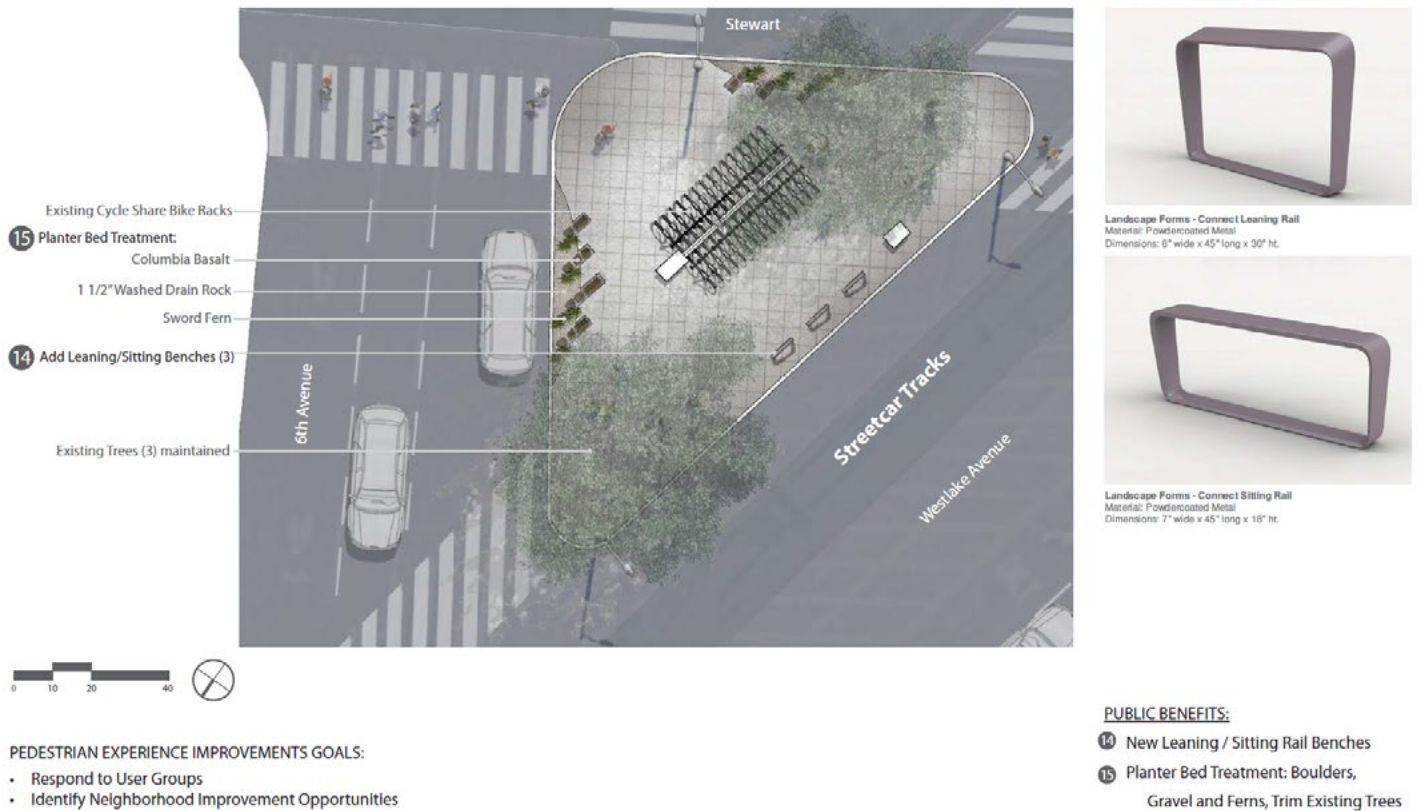


Figure 3: Proposed public benefit - Westlake Plaza



## Agency Comments

**Beverly Barnett**, of SDOT, is speaking on behalf of the Skybridge Review Committee (SRC). Ms. Barnett mentioned the presentation answered several questions and concerns the SRC had while reviewing the permit renewal. She further stated that the SRC reviews a skybridge permit renewal as if it were new skybridge being proposed. Ms. Barnett then stated that, because the SRC was not compelled to recommend the skybridge permit be renewed, the committee did not review the public benefit package. She then stated that both recommendations from the SRC and SDC will be reviewed by the SDOT director, who will provide a decision. The director's recommendations will then be presented to city council. Ms. Barnett thought positively of the proposed public benefit package. Although she mentioned that seeing the proposed amenities within the context of the neighborhood was very helpful and extremely important, Ms. Barnett also stated that a feasibility study would need to be conducted to approve specific elements.

## Public Comments

**None**

## Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Public benefit elements
- Physical improvements
- Landscape improvements

### *Public benefit elements*

The SDC identified two elements that should not be labeled as public benefit. Commissioners agreed the cleaning and painting of surfaces are maintenance items that are expected to be completed by the petitioner and should not be considered as public benefit. While it provides a source of lighting along Virginia St, the Commission also recommended the illuminated identity sign should not be considered as public benefit. The SDC recognized that the remaining proposed elements should be considered as public benefit.

### *Physical improvements*

The SDC appreciated how the proposed elements provided noticeable, physical improvements to Virginia St between 5th and 6th Ave. Commissioners appreciated the various methods for lighting along Virginia Street, including proposed illuminated medallion elements, tempered glass, canopy lighting, truck access lighting, and illuminated sign. The Commission had concerns about the method and placement of the proposed medallion elements and its impact on the building façade. Commissioners recommended the placement of medallion elements align with slope of the sidewalk as so not to detract from the architecture of the building. The Commission also recommended the illuminated identity sign be raised so it will not become a hazard to pedestrians and to not conflict with the placement of the medallion elements along the Virginia St façade.

The SDC also supported the proposed enhancements to Westlake Square. Commissioners recommended the design team replace the soil planting bed near the taxi cueing area along Stewart St with a permeable paving material. The Commission also recommended all proposed elements in Westlake Square be the proposed benches rather than lean rails.

### *Landscape improvements*

The SDC had differing opinions regarding the use of landscaping along Virginia, given its location on the North side of the building, pedestrian movement in the area, and the urban environment along Virginia. There was a lengthy discussion about the proposed street trees and the need for planting beds versus tree grates. The commission also discussed the remnant curb cut that would be created when the automobile driveway and access point on Virginia would be closed as part of their public benefit package. After discussion, the SDC proposed a condition that the design team restore the curb line and level the sidewalk at the driveway that will be abandoned when the garage access point on Virginia is closed. The Commission also recommended the design team keep the proposed planting bed along Virginia St, acknowledging the remaining sidewalk is wide enough for pedestrian circulation.

## Action

The SDC thanked the project team for presenting the public benefit proposal for the permit renewal of the Westin Hotel Skybridge. The SDC appreciated the adequacy of the of the proposed package. The SDC voted to approve, 9-0, the public benefit package for the Westin Hotel Skybridge with the following condition:

1. Subject to SDOT approval, restore the curb line and complete the sidewalk along Virginia St where the curb cut for garage access is no longer required

The SDC also provided the following recommendations:

1. Consider how the medallion lighting elements are attached to the building and explore how they can either be 1) better integrated into the façade or 2) separated from the architecture of the building, to improve their overall appearance and role in enhancing the street level along Virginia
2. Study the location of the proposed Westin Hotel sign along Virginia as it relates to the medallion lighting elements and sidewalk elevation
3. The three elements proposed at Westlake Square should be benches rather than lean rails
4. Provide a walkable surface near the taxi stand at Westlake Square
5. The illuminated identity sign and the cleaning and painting of surfaces not be considered as public benefit elements