

# Marketside Flats Skybridge

**Jenny A. Durkan**  
Mayor

**Samuel Asefa**  
Director, OPCD

**John Savo**, Chair

**Ben de Rubertis** Vice Chair

**Justin Clark**

**Rikerrious Geter**

**Rachel Gleeson**

**Laura Haddad**

**Brianna Holan**

**Mark Johnson**

**Rick Krochalis**

**Ross Tilghman**

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Coordinator

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## Commissioners Present

John Savo, Chair  
Ben de Rubertis, Vice Chair  
Justin Clark  
Rikerrious Geter  
Laura Haddad  
Brianna Holan  
Mark Johnson  
Rick Krochalis  
Ross Tilghman

## Commissioners Excused

Rachel Gleeson

## Project Description

The applicant is requesting approval to retain an existing skybridge connecting a segment of Union St west of 1st Avenue with a private residential development located along Western Ave. The skybridge crosses Post Alley just north of its intersection with Union Street, and has existed in some form since the original construction of the adjacent building in the early 1900's. Due to the approximately 40' grade change between Union St and Western Ave, the skybridge provides a direct access point to downtown for residents of the buildings it serves. The project proposal includes no significant changes to the existing skybridge and provides a public benefit package that includes additional wayfinding, lighting, and street improvements.

## Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the Marketside Flats Skybridge. The purpose of this meeting was to review the merit of and public benefit package for the project. After the presentation and discussion, the SDC voted, 9-0, to approve the merit and public benefit package for the Marketside Flats Skybridge with one condition and several recommendations. The SDC will review the project again for a subcommittee at a future date.

## Recusals and Disclosures

None

**January 3, 2019**

10:30 - 11:30 am

**Type**

Skybridge

**Phase**

Merit & Public Benefit

**Previous Reviews**

None

**Presenters**

- Martha Barkman  
Mack Real Estate Group
- Jack McCullough  
McCullough Hill Leary, PS

**Attendees**

- Clair Enlow  
Resident

**Summary of Presentation**

Martha Barkman of Mack Real Estate Group, and Jack McCullough of McCullough Hill Leary, PS presented the application requesting the approval to retain an existing skybridge connecting First Avenue to the Marketside Flats apartment building (see figure 1). The presentation addressed the merit for retaining the skybridge as well as the proposed public benefit package. This private skybridge connects the rooftop area of the residential building to public right-of-way at Union St west of 1st Ave and was included in the original 1915 plan for the building. The presentation team described the historic uses of the building and skybridge, and how it fits within neighborhood context. In 1987, the skybridge was rebuilt to meet city standards. The skybridge was subsequently rebuilt in 2007 in coordination with the renovations of the Union St concurrent with the construction of the Four Seasons hotel. The skybridge, which averages over 300 pedestrian crossings per day, serves as a required egress for the Marketside Flats building, and provides ADA access between the apartment building and Union St and 1st Ave.



Sky-bridge From Union Street



Figure 1: Location of existing skybridge

The project team is proposing a public benefit package that includes upgrading lighting and wayfinding signage along Post Alley, a historic marker on the Marketside Flats building facade, and coordination with the Office of the Waterfront to provide intersection improvements near Union Street and Western Ave (see figure 2).

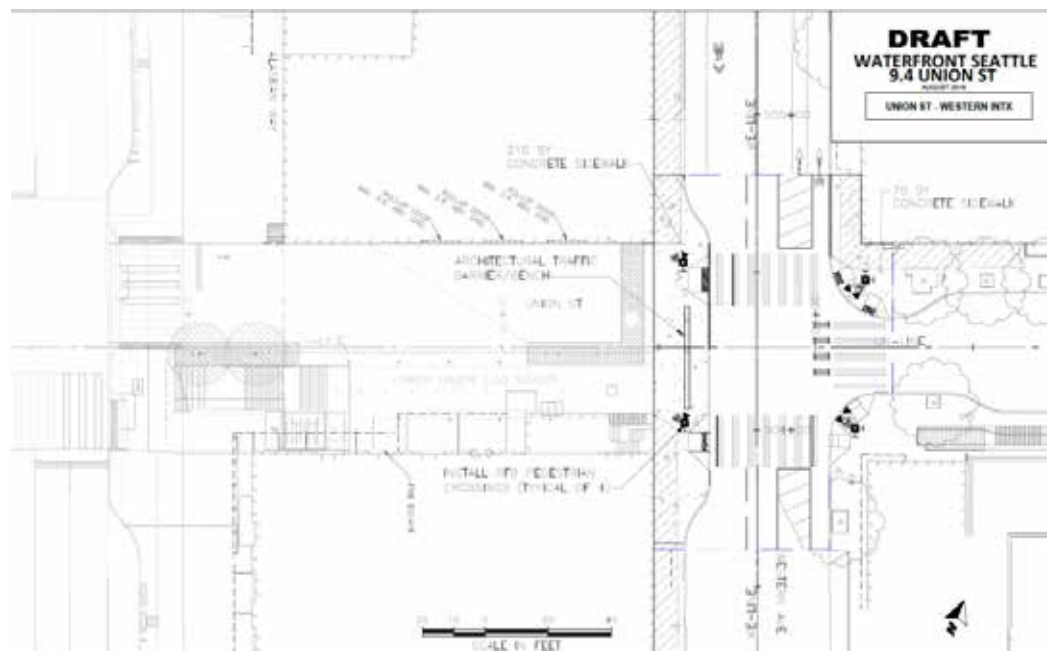


Figure 2: Proposed intersection improvements

**Agency Comments****None****Public Comments****None****Summary of Discussion**

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Adequacy of clearance
- View blockage and lighting
- Interference with existing streetscape
- Reduction of pedestrian activity
- Pedestrian use
- Effect on business
- Availability of reasonable alternatives
- Impact on traffic
- Accessibility
- Changes in conditions in the vicinity since original installation
- Changes to existing public benefit elements
- Known conflicts with existing or proposed utilities

*Adequacy of clearance*

The SDC agreed the skybridge provided the adequate clearance for the alley below.

*View blockage and lighting*

The SDC acknowledged that the existing staircase limited the amount of light reaching the alley below. The Commission recommended the project team consider the removal of the adjacent stair to allow greater light to the alley below pending review by the Landmarks Review Board.

*Interference with existing streetscape*

The SDC agreed the skybridge had no interference with the existing streetscape.

*Reduction of pedestrian activity*

The SDC acknowledged that the skybridge increases pedestrian activity on Union St near 1st Ave.

*Pedestrian use*

The SDC had no position on pedestrian use.

*Effect on business*

The SDC agreed there would be no effect on surrounding businesses.

*Availability of reasonable alternatives*

The SDC acknowledged the lack of viable alternative solutions.

*Impacts on traffic*

The SDC agreed the skybridge has a positive impact on pedestrian traffic and safety.

*Accessibility*

The SDC agreed the skybridge has a positive impact on accessibility, given the large grade difference between 1st Ave and Western Ave. The Commission commended the project team for addressing accessibility and wayfinding issues within this area of downtown.

*Changes in conditions in the vicinity since original installation*

The SDC recognized the drastic change in the surrounding environment since the original installation of the skybridge. Commissioners admitted that existing skybridge provides a greater degree of integration now than it did previously.

*Changes to existing public benefit elements*

The Commission discussed the proposed public benefit package. While the Commission is comfortable with accepting design updates to Union St and Western Ave intersection as part of the proposed public benefit package, Commissioners acknowledged the early stages of the proposed design and is prone to changes in the future. The Commission then stated that they wanted more detail regarding the design of the proposed barrier along the western edge of Western Ave. The commission encouraged the project team to coordinate with the Office of the Waterfront to design the proposed barrier similarly to the design of planters and pedestrian seating used elsewhere along the waterfront. Commissioners also encouraged the project team design the barrier in a way to make it appear like pedestrian scaled street furniture while functioning as a barrier for vehicles. The SDC agreed the project team should return for a subcommittee review of detailed design of the proposed barrier as well as potential changes for the overall design of the intersection.

*Known conflicts with existing or proposed utilities*

The SDC acknowledged that there are no conflicts between the skybridge and existing or proposed utilities. Commissioners then discussed potential conflicts elements form the proposed public benefit package might have with existing or proposed utilities.

**Action**

The SDC thanked the project team for its presentation of the merit phase for the Marketside Flats Skybridge. Overall, the Commission appreciated the comprehensive approach to managing and improving accessibility. The SDC voted, 9-0, to approve the merit phase of the Marketside Flats Skybridge with the following recommendation:

1. Consider the removal of the adjacent stair to allow greater light to the alley below pending review by the Landmarks Review Board

The SDC then voted, 9-0, to approve the public benefit package for the Marketside Flats Skybridge with the following condition:

1. Prior to Council approval of the ordinance to re-authorize this skybridge, the applicant will return for a subcommittee review to review the details of the proposed barrier, changes to the intersection design, and content and design of the proposed plaque.