

Equity in the design of public spaces and places

October 2021



Purpose

The Seattle Design Commission (SDC) embraces equity in the design of public spaces and places as a fundamental component in its project reviews. The SDC supports equitable outcomes in public spaces and public places that address the needs and desires of all individuals, regardless of physical or mental capability, social or economic standing, or gender, racial, or cultural identity.

SDC maintains that equitable outcomes in the design of public spaces and places should arise from well-considered and inclusive public outreach strategies. Emphasis should be placed on outreach to groups and individuals historically or systemically excluded or marginalized in the public process, inadvertently or otherwise.

Applicability

SDC applies this policy to all phases of project review of publicly funded capital improvements, projects seeking a street or alley vacation, or projects seeking approval or re-permitting of a skybridge.

This policy supersedes SDC's November 2016 policy on Equity in the Design of Public Space or Public Facilities.

Process

At the initial project meeting, SDC will ask the applicant to present their concepts for equitable outcomes in the project, how the applicant conducted equitable outreach, and how that outreach influenced the design concept. In subsequent meetings, the SDC will review how concepts of equity and equitable outcomes have been advanced and refined in all aspects of the project.

Areas that the Commission may explore include:

1. Specific equitable outcomes sought for the project

2. Demographics of groups and individuals potentially impacted by this project, including users and nearby residents
3. Process and strategies for outreach and engagement, including:
 - a. Methods of community engagement
 - b. Neighborhood context, including demographics and the built environment,
 - c. How historically underrepresented groups were engaged, including any sorts of compensation that were provided
 - d. Roles of consultants
4. City of Seattle policies on equity that shaped the outreach and design process, including outcomes resulting from a Racial Equity Toolkit analysis or other similar approach.
5. Organizations and/or public agencies contacted to help with engagement, and their findings.
6. How outreach and engagement are reflected in project, including:
 - a. site selection,
 - b. site design,
 - c. landscape and open space,
 - d. building exterior and/or interior, and
 - e. public art program.
7. How goals and expectations of historically underrepresented communities are reflected in project or program elements
8. How and where project or program elements were refined because of ongoing engagement
9. Areas in which engagement couldn't be implemented in program or project elements in particular those elements that were prioritized by historically underrepresented communities
10. Outreach and engagement impact on ongoing operations, site and building maintenance, programming, and other elements of the project.