

MEETING MINUTES

Bruce A. Harrell
Mayor

Rico Quirindongo
Director, OPCD

Jill Crary, Chair

Kevin O'Neill, Vice Chair

Adam Amrhein

Jay Backman

Phoebe Bogert

Kate Clark

Ben Gist

Brian Markham

Zubin Rao

Molly Spetalnick

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Strategic Advisor

Windy Bandekar
Planner

Juliet Acevedo
Administrative Staff

**Office of Planning and Community
Development**

600 4th Avenue, Floor 5
PO Box 94788
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

TEL 206-615-1349

FAX 206-233-7883

seattle.gov/designcommission

May 2, 2024

Convened 9:00 am

Adjourned 11:30 am

Projects Reviewed

Commission Business

Transforming Age skybridge

Commissioners Present

Jay Backman (attended virtually)

Kate Clark

Jill Crary

Ben Gist

Brian Markham

Kevin O'Neill (attended virtually)

Zubin Rao

Molly Spetalnick

Commissioners Excused

Adam Amrhein

Phoebe Bogert

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins

Valerie Kinast

Windy Bandekar

Juliet Acevedo



Commission Business (9:00 – 10:00 am)

The following items were discussed:

1. Briefing on projects to be reviewed today.

Project review – Transforming Age skybridge (10:00 – 11:30 am)

Project Description

Transforming Age LLC is proposing a new skybridge to serve two residential towers in its “Skyline” Community on First Hill. The skybridge would connect the Cascade Tower, built in 2009, and the Olympic Tower, constructed in 2021, across 8th Avenue. The Skyline Community is a Continuing Care Retirement Community that provides housing and services for 425 seniors in 276 independent living apartments, 48 assisted living units, 28 memory care units, and 34 long-term skilled nursing units. The Community is age-restricted and open to residents older than 62, with an average resident age of 83. The skybridge would connect the two Towers and allow residents to move between them above the street level. The skybridge is not open to the public.

The Commission received a presentation on the urban design implications of a proposed skybridge.

The following people were presenters:

1. Mark Brands, SiteWorkshop
2. Paul Aigner, Transforming Age, LLC
3. Doug Palmer, Skyline Resident and Skybridge Committee Member (provided comments on behalf of residents)
4. Chris Bicket, TenW Transportation Planners
5. Ryan Miyahara, Ankrom Moisan Architects
6. Abbey Pearl DeWeese, Hillis Clark Martin, and Pederson

The following people were present:

1. Beverly Barnett, SDOT (provided comment on SDOT work)
2. Amy Gray, SDOT (provided comment on SDOT work)
3. Matt Beaulieu, SDOT
4. Gabriel Seo, SDOT (attended virtually)
5. Jeanette Dubois, SDOT (attended virtually)
6. Logan Bowers, CM Kettles’ office
7. Lish Whitson, Council Central Staff (attended virtually)
8. Amy Gray, SDOT
9. Ellen Greene, First Hill Improvement Association
10. 19 residents of Skyline Community
 - a. Bob Terrell
 - b. Pat Barber
 - c. Maureen Murphy Nutting
 - d. Deborah Bogin Cohen
 - e. Douglas Rosenberg
 - f. Maryann McCall-Taylor

- g. George McCain
- h. Edgar Marcuse
- i. Gloria Kawabori
- j. Casey Rosenberg
- k. Isamu Kawabori
- l. Bill Taraday
- m. Judy McBroom
- n. Rhoda McLaughlin
- o. Marilyn DiBlasi
- p. Beth Cawahara
- q. Ruth Ann Ger

Following the presentation, the Commission deliberated using the criteria provided in the 2021 Joint Director’s Rule (SDOT #02-2021/OPCD #01-2021) governing skybridges. The focus of their deliberations centered on three criteria:

- Availability of reasonable alternatives to the skybridge;
- Changes and effect on pedestrian patterns both at the street level and within any buildings connected because of the skybridge; and
- Context of the surrounding built environment.

The Commission voted 7-1 to approve the urban design phase of the skybridge. The vote to approve was conditioned, requesting further discussion of the following at the public benefit stage:

1. Provide more information on the architectural design and artwork concept for the skybridge and articulate how it fits within the context of the neighborhood, nearby structures, and the adjacent street tree canopy.
2. Pursue programming solutions to activate the street level at the buildings, to mitigate the loss of at grade pedestrian movement and to enhance the pedestrian environment for nearby residents.

The applicant was also asked to provide a written summary of the traffic and pedestrian count data collected by TenW to complete the record.

Kevin O’Neill voted against the skybridge. The reason for his vote was based on the level of existing right of way improvements at the 8th and Columbia intersection, the low number of automobile trips at that intersection, and the limited crossing width at 8th between the two structures. All those right of way conditions indicate that the existing right of way is the reasonable alternative to the skybridge.

Commissioners were concerned about the precedent that this skybridge will set if it is approved by the City Council. Commissioners support for the skybridge is based on the unique set of circumstances in this proposal – improving mobility beyond ADA for residents of an existing senior living community located in two buildings divided by a right of way. Commissioners expressed that this use should not be considered like other residential uses for the purpose of future policy or precedent. Commissioners look to the City Council to ensure that if the skybridge is approved, that its approval will not establish a precedent that would conflict with Council policies that discourage the proliferation of skybridges.