



**Edward B. Murray**  
Mayor

**Diane Sugimura**  
Director, DPD

**Nathan Torgelson**  
Deputy Director, DPD

**Shannon Loew**, Chair

**Ellen Sollod**, Vice Chair

**Brodie Bain**

**Lee Copeland**

**Thaddeus Egging**

**Rachel Gleeson**

**Theo Lim**

**Martin Regge**

**John Savo**

**Ross Tilghman**

**Michael Jenkins**  
Director

**Valerie Kinast**  
Coordinator

**Aaron Hursey**  
Planner

**Joan Nieman**  
Administrative Staff

**Department of Planning  
and Development**  
700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000  
PO Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**TEL** 206-615-1349  
**FAX** 206-233-7883  
seattle.gov/dpd

**November 20, 2015**

**Jane Lewis**  
**Pine Street Group, LLC**  
**1500 - 4th Avenue, Suite 600**  
**Seattle, WA 98101**

**Re: Seattle Design Commission review of the proposed Washington State  
Convention Center expansion**

The Seattle Design Commission (SDC) will evaluate the proposal to expand the Washington State Convention Center (WSCC), as the proposed expansion assumes the vacation of five rights-of-way: three separate alleys; Terry Avenue between Olive Way and Howell Street; and the subterranean portion of Olive Way between 9th Avenue and Boren Street. If approved, these vacations allow for the development of an expanded WSCC, create development sites for highrise commercial and residential developments, and provide automobile and truck access to the WSCC and the related development sites.

In developing its recommendations to the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), the Mayor and City Council, the SDC focuses on two fundamental issues:

- Should the street or alley be vacated after considering the impacts the vacation may have on the urban form and the public trust functions of the right-of-way; and
- Has the petitioner proposed a public benefit package that provides the public with amenities that adequately offset the loss of the street or alley being vacated and that are commensurate with the benefits of the scale of development resulting from the vacation?

This expanded facility will create significant opportunities for the City as a tool for economic development in the downtown core. The two additional developments sites created through the vacations will accommodate a 16-story, 560,000 square foot office building and a separate 28-story residential structure for up to 385 dwelling units. Together, the development realized from the proposed vacations will impose significant impacts on the City, its transportation network, and its urban form, in a rapidly developing portion of our downtown core.

The SDC will be very interested in looking at, and responding to, your overall concepts for public benefit and how your proposal addresses and implements key urban design, transportation, and placemaking opportunities. The vacation of up to five rights-of-way poses significant challenges on the transportation network, and raises significant questions about its impact on the urban form of this part of Seattle. The SDC is concerned that the development team and petitioner devote significant

time, analysis, and resources to questions concerning public benefit, so that the proposed package is of a scale commensurate with the benefits gained to the developer and the development from these vacations.

In advance of your vacation petition, the SDC has identified four themes for further exploration on the issue of public benefit. We've identified these themes early because of the scale of the project impacts on the site and surrounding neighborhoods; we expect this to be an ongoing conversation. These themes include:

- Placemaking;
- Connections;
- Public Art; and
- Transportation network.

### Placemaking

The proposed developments are at the intersection of Seattle's densest neighborhoods: Denny Triangle; Capitol Hill; First Hill; and the downtown core. While the downtown core and Denny Triangle are experiencing rapid growth in both highrise commercial and residential development, Capitol Hill and First Hill have experienced significant increases in residential development. We believe that a successful public benefit package will include assets for these neighborhoods that are independent of the identity or function of the expanded WSCC and the related development sites. This includes open spaces, public-gathering areas, or similar uses that provide the opportunity for community members to congregate in or near their neighborhoods.

One of the strengths of these surrounding neighborhoods are its street-oriented and pedestrian-scale uses. Designs for the WSCC and the two development sites should continue to embrace these values. This is particularly crucial for the convention center facility, where its size and programming have the potential of overshadowing the character of the neighborhoods it straddles. We have seen how the existing convention center has started to modify its ground plane and streetscape to incorporate more pedestrian scale and pedestrian-oriented uses to offset the overall scale of the existing facilities along Pike and Pine. The care and detail in creating unique spaces and places independent of the WSCC and its identity will be closely evaluated by the SDC.

### Connections

The proposed WSCC expansion site will have a significant presence along Pine Street, a key pedestrian route that links the City's retail core to Capitol Hill and First Hill. The Pine Street corridor also links the large scale retailers in the downtown core to the neighborhood-based retail, restaurant, and personal service uses that define Capitol Hill and First Hill. Retaining and enhancing the richness of the Pine Street corridor along the expanded WSCC site will require care, thoughtfulness, and detail that speaks to the importance of this transportation route and the amenities that should be provided to enhance the pedestrian experience.

The expanded WSCC and the related developments will also have a significant presence along Howell Street, Boren Street, and Olive Way. Olive Way continues to increase in importance as a link between Denny Triangle, the northern portions of the downtown retail core, and Capitol Hill. Designs of each building, their respective programs, and a ground plane that promotes and enhances these connections will be closely evaluated by the SDC.

The SDC will also be looking for how the development team will provide public benefits to address existing deficiencies in the transportation network, especially for pedestrians and transit users; and how new connections can be established between and through these neighborhoods. The SDC will be very interested in your strategy to offset the barriers created by I-5, and how you can reestablish connections between downtown and neighborhoods to the east.

### Art

The WSCC expansion is being developed by Pine Street Group LLC on its behalf. While the expansion does not appear to be subject to the Washington State Art program, or the City or County's 1% for Arts programs, the integration of public and publicly-accessible art should be a cornerstone in your public-benefit strategy. The existing WSCC has long embraced public and publicly-accessible art. Its permanent and temporary collections has been an essential component of its identity as a public facility. This tradition was carried forward through its last expansions, including public art along Pine Street, Pike Street, and 8th Avenue.

The SDC is eager to see your strategy for integrating public and publicly-accessible art through all phases of the WSCC. The recent work of the Seattle Arena on the role of public art as a public benefit is a useful guide, especially as you look to solutions to use art to enhance neighborhood identity independent of the WSCC, and how art relates to various transportation functions at or near the facility. The SDC is also eager to see your plan for identifying, retaining, and repurposing existing on-site art developed for the Convention Center transit station. Independent of any responsibilities you will fulfill under the purchase and sale agreement with King County, you have a unique opportunity and responsibility to set a new standard for integrating new and existing art in the development of public facilities.

Transportation network

The expanded WSCC and the related development sites will include approximately 800 parking spaces. These combined developments will generate significant impacts in the form of automobile and truck trips that will impose a significant challenge on an already strained transportation network. Independent of any requirements to mitigate the environmental impacts of this traffic, the SDC will be very interested in understanding how your public benefit package offsets the impacts that these trips pose on the rights-of-way at or near the facility.

Independent of these impacts is how the WSCC addresses the issue of transit. The existing use for the site is the Convention Center transit station. Aptly named, the station provides an important link for transit riders to access the existing WSCC and serves as a transition point from city-based transit to suburban and regional destinations. While initial WSCC designs called for a transit layover facility incorporated into the expanded facility, those designs were abandoned. Setting aside the wisdom of that decision, the fact remains that there is a fundamental need to provide efficient and appropriate transit connections to this expanded facility. As you look for opportunities to address the issue of transit service for this facility, including any mitigation requirements, the SDC will very interested in seeing how your public benefit package can bridge an awkward transition for transit users between the Convention Center and nearby transit resources.

We look forward to working with you and your design team as the project progresses.

Sincerely,



Michael Jenkins, Director  
Seattle Design Commission

cc: Seattle City Council  
Beverly Barnett, Seattle Department of Transportation  
Sara Belz, City of Seattle - Office of Policy and Innovation