

Overlook Walk

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Commissioners Present

Brianna Holan, Chair
Justin Clark, Vice Chair
Kim Baker
Elizabeth Conner
Azzurra Cox
Mark Johnson
Rick Krochalis
Amalia Leighton
Vinita Sidhu
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused

Project Description

The Overlook Walk is a signature element of the City's Office of the Waterfront proposal for the redesign of the waterfront following the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct. The walk is a series of walkways, stairs, plazas, and overlooks that provide a key connection between the waterfront and Pike Place Market. It is the largest of a series of east-west connections envisioned to better link the city with the waterfront. The stairs orient towards Pier 62/63 and the waterfront promenade landing, both of which are elements of the proposed Main Corridor project. The Overlook Walk also includes two buildings, one of which is already constructed, that will be used for a variety of tenant spaces and arts and cultural facilities. The Overlook Walk will also provide a seamless connection to the Seattle Aquarium Ocean Pavilion's rooftop, which will include a series of public spaces, amphitheater, vegetation, and public stair and elevator.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) third review Waterfront Overlook Walk project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the design development (90% design) phase for the project. After the presentation and discussion the SDC voted, 10-0, to approve the design development for the Waterfront Overlook Walk with several recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

None

November 5, 2020

9:00 am - Noon

Project Type

Major Project

Phase

Design Development (90% design)

Previous Reviews[3/5/20](#), [4/19/18](#), [7/21/16](#), [7/19/14](#)**Presenters**Ann Hamilton
ArtistMalika Kirkling
Miller HullJessica Murphy
Office of the WaterfrontValerie Segrest, Muckleshoot
Tribal Cultural Plant SpecialistAsia Tail
Indigenous Art ConsultantAndrew tenBrink
JCFORuri Yampolsky
SDOT**Attendees**

Andrew Barash, Jacobs

Bill Bovey, Jacobs

Angela Brady
Office of the WaterfrontSusan Bullerdick
Seattle Aquarium

Scott Crawford, LMN Architects

Kimberly Deriana, Architect & Artist

Matthew Ells, JCFO

Malynn Foster, Artist

Joy Jacobson, FAS

Ashley Ludwig, ABLE

Mario Madayag, Artist

Andrew Thompson, GCINC

Steve Pearce
Office of the Waterfront

Iris Picat, Enviroissues

Osama Quotah, LMN Architects

Mark Reddington
LMN Architects

Baewon Suh, JCFO

Summary of Presentation

The design development phase of the Overlook Walk project was presented by Jessica Murphy, OOW; Andrew tenBrink, JCFO; David Miller, Miller Hull; Ruri Yampolsky, SDOT; Asia Tail, Indigenous art consultant; and Valerie Segrest (Muckleshoot), tribal cultural plant consultant. The presentation started with background information on the plans for the overall Waterfront project (*see figure 1*), including relevant aspects of the Framework Plan. The art program, landscape concept, and larger circulation strategy (*see figure 2*) for the Overlook Walk project were presented. The project team then presented detailed information for each of the following areas: Bluff Walk, Bridge, Café Pavilion, Western Overlook, North Stairs, Upper Salish Steps Landing, Maintenance Space and Screen Wall, Salish Steps, Promenade (*see figure 3*).

The design of the Café Pavilion building was presented, as was the building along the east side of Elliott, and the art along that façade. The project included targeted programs to commission Indigenous art works, source Indigenous materials, and to provide a link to Indigenous culture and education. Furnishings, lighting, ground plane materials and plantings were presented. Selections were in keeping with the planting and material palette for the overall Waterfront project and varied from the Market level down to the promenade. Interpretive elements and design choices were made to re/establish local Indigenous identity.

Agency Comments

None

Public Comments

Kimberly Deriana (Mandan, Hidatsa), architect and public artist, thanked the team for bringing Indigenous culture to the project in a meaningful way.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Upper areas
- Overlook area
- Under bridge areas
- Lowest area

Upper Areas

The SDC first discussed proposed wayfinding and accessibility. While the Commission appreciated the tie to the Pike Place Market experience of discovery as well as the integration of play along the accessible route in the bluff walk, there was still concern about the overall experience for those who are physically disabled. The Commission expressed desire for a subcommittee on wayfinding at the midlevel area of the project. Commissioners stressed that, at a minimum there should be clear wayfinding to the restrooms and handwashing locations.

The Commission then discussed the proposed planting palette and materials for the upper area, including the bluff walk and Café Pavilion. There was concern about using high altitude plant species near sea level and within an urban environment. The commission stressed the importance of plant maintenance and encouraged the project team to create a long term maintenance plan

The Café Pavilion design was applauded, and a prompt was provided to ensure the space could be well utilized year round. It was suggested the space accommodate outdoor heaters, solar powered preferably. The Commission



Figure 1: Project location

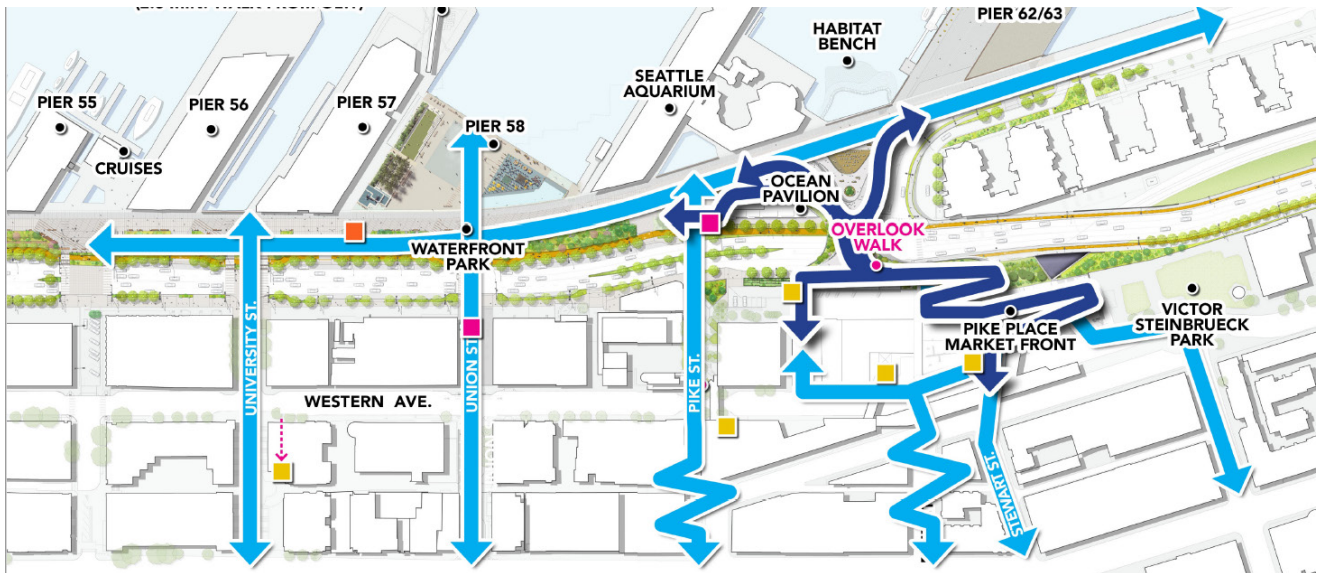


Figure 2: Pedestrian connections between Downtown and Waterfront



Figure 3: Proposed design of Overlook Walk

November 5, 2020

discussed the importance of finding a tenant for the café that will strengthen the cultural identity being developed in the Overlook Walk.

Commissioners then commented on the materiality of the café pavilion. Commissioners recommended the project team continue to think about the overall transparency and design of the pavilion covering, and the possibility of integrating art within the roof material as well as the consideration of integrated photo-voltaic cells.

Overlook Areas

The SDC commended the project team for their continued development of a cohesive design concept for the Overlook area. Specifically, Commissioners appreciated the sizing and fluidity of the space as well as the detailing of the spaces, in particular the durability and quality. Commissioners encouraged the team to consider whether the amphitheater seating at the base of the steps could be made movable to provide flexibility for events.

Commissioners again stressed their disappointment with the location of the elevator at the far end of the walk, noting that providing elevator access near the back side of the Aquarium was a lesser experience than the main circulation route up the Salish Steps. Commissioners were happy to see arm rests within seating and handrails that would be helpful to those who mobility challenged.

The Commission then reflected on issues discussed during the August 20th Aquarium Ocean Pavilion presentation. Commissioners encouraged the Waterfront team to continue with the idea of drawing aquarium programming into the Overlook Walk spaces such as through the use of docents to enhance the storytelling of the spaces.

The SDC then commended the project team for the inclusion of Indigenous team members and noted the new bar that was set for the City in acknowledging and committing to bringing Coast Salish identity to projects within the public realm. The SDC then encouraged the project team to continue exploring ways to expand this work such as by working with and providing retail space for Indigenous businesses.

As this is the gateway from the Waterfront to Pike Place Market, commissioners asked the team to consider where a person would park a bike in order to walk up the Overlook Walk to the Market.

Under Bridge Areas

The SDC was excited to see the art concept by Ann Hamilton. Commissioners expressed the importance of the piece extending the full length of the building and not being reduced if challenges arise and also cautioned to study how it might affect drivers. They suggested solar PVs may be possible within the glass. The Commission then encouraged the team to explore ways to add movement within the art concept such as interacting with passers by, or changing with the time of day. The Commission recommended coordinating with the Indigenous artists, and considering a mural under the bridge.

Commissioners asked the team to strengthen wayfinding for vehicles looking to load and unload at the aquarium.

The SDC then commended the project team for the underlighting of the bridge, which was noted as a beautiful feature. The Commission stressed the importance of the quality of the concrete and other materials. Commissioners then asked the team to consider sound attenuation under the bridge given the hard materials.

Lowest Area

The SDC was very pleased to see how this area had taken shape as a place that is uniquely of Seattle. The Commission commended the project team for the addition of intergenerational, Indigenous art, which brings new meaning to the spaces.

The Commission recommended the team formalize the accounting of sustainability elements so they aren't lost during construction. Commissioners also encouraged the team to take advantage of the potential to tell the stories of timber sourcing, embodied carbon reduction, and to link it to stories about the aquarium facility sustainability and programming.

The SDC recommended the project team return for three subcommittee reviews to address the project's approach to art integration, programming elements, wayfinding, and interpretive garden areas.

Action

The SDC thanked the team for their presentation of the design development phase of the Waterfront Overlook Walk project. Overall, the Commission agreed that the updated design resolves the complex challenge of getting from the waterfront to the Pike Place Market, addressing longstanding problems of connectivity between the waterfront and upland parts of downtown. The Commission appreciates the considerable thought that went into stitching the components of the project together, and the evolution of design and detailing. Commissioners agreed the project sets a new bar for equity in City projects by placing Indigenous artists and cultural consultants in a central role forging the new identity of these spaces. Commissioners also appreciated the integration of sustainability and art throughout the project, as well as the overall design of the Café Pavilion, which will serve as an activating feature that is a flexible, public place.

The SDC voted 10 to 0 to approve the design development phase of the Waterfront Overlook Walk project with the following recommendations:

1. Return to the SDC for subcommittee reviews on the following issues: art integration, programming elements, wayfinding, and interpretive garden areas.
2. Reexamine and enhance accessible routes through the site. Consider how people who are mobility impaired will experience the features, such as the art at the top of the Salish Steps.
3. Consider providing outdoor heaters or solar powered outlets at the Café Pavilion.
4. Explore integrating PVs in the Café Pavilion.
5. Retain the lightness of materials as you develop the art wall along Elliott Way. Consider whether the art could pick up on the movement of pedestrians and changes of day.
6. Reexamine the viability of higher altitude plant species. Include long-range thinking within maintenance and operations plans.
7. Formalize accounting of sustainability features, assure that they are not lost, and that they are part of the interpretive story.
8. Detail and construct the underside of the bridge to the high level of quality being shown. Consider sound attenuation to improve the pedestrian experience.
9. Consider making seating in the lower amphitheater movable to allow flexibility for events.
10. Consider provision of restrooms and handwashing on site or strong wayfinding to adjacent public facilities.
11. Consider a long term tenant for the café space that ties to the cultural story.
12. Continue to build collaboration with Aquarium for docents in the Overlook Walk.
13. Include theater/performance art in the programming strategy for the Overlook Walk spaces.