



**Seattle
Design
Commission**

REVISED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

21 August 2003

Gregory J. Nickels,
Mayor

Donald Royse
Chair

Laura Ballock

Ralph Cipriani

Jack Mackie

Cary Moon

Iain M. Robertson

Nic Rossouw

David Spiker

Sharon E. Sutton

Tory Laughlin Taylor

John Rahaim,
Executive Director

Layne Cubell,
Commission Coordinator

Projects Reviewed

Seattle Center Theater Commons
2040 East Madison Street
CityDesign Updates
Design Commission 35th Anniversary Project

Convened: 8:30am

Adjourned: 3:00pm

Commissioners Present

Donald Royse, Chair
Jack Mackie, Vice Chair
Laura Ballock
Ralph Cipriani
Cary Moon
Nic Rossouw
David Spiker
Tory Laughlin Taylor

Staff Present

John Rahaim
Layne Cubell
Brad Gassman
Lisa Baker



Department of Design,
Construction & Land Use

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21 Aug 2003 Project: 2040 East Madison Street

Phase: Alley Vacation

Previous Review: 1 May 2003 (Alley Vacation)

Presenter: Carlos de la Torre, Sclater Partners Architects

Attendees: Scott Kemp, Department of Design Construction and Land Use
 Beverly Barnett, Seattle Department of Transportation
 Marilyn Senour, Seattle Department of Transportation
 Barry Lamb, Lamb Incorporated
 Jay Reeves, Sclater Partners Architects
 Dean Falls, DEF Inc
 Andrew Taylor, Miller Park Neighborhood Association
 Ann Rennick, resident
 Rene Soulard, resident

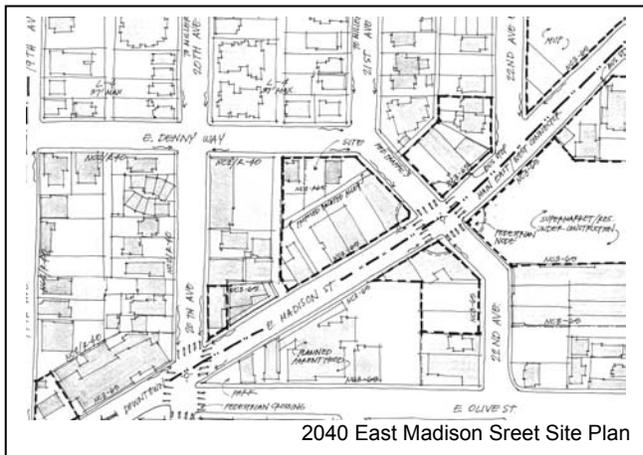
Time: 1 hour (SDC Ref. # 000 | DC00000)

Action: The Commission thanks the team for updating them on this project and appreciates the challenging nature of working in this changing neighborhood and would like to make the following comments and recommendations.

- the Design Commission reiterates its previous request for a more complete urban design analysis including a nine block area that considers pedestrian and vehicular circulation, as well as the transitional and service functions of the alley;
- urges the team to consider the street and alley system as a fundamental component of the urban infrastructure and to take a long view in considering the future benefits of these public amenities;
- feels that there was insufficient consideration given to scheme “C” which could have included creative combinations of subterranean or aerial vacation alternatives; and
- does not recommend approval of the alley vacation at this time.

This project involves a request for an alley vacation in order to accommodate a proposed residential building with a retail base. The project would include five stories of residential units above a first floor retail level. It would also include 2 levels of underground parking. The alley proposed to be vacated runs roughly east west from E Denny Way to another alley on the west. The alley is 10 feet wide and is not currently used for services or any other purpose. The alley dead-ends into the other alley to the west but continues to the east. Although it continues as a right of way to the east across Denny Way the path is blocked by a tree and continues as an unpaved area with grass and bushes.





The project team considers the alley more of a hazard than a benefit to the neighborhood. Currently the police have closed the alley from 6pm to 6am in an attempt to stop the illegal activities that have been taking place there. The project team has spent a considerable amount of time on the site asking community members what they think about the alley and if they would miss it if it were gone. They received a unanimous response from the neighborhood that they do not use they alley and they would not miss it. The design team proposes to mitigate the loss of the alley by creating something positive for the community.

Madison St, which passes to the south of the site, is one of the few roads that connects from the Lake Union to the Elliott Bay and is very busy. The development on Madison surrounding the site is currently one story, but it is zoned to be developed to 65 feet high. The neighborhood is concerned that future development will make Madison St feel like a canyon. The neighborhood would like Madison to be developed as a boulevard with wide sidewalks on either side.

The project team’s preferred scheme (scheme A) proposes to set the building back from the existing property line to create a consistent 12 foot sidewalk along Madison St. Additional setbacks mid-block and on the corners would create small public spaces. The total square footage of these setbacks would exceed the square footage of the vacated alley. Scheme A also includes a break in the building façade along Madison St in order to mitigate the canyon like feeling. With this proposal the 1st floor retail would run consistently along Madison St, but the residential portion of the development would break at the middle of the block.



2040 East Madison Street Scheme A – 1st Floor Plan

The team has also explored a scheme that would not require an alley vacation (scheme C). In this scheme the alley would be widened to 20 ft in order to be more usable. Scheme C would include two separate underground parking garages rather than one large underground garage. In this case the smaller of the two garages would be one story below ground and the larger garage would need to be at least three stories underground. Even if the allowable lot coverage were to be increased scheme C would only accommodate 150 units while scheme A could accommodate 200 units. In the scheme A the building would step down along the north side of the property, below the maximum allowable height, in order to lessen the impact on the residential area across Denny Way. In scheme C the building would need to be built to the maximum allowable height along the north side of the property and the façade would be continuous along Madison without the mid-block break.



2040 East Madison Street Scheme C – 1st Floor Plan

The project team has determined that they would need to build 200 units in order to make this project financially viable, and therefore could not realistically pursue scheme C.

Key Visitor Comments and Concerns

- Has studied and measured sidewalks to determine what would be a suitable sidewalk width along Madison St. Feels that 12 feet is slightly too narrow to accommodate outdoor seating or other uses, but that 15 feet would be ideal. Many other community members feel that a widened sidewalk alone is not an adequate public benefit. Some residents have proposed that there could be a public area at the east end of the site at the corner of Denny Way and Madison St.
- Noted that Planned Parenthood to the south of the site across Madison St voluntarily included 15 foot sidewalks when developing their project.

Key Commissioner Comments and Concerns

- Questions why the team is proposing to vacate this alley and not the perpendicular alley to the west. Feels that the alley proposed to be vacated is useful in mediating the scale change between development along Madison and residential development to the north.
 - Proponents explained that the alley to the west is currently being used and that their plans called for using this perpendicular alley to access the proposed parking garage. They also noted that the 65 foot zoning area extends until Denny Way. They clarified that Denny Way is the mediator between the two zoning areas, not the alley.
- Questions if the alley could have a future productive use once there is increased traffic pressure on Madison St.
 - Proponents reiterated that this alley dead-ends to the west and does not continue as a paved right of way to the east.
- Appreciates the complexity of issues surrounding this project and the proposed alley vacation. Suggests that in considering the usefulness of the alley the team should not look at the next 5-10 years but should take a longer view of perhaps the next 300 years. Also notes that responding to social predators by limiting public space is not an appropriate response.
- Suggests that if the alley were maintained it would not need to be expanded to a 20 ft right of way. Feels that the alley could be utilized by pedestrians rather than garbage trucks or other service vehicles. Believes that there would be an exciting potential to access some units directly off of the street if the alley were maintained. Urges the team to consider examples of lively alleys in the city such as Post Alley as models for this project.
 - Proponents explained that this alley condition is very different from Post Alley. They clarified that they are proposing controlled access points at the entrance to the parking garages and that outdoor spaces associated with the building would not be accessible directly from the public right of way. Proponents do not feel that this area would be appropriate for on grade access from the alley unless access to the alley was controlled through gates at either end.
- Wonders if the team considered a subterranean vacation of the alley. Feels that a subterranean vacation could alleviate underground parking issues.
 - Proponents stated that they only explored the scheme involving the on-grade vacation or the scheme that involved no vacation whatsoever. They explained that with underground or aerial vacations there would be four different potential combinations. They noted that they did not have the resources to explore all four schemes.
- Notes that the intersection of Madison St and Denny Way is an important one. Explained that this intersection marks the entrance to the Miller Park neighborhood to the north. Also remarked that the angle of Madison St shifts at this intersection. Feels that the building massing on this corner is critical to the urban design of the neighborhood.

- Suggests that if the vacation were pursued the corner of Madison St and Denny Way could have a two story retail space to activate the public area requested by the neighborhood.
 - Proponents stated that the proposed retail would already be 15 feet tall. They suggested that awnings, planters and places to sit could be considered as ways to help add to the public environment on the corner.
- Feels that widened sidewalks would be typical of this sort of project and does not see this as a substantial public benefit to mitigate the loss of the alley. Stresses that alley vacations are not to be used as a means toward financial viability of a project.