

# Seattle design Commission

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**Julie Bassuk**

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**Julie Parrett**

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## APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**January 7, 2010**

Convened 2:17 pm  
Adjourned 5:14 pm

### Projects Reviewed

Seattle Center Fun Forest South  
University of Washington West Campus

### Commissioners Present

Mary Johnston, Chair  
Andrew Barash  
Julie Bassuk  
Graham Black  
Brendan Connolly  
John Hoffman  
Laurel Kunkler  
Julie Parrett  
Dennis Ryan  
Norie Sato

### Staff Present

Guillermo Romano  
Valerie Kinast  
Tom Iurino  
Tim Trujillo



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January 7, 2010

**Project:** Seattle Center Fun Forest South

**Phase:** Concept Design

**Last Reviewed:** November 5, 2009

**Presenters:** Robert Nellams, Seattle Center  
 Billy O'Neill, Chihuly Studios  
 Britt Cornett, Chihuly Studios  
 Owen Richards, Owen Richards Architects  
 Kate Cudney, Owen Richards Architects  
 Richard Hartlage, AHBL

**Attendees:**

Pablo Schuquirensky, Meta Arte  
 Ross Wildman, Masonry Inst. Of WA  
 Amy Worthington, Seneca Group  
 Ron Severt, Space Needle  
 Dan McConnell, Space Needle  
 Layne Cubell, Seattle Center  
 Janet Makela, Chihuly Studio  
 Tom Mulica, Owen Richards Architects

James Thompson, no affiliation  
 Michael Dorcy, DPD  
 Lynn Claudon, LCC LLC  
 Mary Bacarella, Space Needle  
 Jill Crary, Seattle Center  
 Joan Rosenstock, Seattle Center  
 Britt Cornett, Chihuly Studio

**Time:** 2:17 pm – 3:45 pm

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## **ACTION**

The Design Commission thanked the Seattle Center Fun Forest South team for their presentation of the proposal to create a glass house exhibition space on the south end of the Fun Forest site. Commissioners appreciated the team's consideration of the master plan and that members of the Century 21 Master Plan Committee were consulted on the idea. The Commission recognizes the potential value for the creation of a new attraction-destination at Seattle Center.

The Commission approved the concept direction for the southern portion of the Fun Forest with a six to one vote with the following recommendations:

- The perimeter of the site is of great concern to the Commission. Consider increasing the size of the area that can be enjoyed by the public for free. Carefully design the edges of the site, giving special attention to enhancing the publicly accessible areas.
- Explore the permeability between the free and paid-for portions of the project. The separation with berms and fences as proposed reflects a defensive design. More visual transparency into the paid areas might increase the sense of permeability.
- Consider further investigation of the sustainability elements – particularly the potential for a green roof.
- Explore how the covered canopy that extends from the south entry of the building can be better brought into relation with the open space and the ground plane. Consider the length of it, the height and scale, and perhaps the use of glass.
- How the glass exhibition use and structures relate to and work with the forecourt of the Center House should be addressed. Consider how this area will function once the Center House is renovated. Also give careful consideration to deliveries and service entrances of both facilities.

**Note: The dissenting vote was due to reservations by a commissioner about the closing off of the exterior perimeter. Public space for private use requires more careful thinking of the perimeter and how the spaces around it are treated and whether the quality of the tradeoff is appropriate.**

**Project Presentation**

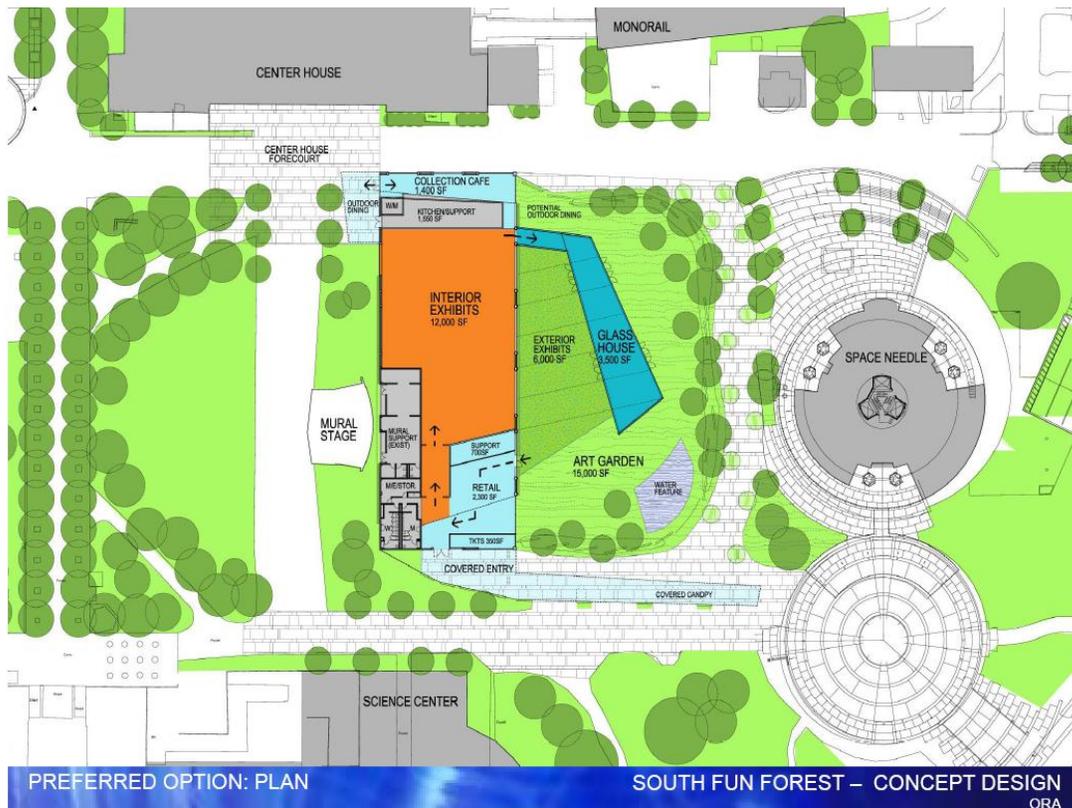
Robert Nellams thanked the Commission for their time. “It’s about bringing vitality and vibrancy to the campus,” he added. He also commended the partnership between the entities involved in the project, Chihuly Studios and Space Needle Corp, and their ongoing collaboration with Seattle Center. Nellams then added, “The premier glass artist in the world wants to be a part of this project. This is a good thing”

Next he shared that the Century 21 Committee and Seattle Center Advisory Commission had been briefed on the proposal. The outcome resulted in positive feedback from both.

“Today’s presentation is a literal reflection of the principles of the master plan,” stated Nellams.

Robert Nellams introduced Owen Richards from the design team who provided a refresher of the master plan goals, green strategies and Design Commission key recommendations.

The site contains approximately 22,000 square feet of existing building and 38,000 square feet of asphalt paving. “It’s an amazing site relative to other icons within Seattle Center,” according to Richards.



**Figure 4: Seattle Center South - Fun Forest Concept Design**

The program consists of exhibition space - indoor and outdoor, for Chihuly. It is not a museum, stated Richards. It is a paid entry venue, but conscious of public accessibility.

Master plan goals:

- Flexible and dynamic spaces
- Visual openness and sense of place
- Public art and vibrant programs
- Green canvas and urban forest

Green Strategies:

- Water retention and rain gardens
- Reduce carbon footprint
- Green building technologies
- Adaptive reuse and reinvention

Design Commission key recommendations:

- Be spectacular/think big.
- Radically transform or demolish the existing building.
- Enhance the public experience from all sides.
- Maximize transparency and openness.
- Weave the design into Seattle Center experience.
- Maximize the public benefit: art should be experienced by the non-paying public.
- Integrate state of the art glass technology.

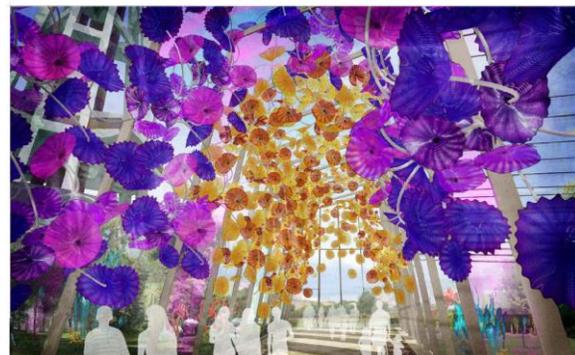
There is a key opportunity to enhance the entry to the site, stated Richards.

Billy O’Neill next expressed Chihuly’s excitement over the opportunity presented by this project. He also thanked the various entities involved in the design development.

Britt Cornett, of Chihuly Studios, then presented visuals of previous Chihuly glasswork exhibitions in locations throughout the world to provide a sense of the versatility in exhibiting the artists’ work.

Next, Owen Richards returned to provide the Program Summary.

- Interior exhibit space – concept: 19,550 square-foot minimum.
- Exterior exhibit space – concept: 24,500 square-foot minimum (includes the glass house exhibit space)
- Art garden-15,000 square foot minimum
- Exterior exhibit space – 6,000 square-foot minimum
- Glass house exhibit space – 3,500 square-foot minimum (5,000 square feet optimal).



GLASS HOUSE INTERIOR SOUTH FUN FOREST – CONCEPT DESIGN

**Figure 5: Glass House Concept Rendering**

The existing building has the 20-foot, minimum, height that is ideal for exhibit space. It is similar to the Chihuly exhibition space at the de Young Art Museum in San Francisco, CA.

Richards also stated that it is essential to maintain the open green space to the west, adjacent to the mural stage.

He then presented the site analysis which includes:

- Series of open spaces containing several art elements
- Clearing within the urban forest with mural stage
- The large scale open space
- Iconic elements of the Seattle Center

Concerning pedestrians:

There is significant pedestrian access on Thomas Street. North-to-South pedestrian connections occur through the center. An opportunity exists to enhance the public experience. The design team believes there is an opportunity to expand the south entry to become an iconic experience. Along Thomas Street, there is an opportunity to enhance the pedestrian experience and strengthen connections.

Upon determining the essential elements of the program and completing the site analysis, the design team next developed the following development study options:

First study: Option A: Urban forest concept

They asked, “Is there a way to strengthen the forest idea that wraps into the building entrance?” They explored the possibility of a café space on the north side. It became necessary to expand the south side of the building. They enclosed the art garden and expanded into the public realm. This option pushed beyond the budget parameters. However, there were strengths in this scheme.

First study: Option B: Landform element

The design team conceived of an opportunity to create a landform element that activates the project. They recognized the undulating aspect in the raised land near the mural stage. This option recognizes a strong pedestrian connection to the south, according to the design team. This option also took advantage of the existing tree canopy on the north which would allow the café to spill out and activate the space. Even by tearing down a portion of the existing building, there was a challenge in activating the outdoor spaces around the project site. This option became a greater budget challenge.

Kate Cudney, of Owen Richards Architects, next explained how the design team learned a lot from the studies and understood how the moves they made really knit together the campus as a whole. They were struck by the green spaces, particularly the tree canopy on the north edge of the space. The very first move was to think of the landscape, considering the dynamic activities that carve and gesture through the site. The team conceived of the glasshouse as a free-standing object within the landscape. Tying these together, the team proposed to develop a blurred landscape and art perimeter edge that naturally separates public from the paid exhibition space. The west face of the existing building is proposed to be transformed with a greenwall system to create a landscape backdrop to the mural stage. The result is transparency and gestures that reach out into the public realm to pull in pedestrians - art as a perimeter.

Richard Hartlage, of AHBL, then added that the fountain lawn already provides an opportunity for people to experience the campus in a very dramatic way. Therefore, a more intimate experience is needed at this site and

there is a wrapping of the forest to help create a sense of landscape integration and still allow some permeability within the site.

At the north end, transparency is created with spillover of the café, according to Hartlage. A green wall facing west is utilized as a simple backdrop for the mural stage. The renderings provided are highly conceptual as the concept will be further explored, stated Hartlage.

Owen Richards discussed the sustainable design aspects of the project that capitalize on the existing building. They are not replacing the building but instead reusing it. The building will integrate natural ventilation and passive solar to create a sustainable building. This all maintains the objectives of the master plan, according to Richards.

### **Commissioners' Comments and Questions**

*Did the green wall roll up to become a green roof?*

This has not been fully explored at this point. Feasibility is an issue. The technologies available might help to make this possible.

*What does the timing look like in terms of the project schedule and leases?*

There are multiple paths being taken concurrently. Lease negotiations are ongoing as design work proceeds. There will be something that divides the areas whether it is a fence or otherwise.

*Regarding the borders, were they set by the demands of the program? If set by programmatic demands was this set by Seattle Center or determined by the architect?*

The borders were developed by collaboration between design team, Chihuly Studios, Space Needle, and Seattle Center. From Chihuly Studio's perspective, the exterior space would ideally be larger. The gift shop and café components are important aspects of generating revenue while creating a vibrant place and destination. There has been a push/pull regarding movement of the exterior east wall and there is still not a hard line around the site as of yet. There are also cost issues to consider.

*What does it mean when we discuss the difference between a museum and an exhibition?*

A museum has rotating exhibitions. This will be a permanent installation of Chihuly work. It will be a for-profit entity as opposed to a non-profit.

*What kind of commitment will this be in terms of a lease?*

We are looking at a 20 year lease in 5 year increments.

*I'm curious about the dynamic in the forecourt area near the Center House when this plan is executed. The Center House is a key element to Seattle Center.*

Seattle Center wants to make the sure the forecourt is large enough to serve the needs of Center House. It's currently narrower than the long-term master plan vision. The big idea in the Master Plan with the larger hangar doors as the south end of Center House was to create a flow of indoor and outdoor space that works year round. The design team is looking at how their project area interacts with the Center House.

*How might the loading work? Do you have a projection for how often the exhibit might change? What is your attitude toward the character of the art garden? The Commission likes the open, civic space.*

The loading access that exists will remain. Owen added that the exhibit space is not a loading intensive use. The only routine loading would exist for the kitchen area. The other areas have light loading needs. As plans for the exhibition space are still in flux, uncertainty exists as to how often it might change.

*I appreciate Seattle Center getting feedback from the Century 21 master plan group. Their endorsement is positive. I believe that the building can be obscured and the use of greenery and glass aids this. I encourage the design team to look further into this. I would like to see the green wall go onto the roof. It's good that they are opening toward the center house. The part that is disturbing is the treatment of the edge. Continue the thinking in flux. There could be more flexibility in the exterior programming. Maybe move the wall in and out. The canopy's length as currently shown is uncomfortably long.*

*Consider the size and quality of the unpaid area. There is concern about ceding more of the Center to the paid areas.*

*There has been tremendous progress made toward the reuse of the existing building. The canopy appears to be too high in the air. Consider a more useful human scale and its functionality as protection from the elements.*

*Regarding the exterior exhibit space, I would like to see further exploration of the flow within the space – connectivity between the Space Needle and the paid space.*

*The maintenance of the mural stage space is positive. I am very concerned about the edge. The need to create an economically viable space is clearly the driving force. Perhaps provide more permeability into the space.*

*In addition to the dynamic tension and wanting the garden to be permeable, you are creating these iconic glass structures as previously requested.*

*I would like to see further erosion of the café. The forecourt area is a center within the Center. Maybe use not as a separate unit but integrate it more. Work architecturally with the space and blur the lines between paid and unpaid. The recent new landscape gesture along Broad Street has been so beautifully rendered and this building does not echo that.*

*I would be interested in seeing the green elements of the building.*

*Less is more*

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January 7, 2010

**Project:** University of Washington West Campus

**Phase:** Alley Vacation

**Last Reviewed:** October 15, 2009

**Presenters:** Anne Schopf, Mahlum Architects  
Mark Cork, Mahlum Architects  
Jennifer Guthrie, Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd.  
Anne Shuks, Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd.

**Attendees:**

Jan Arntz, University of Washington

Jon Lebo, University of Washington

Michele Sarlitto, Blumen Consulting Group

Terry McCann, Blumen Consulting Group

Beverly Barnett, SDOT

Laura Lohman, Seneca Group

Tom Walsh, Foster Pepper

Tess Schiavone, Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd

**Time:** 3:52 pm – 5:14 pm

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## ACTION

The Design Commission thanked the University of Washington West Campus team for their presentation of the public benefits proposed as part of the alley vacations at a site north of NE Campus Pkwy and west of Brooklyn Ave NE (32 West), and one south of NE Campus Pkwy and east of Brooklyn Ave NE (35 West).

The public benefits proposed include a public plaza at the northwest corner of NE Campus Pkwy and Brooklyn Ave NE. The plaza is approximately 11,680 sq. ft. in size and contains a large, mature elm tree. Also a public benefit is the inner courtyard of block 35 West which will be open during normal business hours. Both blocks 32 West and 35 West allow for pedestrians to cut across the blocks. The public benefits also include increased sidewalk widths achieved with voluntary setbacks and extension of curbs in some places, as depicted in the proponent's presentation materials. Extensive pedestrian amenities around each of the two blocks 32 West and 35 West, such as street trees and bus stops, which go beyond what is required by code, are also included. Increased landscaping and transit user amenities along NE Campus Pkwy are also public benefits, as are new landscaping of the median of NE Campus Pkwy from 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE to University Way NE. Although not considered a public benefit, the Commission appreciates the plans for a grocery store and café which will add much needed retail services in the area and activation of the public spaces along the buildings.

The Commission approved the alley vacation with a six to one vote with the following comments:

- As the design is refined, continue to consider the changes the area might undergo in terms of pedestrian patterns, transit use, and increased density, especially once light rail is in place.
- The inner courtyard at Block 35 West continues to appear private and not particularly inviting. The details of the design will help determine how well the courtyard reads as public.
- Consider a celebratory approach to the south entry to the courtyard at Block 35 West so that even when it is closed it can add value to the area. Consider use of art for the fence and gate or screen element.
- The lack of transparency is a concern, but the Commission recognized and appreciated the team's efforts to work with the proposed grocery store and the incorporation of glass to mitigate potential negative effects.

- Continue to collaborate with the UW entities such as the Landscape Advisory Committee and the Henry Art Gallery as well as SDOT when making median improvements to NE Campus Parkway.
- As the design is refined, continue to consider changes the area might undergo, especially once light rail is in place.
- Consider waiting to install the proposed bus shelters until they are needed.
- While recognizing the need to protect the elm tree, allow closer contact to it by people using and passing through the plaza.

**Note:** The dissenting vote was due to concern that the extent of the public benefit might not be sufficient as well as issues with the private nature of the courtyard/pedestrian cut through on Block 35 West.

## Project Presentation

Mark Cork, of Mahlum Architects, stated that the University of Washington has a unique opportunity to create an environment within the goals of the administration and staff. This will revitalize and energize an area of the community. Residents will benefit from community space, enhanced pedestrian areas, and retail activity.

Mark next spoke about the public benefits of the alley vacation. The scope includes UW West Campus housing projects. Site 31W apartments and site 33W residential hall are both scheduled for 2011 occupancy while site 32W and 35W residential halls are scheduled for 2012 occupancy. Sites 31W and 33W are planned to contain 619 beds while site 32W and 35W contain 1,026 beds. The team is proposing to make enhancements to Campus Parkway, particularly the median. Also they intend to develop open space and create Brooklyn as a Green Street.

Green areas are to be developed along NE 41<sup>st</sup> street. The ultimate goal is to enhance the pedestrian realm of the area, according the Cork. "Given the density of the development at the corner of Brooklyn and Campus Parkway, this is the heart of the area," he added.



**Figure 1: West Campus Plan**

Jennifer Guthrie, of Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd., stated that the vision is to create a great neighborhood through various means including sidewalk improvements, a pocket park, and improvement of the median along Campus Parkway.

Next, she stated that Brooklyn Avenue is targeted to become a Green Street, while Campus Parkway is to be enhanced as it is the primary East-West connection.

Historically, this community has always been a neighborhood connected by a trolley. It was recommended that strong connections be made, particularly between the University and downtown. Campus Parkway development took place in the early 1950s.

Today, the landscape has not evolved well. It feels like a transit corridor as opposed to a pedestrian space. Many of the trees have been performing poorly due to poor soil conditions and overcrowding. Furthermore, this is a major

route for Metro as well as a major bicycle route and a future corridor for the trolley extension. Campus Parkway is bounded by student housing buildings to the north and south.

The design team is looking to the spirit of Parkways as they have been historically intended. The intent is to create the feeling of park. Ravenna Avenue in north Seattle is a relevant precedent.

Strategies to creating this parkway concept include:

- Tree thinning (remove underperforming species)
- Soil amendment
- Installation of irrigation
- Turf planting
- Additional tree planting

#### Site 32W

Elm Plaza: Northeast corner of Brooklyn and NE Campus Pkwy

There is a significant slope of approximately 9 degrees at the site.

Programming includes street entrances, public seating perched above green space due to slope conditions, and private seating nooks underneath a giant elm tree centered in the park space.

Reasons stated for the desired alley vacation include:

- Enhance pedestrian circulation,
- Maximize development capacity,
- Integrate housing above grade,
- Create significant new public open space.

The western portion of the site is designed to be student centered. A café would be open to the public and exist on the northeast corner of site. The service entrance has been centrally located along 41<sup>st</sup> Street. There is a desire to eliminate conflict between service areas and pedestrians. Bollards are utilized to define the space. The north portal includes garage doors that are electrically powered and made to appear like the rest of the wall. See rendering.

#### Summary: Site 32

Development potential: 241,200 sf without alley vacation

Proposed development: 134,570 sf with vacation

Vacated land, 2876 sf

Elm plaza: 11,680 sf

Café: 3,025 sf



Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd mahlum



mahlum

**Figure 2: Site 32W Plans**

#### Right-of-way Improvements Quantitative Summary:

3,450 square feet of additional pedestrian improvements

840 square feet of voluntary setback

12,057 code required improvements

#### Additional facts about the development:

- There are four existing trees that will be removed due to poor performance.
- There will be 17 new plantings in addition to the four replacements.
- There will be 2,240 square feet of additional planted area as well as 2,415 square feet of specialty pervious paving.
- Canopies will be integrated in key locations complete with lighting for a total of 1500 square feet.
- Street furniture is being provided, including benches, lean rails, transit shelters, and bike racks.

The objective is to pull from existing plantings in the neighborhood. American elms are being utilized along Campus Parkway which are appropriately scaled for this context, according to Jennifer Guthrie. Consideration is also been taken for the context of each street.

#### Site 35W

Site 35W is similar to Site 32W. However, the design team is creating a through-block pass-through with a courtyard activated by a retail function. Unfortunately, NE 40<sup>th</sup> Street does not allow for 8-foot sidewalks. Additionally, a 7,500 square foot urban grocery store is being designed with a café and service window near the existing bus stop. As currently designed, the service access occurs along NE 40<sup>th</sup> Street near the University Way corner.

Concerning the alley light and viewshed, the block to the south has a vacated alley. Thus, the view may not always exist if the University develops a taller structure on the site.

The design team took another look at the pass-through. Transparency, a café, and a wide passage were designed to create an inviting space. The design team feels that clear visual cues exist through the site.

The team has coupled the pedestrian and service access. The entry is being treated architecturally. Wood elements, glass, and café transparency are utilized for this purpose.

There is an entrance to the grocery store on the northeast corner of the development. The store is being designed to include diagonal shelving to aid in

Site 35W  
View from NE 40th Street



Figure 3: Site 35W Plans

the building transparency.

Development potential: 247,200 square feet without alley vacation

Proposed development: 192,640 square feet with vacation

Vacated land, 2,240 square feet

Open Courtyard: 4,765 square feet

Market: 7,490 square feet

Right-of-way Improvements Quantitative Summary:

4,430 square feet of additional pedestrian improvements

1,595 square feet of voluntary setback

10,442 square feet of code required improvements

The design team has added 6-feet of right-of-way for pedestrians along Campus Parkway as well as setting back the façade of the building. Similar right-of-way improvements are being designed into this site as that of Site 32 including bus shelters, benches, and lean rails. Additionally, the curb lines are being adjusted to accommodate a bike lane and a sharrows moving south.

The design team perceives the open spaces to be significant developments that enhance the entire community.

### **Commissioners' Comments and Questions**

*Can you provide input regarding the 8-foot sidewalk?*

It appears consistent with recommendations provided by SDOT.

*How much is Green Factor and how much is additional?*

Team went above and beyond the Green Factor

*Why is a custom bus shelter being provided?*

They are an amenity, they are not required. We are attempting to maintain a consistency in materials. We took cues from the SLU streetcar.

*Who will be maintaining the amenities?*

The University of Washington.

*Can you walk up to the elm tree in Elm Plaza?*

There will be a protective zone around the tree. It is quite large.

*So students will not be able to lounge in the pocket park?*

No, we went with ground cover and texture instead of a lawn under the tree.

*I have uncertainty about the amount of new street trees. Where is there consistency in tree species?*

There are no existing street trees along Brooklyn. Along Campus Parkway, most are American Elm but the other species are failing. The trees along 41<sup>st</sup> Street are a variety of species. The team came up with a pallet of trees that are compatible with existing trees.

*Is the end goal to create a strong urban form with a tree canopy?*

The goal is to create a strong edge. The edges are intended to strengthen the parkway concept.

*Is it still intended that the pass-through area have limited hours?*

Yes

*Will the courtyard entrance be the main access to the grocery?*

The main entrance will be at the street corner.

*The setbacks from the sidewalk, were they requested?*

The setback is the result of façade articulation.

*Overall, this presentation is much improved from the previous one. The urban design features are much improved. I am troubled by the interior corridor. I do not believe it to be a public amenity due to its interior location. Perhaps look at lighting and paving treatments to emphasize the opening to the courtyard. There is not a lot of street activity along "The Ave." Maybe there is a way to create a stronger and more inviting south pedestrian access."*

*You have done a wonderful job creating transit oriented building facades. Maybe hold back the bus shelters to see how the demand may change due to other changes in the area such as the potential streetcar.*

*Try to not concentrate on the interior courtyard space. The courtyard is handsome. I hope that it becomes a nice, secret space. It will work great for the residents but will not be a big public space.*

*Concerning the median, I hope the design team will work with SDOT.*

*We have not seen any images of what the interior courtyard might look like when it is closed to the public. It is hard to envision how this might work.*

*One of the previous main concerns is the view through the courtyard. The light is still a concern. From the courtyard side, it is much better.*

*It may be a good idea to look at a celebratory gate. Look at how an artist might approach the courtyard entry. How far back will the gate exist?*

## **Commission Business**

- Not taking action on Nov19 notes as of yet.
- Julie Bassuk to take action on the concept design for Seattle Center Fun Forest.
- Andrew Barash to take action on UW West Campus alley vacation
- Timesheets.
- Retreat planning, split into two dates: January 21 and February 4. Location: tbd.
- Alley Charrette – Don and Lauren to take part.
- Citywide Design Guidelines – should the Commission’s role expand? The Commission’s goal is to positively affect the public realm.
- Safeway Vacation.