

Urban Design and Streetscape

Introduction

How were urban design and streetscape concerns addressed in the preferred alternative?

Drawing upon stakeholder input from both the Design Advisory Group (DAG) and mediation processes (2008), the SR 520 Urban Design team developed a series of design priorities for the SR 520 corridor, including proposed roadway and lid improvements in preparation of the preferred alternative. The team developed a vision statement that stresses corridor unity by defining the desire to create "...a coherent and graceful facility that reflects a harmonious relationship with the surrounding landscape, structures, and other elements of the corridor." Conceptual design for the preferred alternative included providing Americans with Disability Act (ADA) access, reconnecting separated neighborhoods through the use of lids, urban and historic aesthetics, preservation and enhancement of green and open spaces, access management, and mobility improvements through a variety of transportation mode choices and routes.

What comments were received?

Through preliminary public outreach efforts, the SR 520 Urban Design team heard a desire for specific features and functions at the Montlake interchange, Washington Park Arboretum and the I-5/Roanoke area. These elements included issues of safety, aesthetics, circulation, wayfinding, and directed programming requests.

As summarized in the Westside Urban Design Memorandum, these desires included:

- Creation of passive park and recreation space.
- Development of paths that logically and seamlessly connect to existing City of Seattle trail and open space networks, such as Washington Park Arboretum.
- Connections *to* and reconnections *of* neighborhoods.
- Creation of coherent, safe and easy bicycle and pedestrian connections.
- Emphasis on the use of vegetation over structure (e.g., green buffers versus fencing).
- Preservation and framing of views of visual resources such as Lake Union, downtown Seattle, Lake Washington, the Olympic and Cascade Mountains, the Arboretum, and Mt. Rainier, through the creation of belvederes, plazas and other public viewing areas.
- Use of lighting which emphasizes safety, directs lighting downward onto paths, and avoids "sky-shine".
- Design of "gardenesque" landscaping for interest and in keeping with neighborhood sensibility.
- Implementation of traffic calming measures via visual cues.
- Application of Olmsted principles and style to landscape and architectural designs where appropriate.

Comments received during the comment period of the SDEIS requested the project include features that add a “human scale” to the project, reflecting the complex needs of city streets. Specific features such as pedestrian lighting, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and landscaping should be well integrated into the project. The project should adhere to concepts from the original Olmsted plan and in particular, design Lake Washington Boulevard and Montlake Boulevard in accordance with the Olmsted concepts. Particular attention should be given to the Arboretum, both toward minimizing impacts as well as the project design adjacent to, or within the park. Comments also recommended developing urban design guiding principles for use in integrating the project into the urban areas within Seattle, and to work closely on the project development with the Seattle Design Commission and the City of Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs.

Addressing the problem

How did we identify possible solutions?

The SR 520 Urban Design team developed recommendations based on previous work processes and public outreach efforts in the project area. These efforts include:

- Past stakeholder input from DAG and mediation.
- Work group recommendations.
- Design precedents, historic context and professional expertise.
- Information gained via extensive public outreach to Seattle neighborhoods, bicycle and pedestrian advocates, stewards of the Washington Park Arboretum, the University of Washington, and City of Seattle representatives.

In particular, the SR 520 Urban Design team focused on resolving issues that affect the FEIS footprint for the preferred alternative. Comments, recommendations, and suggestions from these earlier efforts were synthesized into comprehensive recommendations for Technical Coordination Team (TCT) consideration.

What are the options presented for TCT consideration?

The SR 520 Urban Design team developed a series of options for consideration by the TCT. These options included: providing paths at the Montlake lid, E. Roanoke Street I-5 crossing, and 10th and Delmar lid; providing opportunities for viewing visual resources; and ensuring the durability, relevance, beauty, context and maintenance of landscapes. Following is additional detail for each of the options.

- Provide paths at the Montlake lid which:
 - Are in scale and style with the surrounding Montlake neighborhood, Arboretum and Olmsted boulevards.
 - Accommodate diverse users and modes (e.g., cyclists, pedestrians, and elderly users).
 - Buffer users from the street edge (e.g., planting strips and other aesthetic physical buffers).

- Connect users to locations both on the lid (e.g., transit stops, bicycle lockers, comfort stations, view points, plazas) and to the existing network of local and regional open spaces and paths/trails, including the Arboretum Waterfront Trail, the Lake Washington Loop Trail, East Montlake Park, UW open space, UW main campus, and Sound Transit's University Link UW station.
- Are safe and legible (wayfinding).
- Provide paths at the E. Roanoke Street enhanced I-5 overcrossing and the 10th and Delmar lid which:
 - Are in scale and style with surrounding neighborhoods and parks.
 - Accommodate diverse users.
 - Connect users to north Capitol Hill, downtown Seattle and the University District.
- Provide opportunities for viewing visual resources at:
 - Montlake Bascule Bridge – 18-foot wide bicycle and pedestrian path with viewing space mid-span.
 - E. Roanoke Street enhanced crossing – improved bicycle and pedestrian access with possible belvedere/viewing areas to downtown Seattle.
 - 10th and Delmar lid – incorporation and preservation of the Bagley Viewpoint with raised viewing plaza at east edge of lid.
 - Montlake lid – raised viewing area to Washington Park Arboretum and Lake Washington at east edge of lid.
- Ensure durability, relevance, beauty, context and maintenance of landscapes by:
 - Selecting native vegetation (low maintenance, climate-appropriate) and/or vegetation in keeping with City of Seattle standards and historic context.
 - Not placing vegetation in areas where maintenance is difficult or impossible (e.g., Portage Bay Bridge).
 - Preserving mature tree canopy at 10th and Delmar lid where possible.
 - Preserving and/or enhancing Canal Preserve planting.
 - Connecting or augmenting Olmsted boulevard aesthetic and Arboretum collections/aesthetic through planting plans that respect Arboretum master plan, Olmsted precedents and City of Seattle standards.

Final TCT recommendation

The TCT supports collaboration between WSDOT, the Seattle Design Commission (SDC), City of Seattle, UW Architectural Commission, ABGC, Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board, and Seattle neighborhoods to expand and refine an aesthetic vision, establish goals, and suggest design treatments for urban design and streetscapes within the project area. This collaboration would include identifying the existing urban amenities that will remain after construction of SR 520, and co-developing

a community engagement process for refining the goals and principles. It would ultimately result in a set of urban design guidelines that would inform and direct final design and construction of SR 520.

A SDC subcommittee would partner with WSDOT to review draft guidelines for visual, architectural and lid portal areas. Following general consensus from the subcommittee, the guidelines would be presented to the full SDC for review and general consensus, as well as City of Seattle review. Development of the urban design guidelines for SR 520 is expected to begin in the winter of 2010/2011.