



# Seattle City Council

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## Central Staff - Memorandum

**Date:** December 7, 2015  
**To:** Members of the Transportation Committee  
**From:** Lish Whitson, Council Central Staff  
**Subject:** Clerk File 314278, Amazon's requested vacation of the alley in Block 21

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Amazon has applied for the vacation of the alley in Block 21, bounded by Bell and Blanchard streets and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> avenues in the Denny Triangle neighborhood of Downtown Seattle. At the November 23<sup>rd</sup> public hearing on the application, opponents of the vacation stated that there had not been sufficient consideration of shadow impacts on Denny Park.

### **Street Vacation Policies**

The street and alley vacation policies recognize the important role that streets and alleys can provide in maintaining light, air, open space and views. They state:

The light, air, open space and view functions provided by the right-of-way will be identified for each proposed vacation and the effects of their loss analyzed. The analysis will include the potential shadow impacts of the increase in development potential directly attributable to the vacation on nearby public parks and open spaces.

Specific guidance is provided under Guideline 3.3 which states:

J. Prevention of shadows on parks or other public open spaces. Vacations generally shall not be approved if the development proposed as part of the vacation request would result in additional shadowing of parks and other public open spaces.

Denny Park is one block north of Block 21. Development on Block 21 would increase shadows on the park both with and without the alley vacation.

### **Analysis of Block 21 Alley Vacation shadow impacts on Denny Park**

Amazon has proposed to build a 24-story office tower and a 9-story office tower on the block, separated by publicly accessible open space. The proposed alley vacation on Block 21 will allow for a change in the orientation of the towers on the site from a north-south orientation under current conditions to an east-west orientation with the vacation. Under the vacation

alternative, the taller of the two towers will be located at the north end of the block. As a result, there will be an increase in shadows on Denny Park at certain times of year from the vacation. However, the analysis provided indicates that it is not a significant increase in shadow impacts.

Shadow impacts were disclosed at two different times. At the March 5, 2015 Design Commission meeting, the Commission was shown shadow [diagrams](#) (see pages 65-66) that indicated that there will be increased shadows on the southern edge of Denny Park at noon on the Spring and Fall Equinoxes as a direct result of the vacation. On November 5, 2015, the Department of Planning and Development published an [addendum](#) to the Downtown Height and Density Changes EIS with [appendices](#) that illustrate likely shadow impacts (see pages 33-46 [warning, large .pdf]). This addendum analyzes the project, including the impact of the project with the street and alley vacation on light, air, open space and views.

Related to shadow impacts on Denny Park, that analysis found:

**“...the Alley Vacation Alternative would contribute to shading of Denny Park at times during the Vernal and Autumnal Equinoxes and the Winter Solstice.**

Shading that would occur during the equinoxes would be minimal (less than approximately 10 percent of the total park area during the Vernal and Autumnal Equinoxes, and less than approximately 45 percent of the total park area during the Winter Solstice) and would not affect the whole park. Shading that would occur in the winter would be at a time of the year when less use of the park could be expected due to the typically cloudy weather and colder temperatures. **Usability of the park could continue as shadows would affect only a portion of the park.** It should also be noted that Denny Park has nearly 100 percent tree canopy and therefore **the park is largely shaded under existing conditions.** The mature trees within the park are a combination of both deciduous and coniferous species. Shadow impacts would not be expected during the summer when highest use of the park would be anticipated. Overall, no significant shadow impacts associated with the Alley Vacation would be anticipated to occur relative to Denny Park.” (page 14)

Similarly, in their letter to the City Council recommending conditional approval of the vacation, SDOT stated that they did not identify any adverse light, air, open space and view impacts from the vacation.