

August 3, 2026

MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation, Waterfront, and Seattle Center Committee
From: Rebecca Maskin, Analyst
Subject: Clerk File 314550 – Swedish First Hill alley vacation conditions modification and approval

Introduction and Overview

On August 6, 2026, the Transportation, Waterfront, and Seattle Center Committee (the Committee) will discuss and possibly vote to approve Clerk File (CF) 314550, modifying conditions of approval for an alley vacation conditionally approved in [CF 314304](#) in 2016, and extended under [CF 314477](#) in 2021, that would facilitate the development of a new medical office and support service building pursuant to Swedish's [2005 Major Institution Master Plan](#). Swedish First Hill (Swedish) submitted [a request to modify the approved conditions](#) to accommodate further construction delays in the project, while still delivering approved public benefits.

Swedish First Hill and the Block 95 Development

The Swedish First Hill Major Institution Master Plan was adopted in 2005. The plan authorized the development of a building that would combine medical support and offices on “Block 95.” Block 95 is the block bounded by Boren Avenue on the west, Columbia Street on the north, Minor Avenue on the east and Cherry Street on the South. Previous buildings on this block have been demolished in advance of the proposed development.

The Master Plan supports the vacation of the alley on Block 95 and provides for its redevelopment with a combination of central support, medical offices, research, and parking and loading uses. This project, identified as “Building E” in the Master Plan, would be connected to the rest of the Swedish campus across Minor Avenue through a skybridge to be used by patients and a tunnel to be used by employees to support the rest of the hospital campus. The tunnel and skybridge were conceptually approved by [Ordinance 126413](#) and [Ordinance 125142](#) (extended by [Ordinance 126414](#)), respectively.

Public benefit conditions of the alley vacation

On August 8, 2016, the Council provided conceptual approval to Swedish for the vacation of the alley on Block 95 to facilitate the project described in the previous section.

Conditions placed on the vacation included provision of the following public benefits:

- Street improvements on several First Hill streets and intersections to implement the “First Hill Mile” – a string of pedestrian improvements to create a one-mile pedestrian walking route, with a design that prioritizes and enhances the pedestrian experience. Swedish will provide widened sidewalks, extended curb bulbs, landscaping, art, and wayfinding that identifies the route.
- Funding for improvements to First Hill Park.
- Additional streetscape improvements at and near the site.

The Council’s conditional approval was limited to five years, which was extended for an additional eight years, ending in August of 2029, with the Council’s approval of CF 314477. Swedish is not proposing to modify any of the public benefits in their request to modify the vacation conditions of approval.

Modified conditions of approval

The proposed modifications to the conditions of approval granted in CF 314303 and CF 314477 address further construction delays on the Block 95 project while Swedish constructs other projects in the Major Institution Master Plan. The draft condition modifications:

- Approve the alley vacation for uses and purposes identified in the Swedish First Hill Major Institution Master Plan for Block 95, in place of the development proposed in 2016.
- Add a condition that seeks to ensure maintenance and upkeep of the Block 95 construction site while it is under development.
- Stipulate that the public benefits offered in exchange for the alley vacation should be completed before the conditional approval expires in 2029.

Next Steps

If the committee supports the revised conditions in CF 314550, it should take the following steps:

1. Vote to add the draft conditions of approval included as attachment 1 to this memorandum to CF 314550. The conditions as drafted would indicate the Council's approval of the project as conditioned and would allow development of Block 95 street improvements to occur as soon as construction permits are granted by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections. The conditions indicate those steps the Petitioners would need to complete prior to the Council granting final approval and transferring ownership of the alley to the Petitioners. The conditions also indicate that the Council will grant final approval if the conditions have been met.
2. Move to recommend conditional approval of the vacation petition contained in Clerk File 314550.

Attachments

1. Block 95 Alley Vacation Conditional Approval, Clerk File 314550
2. Summary of Seattle's Street Vacation Policies

cc: Lish Whitson, Director
Calvin Chow, Deputy Director

**IN THE MATTER OF THE REQUEST OF SWEDISH HEALTH SERVICES TO
FURTHER MODIFY THE GRANT OF APPROVAL FOR THE PETITION OF THE
VACATION OF THE ALLEY IN BLOCK 95, TERRY'S SECOND ADDITION, WITHIN
CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 3, IN THE BLOCK BOUNDED BY COLUMBIA STREET,
MINOR AVENUE, CHERRY STREET, AND BOREN AVENUE**

**CLERK FILE 314304
CLERK FILE 314477
CLERK FILE 314550**

The City Council modifies its grant of approval of the Swedish Health Services petition contained in Clerk File 314304 approved August 8, 2016, and the extended approval as described in Clerk File 314477, so as to authorize vacation of:

**The alley lying within Block 95, Terry's Second Addition to the
City of Seattle, according to the Plat thereof recorded in Volume
1 of Plats, Page 87, Records of King County, Washington;
Containing an area of 3,841 square feet or 0.0882 Acres, more or
less; Situate in the City of Seattle, King County, Washington**

Clerk File 314550 is granted subject to the following:

The vacation is granted to allow the Petitioner to redevelop Block 95 substantially in conformance with the medical and support uses identified for the site in the Major Institution Master Plan for Swedish Medical Center First Hill Campus adopted by Ordinance 121965, such as the project presented to the City Council in August of 2016, and for no other purpose.

The vacation is granted upon the Petitioner meeting the following conditions, which are modified versions of the conditions contained in Clerk Files 314304 and 314477. The Petitioner shall demonstrate that all conditions imposed on the vacation by the City Council have been satisfied: all utility work relating to the vacation including easements or other agreements is completed; all public benefit elements have been provided; any other agreements or easements have been completed and recorded as necessary; the appraised value of the alley lands and all fees are paid, prior to the passage of the street vacation ordinance.

1. All street improvements shall be designed to City standards, as modified by these conditions to implement the Public Benefit requirements, and be reviewed and approved by the Seattle Department of Transportation; elements of the street improvement plan and required street improvements to be reviewed include:

Street improvement plan showing sidewalks, street trees, bike racks, street furniture, lighting, art or artist-made elements, and landscaping around the site and the off-site public benefit features, including but not limited to these specific elements:

- Marion to Madison sidewalk and plantings;
- Minor & Seneca curb bulbs, sidewalks, furnishings & plantings;
- University & Summit traffic circle;
- Boylston & Seneca curbs bulbs, sidewalk, furnishings, & plantings;
- Boylston & Marion curb bulbs & sidewalk;
- Broadway Avenue plantings;
- Wayfinding signs and street tree replacement;
- Public art in the ROW along the First Hill Mile;
- Columbia & Cherry expanded and enhanced pedestrian streetscape;
- Pedestrian controlled signal at Boren & Cherry; and
- Pedestrian controlled signal at Minor & James.

It is expected that construction of the street improvements listed in this section will occur pursuant to an SDOT-approved Street Improvement Permit and be completed in two years.

2. Any remaining utility issues shall be resolved to the full satisfaction of the affected utility prior to the approval of the final vacation ordinance. This may include easements, restrictive covenants, relocation agreements, or acquisition of the utilities, which shall be at the sole expense of the Petitioner. Utilities impacted may include:

- Seattle City Light;
- Seattle Public Utilities;
- Puget Sound Energy; and
- CenturyLink Communications.

Prior to the commencement of any development activity on the site, the Petitioner shall work with the affected utilities and provide for the protection of the utility facilities.

3. It is expected that development of the improvements listed in Condition 1 will commence within approximately 2 years after this approval and will be completed before the expiration of this conditional approval in 2029. The petitioner shall provide SDOT with quarterly reports, following Council approval of the vacation, providing updates on the redevelopment within the

Major Institution Master Plan, schedule, and progress on meeting the conditions of approval.

4. Completion of a development project on Block 95 is not a precondition to granting the Alley Vacation. The petitioner may seek a final ordinance granting the vacation after a Property Use Development Agreement, as described in condition 8, has been negotiated.
5. The Petitioner shall work with the City to develop an appropriate interim condition at the site, (e.g., graded, erosion controlled, and secured), and the Petitioner will install those interim improvements on the same timeframe as the construction of the street improvements listed in Condition 1. This interim condition shall be maintained by the Petitioner until redevelopment of the property occurs.
6. Access to the Block 95 property may include three access points, unless otherwise approved by SDCI or SDOT: two driveways on Cherry Street and one exit-only driveway on Columbia Street. Curb cuts associated with these access points will be constructed together with any development activity on the site, and their presence described in the Property Use and Development Agreement required by condition 8.
7. The Petitioner is a health care facility, for which maintaining a healing environment is paramount. In the context of maintaining the healing environment, free speech activities such as hand billing, signature gathering, and holding signs, all without obstructing access to the space, the building, or other adjacent amenity features, and without unreasonably interfering with the enjoyment of the space by others, shall be allowed within the vacation public benefit features; however, the Petitioner shall retain the right to preclude any such activities in the event they interfere with the provision of healthcare services in a healing environment. Members of the public may be asked to leave for conduct that unreasonably interferes with the enjoyment of the space by others or unreasonably interferes with the provision of healthcare services in a healing environment that includes but is not limited to, activities that create noise that interferes with patients' rest and recovery, and interfere with access to care including emergency care and physician services. Signage clearly identifying public access and allowed free speech activities is required at the public open space elements and shall require the review and approval of SDOT Street Vacations. Signage shall be consistent with signage provided for public amenity space, if any, on the site. Any violation of these conditions will be enforced through Chapter 15.90 of the Seattle Municipal Code.
8. The Petitioner shall develop and maintain the public benefit elements as defined by the City Council. A Property Use and Development Agreement (PUDA) shall be required to ensure that the public benefit elements remain open and accessible to the public 24 hours per day, with temporary closures permitted for reasons such as maintenance, safety, or private functions and to outline future maintenance obligations of the improvements. Signage shall be

provided as described in Condition 7. The final design of the public benefit elements shall require the review and approval of SDOT Street Vacations. SDOT may request additional review by the Design Commission of the implementation of the public benefit elements or the pedestrian enhancements, as necessary. Public benefit elements in the right-of-way require additional SIP review, street use permits and indemnification; public and private areas must be clearly distinguished and markers in the sidewalk shall be required. The public benefit requirements include the following features as well as corresponding development standards, including approximate square footage dimensions:

Block 95 Alley Vacation Proposal

Public Benefit Component	Description	Quantity	Estimated Cost¹
1 First Hill Mile	Sidewalk & pedestrian crossing improvements		\$1,300,000
	• Marion to Madison sidewalk and plantings	4,800 SF	
	• Minor & Seneca curb bulbs, sidewalk furnishings and plantings	2,650 SF	
	• University & Summit traffic circle	925 SF	
	• Boylston & Seneca curb bulbs,	3,870 SF	
	• Sidewalk, furnishings and plantings • Boylston & Spring traffic circle • Boylston & Marion curb bulbs and sidewalk • Broadway Avenue plantings • Wayfinding signs • Street tree replacements	1,130 SF 2,715 SF 830 SF 11 39	
2 First Hill Park Contribution	Contribution toward improvements to First Hill Park	\$500,000	
3 Public Art	Public art in the ROW along the First Hill Mile	\$300,000	
4 Minor Avenue Voluntary Setback	Setback along Minor Avenue	1,700 SF	\$125,000
5 Boren Avenue Voluntary Setback	Setback along Boren Avenue	1,200 SF	\$90,000
6 Columbia St. Row Improvements	Expanded and enhanced pedestrian streetscape	980 SF	\$40,000
7 Cherry St. Row Improvements	Expanded and enhanced pedestrian streetscape	560 SF	\$70,000
8 Pedestrian Controlled Signal	Pedestrian controlled signal at Boren & Cherry	1	\$200,000

¹ In 2016 dollars.

9 Pedestrian Controlled Signal	Pedestrian controlled signal at Minor & James	1	\$200,000
TOTAL			\$2,825,000

Granted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2026,
and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of
_____, 2026.

President _____ of the City Council

Street Vacation Policies

From time to time, property owners seek to permanently acquire the street or alley next to their property from the City, typically to facilitate a proposed development. The process to do so is laid out in the [Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) Chapter 35.79](#), [Seattle Municipal Code \(SMC\) Chapter 15.62](#), and the [City Council's Street Vacation Policies](#). In 2018, the City Council updated its street vacation policies to provide greater clarity for petitioners, members of the public and decision-makers in proposing and reviewing street vacation petitions. The policies identify two related but independent questions that the Council must consider in reviewing a street vacation petition:

- are the “public trust functions” of the right-of-way maintained? and
- will the public receive a benefit from the vacation?

Public trust functions are the uses of right-of-way. The policies describe the public trust functions as follows:

Streets are dedicated in perpetuity for use by the public for travel, transportation of goods, and locating utilities. The dedication carries with it public rights to circulation, access, utilities, light, air, open space, views, free speech, and assembly, and contributes significantly to the form and function of the city. The primary concern of the City in vacation decisions is to safeguard the public's present and future needs and to act in the public's best interest. (p. 7)

Public benefits are a required component of street vacations to offset loss of public space. The policies describe public benefits as follows:

The City acts as a trustee for the public in its administration of rights-of-way. Courts have required that in each vacation there shall be an element of public use or benefit, and a vacation cannot be granted solely for a private use or benefit. Therefore, before this public asset can be vacated to a private party, there shall be a permanent or long-term benefit to the public.

The fact that these benefits are provided equally to all members of the public may be most important to those who have the least. To best address the needs of the community, a strong focus on race and social equity is important in assessing the public benefits included as part of a street vacation petition.

Proposed vacations may be approved only when they provide a permanent or long-term public benefit. Because the public permanently loses the street, short-term public

benefits or public benefits that solely benefit individuals will not be considered. The following are not considered public benefits:

- Mitigating the vacation's adverse effects;
- Meeting code requirements for development;
- Paying the required vacation fee;
- Facilitating economic activity; or
- Providing a public, governmental, or educational service.

While the nature of the project is a factor in deciding the adequacy of a public benefit proposal, it is not itself a public benefit. (p. 22)

After a petitioner files a complete vacation petition with the City Council, it is sent to the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), the Seattle Design Commission per [SMC Chapter 3.58](#), and other agencies for review. SDOT collects comments from City departments, private utilities, transit agencies, and others with an interest in the City's rights-of-way. After review and recommendation by these parties, SDOT returns the petition, and the City Council considers the petition. The Council is required to hold a public hearing on the petition, and then must act on the petition. State law states that approval of vacations is solely a legislative act.

If the Council decides it is appropriate to vacate the right-of-way, it will typically grant conditional approval. That approval is placed in the Clerk File alongside the vacation petition. That conditional approval allows the petitioner to begin developing in the right-of-way.

After the petitioner meets all the conditions and pays all fees, SDOT drafts an ordinance for Council consideration that transfers ownership of the right-of-way to the petitioner. Council's review of that final ordinance is generally limited to confirmation that the conditions set in the Street Vacation conditional approval have been met. If all conditions have been met, the Council should pass the ordinance granting the vacation.