

July 28, 2021

MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation and Utilities Committee
From: Lish Whitson, Analyst
Subject: Council Bill 120136: Amazon Block 21 Final Street Vacation

On August 4, 2021, the Transportation and Utilities Committee (Committee) will discuss and may vote on [Council Bill \(CB\) 120136](#), which would grant final approval for the vacation of the alley in the block bounded by 7th and 8th avenues and Bell and Blanchard streets (Block 21) in the Denny Triangle neighborhood of Downtown Seattle, Council District 7. Council concept approval of the vacation was granted on January 11, 2016 through [Clerk File \(CF\) 314278](#).

The vacation facilitated the development of Rufus, a 24-story office tower, and an eight-story family shelter run by Mary's Place. The Council's decision at this point is to determine whether the project has satisfied the [conditions](#) of CF 314278. If those conditions have been met, the Council should approve CB 120136.

Street Vacation Process

The Street Vacation process, as laid out in the City Council's Street Vacation Policies ([Resolution 31809](#)), includes three Council reviews of a project. Soon after a property owner submits a petition to vacate right-of-way, the Council may choose to hold an early public forum or briefing to learn about the proposal and provide early feedback. After receiving this early feedback, City departments, the City Design Commission and other interested parties review the petition. The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) compiles their recommendations and makes a recommendation to the City Council.

Once the Council receives this recommendation, the Council holds a public hearing and reviews the petition. At this point, the Council decides (1) whether to grant the petition, and (2) if the Council determines that the vacation is appropriate, it decides which conditions should be placed on the vacation. This conditional approval allows the petitioner to build in the right-of-way and to complete their project.

Once the project is complete, SDOT confirms that the conditions have been met and transmits a bill to finalize the vacation to Council. At this phase of Council's review, the Council role is to determine that the conditions have been met. Passage of the bill allows for the official transfer of ownership of the right-of-way to the petitioner.

Review of Vacation Conditions

The vacation conditions for Block 21 included the following public benefits, which have been completed:

Public Benefit		Description
On-site Public Benefits		
1	8 th Ave Hillclimb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12,000 sf publicly accessible open space including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accessible ramp from corner of 8th & Bell to mid-block plaza ○ 2854 sf of planting ○ 10 trees ○ 132 lf seating elements ○ Overhead soffit element
2	Blanchard Street Setback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,100 sf setback along the Blanchard Green Street including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 935 sf of planting ○ 5 trees ○ 59 lf seating elements
3	Bell Street Setback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,000 sf setback along the Bell Green Street including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 877 sf of planting ○ 4 trees ○ 20 lf seating elements
Improvements in the Adjacent Public Right-of-Way		
4	7 th Ave Improvements and Cycle Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,700 sf expanded pedestrian streetscape including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1,366 sf of planting ○ 7' wide elevated cycle track running the length of the block ○ 6 street trees (11 total new trees) ○ Bus stop ○ 5 pedestrian light fixtures ○ Enhanced curb bulbs at each corner
5	8 th Ave Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,300 sf expanded pedestrian streetscape including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 663 sf of planting ○ 5 street trees (7 total new trees) ○ 4 pedestrian light fixtures ○ 74 lf seating elements ○ Enhanced curb bulbs at each corner
6	Blanchard Street Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 750 sf expanded pedestrian streetscape including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 258 sf of planting ○ 4 Street Trees (7 total new trees) ○ 4 pedestrian light fixtures ○ 74 lf seating elements ○ Enhanced curb bulbs at each corner

Public Benefit		Description
7	Bell Street Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,800 sf expanded pedestrian streetscape including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 441 sf of planting ○ 4 Street Trees (5 total new trees) ○ 4 pedestrian light fixtures ○ 10 lf seating elements ○ Enhanced curb bulbs at each corner
Off-Site Public Benefits		
8	8 th & Bell Intersection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,350 sf raised intersection and sidewalk to enhance pedestrian safety
9	Bell Street Cycle Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,500 sf buffered bike lane on the north side of Bell Street from Denny to 7th consistent with the Center City Bike Network including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Buffered element to be planter or similar element approved by SDOT
10	Bell Street Concept Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of conceptual street plan from 5th Ave to Denny Way to be adopted by Joint Director's Rule by SDOT and DPD. • Purpose of this Street Concept Plan is to inform future development to reinforce the Bell Street Park design character

The Seattle Department of Transportation has reviewed the project as built, has confirmed that all vacation conditions have been met, and recommends approval of the bill.

Next Steps

If the Committee votes to recommend approval of CB 120136 at its August 4, 2021, meeting, the City Council could consider approval as early as August 9. Following adoption of the legislation, ownership of the former alley would transfer to Amazon.

cc: Dan Eder, Interim Director
Aly Pennucci, Policy and Budget Manager