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\$80M upgrades for Pike Place Market

- *A “legacy levy” that would include the market is planned for the November ballot. Design details are still being worked out but the public now gets a chance to comment.*

By [SHAWNA GAMACHE](#)
Journal Staff Reporter

It's been three decades since the 100-year old Pike Place Market has had any major work done, and the nonprofit organization that manages the market says it's long overdue for some improvements. Plumbing is corroding, the electrical system is overtaxed, not all buildings are accessible by wheelchair or stroller and some might not withstand a major earthquake, they say.



Renderings by SRG Partnership [\[enlarge\]](#)

Recycling bins on Pike Place could move down to the market's lower levels to make room for new day stalls along the street. New lighting is intended to make the market more appealing at night.

The Pike Place Market Preservation and Development Authority is also looking at ways to reduce bottlenecks and create more retail space, though they say that is a far lower priority than infrastructure improvements.

The Pike Place market historic district contains 23 different buildings and its tenants include a dentist, a senior center, a health clinic and a food bank. A dozen of those buildings are managed by the PDA. The market was last renovated in the late 1970's and early 1980's, and much of its current infrastructure stems from that time.

Carol Binder, executive director of PDA, said the renovations will allow the market to continue to function into the future. The market now gets about 10 million visitors a year, she said, a capacity that “was never dreamed of” when the last renovations were made. For example, many small businesses have only one electrical outlet in their space and there are only 18 public toilets in the market.

The PDA estimates the work will cost about \$80 million. The PDA plans to seek bids in the next few months for a general contractor/construction manager.

PDA will hold its first citywide public meeting tonight to get feedback on the proposed renovations and upgrades. The meeting starts at 6 p.m. at the Seattle Public library.

Improvements at the market and at Seattle Center are part of a “legacy levy” Mayor Greg Nickels wants to bring before voters in November. Public meetings on the market will continue through July.

Improvements made 30 years ago were done with urban renewal money from the federal government, Binder said, and those grants don't exist anymore. She said the market's approximately 270 small businesses don't generate enough money to fund the work.

“They just don't generate the kind of revenue that places in Pacific Place do,” Binder said. “We can't just go out and get the high-end retailers and we don't want to.”

Proposed changes include building new roofs and awnings on some buildings, and replacing a dozen separate mechanical systems with a single, efficient condenser water-based central plant.

Duncan Thieme of SRG Partnership, architect on the project, said the central system would save a lot of energy by capturing it and feeding it back into the system. For example, the heat generated from running meat freezers could be recaptured to heat other areas, Thieme said.

Other structural improvements include bringing buildings up to current earthquake codes and adding new elevators in the Corner Market and the atrium in the Economy Building. The hillclimb at Western Avenue would be reconfigured to add an elevator and an electrical plant there. Accessible bathrooms could be built in the Economy Building atrium, at the arcade level in the Soames/Dunn building, and in the Sanitary Market building.

Plans include rewiring and replacing the degraded cast-iron plumbing with stainless steel and the analog metering system in the buildings with a new digital metering system.

SRG Partnership also included ways to add more retail space and reduce bottlenecks. It's made clear in the draft schematic design plan that changes to retail spaces to “increase their vitality and profitability” is the lowest priority of the project. Ideas, like building additional space into the Economy Atrium in the Economy Building, have met with some tenant opposition.

Thieme said adding removable day stalls along Pike Avenue would activate that area, where currently the view is of the backends of cars and dumpsters, and give farmers space to sell.

“One of the goals has been to bring more opportunity for farmers and craftspeople,” Thieme said. “This also, in a way, hearkens back to the old look of the market where, for vendors, that was the prime place to be.”

The draft proposal includes adding new public space at the top of the Hillclimb, in the Economy Market building and the Soames/Dunn Building to reduce bottlenecks. SRG also suggested creating a pedestrian walkway along Pike Place to reduce congestion inside the arcade. Binder said the PDA also wants to add lighting along Pike Place and elsewhere in the market so more people visit the market after dark.

But some vendors oppose changing the current retail space.



[\[enlarge\]](#)

Rebuilding the Western Avenue Hillclimb would make space for a new central plant, a broader stairwell and possibly a new elevator. New public seating could be built at the top, with an accessible ramp to the elevator.

Meeting tonight

The Pike Place Market Preservation and Development Authority will hold its first citywide public meeting tonight to get community input on the proposed renovations and upgrades. The meeting starts at 6 p.m. at the Seattle Public library in the Microsoft Auditorium.

To read the draft schematic design plan, see a map of the market or comment on the proposal, go to www.pikeplacemarket.org.

“In terms of plumbing and wiring: absolutely,” said Mark Monroe, vice president of operations for Lowell’s Restaurant and Bar, a market staple for decades. “There’s a big difference between that and taking away some businesses to get a new sign and a new entrance on Western Avenue.”

James Haydu, director of communications for the market, said that while some of the ideas do involve rearranging retail spaces in the atrium, no tenants or vendors will have to permanently leave the space.

Mike Yeager, owner of Studio Solstice in the atrium, said he also supports the infrastructure changes but doesn’t think any changes should be made to the look of the market or the way the Economy Atrium is arranged.

“Why are they using a perfectly legitimate means of a levy to upgrade our infrastructure to tack on another, whatever, \$30 million dollars to change the look of our market?” Yeager said. “I don’t think the people will vote for those changes nor will they even pass the historic commission.”

Binder said about 85 percent of the \$80 million will go to updating the infrastructure.

She said PDA will strive to have a “light touch” in all renovations and added that final designs will need to be approved by the city’s 12-member Market Historic Commission.

“One of our guiding principles is to keep the funkiness,” Binder said. “You’ll like it better but you won’t know it.”

Flack + Kurtz is mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineer, Swenson Say Faget is structural engineer and Davis Langdon did the cost estimates.

Bush, Roed & Hitchings is providing land surveying.

Shawna Gamache can be reached by [email](#) or by phone at (206) 622-8272.

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