

ANALYSIS

2.0 EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

The Union Street corridor offers an excellent visual connection to the waterfront and bay, but due to the sharp changes in grade, its role as a pedestrian link is limited today.

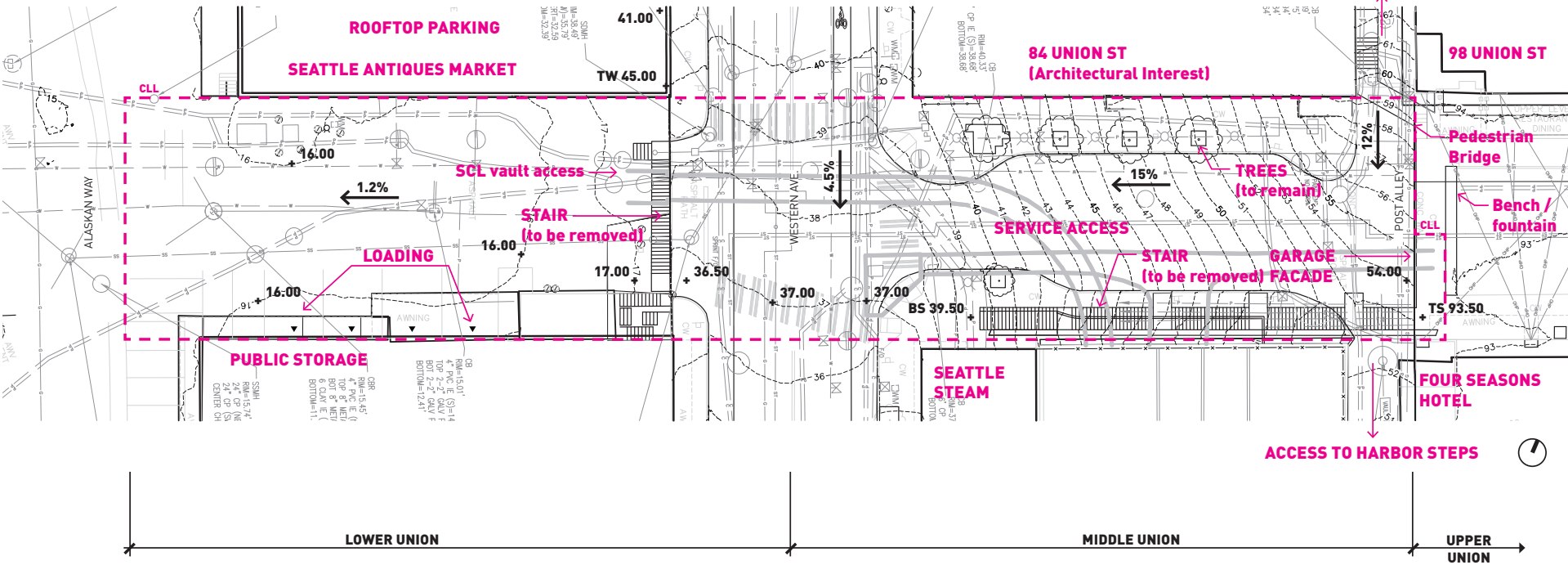
Within the project boundary, the ground elevation rises 39 feet from Alaskan Way to Post Alley, and 78 feet to the Four Seasons Plaza at Upper Union.

The lower block of Union Street opens onto Alaskan Way on the east side at elevation 16 feet, and continues to the base of a 20-foot-high retaining wall supporting the western side of Western Avenue. Between Western Avenue and Post Alley, Union Street rises at a grade of about 15% to 55 feet, and ends at a 37-foot-high garage/building wall that supports upper Union Street.

AERIAL PHOTO OF UNION STREET



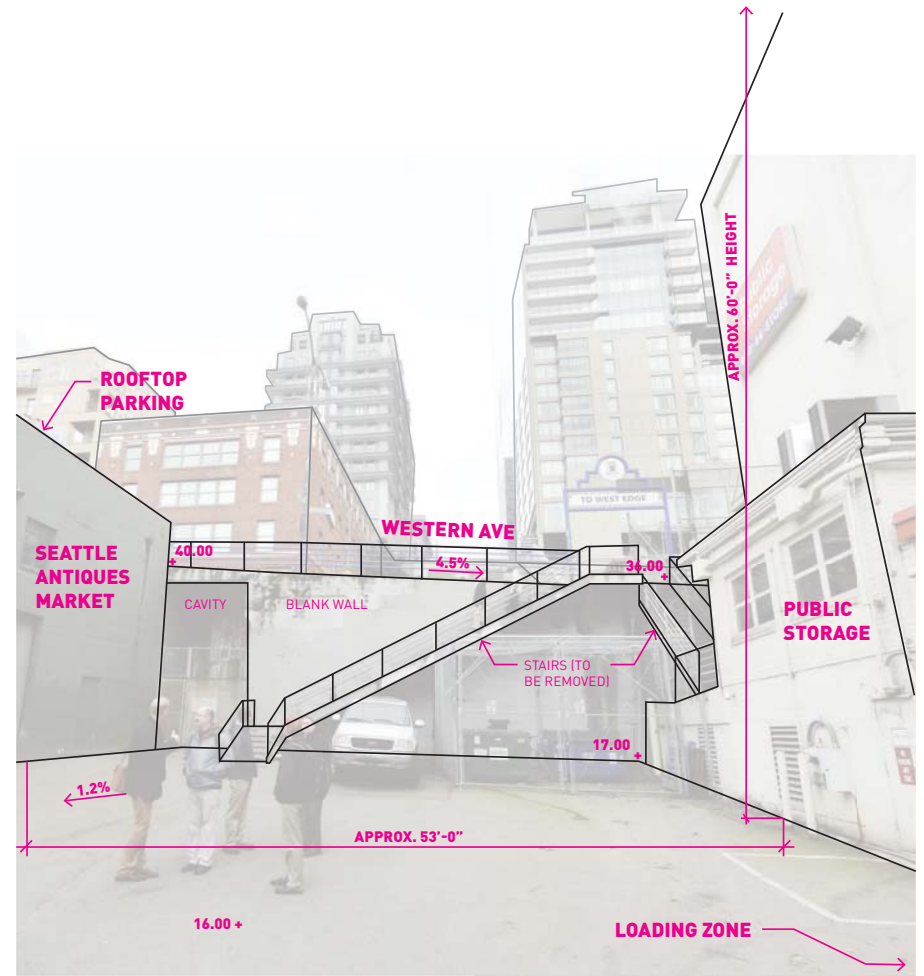
EXISTING PLAN



ANALYSIS

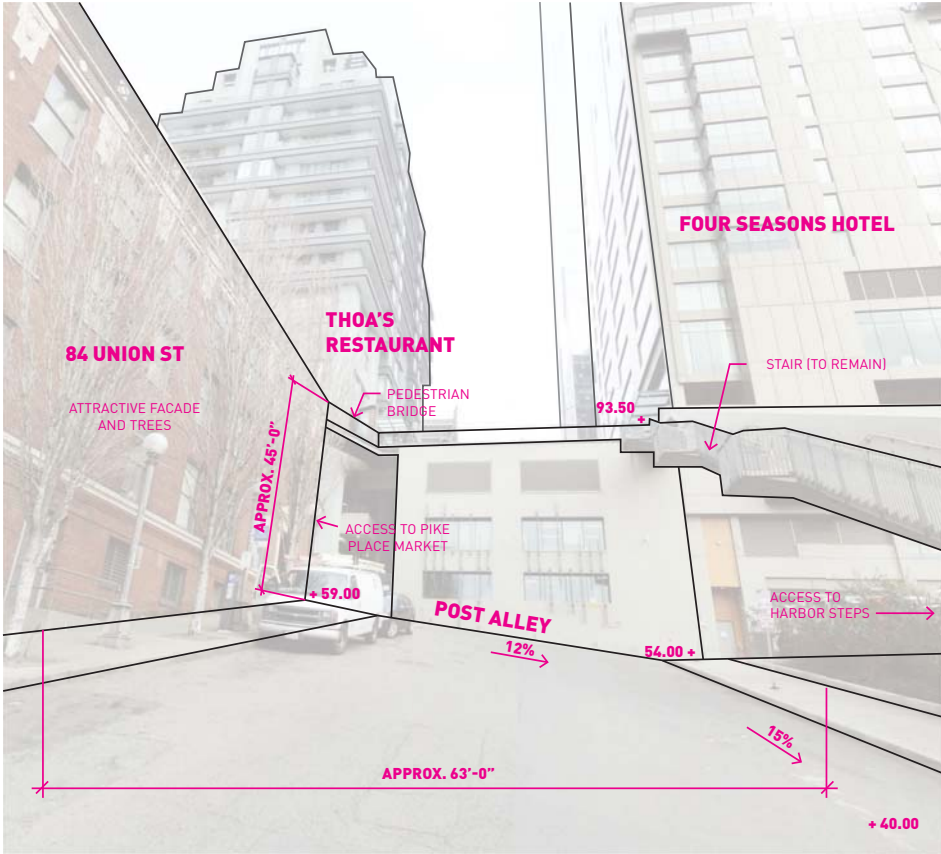


LOWER UNION SITE ANALYSIS





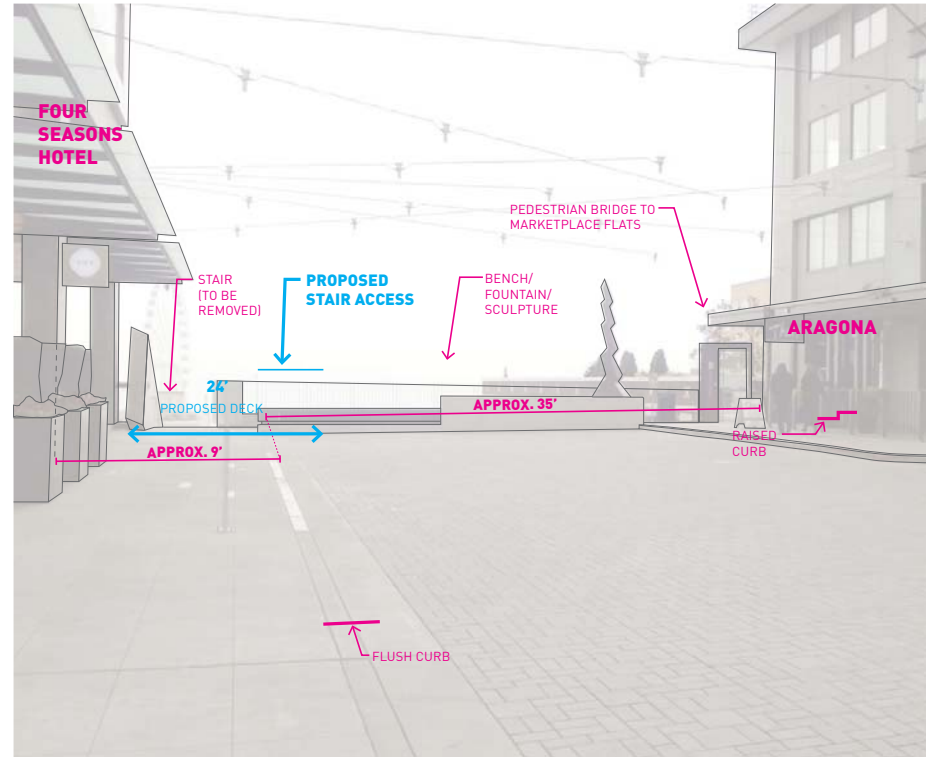
MIDDLE UNION SITE ANALYSIS

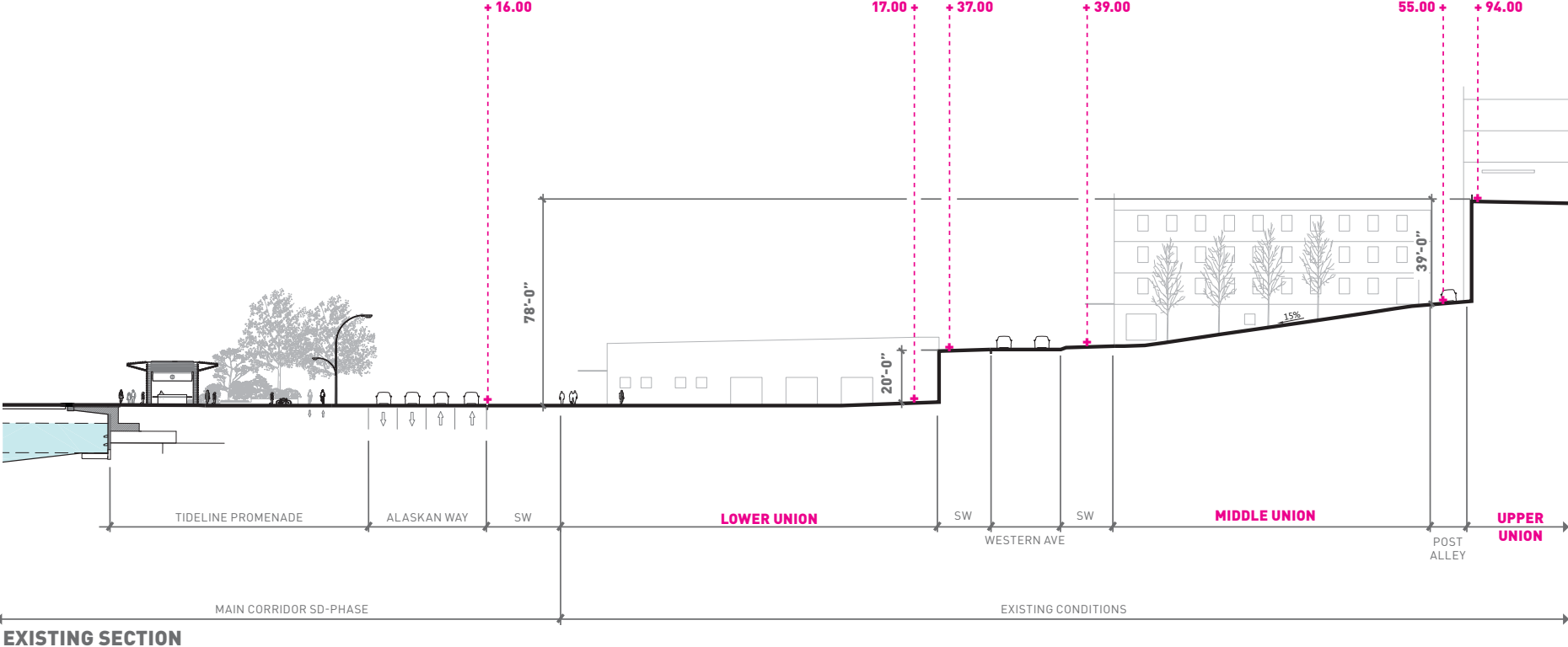


ANALYSIS



UPPER UNION SITE ANALYSIS



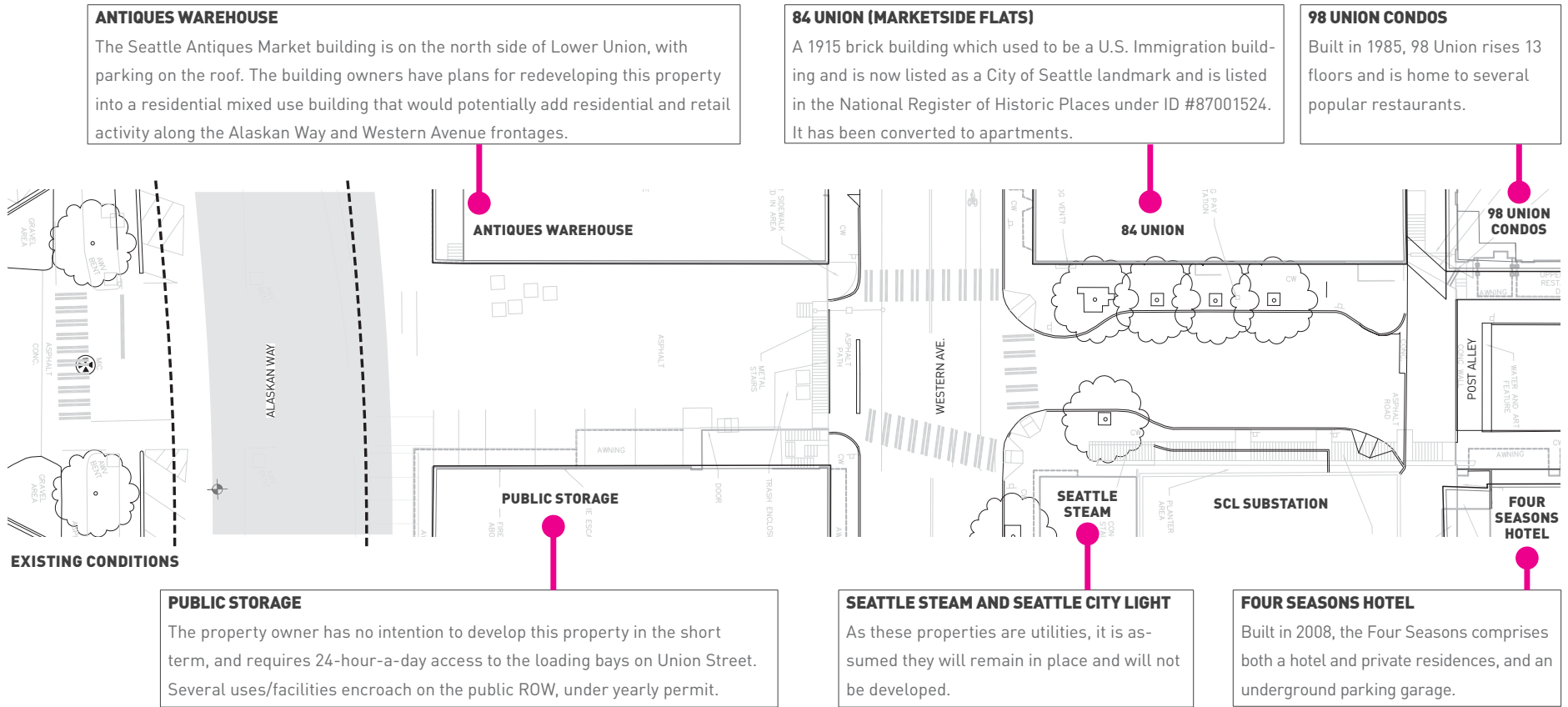


EXISTING SECTION

* NO ADA-COMPLIANT ACCESS FROM UPPER LEVELS TO WESTERN WAY OR ALASKAN WAY

ANALYSIS

2.1 ADJACENT BUILDING USES



2.2 DESIGN OBJECTIVES

In response to client priorities, existing conditions, and design feedback from the Design Oversight Subcommittee and the Seattle Design Commission, the following project objectives were developed:

Improve access

Facilitate a seamless east-west connection from Alaskan Way and the central waterfront up to 1st Avenue, specifically in the context of Union St's proximity to the downtown arts and culture district, in a way that overcomes the significant grade change and facilitates east-west pedestrian movement, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access.

Enhance the public realm

The project will create appealing and flexible public spaces for walking, sitting, and experiencing views of the waterfront, bay, and mountains. Plantings, paving, and street furniture will improve the look and feel of the spaces. Top priorities are to:

- Preserve views to open water
- Create an iconic path and structures on Union
- Preserve integrity of Historic Building at 84 Union
- Create a gateway experience at the eastern project boundary (Upper Union).

Achieve an early win

The project is high visibility and should set the stage for waterfront projects coming later; it will likely be the first Local Improvement District (LID)-funded project.

Frame long-term stewardship decisions

The project will provide a concrete decision-making framework for Operations and Maintenance (O&M) decisions for the future waterfront.

Set positive precedent for Waterfront Seattle project delivery – The project will develop systems for coordination across different Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) divisions and closely related City and State projects.

Accommodate existing conditions

The proposal will take into account the possible Antiques Market redevelopment, assume Public Storage remains long term and accommodate its access and loading on Lower Union, and maintain vehicular access to Post Alley. Furthermore, the project must accommodate the unusually high amount of existing utilities on both blocks. Existing public and private stairs will be removed. The existing conditions, combined with the above design priorities, led to several studies that explored various options for vertical circulation, including escalators, conventional elevators, inclined elevators, stairs, and pedestrian walkways. These studies were developed into three options:

- Minimal impact approach
- Monumental approach
- Direct and legible path approach

The City directed the design team to pursue the accessible “direct and legible path” approach, while preserving open views to the water along the corridor.