

U DISTRICT

Urban Design Framework



City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development

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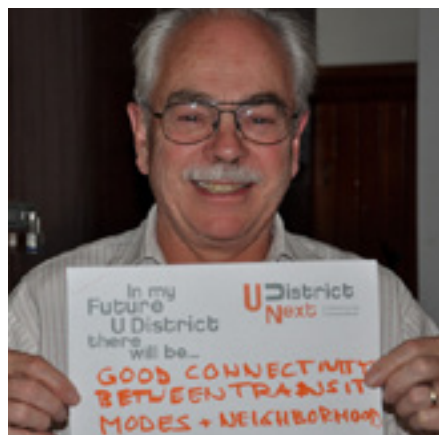
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GGLO



"Bridges @ 11th" is a collaboration between UW, Children's Hospital, and private development. With a range of unit sizes and open spaces, this residential project is designed to serve people who work in the U District.

seaturtle via flickr



The annual StreetFair showcases the eclectic talents and food of the U District community.

freemixology.com



Link light rail will arrive in 2021, fundamentally changing transportation choices in the U District.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University District is a thriving neighborhood with 14,000 residents, hundreds of independent businesses, and its own unique flavor. It's also a cultural and economic hub, as home to the University of Washington, Seattle's largest employer and a magnet for the youth and talent of the Pacific Northwest.

After decades of little development, big changes are underway. The business community, service providers, residents, and UW are collaborating to form new leadership to move the neighborhood forward. UW is investing in West Campus, with twelve new student housing developments. Many other public and private projects are in design or construction. The community is organizing to improve pedestrian safety, bike routes, social services, and open spaces.

Most significantly, light rail is coming in 2021. A new Sound Transit station at Brooklyn and NE 43rd St. will provide a high-speed connection to downtown and neighborhoods north and south. This infrastructure will fundamentally change the context of the U District, leading to substantial development over the next 15-20 years. It will also require thoughtful coordination between transportation agencies.

Now is the time to establish clear community priorities to guide growth. Through an ongoing effort called the U District Livability Partnership, volunteers in an urban design working group spent a year talking to each other, neighbors, colleagues, and the City about how the U District should change and grow.

Many people want to expand the mix of housing to serve a wider range of residents, including options for families, students, professionals, low income residents, and seniors. Others want to increase the number and variety of jobs in the U District, attracting more large employers while supporting the existing small businesses.

The majority of participants favor increased building height in the core of the U District, provided that development standards encourage attractive design. Neighborhood density is seen as a way to achieve housing and job growth near future light rail, new public amenities, and a variety of building forms.

All participants want safe and pleasant streets that serve all modes of travel, including cyclists and pedestrians. People also want to see new public spaces in the core of the neighborhood. Some advocate for a public square on top of the future light rail station, others support increasing privately owned public spaces. Most of all, the community aspires to find ways to preserve the neighborhood's unique and eclectic character in the midst of growth.

This U District Urban Design Framework (UDF) presents recommendations from an ongoing community dialogue about the future of the U District. The UDF will guide City actions like changes to the neighborhood's zoning and design guidelines, as well as City investments. It will also guide the private development and community projects that will be necessary to realize the collective vision of the U District's future.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The issues and recommendations put forward by the U District community generally align with the following principles. The principles establish a clear vision for the U District's future development, guiding recommendations throughout this document:

1. Recognize light rail as a catalyst for change. Light rail will make the U District better connected, support existing and future commercial uses, and allow more people to live within walking distance of high-capacity transit. The station should be a focal point for redevelopment.

2. Balance regional with local. The U District has its own patterns and flavor. It is also a draw for the region, as home to the city's largest employer and the state's largest educational institution. As light rail increases the regional influences, maintain elements of the eclectic local character.

3. Provide a network of great streets and public spaces that creates inviting, memorable neighborhood spaces that support public life.

4. Grow and diversify jobs while maintaining thriving retail and services. The strength and diversity of the U District's small businesses are major assets of the community; protect these while striving to expand the job base to include more office, tech, and research and development.

5. Welcome a diversity of residents. As residential density increases, provide choices for residents of all ages and income levels, including market-rate, workforce, and low-income housing. Provide support services and amenities to meet the needs of residents, including social services, childcare, open space, and other livability factors.

6. Improve public safety by increasing natural surveillance in the built environment and encouraging beneficial street activity.

7. Encourage quality and variety in the built environment, with a particular focus on good design where buildings meet the public realm.

8. Build an environmentally sustainable neighborhood. In addition to the inherent environmental benefits of dense, mixed-use development served by transit, environmental performance can improve through green building, retrofits of existing buildings and green infrastructure.

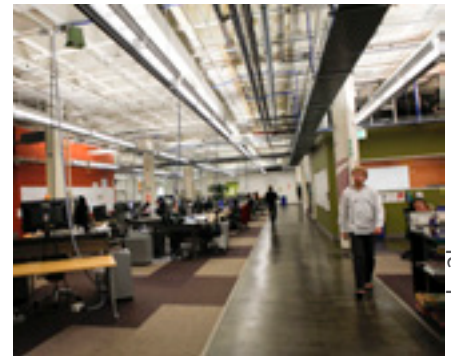
9. Improve integration between UW and the U District by opening the west edge of Central Campus to the U District and building on existing partnerships between the University and neighborhood groups.

10. Support and coordinate active transportation choices, improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure while continuing to support transit and cars.



Diverse coffee shops and eateries contribute to public life.

brewbooks, via flickr



Most jobs in the U District are related to UW or retail/service businesses. Expand the job base to include more of office, tech, and R & D.

www.bs2h.com



Neighbors are working together to make public spaces safer and more inviting.

Friends of University Playground



Joan Horn



Matt L via walkscore.com



Matt Hoehnen

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Urban Design Framework

The U District Urban Design Framework establishes a shared design vision and implementation strategy for the future of the U District. It will help guide future growth in the neighborhood by translating extensive community planning work into guiding principles, specific recommendations, and implementation tasks.

Between now and the 2021 opening of the U District light rail station, the City will revise Comprehensive Plan policies, zoning regulations, and design guidelines for the U District. The City will also invest in new parks and infrastructure, redesign key streets, and coordinate transportation systems. Before starting these various efforts, the U District Urban Design Framework establishes a clear and holistic approach.

1.2 Urban Design Working Group process

In early 2012, the Seattle Office of Economic Development awarded an “Only in Seattle” grant to the U District community to conduct planning work. This planning initially focused on the retail business district, but the project quickly broadened to include residents, businesses, social service providers, the faith community, representatives from the University of Washington faculty and administration, students, and neighbors from areas outside the planning area.

This stakeholder group, called the “U District Livability Partnership” (UDLP), is led by representatives of various community organizations, with support from City staff. It includes working groups on public safety, business development, marketing, and future neighborhood leadership. A final working group—Future Development and Urban Design—has been responsible for thinking about the physical development of the U District.

From June 2012 to February 2013, this Urban Design Working Group held thirteen meetings to address topics including land use, design standards, transit, parks and other public spaces, and environmental sustainability. DPD staff and facilitator Brian D. Scott recorded the group’s ideas and sent meeting summaries to participants for review. These notes and graphics provided the foundation for the guiding principles on p. 5 and the recommendations throughout this Urban Design Framework.

In addition to the Urban Design Framework, the UDLP released a “U District Strategic Plan” in January 2013. This document makes recommendations about how the various stakeholder groups in the neighborhood can collaborate effectively, market the neighborhood to the broader city and region, attract new businesses, and make the neighborhood safer and more appealing. The full Strategic Plan can be found at:

www.udistrictlivabilitypartnership.org



Brian D. Scott

A meeting of the Future Development and Urban Design Working Group.



UDf planning area (in red) over existing urban center designation (blue). The 406-acre planning area extends to Ravenna to consider the needs and concerns of northern neighbors; discussions of new growth potential are focused on the urban center.



Working group draft diagram, mapping key "gateways" and centers of activity in the neighborhood.

1.3 Broader public involvement

In addition to oversight by the Urban Design Working Group and the U District Livability Partnership Steering Committee, this document was informed by extensive outreach with the community at large.

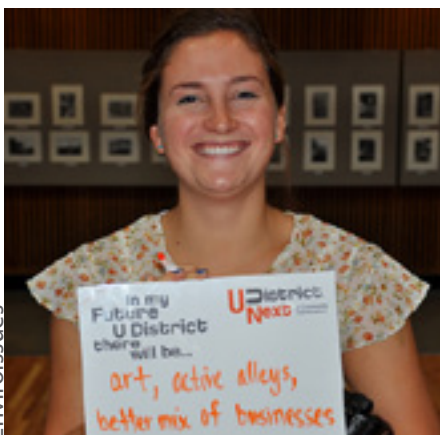
The UDLP hosted three "Community Conversation" events that were attended by hundreds of people from the U District and beyond. Staff from Seattle DPD, OED, Department of Neighborhoods and Seattle Police met with neighborhood groups and individuals. Walking tours were organized in the community, attended by scores of people. The UDLP process and the progress of the Urban Design Framework were widely advertised through print and digital media.

Urban Design Working Group meetings were open to the public, and were well-attended by constituents representing diverse interests and perspectives. DPD met with neighborhood groups including:

- Roosevelt Neighbors' Alliance
- University District Community Council
- University Park Community Club
- Northeast District Council
- University Plaza Condos
- CUCAC
- U District Square

In April 2013, the working group also hosted a public open house to share draft recommendations, DPD held public "drop in office hours" at a local coffee shop to have more detailed conversations with interested individuals. In total, hundreds of people from within and outside the U District planning area have provided input, review and commentary.

Envirolssues



2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 Existing conditions

In 2012, the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) released a detailed report on existing conditions in the U District. A summary is presented here, but the full document may be accessed at:

www.seattle.gov/dpd/cityplanning/completenesslist/universitydistrict

History.

Prior to the 1800s, the area of today's U District was forested, with Duwamish Indian winter camps on Portage and Union Bays. The first European American settlers voted to incorporate the area into the City of Seattle in 1891. Shortly thereafter, the University of Washington moved to the neighborhood from downtown. In 1909, the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition helped fuel growth, laying the planning foundation for the UW's Central Campus.

Transportation has shaped the neighborhood in both positive and negative ways. Rail and a trolley line along University Way established the U District as an urban center within Seattle in the early 20th Century. In later decades, Interstate 5 ran through the neighborhood and cut it off from Wallingford.

Meanwhile, UW continued to grow and expand its presence in the neighborhood. West Campus has become an increasingly important growth area for the institution, and in 2006 the University purchased the neighborhood's largest office building from Safeco Insurance, now UW Tower.

There was little redevelopment activity between 2000 and 2010, but in recent years a spate of new projects broke ground, led by UW's new student housing. The introduction of light rail, expected in 2021, will likely drive further redevelopment.

The Urban Design Framework planning area is large and diverse. It includes a mix of land uses dominated by offices, housing, retail, and other services.

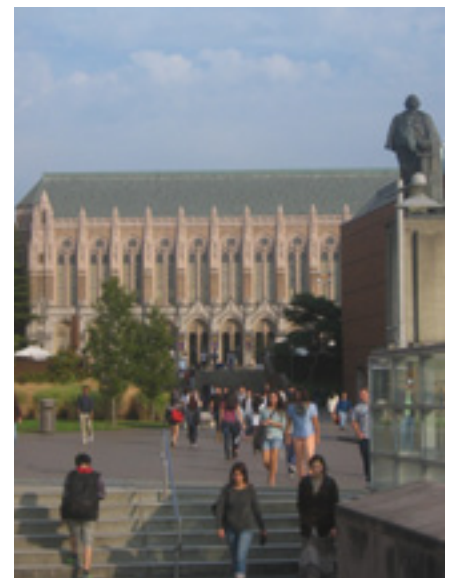
Residential character

In 2010, about 14,200 individuals lived in the planning area. Students account for a large part of this number; 75% of residents were between the ages of 18 and 29.

With the exception of Roosevelt and University Way ("the Ave"), the northern portion of the planning area is mostly single-family and lowrise multifamily housing. Student housing accounts for most of the rental housing in the area. This includes large apartment buildings as well as single-family houses converted into smaller rooms for groups of students.



U District, 1933.



University of Washington is Seattle's largest employer, and the region's premier educational institution.



Historic buildings include architectural details like this gargoyle from University Manor Apartments.

Bill Katzenstein/Iconic Photo



Character buildings from different eras contribute to the neighborhood's look and feel.

Commercial uses

South of NE 50th Street, the neighborhood is an increasingly dense mix of residential, commercial, educational, and medical uses. Commercial corridors on the Ave, Roosevelt, and NE 45th St. provide retail and services to residents, workers, and visitors. Roosevelt and NE 45th St. are mostly larger scale, car-centered retail, while the Ave has continuous narrow storefronts that establish more of a pedestrian retail street. Retail and services in the U District have a highly international influence due to the diverse student population.

Block configuration

The planning area has a regular block pattern with long, narrow rectangular lots. Typical block widths are about 220' long from east to west, with 103' by 40' lots and 14' wide alleys, but block lengths (north to south) vary greatly. They range from 500' near Brooklyn Ave. NE and NE 47th St. to 700' near Brooklyn Ave. NE and NE 52nd St. Lot sizes are generally small, with many owners on each block; this is especially true on the Ave.

Building type and age

Buildings cover a broad range of types, styles, and periods. Wood-frame late Victorian buildings and storefronts sit near early 20th Century brick buildings, Campus Gothic buildings, and some contemporary developments, as well as many featureless commercial buildings from the 1960s-1990s. No one architectural style is dominant.

Heights

Buildings vary considerably in height. The most common height is between 20' and 35', but some UW buildings, apartments, and offices are in the 65'-100' range. A few high-rise buildings are a notable presence, including the UW Tower and the University Plaza Condos, both over 240' feet, and Hotel Deca, approximately 170' tall.

2.2 Planning context

Many members of the community support additional density for the U District over the coming years, with the following considerations:

- New residents and workers will enliven and diversify the neighborhood, support area businesses, and create a sense of neighborhood investment and continuity throughout the year.
- New density located within walking distance of light rail supports environmental goals and enables car-free households, resulting in greater affordability and flexibility in lifestyle choices.

- Accommodate growth in taller, slender towers in some locations and lower-scale buildings in other locations, with features such as open space, outdoor cafes, and pedestrian improvements.
- Use standards and incentives to ensure that new height and density are accompanied by affordable housing, community amenities and important services.

Urban Center/Village Growth Targets

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan designated the U District as an urban center in 1994. This designation recognizes the neighborhood as one of the six areas in Seattle with the greatest potential to accept growth, as determined by access to high capacity transit, proximity to jobs, and a mix of uses including housing, retail, recreation, public facilities, parks, and open spaces. These six urban centers have general targets for growth. The University Community Urban Center does not yet meet these citywide targets:

Comprehensive Plan Goals for Urban Centers		
	University Community Urban Center (existing)	Citywide Target
Jobs (within 1/2 mile of high capacity rail)	10,406 estimated	15,000
Households density	10.5 units/acre	15 units/acre

The adopted 2004-2024 growth target for the University District Northwest Urban Center Village (similar to the planning area) allocated a relatively small share of citywide growth to the U District. Extending those targets to 2035, the following growth is projected for the U District planning area, excluding areas within the UW campus. Beginning in 2015, new targets will be identified for the U District.

University District Northwest* Jobs and Households		
	University District Northwest (existing)	2013-2035 Estimated growth**
Jobs	4,690 (Seattle 2011 Urban Center/Village Employment Growth Report)	+4,100
Households	5,886 (2010 Census)	+3,500

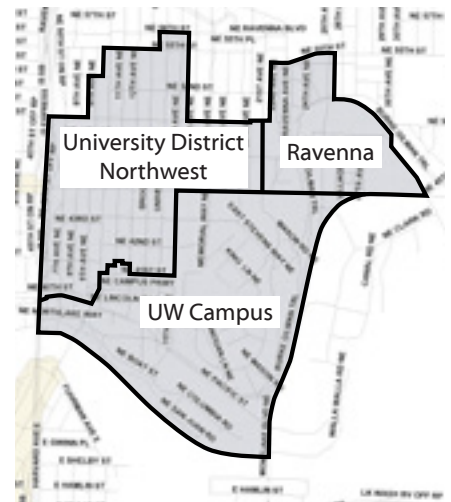
*A subarea of the total University Community Urban Center; excludes Central and West Campuses.

**Estimated - these targets will be revised as part of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan revision process



Bill Katzenstein/Iconic Photo

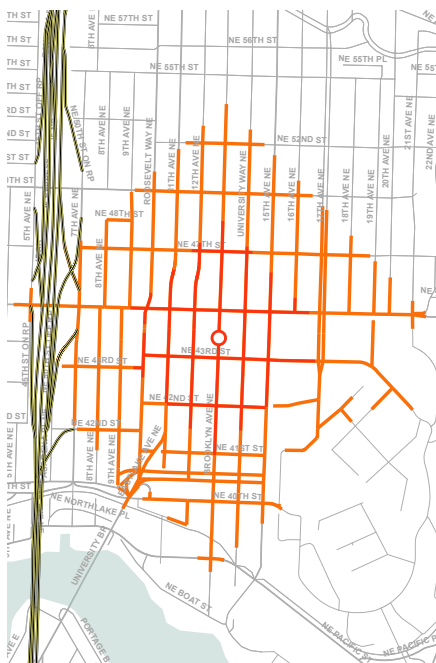
Much of the Ave's distinct character comes from its patchwork of smaller developments and narrow storefronts.



University Community Urban Center and subareas (1998).



Light rail will bring rapid connections to downtown and other neighborhoods, making the U District very attractive for new development.



The half-mile "walkshed" surrounding the future light rail station.

University Community Urban Center Plan

The University Community Urban Center Plan was completed in 1998. Resulting from years of work by neighborhood constituents, UW, and the City, this plan includes goals and policies for how the U District should change over time, accepting new growth while preserving historic elements and building on existing strengths. Goals of the plan include:

- Vibrant commercial districts. Serve local needs and offer regional specialties, especially along the Ave, Roosevelt, and NE 45th St.
- Efficient transportation. Balance different modes, including public transit, pedestrians, bicycles, and cars, minimizing negative impacts to the community.
- Housing. Meet the needs and affordability levels of demographic groups including students, young adults, families with children, empty nesters, and seniors. Balance homeownership opportunities with rental unit supply.
- Recreation. Increase open spaces and active recreation, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan open space goals for urban centers.
- Physical identity. Build on historical and architectural resources, attractive streets, the university campus, and other unique features.
- Arts, culture, and education. Build on the widespread recognition of the U District as a hub of arts, cultural activities, and the region's foremost educational institution.

Sound Transit light rail

While some of the urban center plan policies from 1998 may need to be updated or expanded, the fundamental goals continue to be consistent with priorities voiced by the community in 2012.

In addition to the UW's developments, the biggest single driver of growth in the U District will be the introduction of Sound Transit Link light rail service. New stations near Husky Stadium (opening 2016) and at NE 43rd Street and Brooklyn (opening 2021) will carry thousands of passengers every day between the U District, downtown, and the region. In neighborhoods throughout Seattle, introduction of light rail is accelerating neighborhood discussions about planning. In each case, neighbors are considering how to make the most of light rail and related redevelopment while building on existing community assets.

The "walkshed" around the station site, meaning the area within a half-mile walk, extends from the N. 45th St. freeway overpass to UW's Central Campus, and from NE 52nd St. in the north to NE Pacific St. in the south. There is particular interest in redevelopment in this area, so it deserves special consideration in the planning work.

Other planning documents

A variety of planning documents also influence development and City investments in the U District. These include:

- Land use regulations, Citywide design guidelines, and neighborhood design guidelines.
- The Pedestrian Master Plan, a long-term action plan establishing policies, programs, design criteria, and projects to enhance pedestrian safety, comfort, and access throughout Seattle. www.seattle.gov/transportation/pedestrian_masterplan/
- The Bicycle Master Plan, a blueprint for improvements to Seattle's bike network. It includes recommendations for on-street facilities and urban trails. www.seattle.gov/transportation/bikemaster.htm
- The University District Park Plan (2005), which addresses the existing and future open space deficit in the U District. It includes priorities for the Parks Department in terms of new open space investments. www.seattle.gov/parks/Publications/UDistrict.htm
- The Seattle Parks and Recreation Development Plan, which tracks growth in neighborhoods to help set priorities for parks acquisition and development. It also provides details on planned projects. www.seattle.gov/parks/Publications/DevelopmentPlan.htm
- The Transit Master Plan, the Department of Transportation's (SDOT's) comprehensive, 20-year look ahead to the type of transit system that will be required to meet Seattle's transit needs through 2030. It includes recommendations for a possible streetcar line from South Lake Union to the U District. www.seattle.gov/transportation/transitmasterplan.htm
- The University Area Transportation Action Strategy (2008), a comprehensive look at the U District's transportation patterns and priority improvements. www.seattle.gov/transportation/university_actionstrategy.htm
- The Freight Mobility Strategic Action Plan, which guides SDOT efforts to improve freight mobility and reduce conflicts with other modes of transportation. www.seattle.gov/transportation/freight.htm#plan
- The UW Campus Master Plan, approved in 2002 by City Council and in 2003 by the UW Board of Regents, establishes controls on development, parking, circulation, and open space. It will be updated in the near future. www.washington.edu/community/category/seattle-campus-master-plan/



sea turtle, via flickr

The U District provides a wealth of cultural opportunities that appeal to families. Housing, amenities, and infrastructure should also be designed to welcome families.



Although designated as green streets in the 1998 neighborhood plan, NE 43rd St. and NE 42nd St. need many improvements to create a pleasant walking environment for their large volumes of pedestrians.



Brooklyn Ave NE existing conditions. Mix of building heights and ages, several under-utilized sites a block south of the future light rail station.

2.3 Possible redevelopment sites

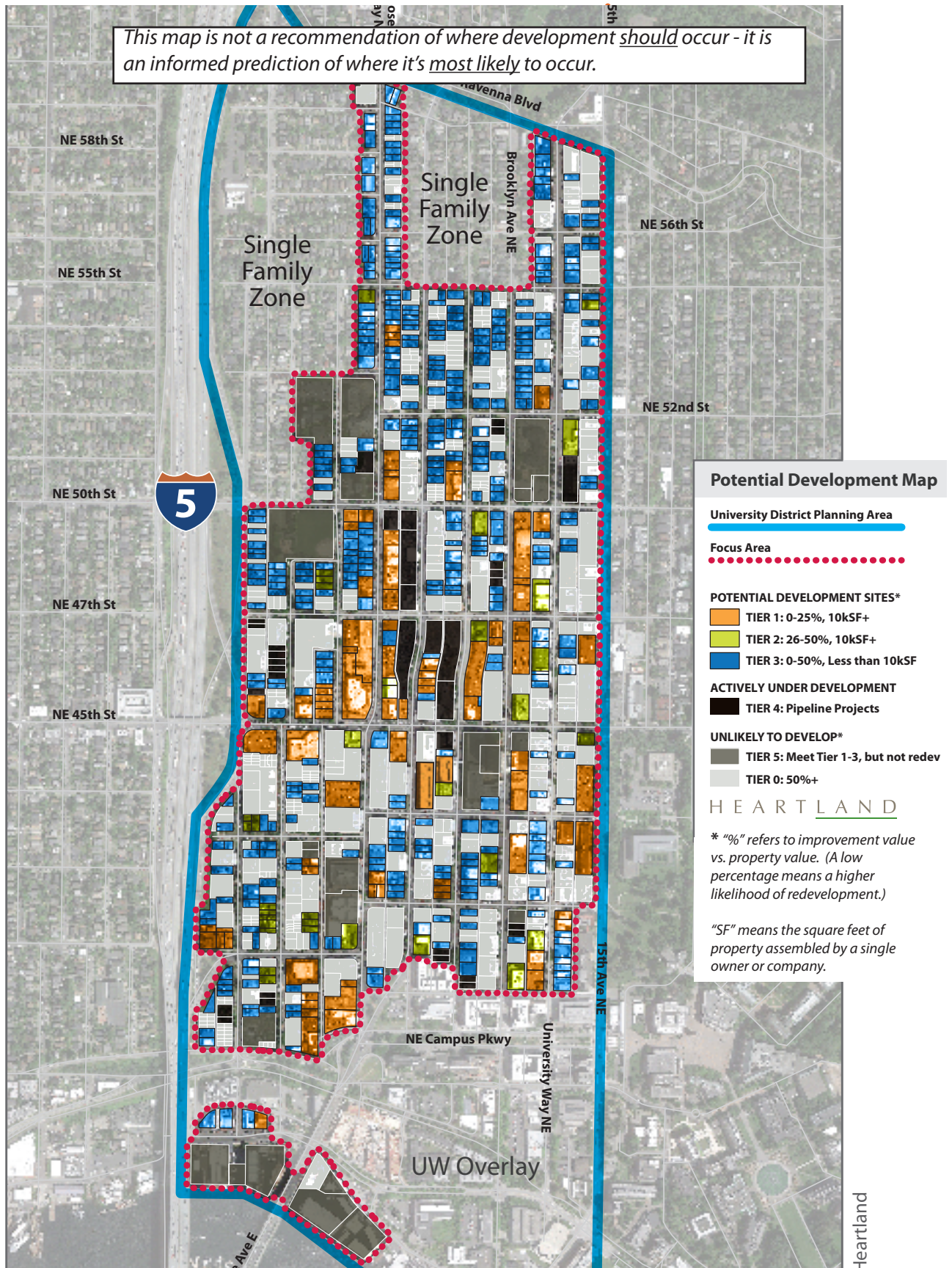
Where will new growth go in the U District? When considering how redevelopment could shape the U District, it's helpful to look at the properties most likely to redevelop. The redevelopment potential map highlights parcels where improvements have a significantly lower value than the property they sit on, and where owners have assembled groups of parcels for potential redevelopment. Landmarks are excluded, as are single-family residential zones and the UW West Campus overlay.

This map suggests two points. First, large redevelopable properties are concentrated in the area south of NE 50th St; this is the area where the most dramatic changes are likely to occur. Second, while there are some full block or half block development opportunities, most sites tend to be smaller. Typically, redevelopment will take the form of infill surrounded by existing uses.



Stephanie Bower

This artist's depiction shows possible development on Brooklyn Ave NE, looking south from NE 43rd St. It includes preservation of character buildings (University Manor is in the left foreground), new development, and green street features.



USA Today



The U District Farmer's Market is a year-round draw for residents and visitors.



Frontage on the Ave is made up of narrow storefronts, contributing to a fine-grained commercial district.

Curtis Cronn, via flickr



Portage Bay offers shoreline recreation and dynamic views.

3.0 URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains recommendations for the physical development of the U District in coming decades. Recommendations are based on the community's ideas about how to enliven and grow the neighborhood while staying true to its unique identity.

3.1 Gateways, hearts, and edges

These are the special areas that define a neighborhood; each category is described in greater detail below, and specific locations are noted in the "Gateways, hearts, and edges" figure. Recommendations throughout this report build on these concepts.



Gateways are transition points that mark entry into the U District. Gateways can be emphasized through the use of architectural elements, streetscape features, landscaping and/or signage.

Several key gateways in the U District have heavy vehicular traffic and confusing rights-of-way: these include NE 45th and NE 50th at the freeway, and the north end of the University Bridge. Redevelopment should make these gateways more comfortable for pedestrians and legible to visitors while maintaining capacity for cars.

One new gateway that deserves special attention is the future light rail station, which will bring thousands of people to the U District every day.



Hearts are the centers of activity that draw people to the neighborhood. Development in these locations should enhance their functions and characters through appropriate uses and architecture.

The University of Washington, just outside the planning area, is the cultural and economic heart of the U District. It has enormous influence on the character of the neighborhood and the people who live and work there. The Ave is one of Seattle's most distinctive commercial corridors, with a multitude of small businesses that offer shopping, dining, and services. Protecting and expanding on the eclectic, energetic character of the Ave should be a priority in any future land use recommendations.

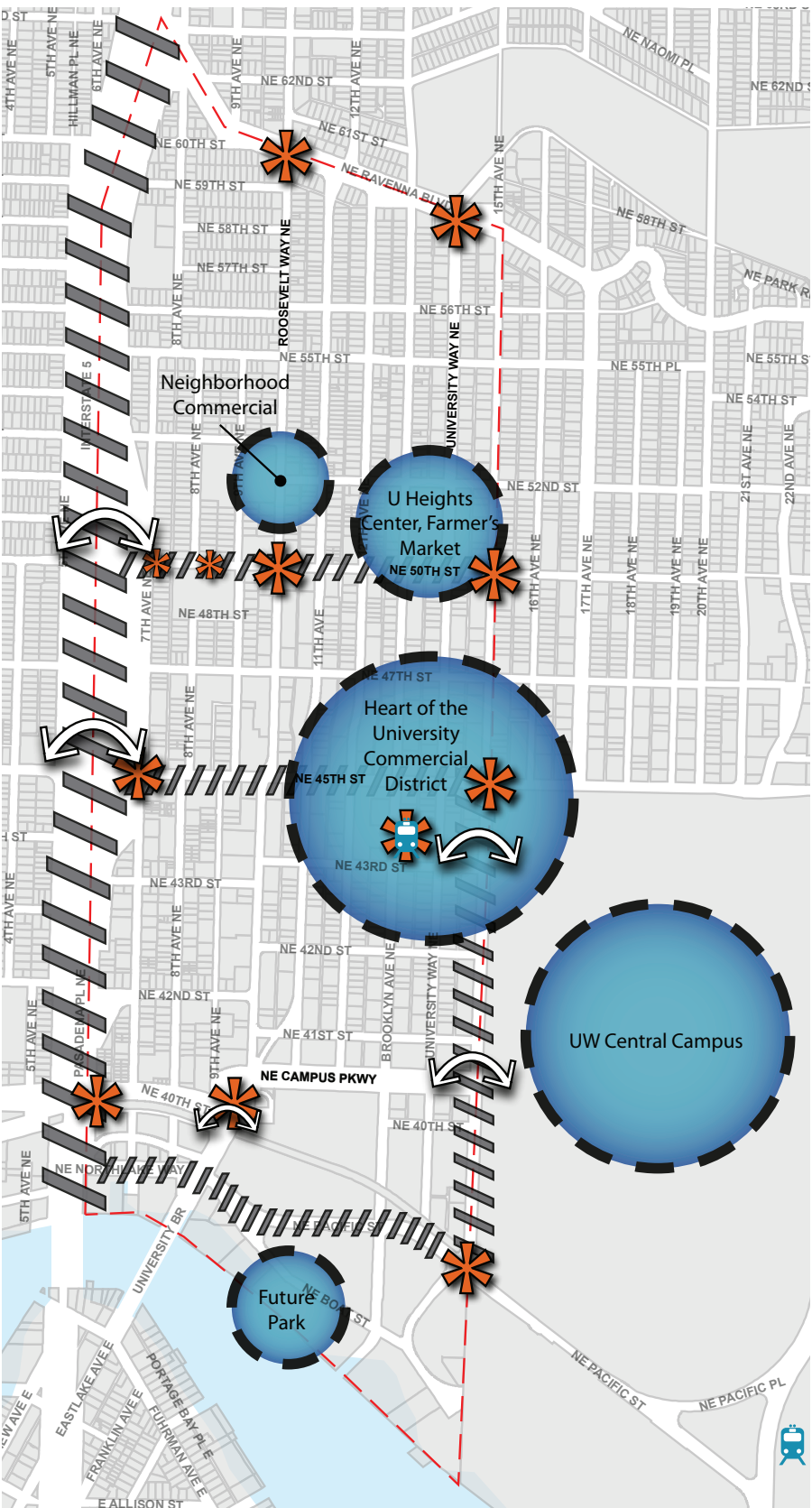
Several "satellite" hearts are focal points for residents and workers in the north, and the future waterfront park (west of the existing Sakuma viewpoint) represents a major new recreational opportunity.



Edges are the natural and built barriers that cut the neighborhood off from its surroundings. Redevelopment should aim to improve connections across these edges where possible.

Interstate 5 is a major barrier. At a minimum, improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists are recommended at the NE 45th St. and 50th St. crossings. More ambitious solutions like pedestrian bridges or partially covering the freeway should be further explored. 15th Ave NE, NE 45th St., NE 50th St., and the north end of the University Bridge could all benefit from pedestrian improvements.

Figure: Gateways, hearts, and edges



- Gateways
- Hearts
- Edges
- Better connections needed



University Heights Center

A gathering space for the community, the University Heights Center hosts a wide variety of classes, workshops, programs, and public meetings.



Seattle Times

UW is a major hub of activity, drawing students, employees and visitors.



The community wants to preserve lower density residential areas at the north end of the planning area.



Catherine Benotto

Some highrise development should be considered between 50th St. and NE Campus Parkway. This example from Vancouver, B.C. shows that tall buildings can incorporate lower scale, street-level residences (see Sections 3.5 and 3.9)

3.2 Land use character

Overall, participants in the planning process support a growing mixed-use neighborhood, with increased residential and commercial development. However, the Urban Design Working Group identified particular emphases that should apply in different parts of the neighborhood. Some of these land use “clusters” would reinforce existing land use patterns, while others are intended to shift areas in new directions.

The “core” of the U District between NE 50th St. and NE Campus Parkway is the area best situated to accommodate significant residential and job growth. This is the area with the greatest concentration of large, private redevelopable parcels. More importantly, this area will be directly served by the new light rail station. The core is within a 10-minute walk to the station, allowing workers and residents fast and easy connections to Capitol Hill, downtown, and the wider service area of Link light rail. This part of the U District abuts UW’s Central Campus, West Campus and the existing business core of the U District. Streetscape improvements and expansion of public spaces is important in this area to serve the increased density.

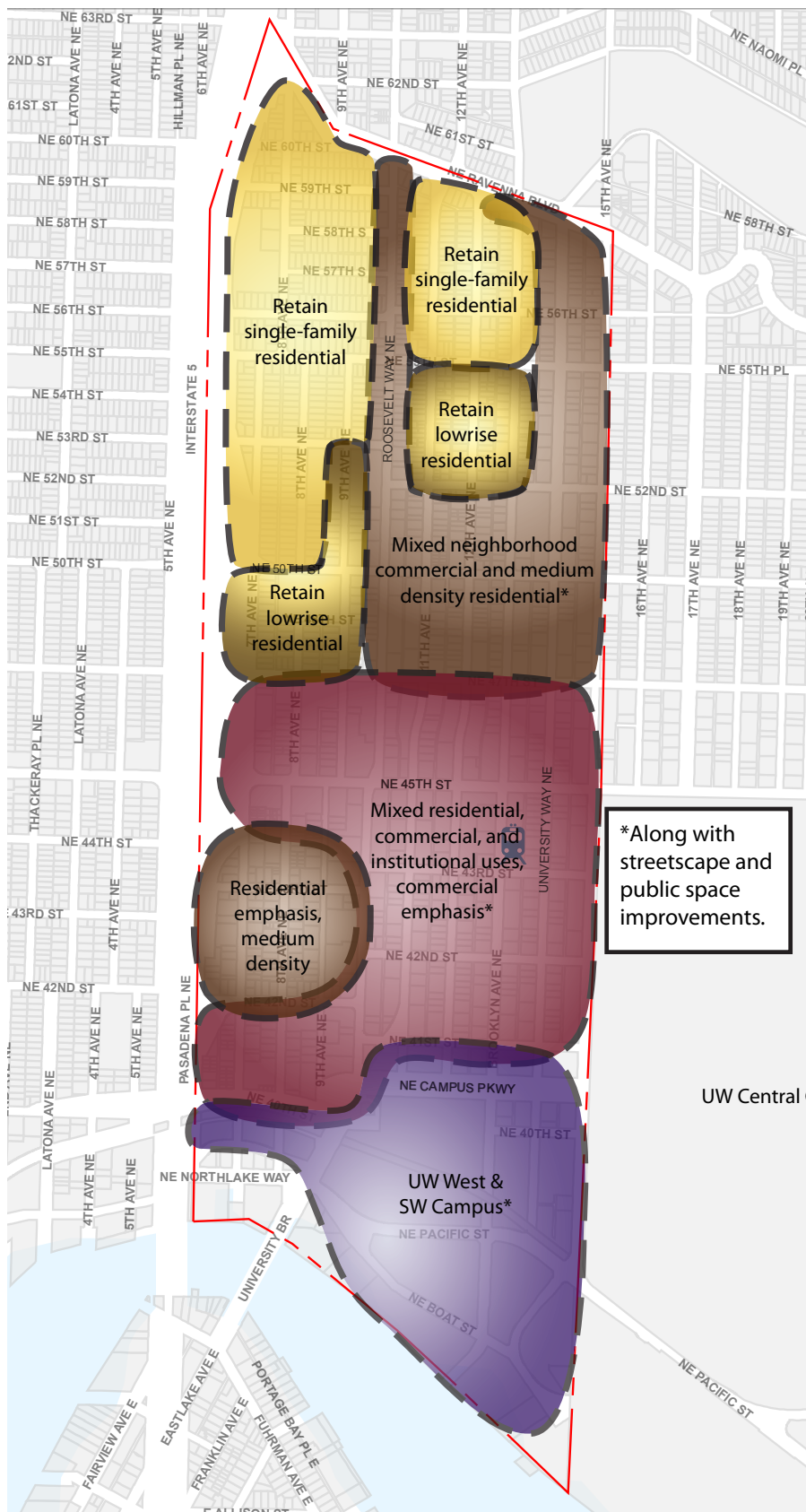
Tucked between the core and Interstate 5 is a pocket of student-oriented residential development built in recent years. It is unlikely that this area will see major redevelopment in the near future.

In the north, residents state a strong desire to maintain a lower-density residential neighborhood with single-family homes and lowrise multifamily residential buildings (except for the higher intensity, mixed-use corridors on Roosevelt and the northern stretch of the Ave). This includes the area currently zoned for lowrise multifamily residential around University Playground, north of NE 47th St and west of Roosevelt.

Changes to zoning should include careful consideration of the transition between the higher-density core and the lower density areas to the north.

At the southern end of the U District, UW West Campus is currently undergoing major redevelopment, with several new residential developments and student life facilities. West Campus will continue to be regulated through UW’s Campus Master Plan, with periodic amendments and updates.

Figure: Land use character



A greater mix of uses and higher density between 47th St. and 50th St. could bring new housing choices and neighborhood services.



The Ave a center of jobs, commercial activity, and cultural life in the U District.

melissajonas via flickr



The 1998 Neighborhood Plan identified a lack of active recreation areas. This continues to be a community priority.

Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance



The U District Farmer's Market is recognized as one of the best in the country.

Zach Mazur



P-Patches at two locations provide gardening and socializing opportunities.

3.3 Public space network

The U District enjoys a variety of open spaces today: parks, a community center, gardens, a regional trail, and a vibrant pedestrian retail street (the Ave). However, as the area grows, more public spaces are needed. Participants in the planning process have identified several ideas for how to integrate public spaces into the neighborhood in a way that serves residents, visitors, employees and students. New public spaces must be well designed to address public safety concerns and to provide a place for people of all ages and abilities.

Parks. New park space is being added now in several locations (see map). However, the existing deficit of open space identified by the Seattle Parks Department will likely grow as the neighborhood grows. Funding for parks will be prioritized through future parks acquisition funds. Spaces that include playgrounds, active recreation, and other attractions that appeal to a diversity of people will help to address public safety/civility concerns.

Green streets provide park-like landscaping, often with wide sidewalks and street furniture. Brooklyn Avenue NE, NE 43rd Street and NE 42nd Street were designated as green streets in the neighborhood plan. DPD will work with the community to design improvements for these streets, with consideration local traffic patterns and competing needs within the right-of-way. The designs will guide street improvements by developers, neighborhood groups, the City and the UW.

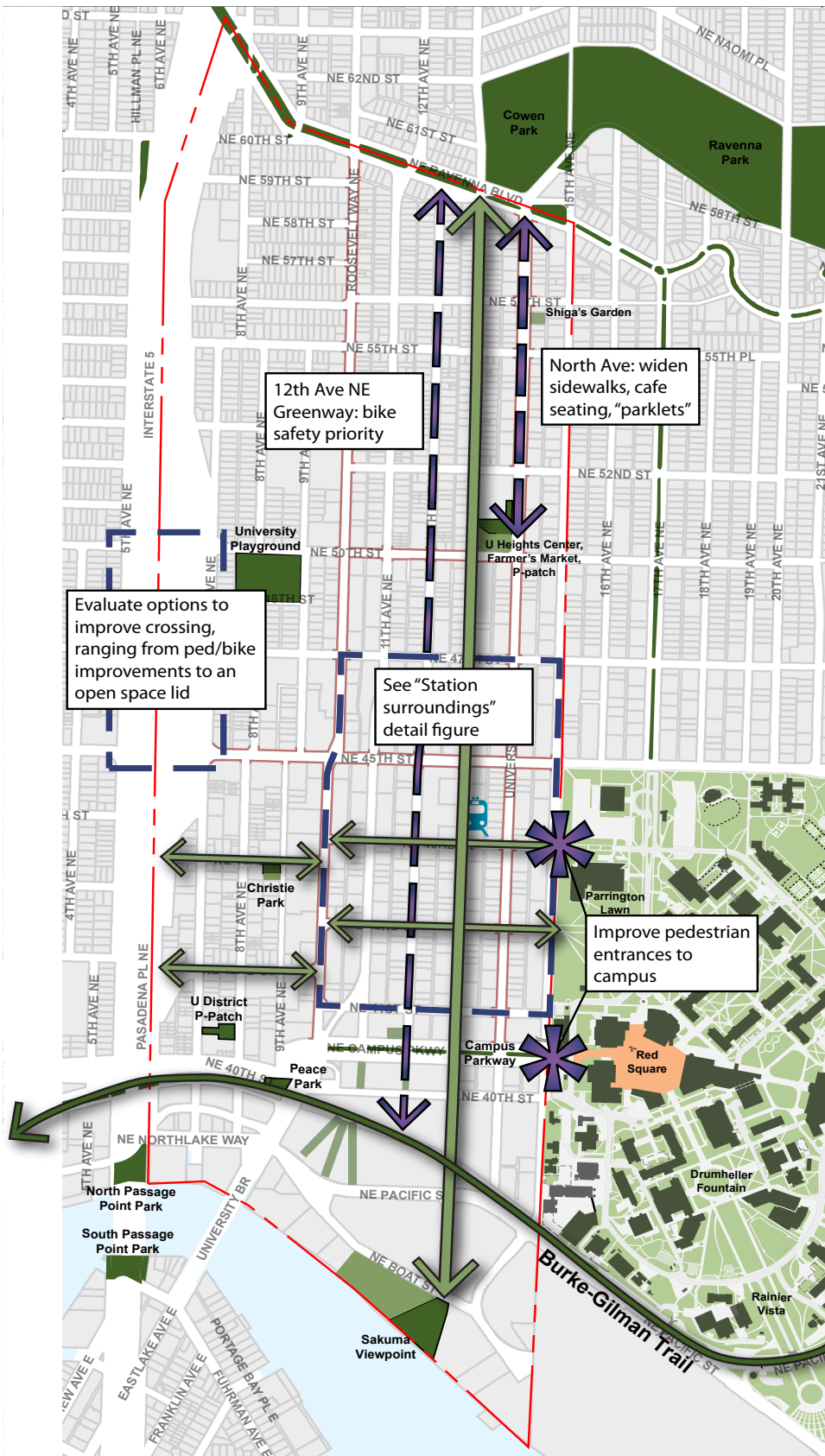
Brooklyn is especially important, connecting Portage Bay to Cowen Park and the Roosevelt neighborhood, passing through the U District's core and by the new light rail station along the way. With relatively light car traffic and a high volume of foot traffic, Brooklyn has the potential to become a great pedestrian route with characteristics of a linear park.

Neighborhood greenways are streets identified for prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements. 12th Avenue NE has been designated as such a greenway, and residents are beginning to work with SDOT on securing funding for specific intersection improvements. This street could become an important north-south corridor for non-motorized travel.

U District Farmers Market. This year-round market is a destination for shoppers across the region and visiting tourists. In addition to healthy food and support for local growers, the market plays an important role in the U District's social life. Local developers and property managers often cite this neighborhood market as a community amenity that adds real estate value and attracts new residents. When designing street improvements and public spaces, look for opportunities to support and grow the farmers market.

(continued)

Figure: Existing & planned public spaces



- ↔ Burke-Gilman Trail
- Key retail frontage
- Existing park
- Planned park
- ↔ Designated green street
- UW campus



Green streets combine high quality sidewalks with generous landscaping. (Detail from the Thomas St. concept plan)



Brooklyn is ideal for green street improvements: it is relatively wide and quiet, and provides an important pedestrian link running the length of the neighborhood.



The Burke-Gilman Trail.



San Francisco has pioneered the concept of "parklets" in the right-of-way. Such an approach could be a good fit for the north Ave.



UW's improvements to the entrance at 42nd St. provide an example of how to open the west edge of campus.

Privately owned public spaces (POPS). Small public spaces that are owned and managed by property owners will likely be created through development incentive programs in higher-density areas. Such spaces must be open to the public and designed for active public use and enjoyment. See Section 3.7 for a description of incentive zoning programs.

The Burke-Gilman Trail is the longest and best established urban trail in Seattle. It connects the U District to many different neighborhoods and parks through excellent bike and pedestrian facilities. New development near the trail should enhance access to the trail, as feasible.

Parklets are landscape and seating areas located within the public right-of-way. These are an option on very wide streets, such as University Avenue NE north of NE 50th Street.

Sidewalk cafes. Wider sidewalks in pedestrian-friendly retail areas provide an opportunity for sidewalk cafes and outside seating. Such spaces will enliven the neighborhood and provide places to people-watch.

Central plaza. Many participants in the planning process would like a centrally-located public/civic space as a defining feature of the neighborhood. For example "U District Square" is an open space concept that advocates would like to see in the space above the light rail station. Others in the community favor the inclusion of interior public space at the base of a transit-oriented development project. As of this writing, transfer of the development rights above the station is being negotiated by Sound Transit and the UW, in exchange for use of UW land that Sound Transit needs to build the station.

Festival streets. Festival streets are designed to serve as regular streets during business hours, but allow for flexible use as public open spaces when closed to traffic. Festival streets often feature special paving, rolled curbs, and public art that serves to reinforce the flexible nature of the space. This approach could help support a variety of public events, such as an expansion of the farmer's market, music performances, etc. See diagram on p. 25 for potential festival street locations.

The UW Campus. The UW's Central Campus includes broad lawns, a historic fountain, gardens and a regionally significant collection of mature trees. The campus is open to the public and used by many neighbors. It could be more welcoming by opening up the west edge of campus along 15th Avenue NE through wider entrances at street intersections and more active building frontage facing onto the street. Wayfinding signs that draw attention to existing resources could also help welcome the broader community onto campus.



Existing conditions on the Ave looking toward NE 55th St.



This artist's rendering shows one possible approach to street improvements on the northern portion of the Ave (looking north toward NE 55th St.). The curb line moves out to accommodate widened sidewalks, landscaping, and sidewalk cafes. Midrise infill continues the Ave tradition of street-level retail and services, but with less of a student emphasis in the north. This area could become more of an attraction for families, professionals, and seniors in the area.

D. Andresen, via Wikipedia



A "galleria" at or near the station could provide small, flexible retail spaces oriented to transit riders and event space. (Stuttgart).

Phil Thiel



A vision of a possible plaza above the light rail station. A high level of programmed activity and site management would be crucial to making this work.

Portland Urban Condos, via flickr



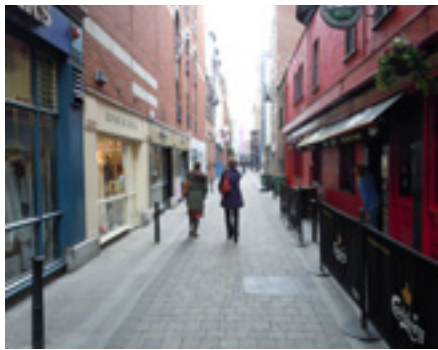
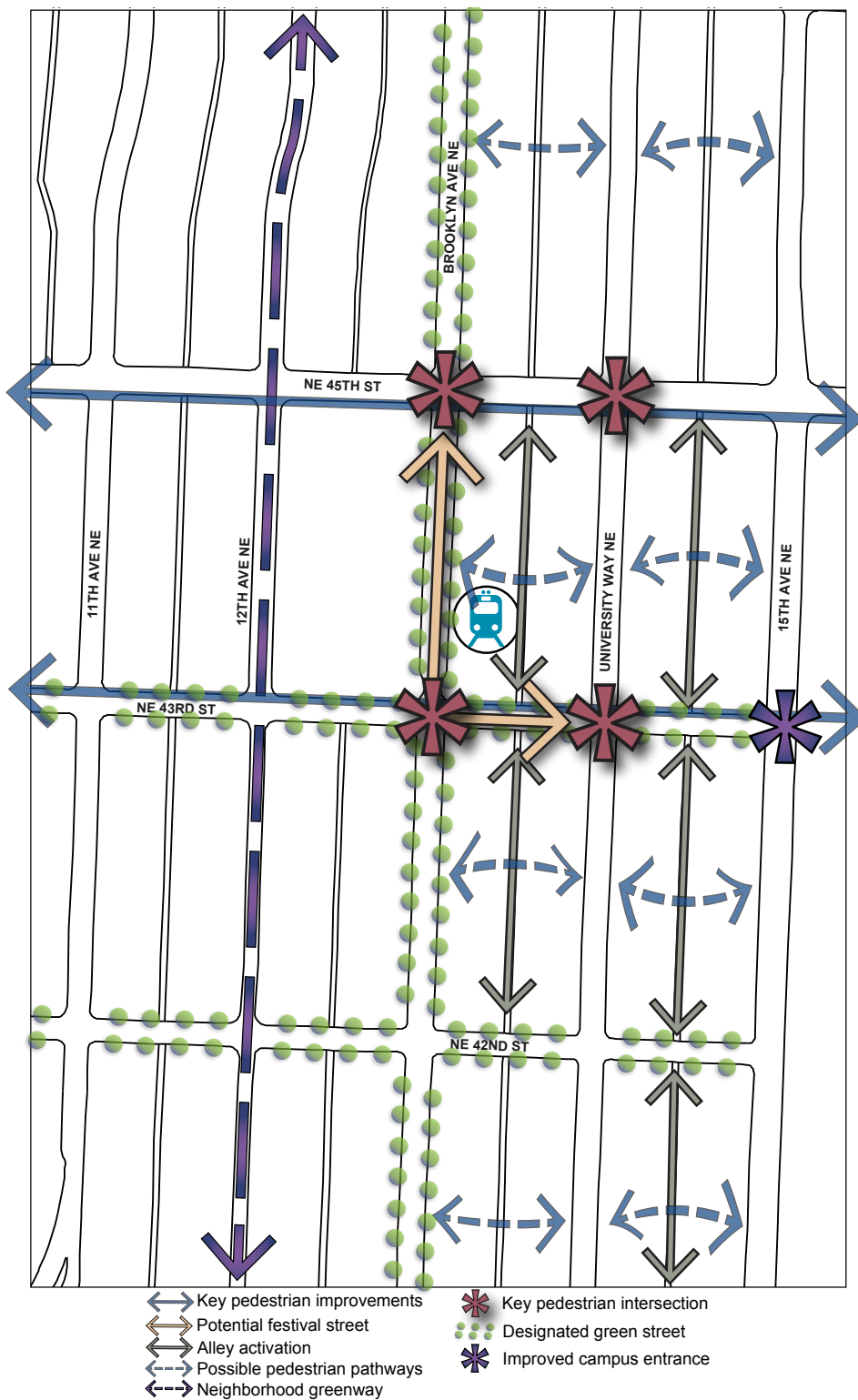
This Portland park, built and managed through a public/private partnership, provides one model for open space at the core of an urban neighborhood.

3.4 Station surroundings

The U District Link Light Rail station, planned to begin service in 2021, is likely to be the single biggest driver for neighborhood change in the next 20 years. The U District community has a strong interest in the future of the station site and its surroundings. While many issues will not be resolved until later in the planning and design of this area, certain principles appear to have broad support.

- East/west pedestrian connections will be crucial on NE 45th St. and NE 43rd St. Sidewalk improvements will be important, and may require ground level setbacks to make room on 45th. Explore tools to achieve mid-block east/west pedestrian pathways as part of redevelopment.
- Improve surrounding intersections to make them more comfortable and convenient for pedestrians. Signal timing, special paving materials, "scramble" crossings, and new signage should all be considered.
- Explore opportunities to create "festival streets" around the station, that is, streets that can be closed off easily for special events. Ideally this would include design elements that tie the sidewalks and the street together in a continuous design. The west and south edge of the station block are the highest priority, but it may be appropriate to extend these festival streets farther along Brooklyn and NE 43rd St.
- Redevelopment should include some kind of publicly accessible space such as a park, plaza, galleria, or arcade. There are several parcels that may be appropriate for this along Brooklyn and NE 43rd St. above or near the station. The station itself is the largest potential site, but part of the site will be occupied by aboveground station utilities. If any of these concepts are pursued, the City should evaluate regulatory mechanisms to "make whole" property owners that would experience any loss of development potential. This could be achieved through a transfer of development potential to other sites in the neighborhood.
- Thoughtful, continuous programming and management will determine how successful any publicly accessible space will be. This activation could be through retail, services, recreational uses, cultural programming, a farmers market, or a combination thereof, but defined activities and maintenance responsibilities are crucial. Partnering between the City, business community, UW, and/or Farmer's Market could help realize this vision.
- Activating the alleys of the blocks identified (right) could build off of existing businesses with alley frontage (Cafe Allegro, Schultzy's) to create fine-grained network of shops and public spaces.

Figure: Station surroundings



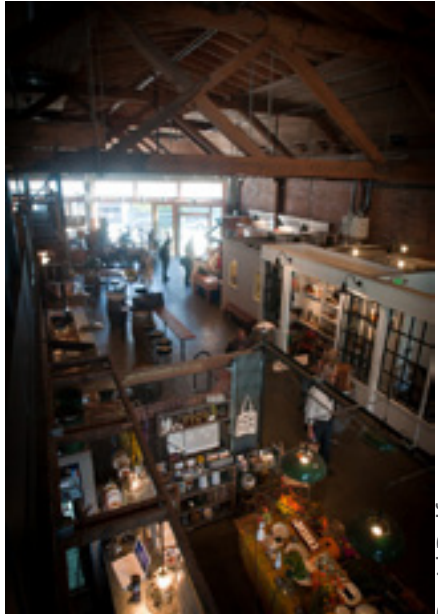
Don Schulze

Clean alleys with active frontage can diversify businesses and add fine-grained detail to a neighborhood. (Dublin)



sea turtle, via flickr

Festival streets adjacent to the station could be designed to hold large community events. (U District Street Fair)



David Delfs

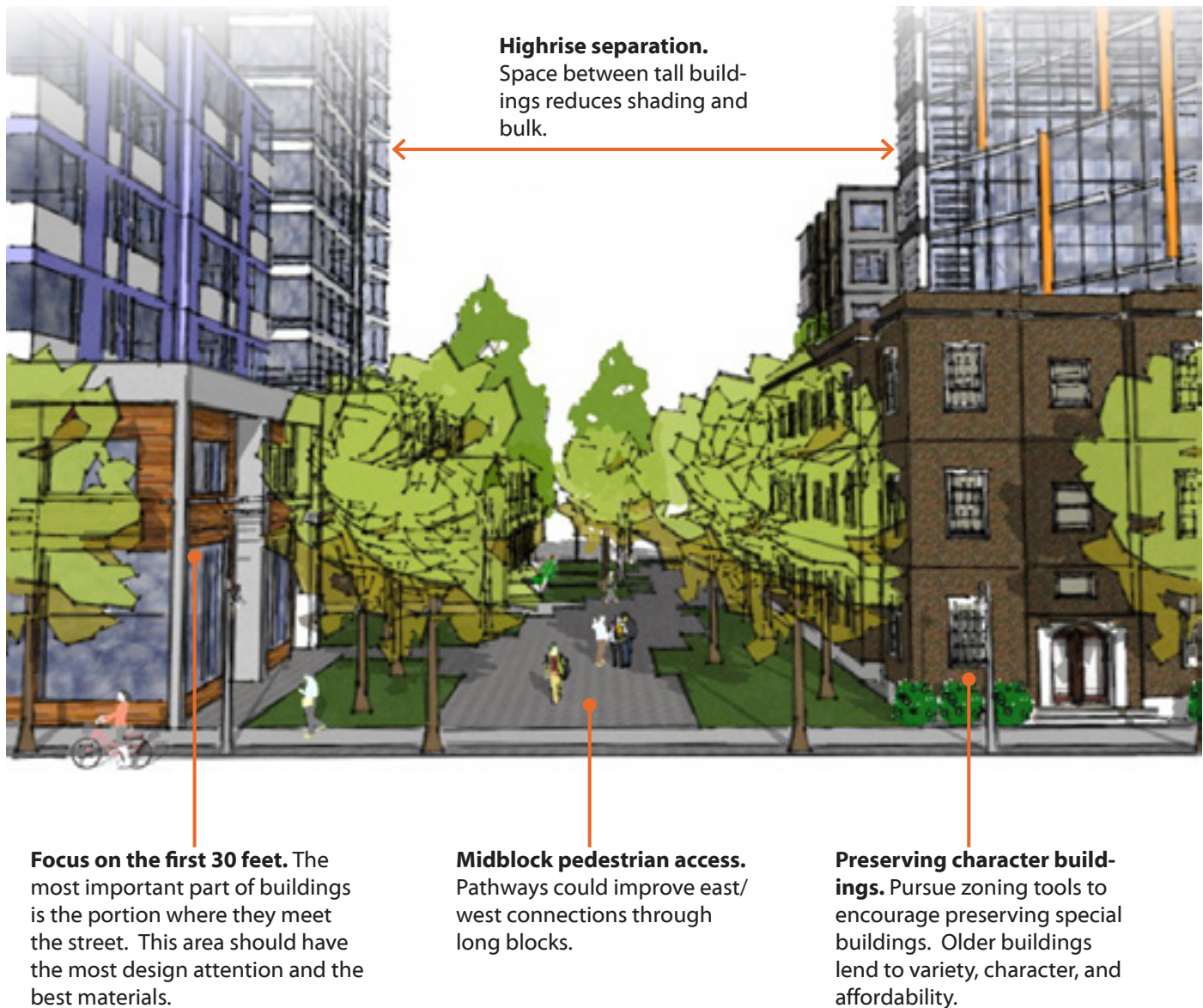
Melrose Market (Capitol Hill) is an example of commercial uses along an interior mid-block corridor.

3.5 Urban Form

During the planning process, community participants identified building features to focus on in new development. Buildings should be thoughtfully designed, with local flavor and an emphasis on creating pleasant sidewalks and other public spaces.

The following diagrams highlight specific features that members of the community support. These should inform regulations and design guidelines.

Note: To show as many design features as possible, these figures show redevelopment concentrated on a single block – in most cases redevelopment will be more spread out, interspersed with existing buildings than what is shown here.



“Ground-related housing” is a design approach where midrise or highrise buildings include elements of traditional rowhouses and stoops at the ground level. This strategy can help activate streets, alleys, and pedestrian pathways. It is important that these units provide privacy for residents while still creating a sense of “eyes on the street” for passersby.

Individual unit entries. Entry from the street (instead of internal access from a hall) can help reinforce a neighborhood feel, with activity all along a residential facade.

Landscaping and horizontal separation. A landscaped setback area helps mark the boundary between private and public without a large wall or fence.



Vertical separation. Raising the entry level 2 - 6 feet above the sidewalk helps provide privacy for the ground floor.

Curb bulbs. Widening the sidewalk at intersections helps make pedestrians more visible to cars and shortens the distance from one curb to the other.

Variety of buildings.

Use standards to achieve a mix of lowrise, midrise, and highrise buildings in the neighborhood.

Upper-level setbacks. In some locations, setting back the upper portions of buildings can open up views and create a more pleasant streetscape.



Green roofs and rooftop amenity space. Rooftops can be excellent places to provide open space for building occupants and/or reduce stormwater runoff.

Sidewalk cafes. Encourage active streetfront uses like outdoor dining.

Street-level transparency. In key areas, windows and doors at the street level help encourage pedestrian-friendly building fronts.

Modulation. Development standards and design guidelines should encourage breaking up large facades to create variety in building massing and maximize natural light inside buildings.



Street trees. Many of the streets in the U District lack trees, even in places where there is enough room in the right-of-way. Trees provide substantial aesthetic and environmental benefits.

Alley vacation. Some developments may seek full or partial alley vacations, where the City relinquishes alley space for development. A high level of public benefit is required for these actions. Alley vacations are one possible route to generous midblock pedestrian pathways.

Concealed parking. Generally, parking should be underground or concealed behind active uses. Even above the street level, visible parking can be detrimental to the sidewalk environment.

Overhead weather protection. Sheltering pedestrians with projections over the walking area is beneficial in our climate, especially near transit stops.



Landscape curb bulbs. Pulling out the curb line in select locations to accommodate plantings adds amenity value while still allowing space for parallel parking

Street-level setbacks. Certain areas like NE 45th St. have narrow sidewalks that constrain pedestrian circulation, but no room to expand into the right-of-way. In these locations, street-level setbacks can increase the sidewalk area.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

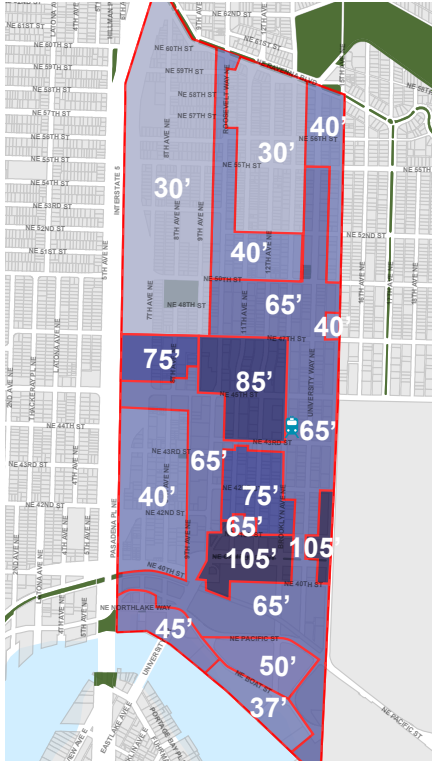
FAR limits set a maximum amount of development for a site, in proportion to lot size. Regulating building mass through FAR can help achieve variety – shorter buildings tend to be wider, and taller buildings tend to be narrower.

Floor plates. Limit the footprint of the tallest buildings for a slimmer building form.



Podium height. Control the height of the lower portion of highrise buildings to maintain a lower-scale street edge in key locations.

Building width. Establish standards or guidelines for building width to avoid monotony along a block face.



Height limits under existing zoning. (Many buildings are taller, as they were built before height limits applied.)

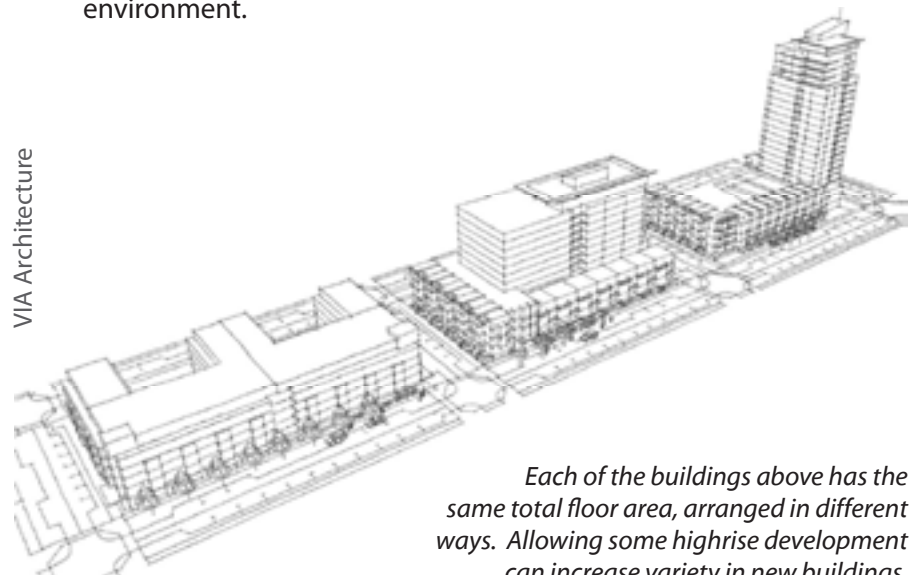


The working group used color-coded stickers to recommend heights for DPD to evaluate. Dark green and blue around NE 45th St. indicate heights of 240' and 300', respectively.

3.6 Building height

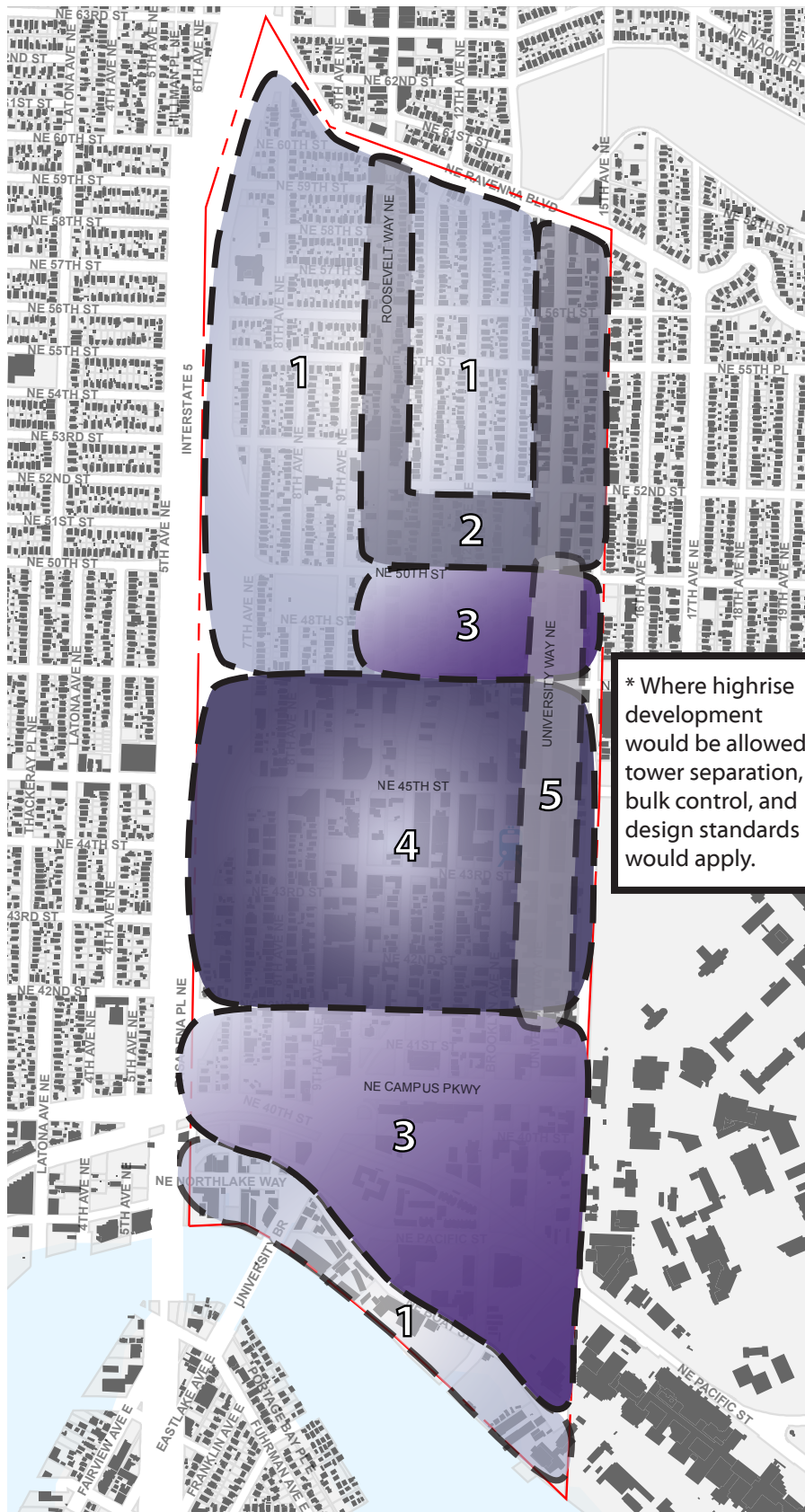
Many community participants recommend allowing greater heights to stimulate redevelopment in some areas. In particular, conversations have focused on how increased height could foster job growth, support local businesses, and increase the amount of market-rate and workforce housing. In the public outreach to date, most constituents support greater heights with the following conditions:

- The greatest height and density increases should surround the station to maximize the value of that infrastructure and the increased mobility it provides.
- Highrise development should provide public benefits through incentive zoning, where increased height is tied to public improvements (see Section 3.7).
- Greater heights should encourage redevelopment of certain under-used properties.
- Greater heights should increase housing options, especially for market-rate and workforce housing. They could also help attract large employers like tech companies, research & development, and office uses.
- Lowrise areas to the north and east should be buffered by intermediate heights, and heights along the Ship Canal should stay low to avoid impacts to recreational and water-dependent uses.
- Standards for highrise development should encourage a variety of building types, avoiding a more homogenous collection of new buildings that all “max out” to the same height (see diagram below).
- All buildings, including highrise developments, should pay special attention to the first 30' above grade to enhance the pedestrian environment.



Each of the buildings above has the same total floor area, arranged in different ways. Allowing some highrise development can increase variety in new buildings.

Figure: Conceptual height recommendations



LEGEND

The height ranges described below are preliminary recommendations for new development, based on community input. They will inform the zoning alternatives that DPD will study in more detail.

- 1 These areas should continue to have predominantly lowrise and single family development, with maximum heights around 30-45'.
- 2 These areas may be appropriate for moderate increases in height, with maximum heights around 65-85' (continuing to favor wood frame, "5 over 1" or "5 over 2" construction).
- 3 These areas are appropriate for increased height and density, but not to the extent of area 4. Evaluate heights ranging from 85-240'.
- 4 This is the part of the neighborhood best suited for increased height and density. Evaluate heights ranging from 120-300'.
- 5 Evaluate a wide range of heights along the Ave, along with additional standards to help preserve the distinctive, fine-grained storefront character.



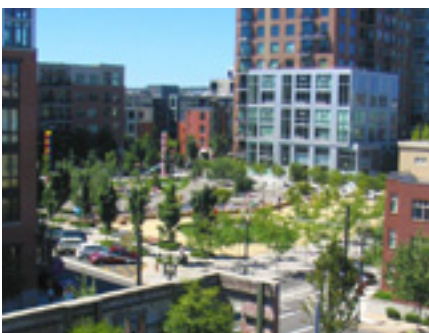
Widened sidewalks, generous plantings, and public seating provided as a condition of highrise development on First Hill.



Increased height should be accompanied by measures to mitigate impacts of increased density. Incentive zoning can be one path to preserving historic buildings.



Some new highrises in the U District could provide context to the existing towers.



Portland's Pearl District accommodates residential density with a mix of midrise and highrise buildings, served by transit, great streets and public spaces.

3.7 Incentive zoning

Incentive zoning is a tool in the Land Use Code through which developers gain additional height or floor area by contributing to specified public benefits.

In 2009, the City Council established a policy that, as part of rezones, increased height and floor area should be contingent on providing public benefits through incentive zoning. They established a framework for how incentive zoning should be applied to new areas, but provided some flexibility for the program to be tailored to neighborhoods. A majority of the incentive must be achieved through providing affordable workforce housing, and the remaining incentive may be used to achieve certain neighborhood priorities.

For example, a "base height" would be established for parts of the U District, similar to the heights allowed under existing zoning. Development to heights that exceed the base (going up to something like the potential heights discussed in Section 3.6) would be achieved by contributing toward affordable housing and other public benefits, commensurate with the project's impacts.

This approach is used in urban centers throughout Seattle. Development in the U District is already subject to incentive zoning for certain height increases, but the tool becomes more powerful when height increases are more substantial.

Prioritizing public benefits

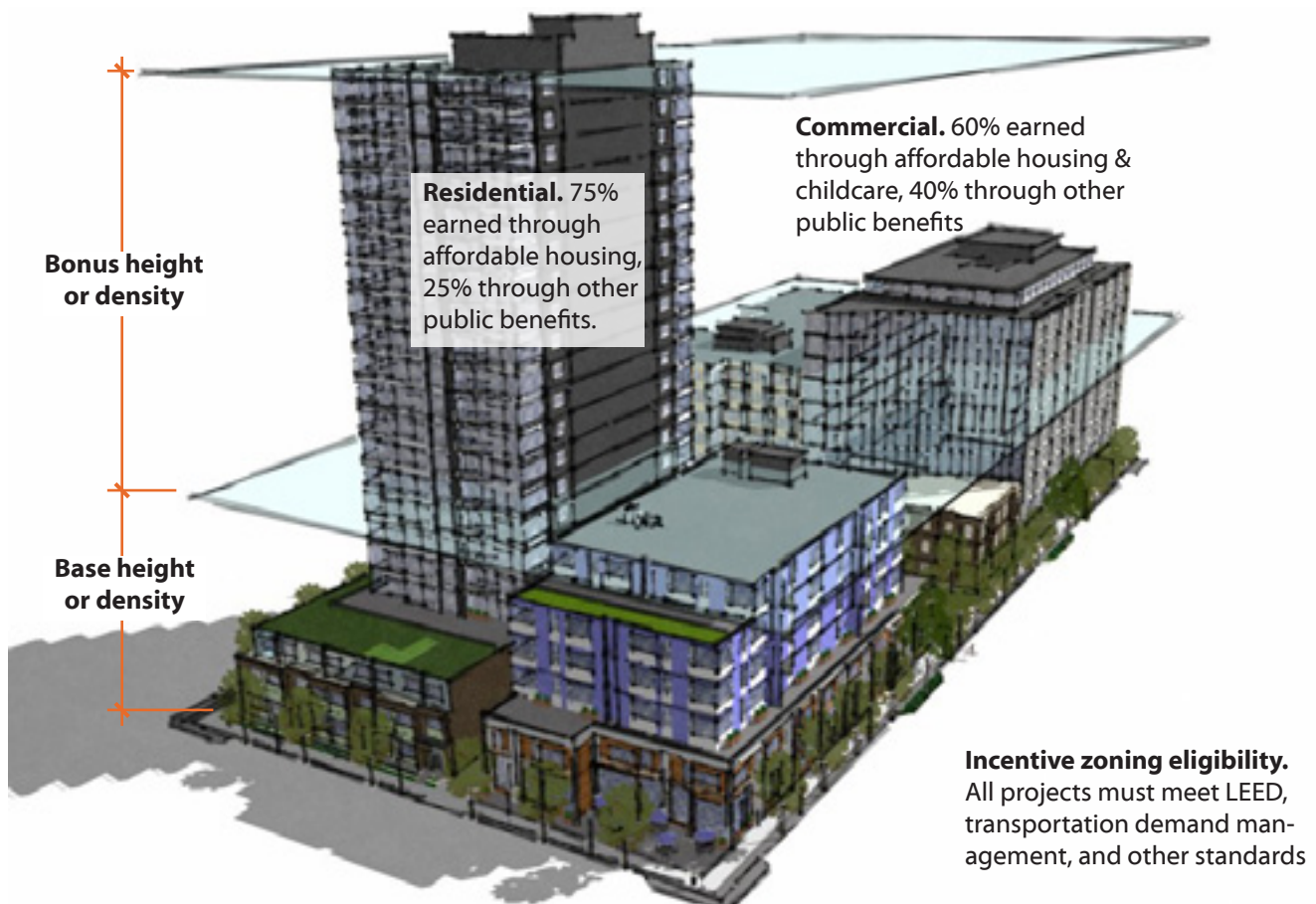
There are legal and practical limits on how incentive zoning programs can be applied. For that reason, it is important for the community and policy makers to prioritize between public benefits within a neighborhood. In the U District, members of the community have identified the following list, which will need further prioritization through the legislative process:

- New public and private open spaces, including spaces for active and passive recreation
- Midblock pedestrian pathways
- Affordable housing
- Larger-sized residential units to accommodate families
- Support services and facilities for vulnerable populations including seniors, non-English speakers, and homeless people
- Child care
- Preservation of historic buildings
- Streets and alleys that are friendly to pedestrians, including landscaping, sidewalk cafes and other features
- Preservation of regional forests and farmlands

Study of incentive zoning and alternatives

In 2013 and 2014, DPD will study the potential for incentive programs in the U District. A draft proposal for incentive programs will be presented for public review along with a draft proposal for building height, development standards and other Land Use Code regulatory issues. Incentive zoning is just one of the many tools and methods used to achieve amenities and services. Other tools include:

- Design guidelines and development standards.
- Investments by businesses, individuals, government agencies and community organizations.
- Local Improvement Districts (LIDs) and Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) organized by residents and/or businesses for physical improvements to the neighborhood.
- King County's Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (Transfer of Development Rights for Tax Increment Financing, or "TDR for TIF").
- Required mitigation for environmental impacts.
- Transfer of development rights, to preserve character buildings and/or open space.



Patrick Ross Photography



"Village Lofts" in Baltimore. Pedestrian-scale lighting, separation between cars and pedestrians, large windows, high-quality materials, and housing on upper stories help create spaces that attract people at all hours.

naphots via flickr



Roosevelt is an active corridor with a mix of businesses. Street improvements and some redevelopment could keep this retail mix while improving the pedestrian comfort of this street.

3.8 Retail activation

Street-level businesses play a defining role in the public life of an urban neighborhood. They provide gathering spaces, jobs, services, street activity, and neighborhood character.

Businesses rely on a combination of public investment in infrastructure, private investment in businesses and upkeep, and the community's support. A high volume of pedestrians and cyclists is a major asset for the U District; a critical mass of people on foot and bike makes the streets more inviting and helps support local businesses.

The Ave is home to scores of small retail and service businesses. A distinct feature of the Ave is that almost all frontage consists of narrow storefronts, which tends to support affordable rents and diverse businesses. South of NE 43rd St., stakeholders want to maintain the existing character, with small storefronts primarily serving the student population. The area between NE 43rd St. and NE 50th St. is considered the heart of the retail district, which ideally should host anchor businesses that serve the community and draw visitors to the neighborhood.

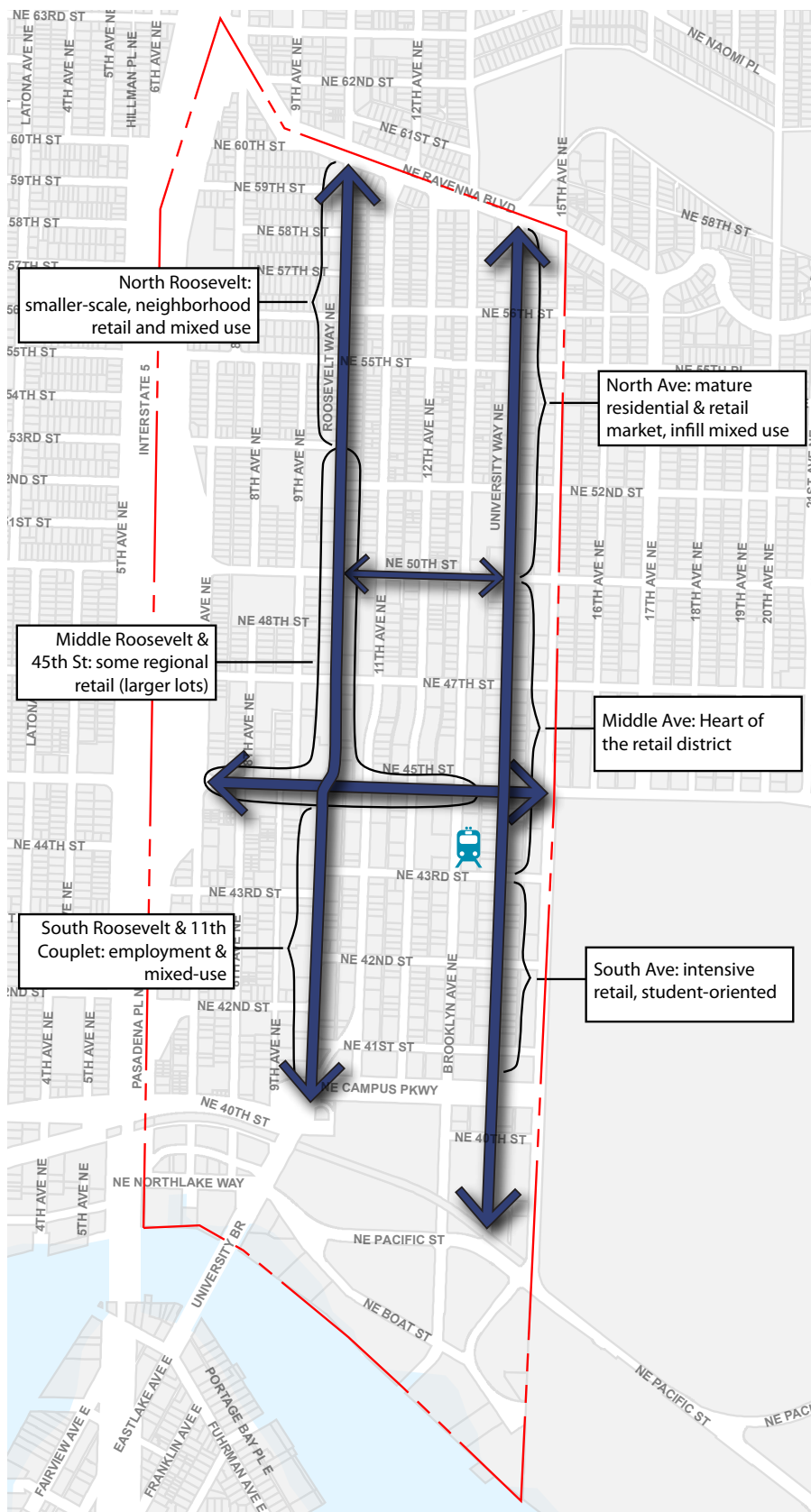
North of NE 50th St., residents and property owners want to encourage mixed-use infill, along with a shift toward a "mature mix" of retail and service uses, i.e., restaurants and stores that target an older demographic. All along the Ave, the community would like to see spaces for outdoor seating and contemplation, including pocket parks and sidewalk cafés.

Roosevelt, NE 45th St., and a portion of NE 50th St. are also called out as places to concentrate retail and service uses, though not as intensively as the Ave. These three streets are all commercial corridors that currently do not provide a pleasant pedestrian environment. They have high traffic with little separation between cars and sidewalks, and the crossings tend to be difficult and/or spread out. They will all continue to carry a high volume of vehicles, but redevelopment could help improve pedestrian conditions through a combination of sidewalk improvements, setbacks, and better crossings.

Some participants in the U District planning process have voiced concern about requiring too much retail at the ground level of new buildings. The City recognizes that requiring more retail space than the market will support impacts the viability of redevelopment, and can result in vacant storefronts. Any standards that require ground level retail and services should focus on the primary retail streets identified here, leaving flexibility for a variety of uses everywhere else.

If there isn't sufficient demand for commercial space along the identified streets, development standards may require spaces that would accommodate future businesses, but allow office or residential use in the interim.

Figure: Retail activation



Students strongly influence the sights and sounds of the U District; businesses along the Ave cater to this demographic.



Ann Arbor has one commercial corridor aimed at undergraduates and another for an older demographic (above). The U District's Ave is long enough to provide both.

Joan Horn



The northern portion of the U District has a predominantly low-density, single family residential character.

Joan Horn



Lowrise and midrise residential buildings help make a transition from single-family to higher density areas.

GGLO



This development in Portland includes affordable housing, with highrise set back from the street.

3.9 Housing Choices: A Neighborhood for All

The U District neighborhood is a place for people. Through the past year of the U District Livability Partnership planning process, the community has expressed a desire for the neighborhood to grow with housing choices for a diversity of people. In addition to students, this includes families, seniors, professionals, UW faculty and staff, low income residents, and others. More year-round residents will support local businesses and foster a sense of neighborhood investment and continuity.

New construction in recent years has produced a large number of lowrise and midrise wood frame apartments, including mostly smaller, affordable units that target students. The majority of residents are young adults (18-29 years), and 82% of homes in the U District are rental units.

It's important to maintain and expand housing for students in the U District, but the City also should use policy tools to attract greater residential diversity. The following sections summarize strategies identified by the Urban Design Working Group and U District Livability Partnership participants.

Increase variety and quantity of housing

- New construction. Encourage a greater variety of housing, particularly within walking distance of light rail. This could include midrise and highrise buildings with amenities that appeal to seniors, professionals, and families.
- Preservation. Retain existing housing where preservation is a priority, including single family homes in single family-zoned areas, and character-defining historic structures.
- Design. Many current residents wish to explore options to encourage multifamily development that includes larger units for families, and higher quality design. DPD will work with residents to examine options to achieve these goals.
- Active street edge. One design approach with particular support in the community is the idea of creating or maintaining an active street edge. For buildings with residential uses on the ground floor, this means including ground-level entrances and stoops, porches or yards – often this takes the form of rowhouses at the base of larger buildings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide affordable options

Affordable housing should be maintained and expanded in the U District over time through a variety of regulatory tools, non-profit investments, and private/public partnerships:

- Incentive zoning will produce units at or below 80% of median income.
- The Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) program will give new development an incentive to include affordable units.
- To the extent possible, proposed zoning should avoid development pressure on existing affordable and low-income housing or include incentives for preservation.
- Regulations on “accessory dwelling units” allow single-family homeowners to add additional housing to their property for extended family or renters.
- The U District Livability Partnership is building an organization to advocate for the neighborhood over time – this group could include the ability to assemble land and attract non-profit development projects.
- Non-profit housing developers from around the region will continue to invest in the U District.

Integrate neighborhood amenities

Amenities help define the character of a neighborhood, and can attract residents and new development. The opening of the light rail station is one valuable asset to the U District. Additionally, stakeholders recommend the following amenities:

- Residential amenities. To appeal to families, developments should provide spaces and features that accommodate children. This includes play areas, exercise areas, and gardening space in residential developments. Developments could also leverage shared amenities like the University Heights Center and P-Patches.
- Public spaces including parks, green streets, parklets, playgrounds, sidewalk cafes, and other places for people to enjoy as “third places.” Public spaces must be well-maintained, activated by retail or other activities, and appealing to a diverse mix of people including children and seniors.
- Diverse retail, services, and entertainment. The U District Strategic Plan identifies ways to attract new retail and entertainment that will appeal to professionals, retirees and families. Groceries and other everyday services are especially important.

(continued)



John Switten

University Plaza Condos is an existing residential highrise in the neighborhood.



GGLO

The City requires residential amenity space. On-site play areas can be a boon to families with small children.



Stephanie Bower

A vision of sidewalk cafés on the northern portion of the Ave.



Historic residential buildings help maintain architectural variety and housing affordability.



With good design at the ground level, highrise buildings can achieve a "human scale" pedestrian environment. (First Hill)

- Community centers and gathering places. Existing centers of community life include the University Heights Community Center, the Farmer's Market, the YMCA, the University District library, and the University Senior Activity Center. Support these institutions to meet the needs of a growing community and seek to increase sports/fitness/recreation facilities and open spaces for families and seniors.
- Social services. The U District has a network of service providers that help meet the needs of kids, homeless youth and adults, extremely low income residents, and seniors. Support these institutions and organizations to better meet the needs of the community and increase capacity for future needs. Priority facilities and programs include child care, hygiene facilities and lockers near the future light rail station; job services and employment programs for youth and homeless adults; low income housing; senior services; and an expansion of existing programs for shelter and nutrition.
- Schools. Families want good, easy to reach schools.. Several private schools and day care centers are located in the U District. The northern U District is served by McDonald International School in Wallingford. Pedestrian improvements along NE 50th, a popular walk/bike route to the school, are recommended along this important corridor. The southern portion of the U District goes to John Stanford International School. Pursue pedestrian improvements under the freeway at NE 40th St.
- Clean and Safe. Public safety and attractive streets are key to inviting residential growth. The Clean and Safe working group of the U District Livability Partnership has identified strategies including: addressing crime "hot spots," increasing public safety through thoughtful design, getting the community involved in policing issues, strengthening the partnership between UW Police Department and Seattle Police Department, and creating a youth jobs program to clean alleyways.



Existing conditions on 12th Ave NE, looking south toward NE 45th St.



Stephanie Bower

This artist's rendering shows "ground-related residential" frontage on 12th Ave NE (looking south toward NE 45th St; Mars Hill Church in the left foreground). This means residential units that face onto a street or alley, often with individual entrances. Design standards should balance privacy for residents with active frontage on the street - this can be achieved through a mix of vertical and horizontal separation (entrance level height and ground-level setback).



Better crossings and wider sidewalks would improve pedestrian conditions on NE 45th St. Widened sidewalks would require ground-level setbacks for buildings.



Many transit routes from downtown to northeast Seattle serve the U District via the Ave and 15th Ave NE.



The north end of the University Bridge is a confusing tangle for pedestrians, cyclists, and east-west traffic. Evaluate options to make this area work better.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

4.1 Mobility

One of the overriding goals of the City of Seattle's land use policies and transportation investments is to make walking, biking and riding transit easy, safe, and practical for everyone. Transportation choices help increase livability and equitability while reducing environmental impacts.

Due to the influence of the University, the neighborhood already has very high volumes of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. The City and UW have made significant investments in each of these modes of transportation, but more work is needed to accommodate the neighborhood's growth. Several detailed transportation plans maintained by SDOT guide these investments (for a complete list, see page 13).

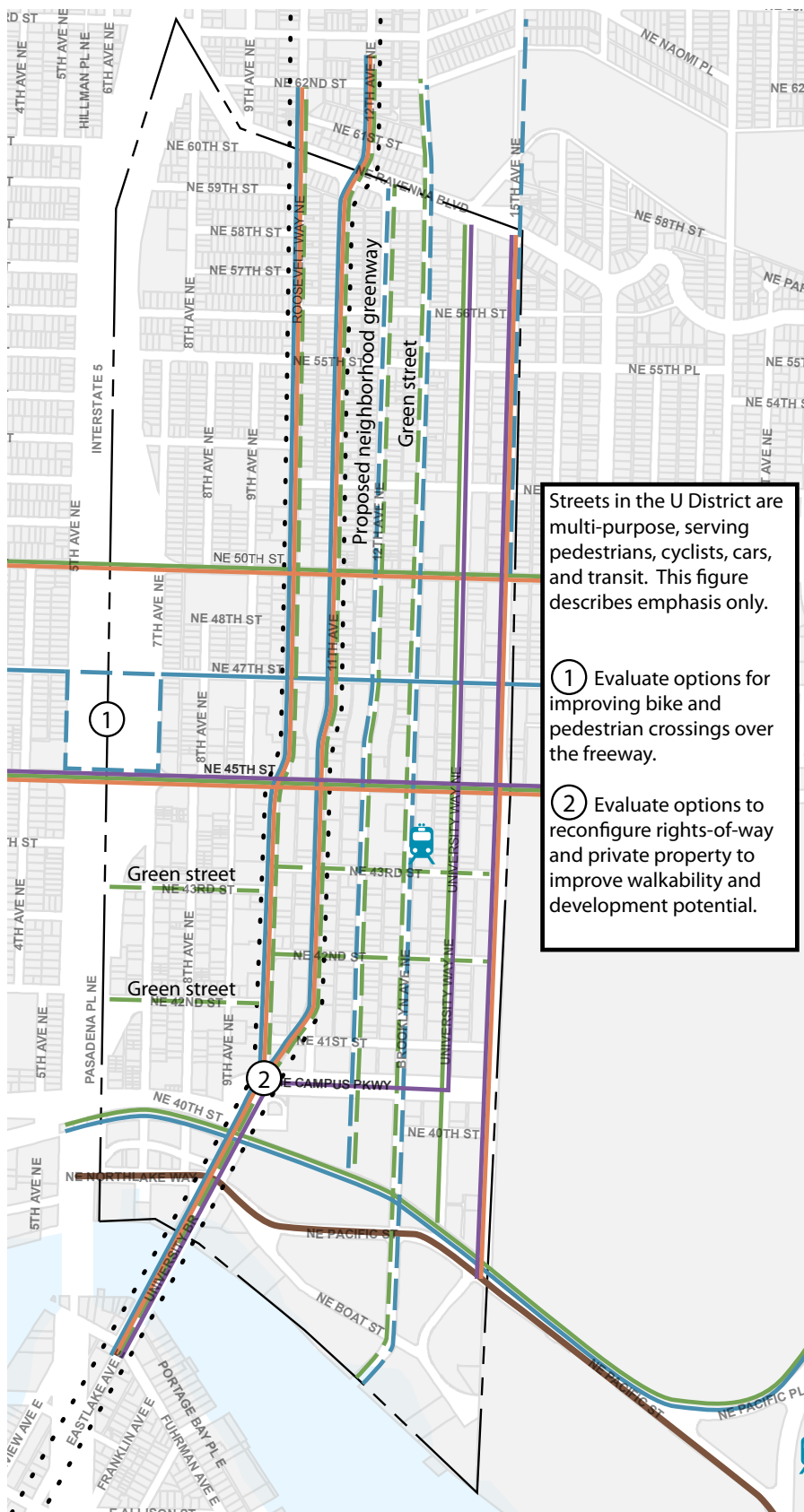
The figure on p. 43 summarizes which streets are particularly important for various modes. Each of these routes accommodates several modes of transportation, but the colored lines represent where existing or planned investments tend to emphasize one or more modes. Dashed lines represent recommended bike and pedestrian facilities.

In addition to light rail, the City's Transit Master Plan recommended an extension of the South Lake Union Streetcar line up Eastlake and into the U District. Further analysis of this route has been budgeted for 2014. The dotted line shows the possible high capacity transit route.

As 2021 and the new U District light rail station approaches, there needs to be thorough coordination between Sound Transit, SDOT, King County Metro, and the community. The U District is already a major transit hub for north Seattle, and all service changes related to light rail will have significant ripple effects. Early and extensive planning and communication will help make the most of the new transit infrastructure and avoid conflicts. In particular, the community is eager to make sure that they will continue to have a high level of Metro service to all points, and that Sound Transit will support strong east/west connections to the station site.

Many community participants have noted that streets at the north end of the University Bridge do not serve pedestrians, cyclists, or east-west traffic well. Encourage coordination between SDOT, UW, and others to improve the street configuration. Realignment could also help create more developable property between Roosevelt and 11th Ave.

Figure: Mobility



- Transit
- Bikes
- Pedestrians
- Major arterial
- High capacity transit study area
- Major truck route

Dashed lines represent proposed improvements.



GGLO

Midblock pathways through can provide valuable pedestrian connections on long blocks, as well as space for landscaping.



Cycle Chic Seattle

University students, faculty and staff contribute to a high rate of bicycle use in the U District. UW estimates that one in 12 trips to campus is by bike.



Joule Apartments in Capitol Hill meets the Seattle Green Factor landscape standard. This resulted in an attractive streetscape, courtyard, and green roof recreation area.



Saxon Holt

Plants bring beauty, relaxation, and environmental benefits into an urban environment. (Millenium Park, Chicago)



This apartment building in West Seattle met part of its landscaping requirement with a rooftop garden for residents.

4.2 Landscaping

Trees and vegetation contribute to the livability of a neighborhood. More plantings in the U District will benefit the neighborhood's aesthetics, economics, public safety, and environmental performance.

At the most basic level, landscaping can screen unattractive features of development, and can offset the overall bulk and hard edges of buildings. But the aesthetic benefits go beyond that – people are attracted to and feel more comfortable in streets and open spaces with landscaping.

Trees and plants have been shown to reduce stress and promote health. Studies also show that trees increase property values and stimulate shopping activity. There is even evidence that neighborhoods with plantings have lower crime than neighborhoods without – healthy, well-tended vegetation gives the sense that spaces are observed and cared for, deterring crime.

Plantings also offer substantial environmental benefits. Trees and shrubs intercept and evaporate rainfall, reducing the amount that reaches the ground and becomes stormwater. Landscaped areas filter and absorb stormwater from impervious areas (more information in Section 4.3).

Trees, green walls, and green roofs also provide cooling during the summer. This is true at the parcel scale, where shade cools buildings, and also at the neighborhood scale, where evapotranspiration can measurably lower air temperature during heat waves. Lower temperatures reduce cooling costs in turn, saving energy and money.

Foliage helps clean the air, capturing and holding small particulate pollutants. Finally, landscaping provides habitat for birds and beneficial insects.

Like many other neighborhoods in Seattle, much of the U District already requires new development to meet a landscaping standard called Seattle Green Factor. This requirement uses a scoring system and “menu” of landscaping features to incorporate more generous, layered landscapes buildings and streetscapes. In addition to trees, shrubs, and groundcovers, Seattle Green Factor encourages the use of green roofs, green walls, native plants, and food gardens. As the City evaluates changes to land use regulations for the U District, Seattle Green Factor should be maintained or expanded.

Streetscape concept plans for designated green streets and other special streets should put a particular emphasis on thoughtful landscape design, more street trees, and well-designed planting beds, as feasible. (For more discussion, see Section 3.3.)

4.3 Green stormwater infrastructure

Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) is a group of stormwater management practices that rely on soils and vegetation to reduce, clean, and slow runoff. Also known as “low impact development,” examples include green roofs, permeable paving, rain gardens, and filtration swales. These technologies often do clean and manage stormwater more effectively than conventional infrastructure, and they offer community benefits that underground facilities do not. For example, roadside rain gardens can be sited and designed to calm traffic speeds, shorten pedestrian crossings (improving safety), and preserve sightlines for cars at intersections.

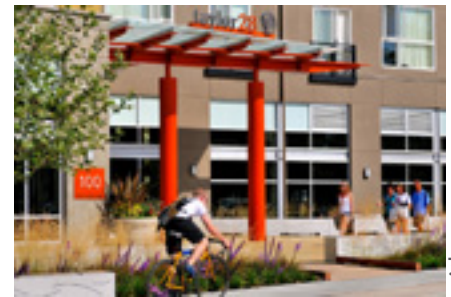
Starting in 2009, GSI has been required as part of stormwater mitigation for all redevelopment, including major street improvements and development on private property. Because of the many benefits, it is worth looking for GSI opportunities. This could mean retrofitting GSI into existing right-of-way planting strips or existing developments. It could also mean seeking funds to help parks, streets, and other public places go above and beyond the GSI required by code – future design work should take this into consideration.

Most of the U District drains through a separated sewage system directly to Portage Bay. In these areas, controlling the rate and volume of runoff is a low priority, since the runoff is not contributing to combined sewer overflows. However, filtering roadway pollutants out of stormwater before it is released will contribute to a cleaner Ship Canal, Lake Union, and Puget Sound. Seek opportunities to incorporate shallow GSI facilities with a high volume of roots and foliage (filtration swales).

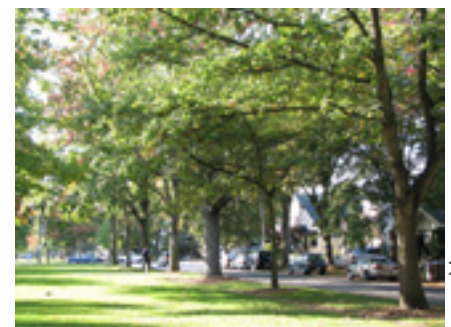
Certain areas north of NE 50th St. will be eligible for GSI funding through the “Rainwise” program, a partnership between Seattle Public Utilities and King County to reduce stormwater in King County’s combined sewer system. Property owners in the green areas shown on this map will be able to get partial or full rebates for rain gardens or other voluntary GSI improvements on their properties. For more information, see www.kingcounty.gov/environment/wastewater/CSO/Controlling/Reducing/RainWise.aspx



Map detail of King County’s planned Residential RainWise program. Areas eligible for rain garden rebates shown in green. Planning area in red.



Taylor 28 in Seattle’s Uptown neighborhood incorporates permeable paving and rain gardens with a great sidewalk environment.



Street trees are one of the easiest and most beneficial ways the U District can reduce stormwater runoff. They also result in safer, more beautiful streets.



The Bullitt Foundation's new headquarters in Capitol Hill are built to meet the rigorous standards of the Living Building Challenge. Among other notable features, the building harvests all of its own energy and water.



Alley 24 in South Lake Union is an example of preserving and repurposing a historic building as part of a larger, LEED-certified development.

4.4 Green building

"Green building" means designing and building in a way that minimizes or avoids all kinds of waste. Green buildings use water, energy, and materials more efficiently than conventional buildings, reducing or eliminating environmental impacts. Some green building practices are built into the City's technical requirements such as the energy code, building code, and stormwater code. More ambitious projects go beyond these minimums, and seek additional green building certification through programs like LEED, Built Green, or the Living Building Challenge. Given the U District community's strong environmental ethic, redevelopment in the neighborhood should strive for a high level of green design and building.

To save on long-term operation costs and improve environmental performance, new buildings and major renovations should strive to:

- Maximize energy efficiency. This may include increased insulation and weather sealing, passive heating and cooling systems, heat recovery, and use of renewable energy sources like solar electricity, solar thermal and ground-source heat pumps.
- Maximize water efficiency. Buildings should use high-efficiency water fixtures, evaluate the feasibility of rainwater capture and re-use, and consider reusing graywater for non-potable uses like irrigation and toilet flushing.
- Reduce construction waste by recycling or reusing materials on site. This includes both building materials like windows and bricks as well as site materials like asphalt and fill.
- Use sustainably produced building materials such as salvaged or refurbished fixtures, materials with a high reclaimed or recycled content, or materials made from rapidly renewable sources.
- Optimize indoor air quality through natural ventilation; use of low-VOC sealants, paints, and coatings; and low-formaldehyde materials.
- Promote alternatives to single-occupant car trips by providing occupants with van and carpool opportunities, parking and showers for cyclists, and transit incentives.

When increasing allowable heights in the U District, the City should consider incentive zoning or outright zoning requirements as a way to further encourage higher performing green buildings.

4.5 District infrastructure

A district energy system heats or cools multiple buildings through one central energy plant, eliminating the need for boilers in individual buildings. This approach has the following benefits:

- It helps buildings use alternative energy sources like solar and geothermal.
- Using a centralized, tightly managed system can improve efficiency.
- It makes it easier to capture and reuse waste heat from sewers, laundry, data centers, etc.

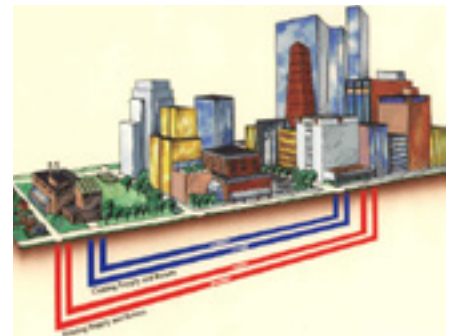
In 2011, the City completed a study to identify neighborhoods where district energy is most promising, and policies to support district energy. The U District was identified as a major opportunity area.

UW has an existing district heat system that they are considering modernizing and expanding. This would likely require support from the City, at a minimum to remove code barriers. With new development anticipated at the core of the U District, there may be opportunities for partnerships between UW and private development.

4.6 Community health

Sustainability has to include not just environmental performance upgrades and expanded economic opportunities, but also equity, health, and well-being for all members of the U District community. Redevelopment and new investment (public and private) can contribute to community health through:

- Better infrastructure for biking and walking. A neighborhood that makes active transportation safe and pleasant is a neighborhood that is more equitable for all its inhabitants while helping everyone be more physically active.
- Expanded social services. The U District is home to many faith communities and social service providers who provide assistance to the homeless, seniors, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations. But more is needed. If the U District is to attract young families, seniors, and those with disabilities, the neighborhood needs more child care, senior services, and more. Redevelopment could help by contributing to affordable space for these uses, along with possible support for sanitary stations, shelters, training programs, and similar services.
- Access to healthy food. The year-round U District Farmer's Market is recognized as one of the best in the country. Make sure that new growth and street improvements continue to accommodate the market, and support expansion of the market if feasible. Additionally, new open spaces (public and private) should help provide opportunities to garden.



Schematic diagram of a district heating system, where heating and cooling for multiple buildings is centralized.



Residential and institutional density in the U District presents opportunities to capture and reuse waste heat.



The U District farmer's market provides residents and visitors with fresh food and flowers, and supports local farms.



Dedicated volunteers are working with the City to advance the idea of "neighborhood greenways," i.e., improved bike routes that are inviting to riders young and old.



4.7 Environmental planning and governance

Community discussions to date have placed a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability as part of a growing U District. While some of the recommendations relating to sustainability may be achieved through existing planning tools and City investments, community projects and partnerships will be necessary if the U District is to become a cutting-edge demonstration of neighborhood sustainability.

There are many examples of successful neighborhood-scale environmental planning and stewardship. In particular, efforts such as the Downtown 2030 District and various "ecodistrict" efforts have created planning and governance models that help communities organize around environmental issues and improve sustainability at a neighborhood scale.

An overview of the ecodistrict concept, along with case studies, is at: www.ecodistricts.org

As planning for the U District moves forward, the community and City should consider the role that existing or new stewardship groups could play in implementing the recommendations of the Urban Design Framework and other goals. Such a group could be responsible for:

- collecting data about existing resource use in the U District
- setting performance benchmarks for the neighborhood: targets for conserving water, energy and other resources; reducing single-occupant car trips; etc.
- identifying specific projects to help meet those benchmarks
- acquiring funding and implementing projects
- measuring the neighborhood's progress

In particular, the U District Livability Partnership may be a suitable forum for these discussions. This approach could result in access to new funding sources (including local improvement districts or loan funds), improve local outreach and education, drive local projects such as an energy district, or develop other partnerships.

APPENDIX: U DISTRICT URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The success or failure of the recommendations in this document will depend on actions carried out by a variety of stakeholders. This appendix summarizes necessary changes to the Land Use Code and other City policies, as well as changes that will be realized through private investments, infrastructure improvements, public/private partnerships, and community efforts. While the City can lay the groundwork for good urban design through appropriate regulations and investments, physical changes in the neighborhood will be carried out mostly private development and community engagement.

TASK	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE
Planning: next steps		
Finalize the Urban Design Framework, use as a guiding document to articulate preferences for land use regulations, public investments and community efforts.	DPD, City partners, community partners	Mid 2013, ongoing
Study potential impacts of different zoning alternatives through the U District EIS; include analysis of market conditions and demand for different uses.	DPD	2013 -2014
Update zoning and design guidelines to shape new development and address constituents' priorities. Include consideration of development standards, incentive zoning, and other planning tools to follow through on the recommendations of the Urban Design Framework.	DPD, community partners	2013-2015
Continue to build organizational capacity. Evaluate options including a community development corporation, public development authority, public facilities district, and/or local improvement district. Build capacity for neighborhood improvements, housing, and services.	U District Livability Partnership, community partners, OED, DPD	2013-2015
Principle 1. Recognize light rail as a catalyst for change		
Work with Sound Transit and UW to ensure the station site has a positive impact on the neighborhood, responds to UDF guiding principles, and that development above the station, above-ground utilities, and any public spaces on the site all benefit pedestrians and the neighborhood.	Sound Transit, UW, community partners, City	2013-2021
Change land use regulations to help achieve the mix and quality of development desired by the community, including increased development capacity near the station.	DPD, Mayor's Office, City Council, community partners	2015
Focus redevelopment on increasing housing, services, and job density within walking distance of the light rail station.	City, developers, UW	Ongoing
Emphasize high quality design in public realm improvements.	Developers, UW, community partners, design review boards, DPD	Ongoing

TASK	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE
Coordinate improvements for all transportation modes to increase effectiveness and avoid conflicts: walking, biking, transit, cars, trucks, buses, light rail, and street car.	SDOT, Sound Transit, King County Metro, UW, community partners, DPD	2013-2023
Principle 2. Balance regional with local		
Develop zoning and development standards that respect the U District's unique character and the aspirations of the community.	DPD, community partners	2013-2015
Accommodate increased residential and job density through zoning, consistent with the neighborhood's location at a hub of regional transportation and education.	DPD, Mayor's Office, City Council, community partners	2015
Accommodate University-related uses throughout the neighborhood, and ensure that University development projects align with neighborhood priorities.	DPD, UW	Ongoing
Coordinate with UW Transportation to encourage the use of transit, bicycles and walking to reach the campus and other UW facilities.	UW, community partners	Ongoing
Coordinate district parking strategies to serve the local business district and the UW.	UW, businesses, developers	Ongoing
Principle 3. Provide a network of great streets and public spaces		
Create street concept designs to guide future investments and implementation by private developers, the City, the University and other agencies. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green streets (NE 42nd, NE 43rd, and Brooklyn Ave NE) • The Ave commercial corridor north of NE 50th St. • Neighborhood Greenway concept on 12th Ave NE. 	DPD, community partners, UW	2014-2016
Use development standards to reinforce pedestrian-oriented commercial streets along the Ave, Roosevelt Way NE, NE 45th St., and portions of NE 50th St.	DPD, community partners, developers	2013-2015
Connect the network of existing and planned parks and open spaces through street improvements and way-finding.	Parks, community partners, SDOT	2013-2023
Use planning tools to encourage high quality public spaces associated with new development projects (incentive zoning, amenity space requirements, possibly impact fees)	DPD, community partners	2013-2015
Use urban design, building features, public art, streetscape improvements to mark gateways	Developers, SDOT	Ongoing
Support planting more street trees on all streets through code requirements, grant programs, and incentives	SDOT, DPD, community partners	Ongoing

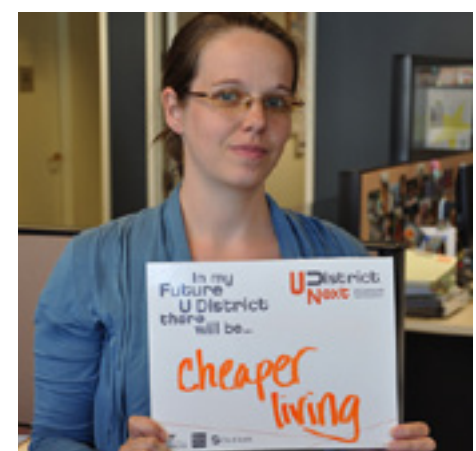
TASK	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE
Find new locations to provide open space to serve the growing neighborhood, especially at the core. Play areas, active recreation, urban plazas, and community gathering spaces are of particular interest. Activate park edges with retail or other active uses that provide “eyes on the park” throughout the day.	Seattle Parks Department, DPD, community partners	Ongoing
Evaluate the site of the light rail station as a location for a public square or arcade, activated through transit ridership, retail and other activities. Such spaces could stand-alone or be integrated into development over the station.	Sound Transit, UW, community partners	2013-2015
Designate, design, and integrate “festival streets”— portions of streets that are designed to be closed at intervals for community events—to expand the availability of open spaces in the neighborhood.	DPD, SDOT, community partners, UW	2013-2016
Use zoning, alley vacations, and other planning tools to encourage mid-block pedestrian pathways and public spaces where feasible.	DPD, developers	2015, ongoing
<p>Improve certain alleys to accommodate pedestrians, community activities and business functions, consistent with the U District Strategic Plan, and maintained by business district. These improvements would require several stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate transportation safety, design • Implement a clean alleys program • Install lighting and other safety improvements • Activate alley facades 	<p>Community business district, property owners, SPU, SDOT</p>	<p>2013</p> <p>2014</p> <p>2015</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Principle 4. Grow and diversify jobs</p> <p><i>See the U District Strategic Plan (2013) for a complete description of commercial revitalization strategies.</i></p>		
Use zoning to encourage redevelopment of under-utilized property. Establish zoning that encourages a broader mix of office, R&D, and tech large employers	DPD, developers, UW	2015
Through land use regulations, continue to support small, independent businesses along the Ave.	DPD, community partners	2015
Allow flexibility for ground-level uses – only require retail/ services in limited areas. Where retail may not be feasible, require tall first floor heights to allow adaptive reuse of ground-level spaces over time	DPD	2015
In commercial areas, ensure that all frontages are pedestrian friendly: wide sidewalks, street trees and landscaping, no parking between the sidewalk and the building	DPD, developers	2015, ongoing

TASK	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE
Encourage development of office space to attract professionals, start-ups and businesses that capitalize on proximity to UW and South Lake Union. Use regulations to encourage incubator space and “technology transfer”	OED, DPD, UW, community partners	Ongoing
Principle 5. Welcome a diversity of residents		
Encourage a diverse residential mix, with homes for families, professionals, non-professionals, students and retirees.	Community partners, UW, developers, DPD	Ongoing
Evaluate possible incentives or standards for family-sized, multiple bedroom units in new construction projects.	DPD	2014
Evaluate options for existing lowrise areas, with an eye toward encouraging quality construction and designs that respond to a neighborhood context.	DPD, community partners, developers	2013
Diversify housing choices to include highrise construction and townhouses/row houses in addition to the wood frame construction that is popular under existing zoning.	DPD, community partners, developers	Ongoing
Invest in low-income housing and services; consider community capacity for land assembly and community development.	OH, non-profit housing providers, community organizations	Ongoing
To serve non-student residents, encourage a mix of commercial uses on the Ave north of 50th that serves an older demographic including professionals, families, and seniors. Redesign the streetscape on the northern Ave to support this approach. Maintain a focus on student-oriented businesses on the southern Ave.	Developers, DPD, SDOT	Ongoing
Evaluate changes to parking zones to reduce conflicts between multifamily and single-family residential areas.	SDOT, community partners	2013-2015
Use incentive zoning to encourage affordable housing and social services as part of market-rate developments	DPD, OH	2015, ongoing
Look for opportunities in land use regulations to maintain existing affordable housing (“market-rate affordable”)	DPD, OH	2015
<i>These recommendations relate to the predominantly single-family and lowrise residential areas north of NE 50th St.</i>		
Preserve existing single-family zoning.	DPD, community partners	2013-2015
Enforce housing standards through regular inspection of rental units, code enforcement and abatement of blighted properties.	DPD, City Attorney’s office, community partners	Ongoing

TASK	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE
Consider rezoning existing commercial properties along Ravenna to allow possible growth or redevelopment of neighborhood-serving commercial uses facing Cowen Park.	DPD, community partners	2015
Consider zoning at the northern end of Brooklyn Avenue NE to allow slightly higher residential densities to complement the small commercial node at Brooklyn/ Ravenna.	DPD, community partners	2015
Principle 6. Improve public safety		
Continue the work of the U District Livability Partnership's "Clean and Safe" committee	Community partners	2013-2014
Increase the volume and duration of pedestrian activity	Developers, businesses, community partners, DPD	Ongoing
Favor "eyes on the street" through development standards, building design, alley management	DPD, developers, community partners	2015, ongoing
To improve safety in public areas, design streets and parks with a "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" approach.	SDOT, Parks, DPD, community partners	Ongoing
Work with City leadership, Seattle Police, DPD and other enforcement agencies to address civility and behavioral issues, and to address safety and Code issues on private properties.	Community partners, Seattle Police, UW, DPD	
Improve maintenance of sidewalks and alleys. Enforce requirements to take garbage receptacles out of the sidewalk after pickup, require lids. Keep sidewalks clear of debris and overgrown vegetation.	Community partners, DPD, SPU	Ongoing
Consider zoning changes to stimulate redevelopment of known crime "hot spots"	DPD, community partners	Ongoing
Principle 7. Encourage quality and variety in the built environment		
Establish a clear design vision for the neighborhood to provide positive outcomes for the community and predictability for developers.	DPD, community partners, developers.	2013-2015
Analyze local conditions for the urban design strategies identified in this document, incorporate these strategies into zoning recommendations as appropriate.	DPD, community partners	2015
Update zoning and development standards to allow the mix and scale of uses desired by the community.	DPD, community partners	2013-2015
Update design guidelines (aligned with new zoning) to achieve the neighborhood character desired by the community.	DPD, community partners	2014-2016

TASK	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE
Establish an effective bonus or incentive program for conservation of historic buildings.	DPD, DON, community partners	2013-2015
Participate in the design review process for new development, support projects that contribute to an attractive neighborhood and active public spaces.	Community partners, developers	Ongoing
Coordinate land use planning effort with utility departments to identify and address needed improvements to infrastructure. Implement regulations to require that developers address infrastructure upgrades necessitated by their projects.	DPD, SDOT, City Light, SPU, developers	2015, Ongoing
Principle 8. Build an environmentally sustainable neighborhood		
Achieve a high level of environmental performance in new development.	Property owners, developers, DPD	Ongoing
Use development codes and incentive programs to support projects that meet and exceed green building standards.	DPD	2015
Pursue opportunities to expand the UW's district heat system and to develop other district approaches that can increase the efficiency of university facilities	UW, Seattle Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE), SPU	TBD
Energy retrofits of existing buildings	Property owners, OSE, Seattle City Light	Ongoing
Prioritize transit, bicycle and pedestrian travel within the neighborhood, while accommodating truck deliveries.	SDOT, UW Transportation, developers, DPD, community partners	2013-2023
Consider a U District Eco-District that would rely on community governance for decision-making.	UW, community partners, OSE, DPD	2014-2016
Include green stormwater infrastructure in new development, park improvements, and green streets.	Developers, Seattle Parks, SDOT, UW, SPU, King County	Ongoing
Provide new opportunities for food production and access to healthy foods. Support the continued presence of the U District Farmer's Market.	UW, DON, Farmer's Market, DPD, community partners	Ongoing
Principle 9. Improve integration between the UW and the U District		
As appropriate, incorporate principles and recommendations of this document in the next campus master plan update and future UW developments.	UW, DPD, City leadership	TBD
Create better connections between campus and U District – use redevelopment and retrofits to open pedestrian entrances and create activation along 15th.	UW	Ongoing
Maintain open lines of communication between UW and the community regarding off-campus development plans.	UW, community partners, DPD	Ongoing

TASK	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	TIMELINE
Through new development, increase the non-student housing stock in the U District to help balance the student population.	Developers, DPD, non-profit housing providers	Ongoing
Include new usable, activated public spaces and mid-block pedestrian connections within UW projects.	UW, DPD	Ongoing
Address public safety/civility/behavioral issues through coordination between Seattle Police and UW Police.	SPD, UW Police	Ongoing
Integrate public spaces throughout the West Campus area.	SDOT, UW, DPD	Ongoing, campus master planning
Principle 10. Support and coordinate active transportation choices		
Improve pedestrian/bicycle crossings of arterials that present challenges to pedestrians: NE 45th St., NE 47th St., NE 50th St., Roosevelt Way NE.	Sound Transit, SDOT, community partners	2013-2023
Implement bicycle and pedestrian master plan recommendations for the U District.	SDOT, community partners	Ongoing
Within one block of the light rail station, support services that are useful to transit riders: bike facilities, lockers, hygiene facilities, child care, and a diversity of retail.	Sound Transit, developers, community partners	2021
Integrate bus and rail transit modes to ensure easy connections.	Sound Transit, SDOT, community partners	2013-2023
Provide high quality streetscapes near the light rail station to enhance pedestrian and bicycle travel and facilitate bus transfers. Widen sidewalks, provide bicycle facilities, and improve intersections. In particular, focus on connections from the station to the Ave and Central Campus.	SDOT, DPD, Sound Transit, community partners, UW	2021
Implement priority pedestrian crossing improvements identified for the U District in the Pedestrian Master Plan.	SDOT	2013-2023
Allow structured short-term parking. However, ensure that the first 30 feet above grade is designed for active uses and pedestrian-friendly frontage.	DPD, community partners	2015



EnviroIssues



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June 20, 2013