



University District

NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GUIDELINES

DRAFT



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University District Partnership

Office of Planning and Community Development

Introduction

What are Neighborhood Design Guidelines?

Design Guidelines are the primary tool used in the review of proposed private projects by Seattle DCI staff for administrative design review, or the Design Review Boards. Design Guidelines define the qualities of architecture, urban design, and outdoor space that make for successful projects and communities. There are two types of guidelines used in the Design Review Program:

- Seattle Design Guidelines (also called citywide) - apply to all areas of the city except for downtown, historic districts, and the ISRD.
- Neighborhood Design Guidelines - apply to a specific geographically-defined area, usually within a residential urban village or center.

Once a set of Neighborhood Design Guidelines is adopted by City Council, they are used in tandem with citywide guidelines for the review of all projects within that designated neighborhood guideline boundary. Not all neighborhoods within the city have neighborhood-specific guidelines, but for those that do, applicants and Board members are required to consult both sets of guidelines—citywide and neighborhood-specific— with the Neighborhood Design Guidelines taking precedence over the citywide in the event of a conflict between the two. Neighborhood Design Guidelines offer additional guidance on the features and character of a particular neighborhood, and are very helpful to all involved in the design review process.

Neighborhood Design Guidelines reveal the character of the neighborhood as known to its residents and business owners. The guidelines help to reinforce existing character and protect the qualities that neighborhood residents value most in the process of change. Thus, a neighborhood's guidelines, in conjunction with the citywide Design Guidelines, can increase overall awareness of responsive design and involvement in the design review process.

Reader's Guide

This document is organized around the larger themes and format of the citywide Seattle Design Guidelines with distinct topics and directives specific to the University District neighborhood. Photos and graphics that illustrate selected guidelines are presented, in addition to the text which explains design intent and/or provides background information. All images not individually credited are OPCD file photos.

Guidelines at a Glance

The University District Neighborhood Design Guidelines work together with the City Council adopted Seattle Design Guidelines (also called the Citywide Design Guidelines), which remain applicable on all projects subject to Design Review. See Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 23.41.004 for information on Design Review thresholds.

Below is a list of the Citywide Guidelines, and the column to the right indicates if these Neighborhood Design Guidelines provide supplemental guidance for that topic; a “**YES**” means both Citywide and Neighborhood Guidelines are applicable; a “**NO**” means only Citywide Guidelines apply.

Citywide Design Guidelines

Neighborhood-specific Guidance

CONTEXT & SITE (CS)

CS1	Natural Systems and Site Features Use natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for design	YES
CS2	Urban Pattern and Form Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics and patterns of the surrounding area	YES
CS3	Architectural Context and Character Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood	YES

PUBLIC LIFE (PL)

PL1	Connectivity Complement, connect and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site	YES
PL2	Walkability Create a safe and comfortable walking environment, easy to navigate and well connected	NO
PL3	Street-Level Interaction Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level, including entries and edges	YES
PL4	Active Transportation Incorporate features that facilitate active transport such as walking, bicycling and transit use	YES

DESIGN CONCEPT (DC)

DC1	Project Uses and Activities Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site	YES
DC2	Architectural Concept Develop a unified, functional architectural concept that fits well on the site and its surroundings	YES
DC3	Open Space Concept Integrate building and open space design so that each complements the other	YES
DC4	Exterior Elements and Finishes Use appropriate and high-quality elements and finishes for the building and open spaces	YES

See the below link for a complete version of the Citywide Guidelines, and a complete list of all Neighborhood Design Guidelines:

<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/whoweare/designreview/designguidelines/default.htm>

Context and Priority Issues

Context

After extensive work with the University District community, areas in the University District (or U District) were zoned at higher intensities in 2017 to focus and shape development near high-capacity light rail (which is expected to start operation in 2021). As growth continues, the University District and the areas around it are likely to experience a period of redevelopment. It is critical that new development continues the established physical character of the University District as a welcoming, inclusive neighborhood designed and built at a human scale.

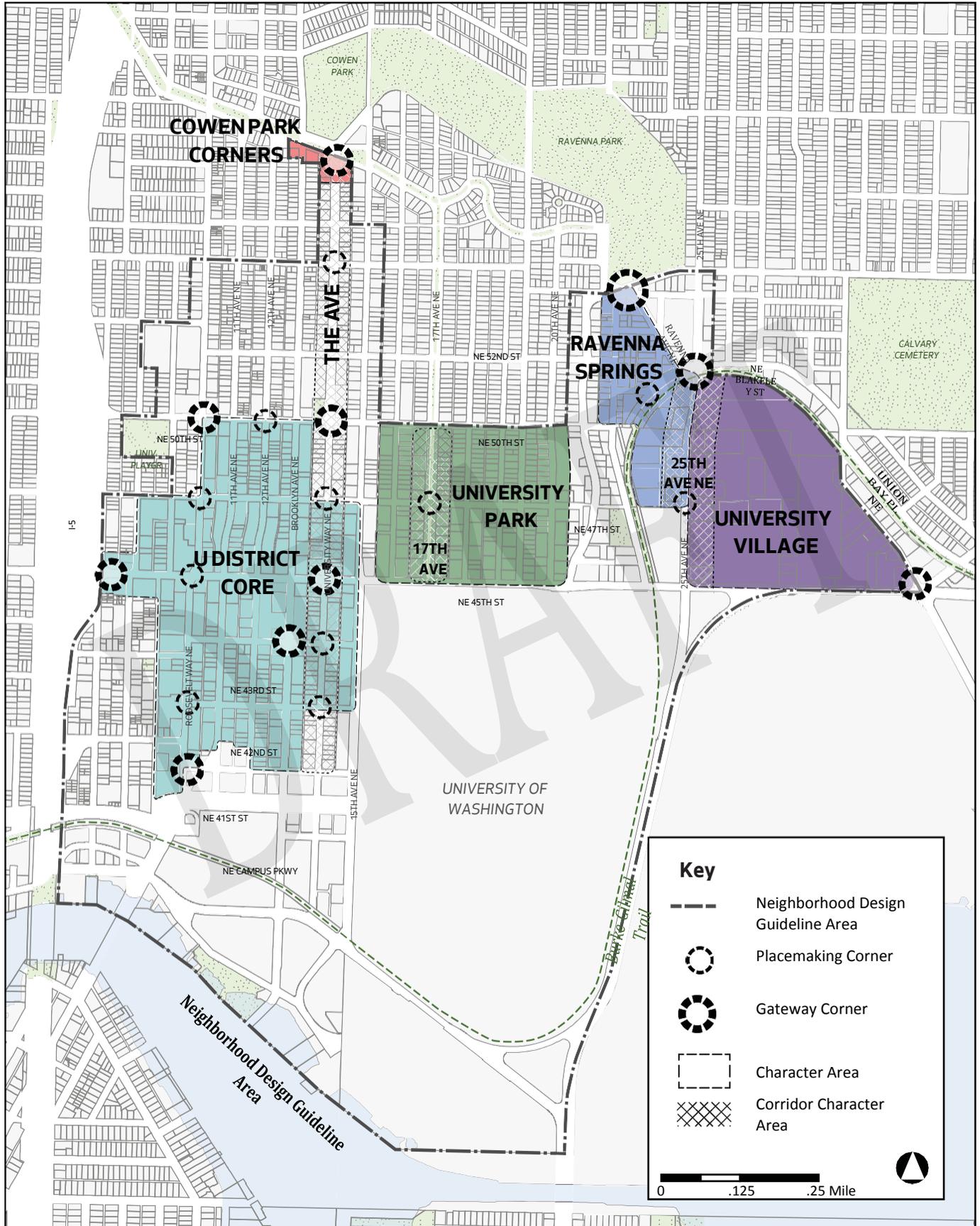
The design of the buildings, places, spaces, and mobility networks that make up the University District have a direct impact on how people interact with the built environment, how they contribute to it, and how they value it. The University District Neighborhood Design Guidelines outline specific qualities for the design of buildings and the public realm that achieve a high standard of design excellence and contribute positively to the distinct identity of the U District neighborhood. The University District Neighborhood Design Guidelines contain specific strategies and approaches to achieve the following principles, which community partners have defined as priorities for guiding new development within the University District Neighborhood Guideline Area (see Map A).

Design Excellence in the University District:

- **Create richness in the quality and variety of elements that form the public realm.** Enhance the distinct identity of the U District as an eclectic, mixed-use, pedestrian oriented urban center by ensuring new development contributes to the variety of experiences provided. Consider new development as a fresh canvas to create and recreate the neighborhood for the people that live, work, and play in the U District. A range of uses, colors, spatial variety, outdoor spaces, public art, and self-expression contribute to the variety and complexity that create an eclectic, welcoming, and intimate neighborhood.
- **Emphasize human-scaled design and generate pedestrian activity to foster an engaging public realm.** An individual interacts directly with the street level of a building; a building's design and the uses within should be driven by the goal of creating a welcoming, walkable, pedestrian-oriented urban streetscape through the layering of details, textures, and visual interest that create an expectation of discovery and novelty. Street walls should be well-defined but permeable as to engage pedestrians.
- **Contribute to a robust network of pedestrian-priority outdoor spaces that act as a "front yard" for the University District community.** The physical environment forms the setting for community and public life. Streetscapes and open spaces should serve as an outdoor living room for daily life with building designs that maximize social interaction. Residents of the University District have long expressed the desire for more spaces within the public realm to accommodate the range of needs for the growing population. Public and private outdoor space is especially important for people living in smaller dwellings, to provide a variety of passive and active areas for children and young people to play, and it improves overall livability.
- **Establish design excellence and U District Identity in taller buildings.** Revised zoning allows for tall buildings that will be visible and substantially taller than the existing and surrounding context. Design guidelines that specifically address tall building design principles are crucial to ensure prominent, new forms fit into the U district, contribute to the streetscape and public realm, and express sophisticated design and materials.
- **Integrate art and new technology.** Public art embodies the University District's unique cultural spirit and is one of the strongest ways in which to create a sense of place, even with temporary installments. New development should engage with local artists and take advantage of the connection to the University of Washington to integrate art and emerging technologies into both development and open spaces, to enrich the experience of the public realm and foster a unique district identity.

University District Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Map A: Character Areas, Gateways, and Placemaking Corners



Note: Design Review does not apply to all zones. See the Seattle Municipal Code, section 23.41.004 for more details.

CS1

CONTEXT & SITE

Natural Systems & Site Features

Citywide Guideline:

Use natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. Plan for Daylight & Trees

- a. **Arrange building massing and use upper level step backs to increase solar access** into ground floors, shared amenity spaces, streets, and the public realm, especially on narrow rights-of-way such as University Way NE. Use two-story or mezzanine layouts for residential or live-work units at or below-grade to increase daylight access to those units.
- b. **Avoid deeply recessed or sunken living space**, and minimize the distance that units are located below grade to provide direct access to daylight and air from above-grade windows for each unit.
- c. **Incorporate new & existing trees.** Site the buildings and design building massing to preserve and incorporate existing mature trees, especially on slopes; this is especially relevant in the Ravenna Springs character area (see map A). Where removal is unavoidable, configure open space to accommodate large canopy replacement trees.

Hybrid Architecture



Development sited to preserve two existing trees. A shared front porch and generous vertical entry provide residential character.

CS2

CONTEXT & SITE

Urban Pattern & Form

Citywide Guideline:

Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. Character Areas & Corridor Character Areas

For projects within the areas identified on Map A, development design should reinforce and/or create a legible quality of place.

- a. **Cowen Park Corners:** Use lush landscaping to carry the experience of Cowen Park down the north end of University Way NE. Incorporate generous sidewalks and seating areas.
- b. **University Park & 17th Ave Boulevard:** Reinforce the existing pattern of generous front setbacks. Incorporate occupiable amenity spaces into front setbacks with areas for large shade trees and landscaping. Take cues from the design, scale, and character of historic buildings, including: grand entries; sloped roofs; the use of brick, masonry, and wood; vertical window proportions; and a high degree of architectural detailing.
- c. **Ravenna Springs:** Design projects to create and reinforce the quality of a cohesive “village” with massing that is broken into multiple buildings, individual unit entries and ground-related housing, highly permeable blocks with walkways and open spaces, and a high degree of landscaping and pedestrian amenities.
- d. **University Village & 25th Ave NE:** Prioritize active edges and direct pedestrian connections to 25th Ave NE and the Burke Gilman Trail. Development along 25th Ave NE should create an active, engaging building edge for pedestrians and create protected sidewalks by utilizing planter strips with lush landscaping.
- e. **The U District Core & The Ave:** Express an urban character that is distinct to the U District and prioritize the pedestrian experience with human-scaled design and a high degree of visual interest. Foster an eclectic mix of businesses and architectural styles.
 1. Reflect historic platting patterns by articulating and/or modulating buildings and design styles at 20-40’ intervals.
 2. Use upper level step backs that respond to predominant and historic datums in context.
 3. Incorporate balconies or terraces in buildings with residential uses to contribute to passive surveillance and visual interest.
 4. Use lush, layered landscaping at street level, especially in residential areas south of NE 43rd St.

DoubleSpace Photography



New development responds to datum line of adjacent existing building by stepping back at the second story and again at the upper levels.



Layered landscaping at street level in front of residential uses to provide screening and soften buildings.



Commercial uses at grade adjacent to the park help activate the space. A significant upper level step back reduces visual and solar impacts to the park, while balconies provide passive surveillance and depth to the facade.



A small setback at the corner creates space for seating and a sculpture.

2. Neighborhood Context

- a. **Contribute to community character.** To enhance the eclectic character of the University District, plan and include elements that are easily customizable for tenants and businesses to individualize storefronts, kickplates, and streetscapes through paint colors, materials, lighting, signage, awning design, seating, or other pedestrian amenities. Use these features to express 20-40' storefront modules.
- b. **Provide zone transitions.** When a project site abuts a zone with a height limit that is two stories shorter than the project site, provide upper level setbacks that create a sensitive transition to the less intensive zone.
- c. **Activate parks & open space.** In development adjacent to open space and parks, activate the building edges by incorporating active uses, small public plazas or seating areas for ground-floor uses, as well as balconies or terraces at upper floors. Design adjacent projects to act as a deferential backdrop, with refined building facades that help frame the open space, or incorporate artistic features that complement the function of the open space and create an "outdoor room."

3. Gateways & Placemaking Corners

- a. **Gateways** identified on Map A are significant "entry" points in the U District Neighborhood.
 1. Express a sense of arrival to a distinct area with distinctive forms, prominent massing, unique design concepts, and the highest attention to design quality.
 2. Create accommodating entries with wider sidewalks, significant landscaping features, public plazas, active uses, and art.
- b. **Placemaking Corners** identified on Map A are key nodes and pedestrian activity areas within the U District Neighborhood.
 1. Design projects as part of a composition with the adjacent corner-facing sites, to frame the space and balance strong spatial edges with adequate space for movement and activity, including small plazas, seating, and public art.
 2. Incorporate special paving and surface treatments; art installations; seating; kiosks.

CS3

CONTEXT & SITE

Architectural Context & Character

Citywide Guideline:

Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. University District Architectural Character

- a. **Foster the eclectic mix of architectural styles and forms** on each block and throughout the neighborhood while maintaining articulated base designs that are pedestrian-oriented. Repetition of architectural forms and character, whether visually adjacent or within the U District, is strongly discouraged.
- b. **Complement and continue predominant styles or materials** when the immediate context of a site is comprised of buildings or a collection of buildings with local significance or identifiable architectural styles or similar materials.
- c. **Articulate building form and facades to respond to historic platting patterns** to create compatibility between contemporary architecture and existing development.
- d. **Respond to nearby predominant horizontal and vertical patterns** and datum lines, and take cues from design elements in older structures such as campus gothic style, punched windows, texture-rich materials, and thoughtful detailing.

2. Adaptive Reuse & Preservation.

Establish a connection to the U District's history by preserving existing fabric with architectural or cultural significance.

- a. **Preserve or rehabilitate existing structures or facades**, especially those with exceptional character, local significance, or quality materials including brick.
- b. **Creatively repurpose materials, signage, and other physical pieces** from existing development into new projects to create a connection with the neighborhood's past and contribute to a sense of place.



Architectural diversity is a defining characteristic of the U District.



Two examples of new development reflecting context through the use of related materials, datum lines, and horizontal and vertical elements.



New development incorporates a historic facade and mid-block passageway. The two-story facade provides a transition from the taller building to a pedestrian scale and breaks up the building massing.

PL1

PUBLIC LIFE

Connectivity

Citywide Guideline:

Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. Networks & Connections to Community Open Space

- a. **Include open space at grade that physically or visually engages the public realm.** Options include plazas, public courtyards, play areas, gardens, and ground level patios.
- b. **Projects located on Green Streets** (as designated on SDOT maps) **and within the Green Spines** (See Map B): Include multiple types of publicly-accessible open spaces and private amenity spaces that address the public realm including: balconies and unit patios, pocket plazas, strategic setbacks at grade for seating areas and play areas, and upper level stepbacks with terraces or patios.
- c. **Connect to the Burke-Gilman Trail.** For projects adjacent to the Burke-Gilman Trail, provide physical and visual connections for pedestrians and cyclists. Design trail-facing façades with active uses, including retail, amenity space, and unit stoops or patios.
- d. **Treat all alleyways as potential pedestrian routes.** Incorporate windows, entries, art, lighting, and active uses on alley-facing facades to activate and improve safety in alleys.

2. Shared Alleys & Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections

Pedestrian connections provide open space and create a fine-grained connectivity and pedestrian activity in the U District.

Mid-block pedestrian connections. *Mid-block connections provide more pedestrian routes on long blocks.*

Shared Alleys. *Shared, activated alleys are a defining feature of the University District Core.*

- a. **Reinforce existing movement patterns** and introduce connections that weave a pedestrian-priority network throughout the neighborhood with mid-block pedestrian pathways and shared alleys.
- b. **East-west mid-block pedestrian connections from the street to alley** are strongly encouraged on blocks within the “Mid-block Pedestrian Pathway Priority Area” on Map B. Projects within the approximate middle third of the block are the preferred location for mid-block pedestrian connections.



Unit entries, windows, landscaping, and lighting provide a welcoming and pedestrian-friendly mid-block pathway.



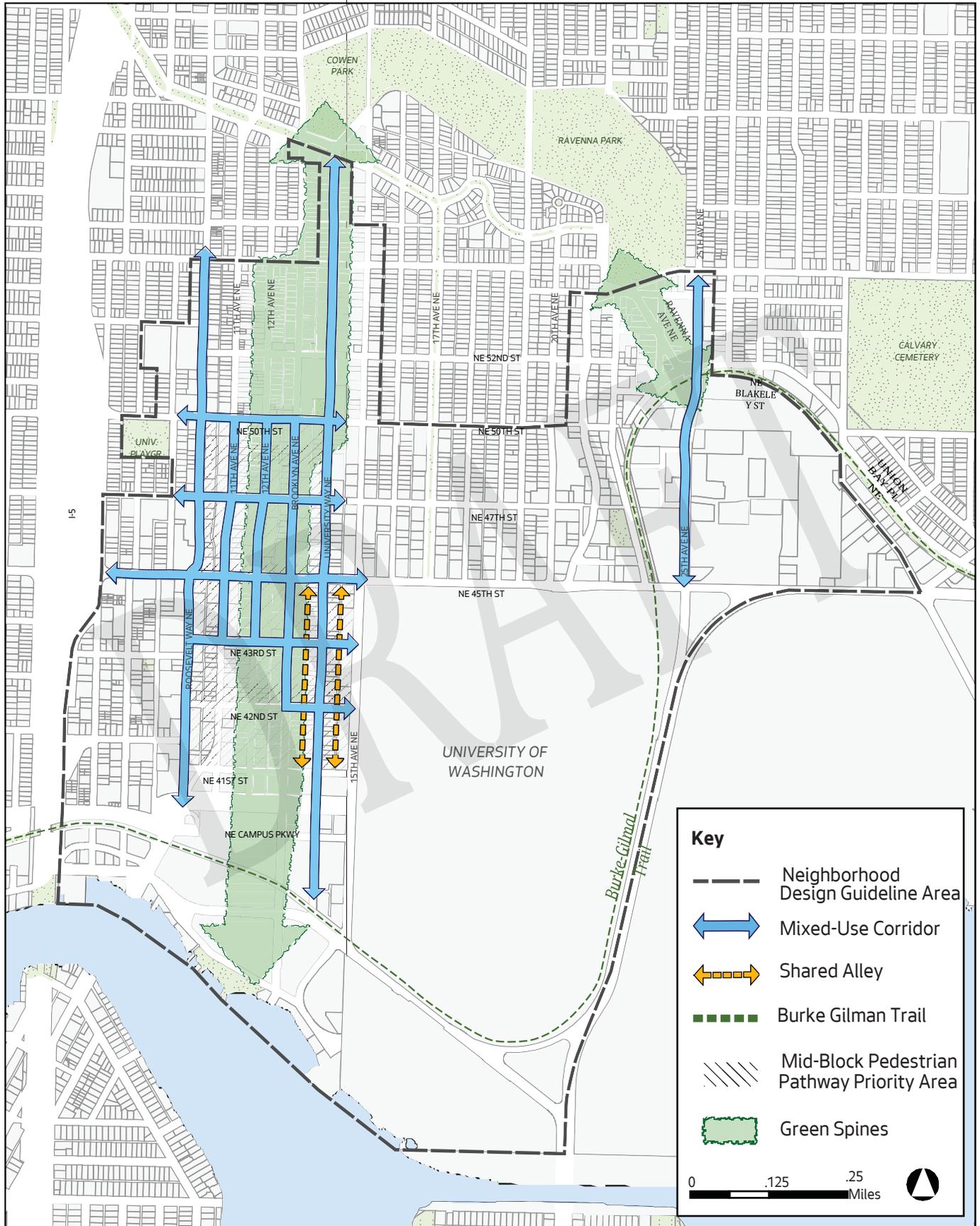
Permeable pavers delineate space along the alley. Landscaping provides a buffer from residential uses make it more pedestrian-friendly.



A mid-block pedestrian connection provides open space, access to light and air, and incorporates benches and landscaping. Balconies and windows on the adjacent buildings provide passive surveillance.

University District Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Map B: Public Realm Activation & Open Space Network





A mid-block pathway is lined with shops, windows, seating, and landscaping to make it welcoming and pedestrian-friendly.



A mid-block pathway through a residential development is lined with unit entries, planters, and windows. A change in paving signifies the transition to semi-private space.

Block 136 by Mithun



Buildings adjacent to a mid-block pathway incorporate balconies and windows for passive surveillance.

Calvin Hodgson



Signage for Post Alley creates a unified identity.



A kiosk provides an opportunity for displaying art and information while establishing a playful landmark.

c. Design facades adjacent to mid-block pedestrian connections and shared alleys as a second “front” with activating uses.

1. Locate active ground-level uses along shared alleys and pedestrian pathways, including secondary entrances for businesses and individual unit entries separated by grade or setbacks for residential uses.
2. Avoid long blank walls. Where unavoidable due to service uses, treat blank walls with artwork, interesting materials, lighting, or architectural features.

d. Create usable, safe, people-friendly spaces.

1. Include upper-level balconies or terraces so that occupiable spaces overlook shared alleys and mid-block connections.
2. Strive for clear sightlines. Where mid-block connections do not cross the right of way or do not align across an alley or street, provide a focal point and wayfinding features at the visual terminus.
3. Incorporate secondary spaces for impromptu gatherings, play opportunities, outdoor seating, and bike racks.

e. Create consistent signage & incorporate wayfinding elements.

1. Install wayfinding elements on street and alley facades to highlight entrances to alleys and midblock crossings, including special architectural treatments, creative signage, ground treatments, lighting, and façade design. Strive for continuity of design features throughout the neighborhood.
2. Incorporate street furniture, art installations, creative paving, paint patterns or lighting throughout shared alleys and mid-block connections.

PL3

PUBLIC LIFE

Street-Level Interaction

Citywide Guideline:

Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. Entries

- a. **Design prominent, accommodating entries** with vertical emphasis and architectural interest at a variety of scales. Use high-quality materials and detailing to create an identifiable entrance and welcoming experience for visitors and users.
- b. **Avoid grade separations at retail entries.** Step building floor plates along sloped sites to avoid raised or below-grade entries for commercial uses along the sidewalk.
- c. **Courtyard entries should be physically and visually accessible** from the street. Units facing the courtyard should have a porch, stoop, or deck associated with the dwelling unit to support community interaction. Any fences or gates should be set back from the sidewalk to incorporate a semi-public transitional space.

2. Ground-level Residential Design (on appropriate streets)

- a. **Articulate individual dwelling units and provide usable stoops or patios** for street-facing residential units. Include architectural detailing that expresses a residential use, such as contrasting trim, hardware, awnings, mailboxes, address numbers, and appropriately scaled materials. Provide opportunities for personalization.
- b. **Use rowhouse-style units at the base** of residential structures to transition to the pedestrian sidewalk and street; they provide large windows, entries, patios and other activating features.
- c. **Provide adequate defensible space as a transition** from the sidewalk to residential uses for visual connection and passive surveillance of the public realm. Raise units slightly above grade or provide an adequate setback. Use buffers of low walls, planters, and layered landscaping; avoid tall fences or patios deeply recessed below grade.
- d. Where direct-unit entries are challenging due to a site's physical constraints, **include a generous main entry with an occupiable shared space** or forecourt to create a "front porch" for residents. Provide ample space for bicycles, seating, furniture, and planters.



Ground level setback zone with residential patios.



Residential uses at grade are set back from the sidewalk to provide transitional space and landscaping. The use of brick, awnings, and individual unit entries are engaging to passers-by.



Individual patios provide private open space, passive surveillance, and enhance the relationship with the public realm.



Cafe Solstice has a small outdoor patio that provides a porous, engaging edge while maintaining the street-wall.



Operable shades/louvers at upper levels add human scale and an ever-changing facade. The notched parapet and building corner breaks down bulk of the form.



Live-work units designed for commercial uses at grade, with living spaces above.

3. Mixed Use Corridors & Commercial Frontages

Mixed-use corridors (as indicated on map B) should be designed as welcoming and lively pedestrian-oriented streetscapes with a fine-grained detail and ground-level activity that engages the public realm.

- a. **Maintain a well-defined street wall on mixed-use corridors** to create an urban feel. Incorporate strategic setbacks at corners and entries for seating, usable open space, and landscaping.
- b. **Provide frequent entrances, expressed breaks, and architectural interest at regular intervals of 20-30 feet** (regardless of uses behind) to create a human-scaled experience and accommodate the presence or appearance of small storefronts. Add unique features to long sections of storefront systems.
- c. **Residential entries for upper floor residential uses and residential signage should not dominate** the street frontage over commercial uses.
- d. **Minimize the size and presence of residential lobbies** and other non-activating uses to maintain the commercial intensity and viability of mixed-use corridors.
- e. **Design a porous, engaging edge for all commercial uses at street-level.** Include operable windows at all levels of the building and especially at the streetscape to maximize permeability and activate the streetscape. Design street-level facades that open to or near sidewalk level, allowing uses to spill out, and provide areas for outdoor seating.
- f. **Design live/work units and all other non-commercial spaces for conversion to street-accessed commercial uses over the life of a building.** Provide a direct path to the entry from the sidewalk, transitional areas that can be used as outdoor seating, awnings, and pavement treatments. Use recessed entries and non-permanent solutions for privacy for residential uses, such as movable planters. Unit layout should separate living spaces from work space as to provide appropriate privacy for living spaces.

PL4

PUBLIC LIFE

Active Transportation

Citywide Guideline:

Incorporate features that facilitate active transport such as walking, bicycling and transit use.



A bike corral with inverted "U" style racks provide ample and convenient parking without impeding a narrow sidewalk.



Custom bike racks provide an opportunity for placemaking.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. Bicycle Circulation & Parking

- a. **Design bicycle parking for efficiency and security.** Bicycle use and parking should be encouraged to promote a healthy and active neighborhood and to support local businesses. Bicycle racks should be plentiful, and either be from the Seattle Department of Transportation's bike parking program or be an approved rack of similar "inverted U" or "staple" style.
- b. **Integrate design features into bicycle facilities that enhance placemaking,** such as having a uniform color for bike racks within the U District or having distinctive place-names designed into the racks.
- c. **Locate bicycle parking and bicycle racks in convenient locations** for residents and temporary users with easy access, weather protection, and minimal grade changes. Provide direct routes from bicycle lanes to bicycle parking in garages or bicycle racks, and provide signage that directs bicyclists to these facilities. When bicycle parking is located indoors, minimize obstructions, and consider using sliding or automatic doors.

2. Connections and Facilities for Transit

- a. **Ensure convenient connections to the light-rail station** for development near the station or other high-volume transit stops. This might include widened sidewalks, chamfered building corners and/or recessed entries to facilitate higher pedestrian volumes near the stations.
- b. **Integrate waiting areas for transit and vehicle pick-up into the building design** rather than adjacent to the street, where possible and with approval of agencies. Include shelters, large canopies, lean bars, and benches.

DC1

DESIGN CONCEPT

Project Uses & Activities



Frequent individual unit entries in the landscaped setback zone, and upper level balconies provide, an engaging street edge.



Artistic screening for ventilation celebrates local history and culture.



Residential uses fronting a 'shared alley' space incorporates high-quality materials, entries, balconies, stoops, landscaping, and windows to create a pedestrian-friendly shared space.

Citywide Guideline:

Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. Activating Uses

- a. **Maximize active uses along street frontages** (especially Mixed Use Corridors on map B) and minimize the amount of frontage dedicated to lobby/lounges, office and leasing spaces - uses which can be located elsewhere in the building. Provide a high frequency of entries for both commercial and residential uses.
- b. **Group live-work and commercial spaces** at corners and clusters at street level rather than fragmenting them between lobbies and other non-commercial ground-floor uses.
- c. **Where residential uses face on-site or public open spaces, parks, or access drives**, balance privacy layering with passive surveillance by incorporating stoops, patios, balconies, greenery and lighting. Minimize garage frontages at these locations.

2. Visual and Safety Impacts

- a. **Locate service entries and trash receptacles within the building**, mid-block along shared alleys (see map B) and away from pedestrian crossings or gathering spots at mid-block connections.
- b. **Use high quality materials and finishes for all service screening and garage doors** with artful treatments and architectural detailing that reinforces the design concept and contributes to visual interest at eye level.
- c. **Wrap above grade parking with active uses** to minimize 'dead facades'. Design any above-grade parking with a high degree of architectural detailing consistent with the non-vehicle design, possibly integrating changing displays or community artwork.

3. Shared Open Spaces

- a. **If access drives are provided on site, design them as shared space** for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles to move slowly and safely. Include entries, balconies, windows, landscaping, and opportunities for personalization. Curb-less drives are desirable.
- b. **Design the layout of the open space and surrounding uses intentionally to function as shared community space.** Include landscaping, pedestrian amenities, lighting, and paving treatments that clearly delineate paths from gathering areas.

DC2

DESIGN CONCEPT

Architectural Concept

Citywide Guideline:

Develop a unified, functional architectural concept that fits well on the site and its surroundings.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. Massing & Reducing Bulk and Scale

- a. **Optimal building massing and form expresses an intentional and original response** to the context, streetscape and all guidelines; it is not merely a transcript of the allowable building envelope.
- b. **Reduce the bulk and scale of large buildings.** A large building should be able to be read as a series of discrete forms at multiple scales to reduce perceived bulk, create interest, and help users understand how the building is occupied.
 1. Break up larger development into multiple buildings and smaller masses with pass-throughs and pathways.
 2. Alternatively, give the impression of multiple, smaller-scale buildings by employing different façade treatments at intervals that complement the context by articulating the building at regular intervals.
 3. Employ purposeful modulation that is meaningful to the overall composition and building proportion, or that expresses individual units or modules. Avoid over-modulation. Changes in color and material should typically be accompanied by a legible change in plane and/or design language.
 4. Opt for distinctive and sculptural forms and elements, especially in highly visible locations or corners.
- c. **Design the building base to create a solid and “grounded” form** that transitions to a human-scale at the street. The height of the base/podium should be proportional to and substantial enough to “anchor” the upper massing.
- d. **Use upper level step-backs to maintain a street-room scale** along the street and respond to historic datums.
- e. **Ensure that building massing does not dominate the public realm.** Setbacks from the sidewalk should be open to the sky. Where overhangs create usable open space at grade, provide an adequate ceiling height—generally at least two stories—with lighting and design detail to create a welcoming space.
- f. **Locate vertical stair and elevator cores internally to minimize height impacts** to the street. Stairs visible to the street should be designed as a prominent feature with high transparency.

Andre Proulx Photography



A distinct sculptural form on a highly visible corner creates a sense of depth and responds to each adjacent street.

Block 136 by Mithun



A full block development is broken into two distinct and complimentary buildings with a mid-block pedestrian pathway.



An appropriately-scaled brick base provides grounding for a set-back upper massing. Balconies provide depth to the facade while a skilled use of analogous colors adds a whimsical flair that is not overwhelming.

GBD Architects, Andre Prouge Photography



A large building is broken down by employing modulation that corresponds to distinct, yet related design languages. The use of punched windows, brick, and wood adds a layer of complexity and depth to the facade.



Student housing gets a pop of pink on the internal courtyard. The massing is broken up into three distinct pieces with varying but related themes and proportions.



A significant set-back of the upper massing and a slight bend reduces the overall bulk and creates a unique form. Strategic setbacks at corner entries to create space.

Hybrid Architecture



Depth and complexity is added to a simple form with the use of recessed balconies. Lush landscaping provides a buffer from the public realm.

2. Architectural Concept & Façade Composition

- a. **Embrace contemporary design through distinctive, elegant forms** that demonstrate a context-sensitive approach to massing and façade design.
- b. **Create a finely-grained mix of complementary buildings and architectural styles on a block**, taking cues from established patterns such as frequent entries, the use of brick and other highly-articulated materials.
- c. **Reinforce the massing and design concept with a deliberate palette** that limits the number of materials, colors, and fenestration patterns to achieve design cohesion.
- d. **Use brick or other high-quality, durable, and fine-grained materials** as the prominent base material to reinforce a strong base massing.
- e. **Employ a restrained and purposeful application of bold or high-contrast colors** and moments of whimsy to contribute to the eclectic character of the University District without overwhelming the streetscape.
- f. **Provide architectural interest with legible roof lines or defined top of the structure** that is clearly distinct from the façade walls.
- g. **Avoid expanses of large panels with minimal detailing, and do not rely on the use of colored cladding to increase visual interest.** Break down large masses or facades by 1) using quality materials that provide relief and interest through shadow lines, depth of fenestration, and detailing, and 2) delineating a base, middle, and top with architectural detailing and massing.
- h. **Intentionally detail joints, reveals, and fasteners** to articulate and reinforce the design concept.
- i. **Incorporate depth into building facades**, especially those with minimal modulation and boxy massing. Integrate façade depth and shadow casting detail, including projecting elements, setbacks and expression of window reveals, to give visual richness and interest. Recessed windows of 6-8" are preferable to window trims or fins applied to flush windows.

3. Pedestrian-Scaled Streetscape Design

- a. **Design facades to a human-scaled rhythm and proportion and avoid monotonous repetition of the storefront or module** by providing points of interest every 15-30 feet. Layer a hierarchical arrangement of articulation and detailing at a variety of scales to express a high degree of quality and visual interest by including features such as articulated mullions, setbacks, patios, intricate architectural detailing, art, light fixtures, entries, planters, and window groupings.
- b. **Limit the height and use of retaining walls** along streets, open spaces, and in other areas of the public realm. Use stepped terraces as a preferred solution to resolve grade differences.

GBD Architects, Andrei Poug Photography



One development incorporates multiple storefront designs in 20-40' intervals to break down the scale of the building and demarcate businesses.



Multiple elements are layered to enhance the pedestrian experience through detailing and visual interest.



A visible party wall adjacent to an undeveloped site uses local artists to provide visual interest and contribute to placemaking.

Aqua Tower, Studio Gang



Intricately designed protruding balconies provide depth to an otherwise simple form, creating a sculptural and elegant tower form.

4. Service & Mechanical Elements

- a. **Intentionally design wall venting for commercial uses, and integrate other screening for mechanical equipment** on the roof or affixed to the building, into the overall design concept.
- b. **Integrate building service elements**, such as drainage pipes, grilles, screens, vents, louvers, and garage entry doors into the overall facade design, and use these features as opportunities to provide artful or unique applications.

5. Blank Walls

- a. **Finish visible walls and rooftops with quality materials or artistic expressions** that reinforce the design concept, avoiding simplistic treatments of colored cladding.
- b. **On party walls visible from streets, provide visual scale and interest** with murals or other legible artistic or architectural expressions, or joint patterns, plane changes, material variety, and/or proportions that break down the scale of large blank walls.

6. Tall Buildings

Tall buildings require additional design guidance since they are highly visible above typical 'fabric structures' and impact the public visual realm with inherently larger façade surfaces, bulk and scale shifts.

Tall Building Guidelines apply to the entire structure whenever any portion of the structure exceeds 85ft height.

- a. **Response to Context:** Integrate and transition to a surrounding fabric of differing heights; relate to existing visual datums, the street wall and parcel patterns. Respond to prominent nearby sites and/or sites with axial focus or distant visibility, such as waterfronts, public view corridors, street ends.
- b. **Tall Form Placement, Spacing & Orientation:** Locate the tall forms to optimize the following: minimize shadow impacts on public parks, plazas and places; maximize tower spacing to adjacent structures; afford light and air to the streets, pedestrians and public realm; and minimize general impacts to nearby existing and future planned occupants.
- c. **Tall Form Design:** Avoid long slabs and big, unmodulated boxy forms, which cast bigger shadows and lack scale or visual interest. Consider curved, angled, shifting and/or carved yet coherent forms. Shape and orient tall floorplates based on context, nearby opportunities and design concepts, not simply to maximize internal efficiencies. Modulation should be up-sized to match the longer, taller view distances.
- d. **Intermediate Scales:** To mediate the extra height/scale, add legible, multi-story intermediate scale elements: floor groupings,

South Beach, Foster + Partners



A sculptural roof line reinforces the design concept and transitions to the sky.

The Cite, Orange Architects



A tall building is broken up into horizontal stacked boxes to create a distinct form and break down the scale of the building.



Towers design contributes to the collection of buildings that define Seattle's skyline.

gaskets, off-sets, projections, sky terraces, layering, or other legible modulations to the middle of tall forms. Avoid a single repeated extrusion from base to top.

- e. **Shape & Design All Sides:** Because towers are visible from many viewpoints/ distances, intentionally shape the form and design all sides (even party walls), responding to differing site patterns and context relationships. Accordingly, not all sides may have the same forms or display identical cladding.
- f. **Adjusted Base Scale:** To mediate the form's added height, design a 1-3 story base scale, and/or highly legible base demarcation to transition to the ground and mark the 'street room' proportion. Tall buildings require several scale readings, and the otherwise typical single-story ground floor appears squashed by the added mass above.
- g. **Ground Floor Uses:** Include identifiable primary entrances -scaled to the tall form - and provide multiple entries. Include genuinely activating uses or grade-related residences to activate all streets.
- h. **Facade Depth & Articulation:** Use plane changes, depth, shadow, and texture to provide human scale and interest and to break up the larger façade areas of tall buildings, especially in the base and lower 100 ft. Compose fenestration and material dimensions to be legible and richly detailed from long distances.
- i. **Quality & 6th Elevations:** Intentionally design and employ quality materials and detailing, including on all soffits, balconies, exterior ceilings and other surfaces seen from below, including lighting, vents, etc.
- j. **Transition to the Sky & Skyline Composition:** Create an intentional, designed terminus to the tall form and enhance the skyline (not a simple flat 'cut-off'). Integrate all rooftop elements and uses into the overall design, including mechanical screens, maintenance equipment, amenity spaces and lighting. Study & design how the tall buildings will contribute to the overall skyline profile and variety of forms.

DC3

DESIGN CONCEPT

Open Space Concept



A pedestrian-friendly shared space is lined with balconies, entries, landscaping, windows. The presence of garage doors is minimized.



Cowen Park Apartments feature a lush semi-private courtyard entry that is accessible from the street.

Hybrid Architects



A residential project provides a large shared front porch that provides a place for interaction and views into the interior courtyard.



A courtyard incorporates area for trees and play space for kids, with direct sightlines to units.

Citywide Guideline:

Integrate building and open space design so that each complements the other.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. Open Space Organization & Site Layout

- a. **Design outdoor amenity areas, open space, and pedestrian pathways to be a focal point and organizing element within the development**, break up large sites, and foster permeability. Arrange buildings on site to consolidate open space areas into designed, usable shared spaces or places for large trees instead of “leftover” spaces or drive lanes.
- b. **Extend pedestrian routes from entry courtyards or forecourts** all the way through a project site to improve pedestrian walkability.
- c. **Arrange residential development, especially townhouse and rowhouses, to orient units towards the street**. Where units are oriented towards internal pathways or access drives, design these as shared pathways that prioritize the pedestrian experience with paving, landscaping, lighting, stoops, and human-scaled design features.

2. Residential Open Space

- a. **Provide a variety of types of outdoor private amenity space** instead of only locating private amenity space on rooftops. Include usable patios, terraces and balconies, opt for usable projecting or recessed balconies instead of flush railings.
- b. **Design shared play areas for children** with sightlines to units.
- c. **Design courtyards to incorporate layered planting and trees** that provide privacy to units surrounding the courtyard as well as users.

3. Street-level Open Space

- a. **Design open spaces at street-level to be accommodating**. Semi-public spaces such as forecourts should engage the street and act as a “front porch” for residents. Minimize the use of visual and physical barriers, especially those adjacent to the street. Locate any necessary fences or gates set far back from the street to create a semi-public transitional space.
- b. **Open space design and location should support lively community interaction**, rather than passive space within a development, as well as the larger University District community.

DC4

DESIGN CONCEPT

Exterior Elements & Finishes

Citywide Guideline:

Use appropriate and high-quality elements and finishes for the building and open spaces.



Base massing reflects the immediate context with the use of brick and fenestration patterns. Upper level step backs provide room for terraces and balconies while reducing the overall mass. Modulation is reinforced with changes in the design language.



A cohesive design expresses the modular construction technology used for this project.

University District Supplemental Guidance

1. Durable, High-Quality Exterior Materials

- a. **Use materials that provide and evoke durability and permanence.** Avoid thin materials that do not age well in Seattle's climate, including those that deform or warp, weather quickly, or require paint as a finish. Locate materials with a durability appropriate for an urban application, especially near grade.
- b. **Brick is a preferred material**, especially for podiums and the first 30-50' from grade.
- c. **Use materials with inherent texture and complexity.** Limit the use of large panels or materials that require few joints, reveals, or minimal detailing. Use materials that provide purposeful surfaces and reinforce the design concept and building proportions.
- d. **Utilize emerging technology and innovative materials** that inspire inventive forms, applications, and design concepts.
- e. **Consider the life cycle impacts of materials**, and choose those that are renewable, responsibly sourced, and have minimal impacts to human and environmental health.

2. Hardscaping & Landscaping

- a. **Incorporate artistic, historical, and U district-unique elements into landscape materials** to define spaces and contribute to placemaking, including mosaics, wayfinding elements, reused materials, and lighting.
- b. **Hardscape materials contribute a fine-grained texture** through joint patterns, scoring, or inherent material qualities. Avoid surfaces with minimal texture, especially heavy traffic areas.
- c. **Use pavers and ground treatments to delineate uses**, including building entries and seating areas within the public right of way.
- d. **Green Walls.** Integrate purposeful green walls into the construction and design of the building and landscape to avoid appearing "tacked on" as an afterthought. To maximize the potential for success, provide permanent irrigation and choose locations with appropriate growth conditions.