

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** SEPTEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> NORTHGATE 5<sup>TH</sup> AVE. STREETScape DESIGN WORKSHOP  
PARTICIPANTS AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

**FROM:** 5<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE IDT (COMPILED BY MEGHAN STEDMAN)

**DATE:** OCTOBER 11, 2001

**RE:** ANALYSIS OF WHAT WE HEARD FROM PARTICIPANTS OF THE SEPTEMBER 6,  
2001 NORTHGATE 5<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE STREETScape DESIGN WORKSHOP

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Participants of the September 6, 2001 Northgate 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Streetscape Design Workshop expressed their ideas and concerns about the preliminary design concepts through written statements and questions, small group discussions, and a report-out at the end of the workshop. Major themes of public comment as they relate to each element of the preliminary design concepts are summarized. The final report will contain an appendix with a complete record of all workshop participant's comments, concerns and ideas.

The comprehensive list of concerns and ideas stated here could serve as a checklist for the interdepartmental team as we begin preparing the preferred design concept for the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE Streetscape Design.

### DESIGN ELEMENTS FOR ALL OF 5<sup>TH</sup> AVE. NE: SIDEWALKS, CROSSWALKS, MEDIANS, LANES

- **On-Street Parking:** Methods of buffering pedestrian traffic from automobile traffic, especially the addition of off-peak, on-street parking to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., raised several concerns for workshop participants. Many people feel it is important to carefully consider the definition of "off-peak" because of the non-traditional times in which the Northgate area is most heavily used. Some participants stated that on-street parking is good for pedestrians and businesses and we should consider adding it north of 106<sup>th</sup>. However, several participants were concerned that there is insufficient demand for on-street parking and it will impede traffic flow. They asked that we investigate the demand and recommended alternatives to on-street parking include barriers, bike lanes and wider planting strips.
- **Crosswalks:** Participants expressed strong support for improved crosswalks that are stamped concrete with a textured pattern.
- **Mid-Block Crossings:** Many workshop participants supported mid-block crossings, and questioned why they were not shown in any of the preliminary designs, especially at 102<sup>nd</sup> Street and at the Pac-Med Clinic. Mid-block crossings were viewed as an effective tool in breaking up Northgate's superblocks by simulating the crossing opportunities that shorter blocks offer. Some also felt that mid-block crossings would slow vehicular speeds. However, a small group of participants placed an emphasis on efficient traffic flow and may not have supported this design feature if it had been shown in any of the design alternatives.

- **Extended Signal Crossing Times:** Participants supported increased walk-times across intersections, especially if streets are widened to accommodate new turns lanes or expand bus-turn radii. However, some concern was expressed that extended signal crossing times would cause too much congestion for automobile traffic and provide more time for pedestrians and turning vehicles to come into conflict with one another. One participant raised an interesting point that increasing crossing-signal walk-times may reduce the traffic-flow benefits of additional turning lanes, especially at 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Northgate Way. Some participants recommended that the City look at the use of curb bulbs or other tools to shorten pedestrian crossing times. Several workshop participants recommended we investigate the use of audible crossing signals, all-way pedestrian crossings and scrambled crossings.
- **Sidewalks:** Wider sidewalks are considered a basic and important feature of the streetscape. While all participants were in favor of wider sidewalks, several participants stated that the 12-foot minimum width required by the Major Pedestrian Street designation should be built as intended by the regulations rather than the 10-foot design shown in the concepts. One participant questioned how the proposed 10-foot sidewalks would eventually be increased to 12-feet, where required, and wondered whether we should wait and implement 12-foot sidewalks as development occurs.
- **Medians:** The overall concept of a center median received consistent support from workshop participants. While there was overall support for a variable median that allowed for access and turning, the purpose, design, and appearance of the median received a variety of comments as it pertains to each node. Many participants wanted to explore installing refuge or oasis areas on the medians to improve the safety for pedestrians crossing 5<sup>th</sup> Ave.

#### **DESIGN ELEMENTS: STREET TREES, UTILITIES, BUS SHELTERS, AND OTHER AMENITIES**

- **Street Trees:** Like wider sidewalks, workshop participants consider street trees to be a basic and important feature of the streetscape design. Several participants emphasized that trees and tree placement can be an important “placemaking” feature. Concerns raised by a small number of participants in regards to street trees include whether they should be planted on the median, the importance of street tree grates so that pedestrians can walk around the base of the trees, and tree-canopy maintenance issues.
- **Utilities:** Participants were unanimous regarding the need to relocate the existing signal cabinet at the northwest corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Northgate Way. Where utilities were addressed by work groups, participants agreed that all utilities should be placed underground. Strong support was also expressed for moving the public utility poles out of the center of the sidewalk, though with acknowledgement of the high cost associated with this action.
- **Street Amenities:** Workshop participants strongly supported streetscape amenities on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue including pedestrian-scaled lighting, covered benches and community kiosks. There was also some support for concentrating many of these amenities in Node 3 at the overlook to Park 6 and Thornton Creek, thereby creating a community gathering place that better integrates the presence of the creek into the streetscape.

- **Bus Shelter Movements and Improvements:** Moving and improving bus shelters received strong support from workshop participants. Most of them were in favor of larger shelters at bus stops with benches, garbage cans and route information. Metro staffperson Jack Whisner cautioned that there are costs associated with moving each of the shelters from near-side to far-side of the intersection as proposed by SeaTran.

#### **OTHER ISSUES: PURPOSE, CONNECTIVITY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND DEVELOPMENT, AND IMPLEMENTATION**

- **Purpose:** The purpose of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE streetscape design project still remains an issue of conflict for some participants. While some attendees focused their comments on the ways in which 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. can become a more pedestrian-friendly street, others questioned the appropriateness and the feasibility of this conversion. There still appears to be a conflict between those participants who feel that steps should be taken to slow the speed at which traffic moves and those who felt that reducing congestion and improving traffic flow should be an important goal of the project.
- **Connectivity:** Several work groups felt that an important ingredient in 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue’s success as a pedestrian-friendly street is the ability for people to walk there from the surrounding neighborhoods, especially those to the east. They asked that the City investigate ways of improving the east-west connections to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- **Private Development Issues:** Many of the workshop participants discussed improvements to private property that are important to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. becoming a place where people want to walk. Ideas regarding the design and importance of private property and development range from the importance of Simon Property Group building along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., the need for variety in building design and business use, the need for awnings on all buildings, and the importance of authentic window transparency. Some participants emphasized the need for a “buy-in” to the final streetscape design concept from adjoining retailers and property owners.
- **Implementation:** Some participants questioned how the Streetscape Design Plan would be implemented, especially how the public and private components of the plan would be coordinated (i.e. the expanded right-turn lane from 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. onto Northgate Way and the short-term expansion of sidewalk widths to 10 feet versus the long-term need to expand sidewalks to 12-feet as new development occurs within the Major Pedestrian Street designation area). Some recommended the City explore extending the Major Pedestrian Street designation south to 100<sup>th</sup>. Others expressed concern about maintenance issues for bus shelters, street tree canopy heights, and other streetscape elements.

#### **DESIGN ISSUES SPECIFIC TO NODE 1**

- **Lengthened Right turn lane Northbound along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave at the Intersection with Northgate Way:** While there was some support for lengthening the right turn lane onto Northgate Way, participants were concerned about the need for this design element and the fact that its implementation was contingent upon the adjacent private properties being redeveloped to provide the necessary right-of-way. One person recommended as an

alternative that the City investigate and consider enabling the center lane to go straight or turn right, as not many cars go straight from that lane now.

- **Double Left Turn Lane Westbound and Eastbound from Northgate Way onto 5<sup>th</sup> Ave.:** Most participants had concerns about this design element including its feasibility given the existing right-of-way width, the purpose (slowing versus speeding traffic), and the overall impact on pedestrians crossing the intersection.
- **Medians:** Workshop participants expressed a range of ideas and concerns about the three median options: central two-way left-turn lane (no median), continuous central median, and a combination of the two (variable median). While some felt that the presence of the median would slow traffic, others felt it would enable it to move more quickly and efficiently. Many expressed concern that a continuous central median would further congest traffic and be a hindrance to accessing small businesses on the east side of 5<sup>th</sup> NE. Overall, the small groups expressed the most support for the variable median, as it would provide additional greenspace while still allowing left-hand turns to be made into adjoining businesses.
- **North Park-and-Ride Lot Relocation:** Participants recommended that the City investigate how the relocation of the North Park-And-Ride lot to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue or another location in Northgate would impact the intensity of traffic on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and other major traffic corridors.

## DESIGN ISSUES SPECIFIC TO NODE 2

- **On-Street Parking:** While participants' concerns about the demonstrated need for on-street parking and its possible effect on traffic-flow pertain to Node 2, one discussion group recommended that we maximize the amount of on-street parking available in this area. In response to stated concerns about on-street parking, Metro staffperson Jack Whisner recommended changes to the reconfiguration of Nodes 2 and 3, including where and when on-street parking is provided.
- **Improved Pedestrian Crossing to Northgate Mall's Bon Marche Entrance:** Workshop participants voiced strong support for an improved pedestrian crossing of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue at the Mall/Bon Marche entrance. Many expressed a desire that medians located in that vicinity provide a pedestrian refuge. There was also support for The Simon Property Group enhancing the mall entrance on their property so that it complements the pedestrian-friendly streetscape elements elsewhere on 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. while providing a prominent and pedestrian-friendly entrance into the Mall. Most participants saw this design element as being positive for the Mall and for 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE.
- **Medians:** The work groups shared the same concerns about medians located in Node 2 as they did for those located in Node 1. Strongest support was expressed for the variable median. Participants felt that shorter medians help create a more pedestrian-friendly scale, while also helping to reduce the number of curb cuts in the area by directing where they can be located. Some participants supported the continuous median for the following reasons: reduced turning movements will improve traffic flow, the resulting congestion would be

more palatable in a tree-filled environment, the continuous median would be better for pedestrians, and a continuous median would help reduce the number of curb cuts. Others felt the continuous median would block access to businesses and the adjoining neighborhoods, while further congesting traffic.

### DESIGN ISSUES SPECIFIC TO NODE 3

- **Mid-block Crossings:** Several participants expressed concern that future development on the Northgate Mall south lot could affect pedestrian crossings in the area. Many recommended the City investigate the need for additional crosswalks, especially at 102<sup>nd</sup>. Some work groups felt that a crosswalk at 102<sup>nd</sup> could help in establishing a smaller grid-system throughout the neighborhood.
- **Gateway:** Workshop participants recommended the creation of a “gateway” treatment in Node 3 to announce to both pedestrians and automobiles that they are entering/exiting the Northgate core and Maple Leaf neighborhood.
- **Changing Curb Radii at 100<sup>th</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup>:** While some participants supported widening the curb radii to accommodate bus turning movements, many more expressed concern that it would lengthen the time required for a pedestrian crossing. Some stated that this design feature is less safe than what currently exists, as other non-bus traffic would utilize the changed curb radii to travel more quickly through the intersection.
- **Lane Narrowing South of 103<sup>rd</sup>:** Several participants and work groups were concerned that the proposed narrowing of the northbound lane, achieved through a striped channelization between 100<sup>th</sup> Street and 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, is unsafe.

### NEW IDEAS

- New ideas generated by workshop participants include adding bike lanes to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE, researching opportunities to improve drainage in the area, installing mid-block crossings, building kiosks, enhancing the street’s relationship with Thornton Creek and Park 6, putting a pedestrian overpass between Northgate Mall and the Bon Tire site, submerging traffic and making the surface available to pedestrians and bikes only, and adding public art to Node 2.