

Northgate 5th Avenue Streetscape Design Project

What We've Heard So Far...

Northgate area residents have given a tremendous amount of their time to defining a vision of Northgate as *a vital, mixed-use center of concentrated development*

surrounded by healthy singlefamily neighborhoods. The vision of 5th Avenue as a pedestrian-friendly "Main Street" for Northgate dates back to the 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan. Information from the Plan as it relates to 5th Avenue as well as the subsequent Committees and Workshops dedicated to improving Northgate, is compiled here.

Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan

The City designated 5th Avenue between 105th and 113th Streets as a Major Pedestrian Street. This designation regulates uses and building locations to promote a pedestrian-friendly environment. Requirements for new development on a Major Pedestrian Street include the provision of a sidewalk no less than 12 feet in width, street trees, street furniture and planting boxes. Fifth Avenue between 113th and 115th Streets was designated by the City as a Special Landscaped Arterial. Requirements along a Special Landscaped Arterial include a minimum six-foot wide sidewalk and a six-foot wide planting strip or a twelve-foot wide sidewalk. Improvements such as: street trees, special pavers, lighting, benches and planter boxes are also required.

Station Area Planning in Northgate (May 2000 to Present)

Many citizens involved in the Northgate Station Area Planning (SAP) process see 5th Avenue NE as a potential "main street" for the Northgate area. Concerns include:

- The adequacy of existing sidewalk standards on 5th Avenue (12' width).
- The "Major Pedestrian Street" designation in the Northgate Zoning Overlay only goes as far south as NE 105th Street.
- The possibility of incorporating bicycle lanes safely, given current bus volumes, traffic speeds, and congestion within the right-of-way.
- More consistency in standards for sidewalks along the same corridor or for the same types of streets (such as arterials, or streets that carry large amounts of pedestrians).
- Any regulatory designations of streets need to include intersections.
- There needs to be more attention paid to sidewalk impediments, such as power poles. The lack of on-street parking on many arterials in the Northgate core also allows traffic to travel near pedestrians.

Planning Commission Town Center Visioning Workshop, May 2000

Recommendations & Ideas Generated by Charrette Teams include:

- Recognize Northgate Way as Northgate's defining thoroughfare.
- Establish 5th Avenue NE as a boulevard with wide sidewalks and a five-foot planting strip to buffer pedestrians from the street.
- Use attractive lighting and paving treatments, especially at key intersections.
- Enhance crosswalks at 105th Street and Mall Entrance (Bon entrance).
- Connect to the planned detention pond trail near 105th Street.
- Install a pedestrian overpass at 5th Avenue and Northgate Way connecting all four corners.



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Understanding Northgate Workshop, October 2000

A concept common to all design schemes generated at the workshop was that 5th Avenue NE is the most important pedestrian corridor and focus for the community. Changes should be made to the existing land uses and sidewalk environment, including development on the Mall's parking lots, to achieve this goal.

Advice related to 5th Avenue NE included:

- Involve the business community through public/private incentives.
- Create an urban center with a strong emphasis on movement by focusing on:
 - multi-modal transportation including pedestrians, bicycles, public transit, and automobiles
 - balance local and regional mobility needs, interconnection, and mobility options
 - pedestrian-friendly places, links, connectivity, places to walk to that are tied in with mixed uses
- Focus on pedestrians and non-motorized transportation including safety, ambiance, pedestrian lighting, circulation systems and networks.
- Transform the area from a suburban to urban place.
- Accommodate traffic calming and short term and long-term parking.
- Do not allow funding to limit potential or improvements within the Northgate area.

Schemes developed by Work Teams include the following design suggestions related to 5th Avenue:

- Improve pedestrian access to the Mall from the east side of 5th Avenue through an elevated connection or through curb bulbs and a crosswalk between the Mall entrance and the east side of the street.
- Improve the west side of 5th Avenue between NE 100th St. and Northgate Way by creating a strip park with 20-foot sidewalks, a bike path, and pedestrian waysides.
- Install wider sidewalks on 5th Avenue NE (20-25 feet) and promote new development that comes to the edge of the street to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Recognize pedestrian connections as organizing elements of any design plan.
- Address pedestrian needs given existing bus and auto traffic with 18-foot wide sidewalks, trees, and parallel parking along 5th Avenue NE.

Refining Our Choices Workshop, December 2000

All four design alternatives featured 5th Avenue pedestrian improvements between 100th and 113th Streets. Universal comments in support of this design feature include:

- The need for a wide pedestrian presence on 5th Avenue.
- 5th Ave. should be a user-friendly interface between the north and south parts of Northgate.
- Private and/or public development along 5th Avenue could improve it as a street for pedestrians.

Comments made expressing concern about 5th Avenue included:

- There needs to be a definite pedestrian connection across 5th Avenue at the Bon Marche entrance.
- Traffic on 5th Avenue makes it difficult to access current or future uses.
- Development of 5th Avenue as a pedestrian-friendly street is inadequate without strong connections to other uses in the area, including the Transit Center.
- Pedestrian improvements to 5th Avenue are insufficient without pedestrian-friendly development including housing, public investments, and/or retail uses. Design options shown without a public or private investment on 5th Avenue were criticized.

Other general workshop comments related to 5th Avenue included:

- Concern about the congestion of traffic in the area and current traffic violations
- 5th Avenue should be widened with parking lanes along either side.
- Development incentives, such as height variations, can help to fund the amenities desired for Northgate.
- Design options should incorporate pedestrian improvements, wide sidewalks, proper drainage, traffic flows, and traffic calming.

