December 2009

North Rainier

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN UPDATE

Goals, Policies and Strategies to Achieve the North Rainier Neighborhood Vision

Executive Summary

In the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Update process initiated in 2009, a diverse community of stakeholders articulated priorities for the future of their neighborhood, identifying goals and shaping the policies and strategies to achieve them. They benefited from the compelling vision of the existing Neighborhood Plan, first completed in 1999, which established a vision for an interweaving of people of various backgrounds who live and work in a culturally and economically diverse area which maintains its ethnic roots. Central to this is the goal of creating a compact, mixed-use neighborhood or "Town Center" near the light rail station. Major steps have been taken in North Rainier in the past decade, including the opening of a new light rail station and improvements to Cheasty Boulevard and other parks. However, as the community made clear in the update process, significant work remains to be done, and there are newly emerging priorities and new strategies to pursue.

The workshops, meetings, and ongoing discussions that have shaped the update underscore the widely shared goal of increasing the community's choices for how to live, work, and enjoy life in their neighborhood. There are several new recommendations intended to help maintain the community's diversity and ethnic roots. These include strategies to preserve opportunities for small and ethnic business, create a multicultural community center, and encourage park facilities and programming that are culturally relevant to different communities.

Participants continue to recognize the potential of light rail service to create a neighborhood Town Center that is a cornerstone of a more sustainable community. They have envisioned how more households would increase opportunities for the diversity of businesses and services that they value. At the same time, they have emphasized that they need a Town Center that works for them, where growth and change include housing for diverse incomes and household sizes, connecting to their homes and businesses with safe, green, and walkable streets and sidewalks.

The update recognizes the potential for the large sites to the north of S. McClellan St. to bring significant new residential and commercial development that could transform the Town Center into a vibrant community and destination. Consequently the update includes strategies to further study a range of height increases in the Town Center. This reflects the potential for compact development, including a small number of towers. Completion of an urban design plan, design guidelines and street designs will give clear guidance to development. In addition, as part of the vision for the Town Center, the Update proposes to create a "Main Street" for the Town Center along the blocks of Rainier Ave S between S Bayview St and MLK Jr. Way S rather than pursuing a roundabout as promoted in the 1999 plan.

The update's format and structure are designed to allow a civic partnership of the community, city, and public and private organizations to work together to make this vision a reality.

Introduction

In the 1990s, community members from 38 neighborhoods across the city created a 20-year vision for how each of their neighborhoods would grow. This work was done as part of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan initiative, a citywide effort which sought to "preserve the best quality of Seattle's distinct neighborhoods while responding positively and creatively to the pressures of change and growth." The Neighborhood Plans developed strategies to insure that the creative response to growth was informed by both City expertise and local knowledge and priority-setting.

In the decade since the plans were completed, there have been significant changes in Seattle and its neighborhoods, growth in housing, and major public investments in public amenities. Also, during this time the population of the city also greatly diversified. Following extensive discussion and review of the existing Neighborhood Plans and their effectiveness, in 2008, the Mayor and City Council recognized the need to revisit the plans through broad and inclusive discussions with the community, including new strategies for civic engagement. The update process was begun in 2009 to: confirm the neighborhood Vision, refine the plan Goals and Policies in order to take into account changed conditions, and to update work plans to help ensure that each community's visions and goals are achieved through the implementation of the strategies and actions.

The North Rainier Neighborhood Plan was chosen by the Mayor and City Council as one of three plans to be updated in 2009. The arrival of light rail service brings increased development interest and new residents to the neighborhood. These changes present great opportunities to realize North Rainier's goal to create a vibrant, transit-oriented Town Center, one in which residents, businesses and visitors enjoy the lively, diverse, and distinctive character of the neighborhood. This plan update articulates community goals so that the City, developers and neighborhood residents can all work together to bring about the neighborhood vision.

Over the past year, dedicated community members worked with City staff to assess and address those conditions that have changed since the 1999 North Rainier Neighborhood Plan. New neighbors and new voices joined those who participated ten years ago. Together, community members discussed what they value in the neighborhood, and outlined their shared goals and ideas about how to achieve those goals.

These new goals and policies will be incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan (see appendix). The plan update also creates a shared work plan for the community and City (see appendix). The strategies and actions will be incorporated in a living document that defines shared priorities and responsibilities for next steps.

How the Update is Organized

This document incorporates various components that together comprise the update. The following is a description of the different components:

Community Engagement – describes the process through which community members provided guidance and invaluable information, including the various methods used to reach out to and engage as many neighbors as possible.

Sustainability – provides a discussion of environmental and socio-economic sustainability and its inherent relevance to neighborhood planning.

Vision, Goals, Policies and Strategies – are the key components of this update. The Vision is from the 1999 Neighborhood Plan and holds true today. The Goals, Policies and Strategies build upon one another to help fulfill the North Beacon Hill Vision. They are a distillation of what we heard from the community and will guide the City's work as well as inform future development that occurs in the neighborhood. The Goals are organized into two broad categories: Creating Choices for Living, Working and Playing; and Shaping a Transit Oriented Town Center. With each Goal are its associated Policies and Strategies. With each goal, associated policies and strategies is a discussion that incorporates community input and feedback and that shaped the recommended strategies.

Appendices – include several important resource documents including a shared work plan for the City and neighborhood to guide implementation and the original Neighborhood Plan.

Community Engagement

Over the course of the past year, a broad cross section of community members engaged with the City through both innovative and time tested tools. From hands-on workshops and smaller scale interactive meetings with community-based organizations, to online updates and questionnaires, neighbors used a variety of ways to be involved. Reaching a broad range of those who live and work in North Rainier, including those who have been historically underrepresented in the planning process, was a primary objective of the Update process. During 2009, community members expressed their views at 48 neighborhood and City-sponsored meetings and events in North Rainier. Long-time veterans of neighborhood planning, stewards of the important work begun in the 1990s, and a new generation of neighborhood planners came together to build a broader base of civic engagement. Bicultural and/or bilingual Planning Outreach Liaisons (POLs) connected with 13 under-represented communities. The outreach liaisons hosted 38 community workshops where historically underrepresented North Rainier community members participated—strengthening the bridge between the City of Seattle, residents, community organizations, and businesses.

This intensive effort was necessary in order to build relationships with those who were new to the planning discussion, and to provide sufficient background information to help them participate effectively. POLs went beyond translation and interpretation to create culturally-appropriate opportunities for dialogue about planning and create deeper understanding of the issues and richer input. For example, sight and mobility impaired workers at the Light House for the Blind came together to discuss specific issues and recommendations for making open spaces and streets better place for people with disabilities.
In March, neighbors engaged in the first phase of the update process through the North Rainier Baseline and Issues Identification workshop at Franklin High School. They discussed neighborhood-initiated planning efforts since the existing Neighborhood Plan as well as how to build on that work given changing conditions. Neighbors described how they live, work and play in their neighborhood, what makes it unique, what they value in the community and how they see it changing in the next several years. Neighbors also described how they move around and through the community, the kinds of places they go and how they value those places, especially parks and open space. Embedded in these discussions were their identified needs for a healthy and vital neighborhood. Planning Outreach Liaisons extended this conversation into their respective communities throughout March and April. North Rainier's important issues and priorities emerged from these conversations.

In May small groups of neighbors and City staff worked together at a Town Hall meeting at the Northwest African American Museum to address themes that emerged from the March and April workshops. Neighbors worked through hands-on exercises to identify gaps and opportunities for improving mobility around and through the neighborhood as well as to explore the relationships between the number of households in the neighborhood, retail destinations, parks and walkability. The Planning Outreach Liaisons replicated the exercises; working with their respective communities. The community's goals and desired improvements within the neighborhood grew from this second phase of meetings.

In September, community members attended two open houses to review draft goals and recommendations that grew from the themes, issues, goals and desired improvements voiced by the community throughout the preceding months. Outreach continued through the final months of the year, including the work of POLs, who reached out to their communities to both review draft plan recommendations and to lay the groundwork for their ongoing engagement in the update's implementation phase.

Throughout the plan update process, the workshops and meetings have been structured to engage community discussion and guidance, followed by reporting back, all of which has informed the next steps of drafting and finalizing recommendations. This broad engagement and detailed recording of community comments throughout the process created ongoing transparency that serves as the underpinning of this update to the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan.

Sustainability

A sustainable community is one that values and plans for its long term social, economic, and environmental health. Seattle's Comprehensive Plan states this as four values that are the bedrock of the City's commitment to sustainability: community, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity and security, and social equity.

North Rainier is a Hub Urban Village with remarkable existing and potential strengths as a sustainable community. A core principle of Seattle's approach to sustainability is that it must be addressed at the neighborhood level, and that it is critical to directly engage the people who live, work, and visit our communities to shape a sustainable future. Through the Update process, the neighbors' commitment was clear to making it remain and improve as a place that is walkable, livable, and meets the promise of its new light rail service—offering more choices to the people who live and work there. That choice can have an impact on one of the most significant environmental standards—reducing greenhouse gas emissions—by reducing vehicle miles traveled. If you don't have to get in your car to get groceries, go to work, or enjoy an afternoon in a park or neighborhood downtown, you can make the more sustainable choice, a local decision that can affect the global challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Yet as community dialogue made clear throughout the Update process, the arrival of light rail on its own does not guarantee sustainability. For people to make more sustainable decisions, they need to see that there are more and better choices, and to recognize the direct impact of sustainability on their lives. For example, Great City worked with the community to complete at Green Infrastructure Audit. This work has complemented and informed the update process, and underscores how a community-informed process—identifying how sustainability directly affects their lives—is key to establishing a new standard. The citywide, regional, and global decision-making remains crucial—Seattle has led the world as a city in signing on to the Kyoto Protocol in 2005 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and this work continues. But global standards only work if there are local commitments.

As neighborhood updates move forward, the City will continue to work with communities to develop further measures of sustainability, from walkability, to the availability of fresh, healthful food, to green infrastructure of trees and open space. At the same time, the Update process has made clear that sustainability does not need to be set out as separate and apart from the overall recommendations, because communities already see it as integral to their overall vision for the future.

Community members discussing the future of the North Rainier urban village

North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Vision February, 1999, Excerpt

Entering the North Rainier Valley we are impressed by the neat, well-maintained, well-landscaped main thoroughfares that accommodate all major modes of transportation. We are an interweaving of people of various backgrounds who live and work in a culturally and economically diverse area which maintains its ethnic roots. Business, light industrial, and high-tech job opportunities provide welcome employment for the entire Puget Sound region.

The residential environment comprises multi-family, single-family, and mixed-use housing in clean, safe neighborhoods affordable to a broad range of people. Housing densities increase near the core of the urban village and around transportation hubs. Multi-family housing is not concentrated in one area, allowing increased density while not overwhelming the community.

Residential areas are peaceful, quiet and safe. They are inviting to pedestrians, children, families the elderly, and people with special needs. Anyone is able to walk or roll along the streets at all hours of the day or night. Consistent maintenance keeps areas clean, neat, and safe. Pocket parks and p-patches are interspersed throughout the neighborhoods. Iron bars covering doors and windows are seen no more, having been replaced by vibrant architecture and colors, open doors, and a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere that has drawn residents back to the community. Neighbors know and care about each other; children are welcome and have plenty of safe places to play.

North Rainier Valley is a destination for recreational activities. Continuous bicycle paths and routes meander from Lake Washington through the residential areas, through parks, the City, and outlying areas. The green spaces are linked together. Playfields and courts allow for all ages and skill levels to gather and compete. Venues are set up for regional sports.

The valley is a draw for film, theater, music, dance, and visual arts. Public Squares, religious institutions, schools, and community centers are also gathering places for activities for neighborhood residents. The community enjoys and celebrates diversity. Committee to helping immigrants become an integral part of this neighborhood, programs are set up to accommodate new immigrant populations and aid them with English classes, cultural interaction, and advocacy for their needs. Such programs are increasingly shared in and with other parts of the City.

Our ongoing commitment to the education of our youth is the cornerstone of the North Rainier Neighborhood. Schools are consistently and fully used for adult education, after-school activities, and a wide variety of educational and tutorial opportunities. Citizens are actively involved in outreach and volunteer programs. High-quality school programs have become a draw for business and employment.

The businesses are strong, stimulating and economically stable. Various new commercial and industrial activities have recently entered the scene and retain the diversity and ethnic heritage that make our Rainier Valley unique. A full range of services is available without having to leave the community. Zoning coordinates industrial, commercial, and residential uses to their mutual advantage. Businesses actively participate in community activities. Retail property is well kept and accessible to all.

Public transportation has become easier to use than the automobile-oriented systems of the 20th century. Major routes are safe for bikes, pedestrians, autos and transit users and are completely accessible for the visually and physically impaired. The streets themselves are tree-lined and smooth. Transit systems link the east, west, north and south areas of Seattle, and the entire Puget Sound region in a way that is non-intrusive to the fabric of the neighborhood. The commute is easy for folks from other areas to visit, work, and shop in the North Rainier Valley.

Mount Rainier remains a landmark vista in the heart of Rainier Valley. The pulse of our area is vibrant. The future is grand.

This section of the Update describes goals to preserve, enhance and improve the day-to-day life of community members. It also outlines strategies and to help achieve these goals.

Note: Numbers in parentheses, such as (NR-P6), after Goals and Policies refer to the 1999 Neighborhood Plan Goals and Policies as they were incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan. Refer to the appendix to see how the Comp Plan Amendment updates the Neighborhood Plan with new and revised goals and policies that emerged from the 2009 Update process.

Goal 1

Foster a vibrant, business district that serves North Rainier residents and is a destination shopping area with stores that serve the greater Valley.

Discussion

Community members want a shopping district; a place they can go for their daily to monthly needs. A number stated that they would like a place to buy clothes and shoes without going to Southcenter. Others spoke of the desire to have a place where they would spend an afternoon meeting friends, eating and shopping.

Policies

1.A. Encourage the inclusion of affordable commercial space in new development.

1.B. Encourage retail and services that are destination for customers from the Valley and beyond, as well as those that support the daily needs of residents.

Strategies

1. Strengthen the Rainier Valley Chamber of Commerce and encourage increased membership from local businesses so that business owners can work together and with the community to create a vibrant neighborhood business district. The Chamber can also provide a venue for peer support and mentoring as well as a venue for its members to raise its concerns to the City and to pursue grants and technical assistance.

2. Look for opportunities in projects receiving City funding to create affordable commercial spaces.

3. Support and expand the existing diverse mix of generally small-scale businesses by:

- using design guidelines that provide guidance for creating business spaces that are culturally-appropriate (such as storefronts that open onto sidewalks)
- providing technical assistance and access to financing to small businesses in the retail corridor
- encouraging membership in local business associations
- encouraging peer support and mentoring

4. Supporting partnerships to strengthen the business district, such as:

- SCORE/Small Business Development Center
- Community Capital Development
- University of Washington Entrepreneurial Law Clinic
- Rainier Valley Community Development Fund
- HomeSight

5. Retain a grocery store and pharmacy in the Town Center.

6. Improve the existing Town Center and make it more inviting using the City's Neighborhood Business District Fund and Neighborhood Street Funds. Work with the community to identify projects and initiatives in which the community's effort would be matched by funds from the Neighborhood Matching Fund. Improvements may include:

- streetscape amenities, such as benches and banners
- activating public spaces with street vendors
- business district marketing map and brochure
- encourage community-driven activities that support gatherings which draw customers such as street fairs, farmers markets, etc.

Creating Choices for Living, Working and Play

Goal 2

Ethnic and cultural diversity is a continued presence in the businesses and community.

Discussion

The cultural diversity of the commercial district is valued and supported by the community. The broader community would like these often small, independently owned, culturally focused businesses to remain as the North Rainier Urban Village grows and transforms. Owners of small, ethnic businesses spoke of the need to both expand their market and to support continued affordability.

Policies

2.A. Promote the location of cultural community centers and services in the transit-accessible areas of the neighborhood.

2.B. Provide technical and financial support to small businesses that meet the needs of the ethnic and cultural communities in the neighborhood.

2.C. Encourage community-based efforts for cross-cultural integration among the business owners as well as among the broader community.

2.D. Encourage the construction of physical improvements and activity programming that are culturally relevant to people with disabilities throughout the Town Center.

Strategies

1. Explore new and existing models of financing mixed-use development projects that provide affordable commercial space as well as affordable housing in City-funded mixed-use projects.

2. Promote the location of cultural community centers and services in the neighborhood.

3. Promote peer support, mentoring, technical assistance, and other means of improving business capacity for businesses interested in broadening their market.

4. Promote opportunities for cross-cultural integration among the business owners as well as among the broader community. Seek opportunities to create a vibrant, stable multicultural shopping area.

5. Explore feasibility of using the Station Area Overlay or incentive zoning to create affordable commercial space.

6. Implement programming and improvements that are culturally relevant to people with disabilities throughout the Town Center, such as innovative aesthetic enhancements to the public realm, and parks that incorporate audible, visual and tactile configurations.

7. Support community-driven gathering activities that increase awareness and education of the community's multicultural population and create a multicultural identity and destination point for Seattle.

Goal 3

Development within the Town Center prioritizes housing that serves households across of a range of income.

Discussion

Many community members noted that there is little housing in the Town Center of the North Rainier Urban Village and suggested improving pedestrian and transit connections into the center, as well as increasing the vitality and personal safety of the Center by increasing the number of housing units there. More market rate housing is needed, as well as affordable housing. Concerns were expressed that increased development will increase rents and force residents to move away. Affordable housing, including family housing and affordable senior housing is important.

Policies

3.A. Encourage a mix of home prices and sizes through active use of incentives and funding.

Strategies

1. Encourage and/or require mix of home prices and sizes through active use of incentives, direct City funding, and surplus property programs.

2. Leverage public funds to support affordable housing near to the light rail station.

3. Encourage affordable family-sized homes through incentives, direct City funding, and surplus property programs.

4. Use City funding to leverage other funding to preserve existing and create new subsidized housing.

5. Apply Comprehensive Plan affordable housing targets to the North Rainier Urban Village and periodically evaluate progress.

6. Set affordable housing objectives and use incentives, direct City funding, and surplus property programs to fill gaps.

Goal 4

Promote the North Rainier Hub Urban Village as a "Green Hub" providing green jobs and training, and green development.

Discussion

North Rainier is a Hub Urban Village with the capacity for an increase in jobs. Community members felt that the presence of the University of Washington as a land owner and the tradition of North Rainier Urban Village as a commercial and light manufacturing area suggests an opportunity to build a green technology incubator.

Policies

4.A. Support training programs and jobs in North Rainier that capitalize on the green technology market in order to support the role of North Rainier as the hub urban village within the Rainier Valley.

4.B. Identify and promote opportunities for green infrastructure and development.

Strategies

1. Consider creating a green technology-focused extension program by working with organizations such as the University of Washington.

2. Build on the "green ring" provided by Cheasty Greenspace and Mt. Baker Boulevard by stressing the use of complementary green building technologies in development regulations and incentives.

3. Continue to pursue zoning and design review changes that support the inclusion of green building components.

4. Look for opportunities for a Living Building Pilot Program project in North Rainier.

5. Complete a green infrastructure analysis exploring potential opportunities such as UW Laundry, Rainier Ave S redesign and stormwater facility work.

6. Consider building a "green" demonstration and education site for the community in relation to the green jobs and technology program that could provide visible, passive education about wind and solar technologies and other green building technologies to encourage engagement in green jobs or local use of alternative energy. This could also be a destination site that supports small businesses.

Creating Choices for Living, Working and Play

Goal 5

A community that supports and provides opportunities for neighborhood youth.

Discussion

The North Rainier Urban Village is home to Franklin High School – a center for both youth education and youth activities. The community would like to see more programs to positively engage its young people.

Policies

5.A. In fulfilling its role as the hub urban village for the Rainier Valley, North Rainier should include training programs and jobs for youth that prepare them for family-wage jobs in the area and region.

5.B. Support positive and safe activities for youth.

Strategies

1. Continue to fund programs that engage youth in positive and safe ways such as:

- Youth in Focus , photography classes,
- Seattle Chamber Players composition workshop at Franklin High School,
- Northwest African American Museum public sculpture classes.

2. Develop more coordinated information resources for youth to learn about and engage in various activities at a range of community service centers, learn about jobs and job training, as well as engage in supported physical activity in local green and open spaces.

3. Work more closely with local schools to create seamless access for youth to community amenities and services.

Goal 7

North Rainier is known as a safe and hospitable neighborhood through its residents' increased awareness of community-based crime prevention programs. (NR-G10)

Discussion

Throughout Southeast Seattle the community's concerns about public safety negatively affects their use of transit and parks, and walking or bicycling to local shopping areas.

Policies

7.A. Promote uses around transit facilities such as businesses open into the evening hours, and housing that provides "eyes on the street."

7.B. Seek opportunities for the community and the Seattle Police Department to strengthen partnerships.

Strategies

1. Create neighborhood design guidelines that emphasize pedestrian-friendly elements in new developments and ensure "eyes on the street."

2. Provide sufficient police presence around transit facilities until the time that the level of development provides sufficient activity to reduce the need for police presence.

3. Define and protect emergency access routes to and through the Town Center for reliable access by police and fire vehicles.

4. Increase the mix of uses and residential density in the Town Center to increase the numbers of people using the public spaces including the sidewalks.

5. Build positive working relationships among community members and Seattle Police Department.

6. Complete a Health Impact Assessment to increase the success of implementation at reducing disparities in health.

7. Install pedestrian-scale lighting throughout the Town Center, using design and color to distinguish the area as a vital pedestrian environment.

8. Support community-based projects that include activities that positively impact public safety issues including the development of community groups that share information and education about public safety as well as groups that implement programs or physical improvement projects, such as litter clean up, festivals, gatherings paces, public art, lighting improvements, banners for business districts, etc.

Goal 6

A "ring of green" surrounding the urban village with strong connections to the greenbelts, boulevards and parks, augmented with a hierarchy of open spaces.

Discussion

The community values the existing parks and open spaces. Many expressed parks and open spaces are key to why they enjoy living in the area. There will be a need for a variety of parks or open spaces in the Town Center as it gains residents, which will support the area as a shopping destination. The form and programming of open spaces should also meet the differing needs of the diverse community.

Policies

6.A. Seek to preserve environmentally sensitive hillsides, particularly those in the Cheasty Greenbelt, and seek to protect them from further residential development. (NR-P6)

6.B. Support partnerships with Parks, SDOT, DON, utilities, nonprofit organizations and the community to enhance street-end stairs, and create safe trails where appropriate through the surrounding greenbelts.

6.C. Seek to enhance community pride through establishment of a multicultural community center, multicultural community festivals, youth mentoring, and other youth programs. (NR-P10)

6.D. Design parks and open spaces and programming to accommodate users of diverse ages, interests and cultures.

6.E. Work with available resources, including levy funds, general funds and partnerships with developers, to create a hierarchy of publicly accessible open spaces that address the gaps identified in the parks Gap Analysis; this could encompass publicly accessible private spaces.

6.F. Support local agriculture and access to locally grown food through public mechanisms such as P-Patches and the Cultivating Communities program, as well as nonprofit and private mechanisms including farmers markets and on-site landscaping.

Strategies

1. Improve and augment the Cheasty and Mt Baker Boulevard network by:

- improving street-end stairways
- constructing new trails from Beacon Hill to the Town Center that offer easier grades than those on streets such as S McClellan St
- enhancing the streetscape on S McClellan St
- incorporating destination / active spaces along the network

2. Consider working with nonprofit organizations or a private developer to establish a multicultural community facility.

3. Implement park programming and improvements that are culturally relevant to the neighborhood, such as increasing opportunities for soccer, and separate swimming times for women.

4. Pursue the potential for acquiring new parks space within the urban village through the Parks and Green Spaces Levy funds for Neighborhood Park Acquisition.

5. Pursue the potential for acquiring new P-Patch community gardening space and urban agriculture space as part of and in addition to the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy.

6. Implement the Parks and Green Spaces Levy project to renovate and improve Atlantic Street Playground.

7. Implement the Parks and Green Spaces Levy project to renovate and improve Rainier Park Playground.

8. Use opportunities, such as the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy project at Children's Play Garden and other Parks Department programs to increase accessibility and create open spaces that are relevant to people with disabilities.

9. Continue to implement the Pro Parks Levy designs for Jimi Hendrix Park, including elements that improve connections to the Northwest African American Museum and the surrounding neighborhood.

10. As funding becomes available, create additional structured and unstructured play areas for children.

11. Increase the vibrancy and safety of the public realm with wider sidewalks, landscaping and pedestrian lighting.

12. Promote the development of more P-Patches and other methods to increase access to locally based food sources and to build community.

Rainier Avenue S at S Bayview Street looking south.

Existing Zoning - Likely Build Out

Concept A-Likely Build Out

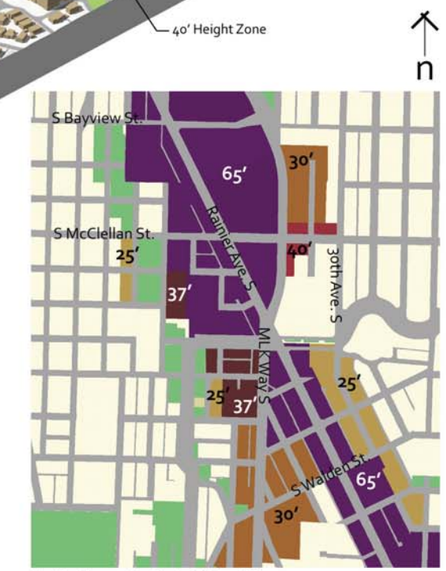
Concept B-Likely Build Out
Recommended for Further Study

Existing Zoning
Likely Build Out

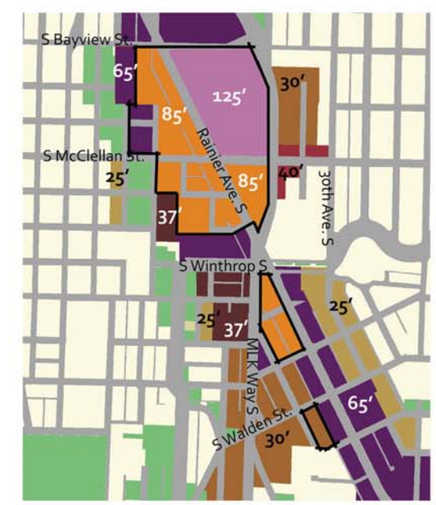
Concept A
Selective
Increase to 85'
Likely Build Out

Concept B
Selective increase
to 85' and 125'

Recommended for further study



Existing Height Limits



Recommended Height Limits

These building height concepts were created from community discussions in spring of 2009 and refined with community review from meetings that summer and fall. Using tools such as urban design framework plans, neighborhood design guidelines, zoning, and street design plans, the community will further define the desired form and characteristics of this Town Center to achieve the goals and vision of their neighborhood plan. See appendix for additional land use recommendations.

Shaping a Transit Oriented Town Center

This section focuses on the community members' ideas for the physical elements – streets and urban form – that support their goal to create a strong Town Center that is attractive to residents as well as visitors. Residents and business owners alike recognize the potential of light rail to serve as a catalyst to help shape a more pedestrian-oriented Town Center.

To be a vital place that offers all the desired amenities, there must sufficient density of housing businesses and jobs, good design, diversity of activities and people, and desirable destinations. These elements are also central to realizing a sustainable urban community where walking and transit are the preferred ways to get around.

Goal 1

A Town Center that concentrates housing, commercial, services and employment; that is well served by transit and non-motorized travel options; and that is well designed and attractive to pedestrians.

A vibrant, business district that serves North Rainier residents and is a destination shopping area with stores that serve the greater Valley.

Discussion

Creating a Town Center for North Rainier was a central component of the neighborhood plan and station area plan. Community members continue to support this, and offer a more definitive vision about the character of the area, the mix of uses and the connections to the surrounding single family areas. While most of the recommended public improvements have been completed, the envisioned new development and critical elements of streetscape improvements have not. Property owners now see opportunities to create redevelopments that would be defining elements of the Town Center.

Policies

1.A. Foster development of a shopping district comprised of businesses that provide products and services that meet the needs of community members from different cultural backgrounds.

1.B. Assess utility capacity within the Town Center for its ability to support the desired future density.

1.C. Strengthen local business associations that include and/or support the presence and growth of businesses owned by immigrant and minority community members.

1.D. Support and expand the existing diverse mix of generally small-scale businesses.

1.E. Include in the urban village and rezone a portion of single family area located between 24th and 25th Ave S and north of S McClellan St, to a multi-family zone within the Station Area Overlay that would allow more compact residential development. See pages 12 and 13.

1.F. Within mixed use zones in the Station Area Overlay District, define and consider minimum residential densities in order to create the critical mass of people and activity for a Town Center.

Strategies

1. Use mechanisms such as urban design framework plans, neighborhood design guidelines, and street design plans to describe the desired form of future development.

2. Create neighborhood design guidelines and an urban design framework plan for North Rainier Town Center area. Plan elements could include:

- building height options
- incentive features
- breaking down scale of super blocks to create a balance of inwardly and outwardly focused development
- use of green building strategies such as those that address drainage, building efficiency; tree canopy; and opportunities for district energy systems
- open space that invites people to gather and to engage in physical activity
- pedestrian connections and sidewalk widths
- guidelines to help ensure that new housing doesn't create a "wall" of undesirable facades that is counter to the feel of the neighborhood

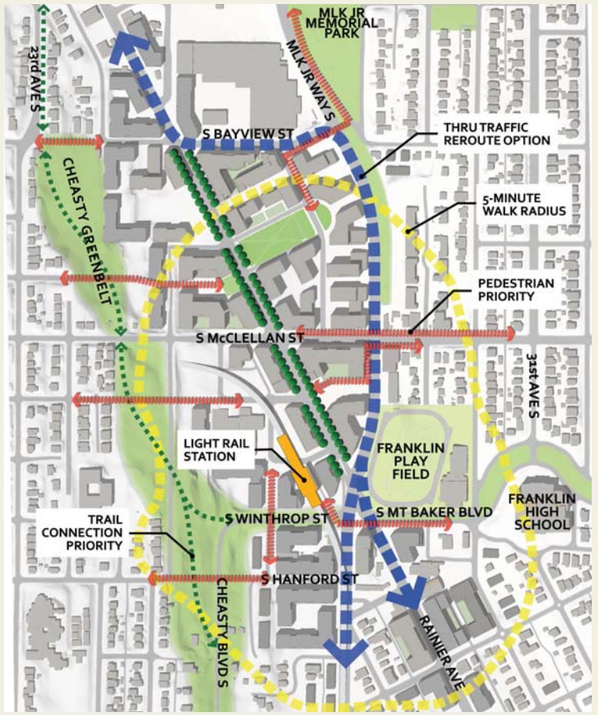
3. Through processes that engage community stakeholders consider and evaluate the application of zoning designations and related development regulations that are most likely to achieve the neighborhood's urban design vision. Include evaluation of new regulatory and programmatic tools as they become available. Rezone key opportunity sites to encourage redevelopment of parcels around the light rail station in a manner that incorporates housing, commercial services (such as a grocery store and small businesses) and amenities. See pages 12 and 13.

4. Evaluate proposed height and land use changes within the Town Center. See pages 12 and 13.

5. Address zoning on west side of Rainier Ave S. immediately south of S Walden. There are eight single family parcels zoned NC3-65 and L-3. Rezone these parcels to be more consistent with adjacent properties.

6. Expand the Town Center area to focus new mixed use development south of S Bayview Street and north of S Byron Street.

7. Consider including within the urban village a portion of single-family area located between 24th and 25th Ave S and north of S McClellan St, and rezoning more consistent with adjacent zoning, to allow more compact residential development.



Places and Connections

8. Within mixed-use zones in the Station Area Overlay District, consider minimum residential densities (related to the zoning designations).

9. Maintain and expand collaboration with Sound Transit, King Country Metro, property owners, and community members to pursue redevelopment opportunities in the station area, such as surplus Sound Transit parcels and the Metro bus layover, to create dense, mixed-use projects that establish a vital pedestrian environment, provide affordable housing, and support the development of small businesses.

10. Continue to pursue redevelopment of the triangle block containing the bus transfer facility. Possible solutions could include undertaking a joint development project incorporating the bus transfer facility, or finding a new location for the bus transfer facility on the west side of Rainier Ave S and redeveloping the block.

11. Pursue opportunities to create a multicultural shopping area/center/market.

12. Work with Seattle City Light, Seattle Public Utilities and the Department of Information Technology when considering changes to zoning to evaluate if there are area-specific capacity problems resulting from the potential increase in development capacity.

13. Encourage the use of City grant programs to improve the Town Center and make it more inviting.

Goal 2

A neighborhood served by a network of safe streets with amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists. (NR-G3)

Discussion

It was clearly acknowledged that this is currently an auto-oriented neighborhood. Both Rainier Ave S and MLK Jr. Way S are dominated by vehicular traffic and are difficult to navigate as a pedestrian or bicyclist. Many people are afraid for their personal safety while waiting on the street for a bus. Nearby residents who could actually walk to the stores said they choose not to because it is unsafe and difficult to walk from store to store. In the future, this area is envisioned as a destination shopping area where it is possible to run multiple errands in one trip during the day or evening. Currently, the area does not feel secure because there are no "eyes on the street" from local businesses and residences.

Policies

2.A. Create seamless pedestrian and bicycle links within the Town Center, and to the surrounding community facilities.

2.B. Prioritize development of universally accessible routes between the town center and locations such as Lighthouse for the Blind and Center Park.

2.C. Ensure standards for new development projects accommodate a vibrant pedestrian environment throughout the Town Center.

2.D. Enhance access throughout the Town Center for people of all ages and abilities.

Strategies

1. Create a pedestrian network of pathways throughout the Town Center, connecting retail, services and light rail station. Specific actions could include the following:

- Implementation of the Southeast Transportation Study (SETS) project #10 and #11 to calm traffic and improve the streetscape along S McClellan St from 23rd Ave S to Mt. Baker Blvd. Projects #10 and #11 include relocating utility poles and signal controller cabinets where necessary to ensure a clear walking path, adding a missing sidewalk link, widening sidewalks, installing planting strips, installing curb extensions, and adding pedestrian lighting. Additional work may include working with Metro to relocate trolley wire poles out of the pedestrian pathway.
- Work with property owners and developers to break up the large block and/or parcels into smaller pieces, providing walking routes through the sites and connections to the surrounding street grid, as well as consolidating the number of driveways as redevelopment occurs to provide an improved pedestrian environment.
- Complete the sidewalk network to make better connections between destinations.
- When enhancing access throughout the Town Center for people of all ages and abilities, pay particular attention to connections to transit and shopping areas from the Lighthouse for the Blind and the Center Park.
- Identify sites that would benefit from unique art or pavement treatments to support a vibrant walking environment.

2. Identify desired off-street circulation patterns and work with developers of large parcels to create internal circulation that promotes walking within developments and between the sites.

3. Modify the Land Use Code to define minimum widths for sidewalks and landscaped planting strips on all streets in station areas with pedestrian designations. Define areas that are appropriate for, and associated sidewalk dimensions that are supportive of sidewalk cafes and/or stores that open to the sidewalk.

4. Improve street ends to create more connections between neighborhoods.

5. Create a more secure environment for people and business using the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to enliven temporarily vacant sites. Ideas could include temporary markets.

6. Create active, family-oriented spaces within the Town Center to invite positive use that enhances public safety.

Shaping a Transit Oriented Town Center

Goal 3

Development of Rainier Avenue South as a highly functioning, multi-modal "complete street" that serves as the spine of Rainier Valley and retains its existing vistas of Mount Rainier. (NR-G4A)

Development of Martin Luther King Jr. Way as a landscaped "complete street", and part of the neighborhood' s network of streets with amenities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. (NR-G4B)

A transformed Rainier Avenue S between S Bayview Street and MLK Jr. Way S that functions as a pedestrian-oriented main street.

Discussion

Almost everyone agreed that Rainier Ave S and the abutting development in its current form are not conducive to creating a vibrant Town Center. By reducing traffic on Rainier Ave S, the streetscape would be made more appealing for pedestrians and still be able to adequately accommodate transit. A "traffic-calmed" Rainier Ave S would most likely promote further streetscape improvements.

Community members recognize the area's transportation challenges, with better bus, walking and biking environments a high priority. While the community acknowledges the constraints of available rights-of-way, the area needs sidewalks wide enough for safe walking, with outdoor cafes and adequate bus shelters; on-street parking in the commercial areas to act as a buffer between traffic and pedestrians; and bike lanes.

Policies

3.A. Promote alternative transportation programs, such as bicycle commuting, local hiring, van pools, and transit ridership. (NR-P13)

3.B. Support actions that improve the pedestrian and transit functions along Rainier Avenue S between S Bayview Street and MLK Jr. Way S so that the section becomes more of a local main street for the North Rainier neighborhood.

Strategies

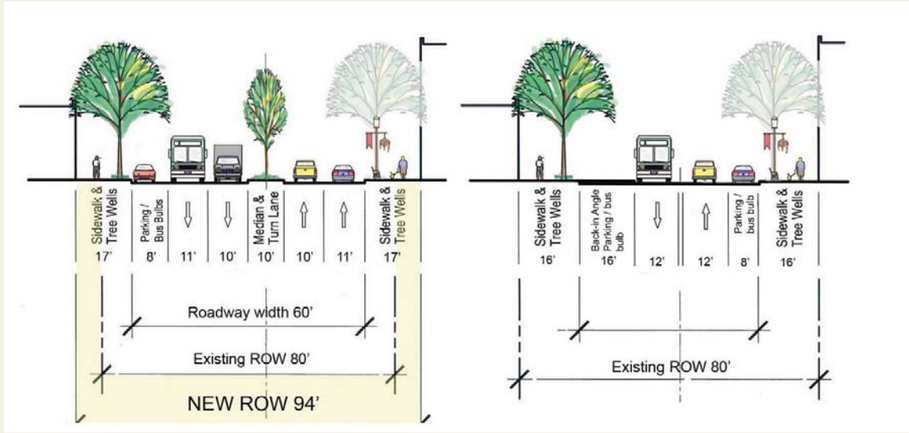
1. Implement the recommendations from the Southeast Transportation Study (SETS), which serves as the blueprint for programming transportation improvements in SE Seattle.

2. Use the Pedestrian Master Plan as a tool for prioritizing pedestrian improvements and Neighborhood Street Fund projects.

3. Use the Bicycle Master Plan as a tool for prioritizing bicycle improvements.

4. Continue to pursue a bicycle route along Rainier Ave. S or parallel street that takes advantage of the flat grade in the valley floor.

5. Look for opportunities to develop transportation corridors that might encompass several roads. For example, consider if Chief Sealth trail can function as the major north/south bike route, enhancing the connections from it to commercial areas.



Rainier Ave S Expanded ROW Option

Rainier Ave S Reroute Option

Goal 3 (continued)

6. Consider adding destination spaces along Chief Sealth Trail, such as play areas, community gardens and pocket parks, to encourage use.

7. Use health impacts assessments to help ensure that transportation projects consider accessibility, livability and health quality.

8. Evaluate an "MLK Jr. Way S re-route" that would route thru-traffic from Rainier Ave S to MLK Jr. Way S from the Rainier Ave S/MLK Jr. Way S intersection. See conceptual street cross-section options on page 17.

- This strategy calls for the rerouting of thru-traffic from Rainier Ave S to MLK Jr. Way S. at the Rainier Ave S and MLK Jr. Way S intersection and back to Rainier Ave S by way of S Bayview St. (*Note: The re-route strategy would require more detailed modeling and operational analysis to understand the traffic volumes that would be diverted, effects upon congestion especially at intersections, geometric requirements, and the need to acquire additional rights-of-way (ROW). Both existing and future conditions would need to be studied before any decision were made about this alternative. Currently, there is no funding for such an analysis, and engineering, design, or construction.*)

9. Develop street design cross-sections for Rainier Ave. S that support a more pedestrian-oriented shopping area.

- SDOT will complete a conceptual design for Rainier Ave S from the Rainier Ave S and MLK Jr. Way intersection to S Bayview St which shows a possible new cross-section that includes landscaped median where possible, and other features such as a parking lane. This design would require additional ROW from private landowners. (*Note: Before any design alterations could be accomplished, SDOT would have to conduct an operational analysis of any proposed changes. This analysis would include impacts upon levels of congestion, especially at intersections, and transit speed and reliability. Both existing and future conditions may need to be studied. Currently, there is no funding for such an analysis, and for engineering, design, or construction.*)

Appendices

The appendices are posted online at: www.seattle.gov/dpd/NeighborhoodPlanUpdates

Work Plan
The attached work plan adds Actions to the Goals, Policies and Strategies and formats them into a document that can be used to guide the Community's and City's work to achieve the community's goals.

Glossary

Updating the Comprehensive Plan
This documents shows how the revised North Beacon Hill Neighborhood Plan Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan updates and weaves together the Goals and Policies from the 1999 Neighborhood Plan and those that emerged from this 2009 Update process.

Recommended Changes to the City's Comprehensive Plan

Neighborhood Plan
completed in 1999

Baseline Report
dated March of 2009 includes highlights of the 1999 Neighborhood Plan and 2009 statistics

Meeting Materials and Notes
from the March, May and September 2009 meetings

Planning Outreach Liaison meetings.

Acknowledgments

In acknowledgment of the participation of thousands of committed Seattleites.

Including:
Mount Baker Community Club
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Great City
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Scan Design Foundation
Sound Transit
University of Washington, College of Built Environments
Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee

Planning Outreach Liaisons
Somali Speaking Community
Amharic Speaking Community
Oromiffa Speaking Community
Tigrinya Speaking Community
African American Community
Vietnamese Speaking Community
Tagolog Speaking Community
Chinese Speaking Community
Khmer Speaking Community
Seniors & People Living with Disabilities
Youth
Native American & Alaskan Native
Spanish-Speaking Community

Commissions
Seattle Planning Commission
Seattle Design Commission

City of Seattle Lead Participants
Department of Planning and Development
Department of Neighborhoods
Seattle Department of Transportation
Seattle Parks and Recreation
Office of Housing

The City of Seattle, Interdepartmental Team incorporated the contributions of over 20 agencies and departments.