UNIVERSITY *community*

Design Guidelines

Effective October 15, 2000

Seattle Design Review Program

City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development

Design Review: *University Community Design Guidelines*

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Acknowledgements

University Community Urban Center Association Planning Committee

North Avenue Task Force

Seattle Department of Planning and Development

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I. Design Review in Seattle's Neighborhoods

What is Design Review?

Design Review provides a forum for citizens and developers to work toward achieving a better urban environment through attention given to fundamental design principles. Design Review is intended to affect how new development can contribute positively to Seattle's neighborhoods. Design guidelines offer a flexible tool—an alternative to prescriptive zoning requirements—which will allow new development to respond better to the distinctive character of its surroundings.

Design Review has three principal objectives:

1. to encourage better design and site planning to enhance the character of the city and ensure that new development sensitively fits into neighborhoods;
2. to provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and
3. to improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors and the City early in the design and siting of new development.

Design Review is a component of a Master Use Permit (MUP) application, along with other components, such as environmental review (SEPA), variances, etc., administered by the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use (DCLU). Like these other components, Design Review applications involve public notice and opportunity for comment. Unlike other components, projects subject to Design Review are brought before the Design Review Board for its recommendations or to staff through Administrative Design Review. The final decision on Design Review is made by the DCLU Director, together with the decisions on any other MUP components. This decision is appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

What are Neighborhood-Specific Design Guidelines?

Design Review uses the both Citywide Guidelines and guidelines that are specific to individual neighborhoods. Once adopted by the City Council, neighborhood-specific design guidelines augment the Citywide Guidelines. Together they are the basis for project review within the neighborhood.

The guidelines for the University Community Urban Center augment the existing Citywide Design Guidelines.

The University Community Urban Center (UCUC) neighborhood design guidelines reveal the character of the University District as known to its residents and businesses. The guidelines help to reinforce existing character and protect the qualities that a neighborhood values most in the face of change. Thus, a neighborhood's guidelines, in conjunction with the Citywide Design Guidelines, can increase overall awareness of good design and involvement in the design review process.

More About Design Review

More information about Design Review can be found in the Citywide Design Guidelines and in the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC 23.41). Information includes:

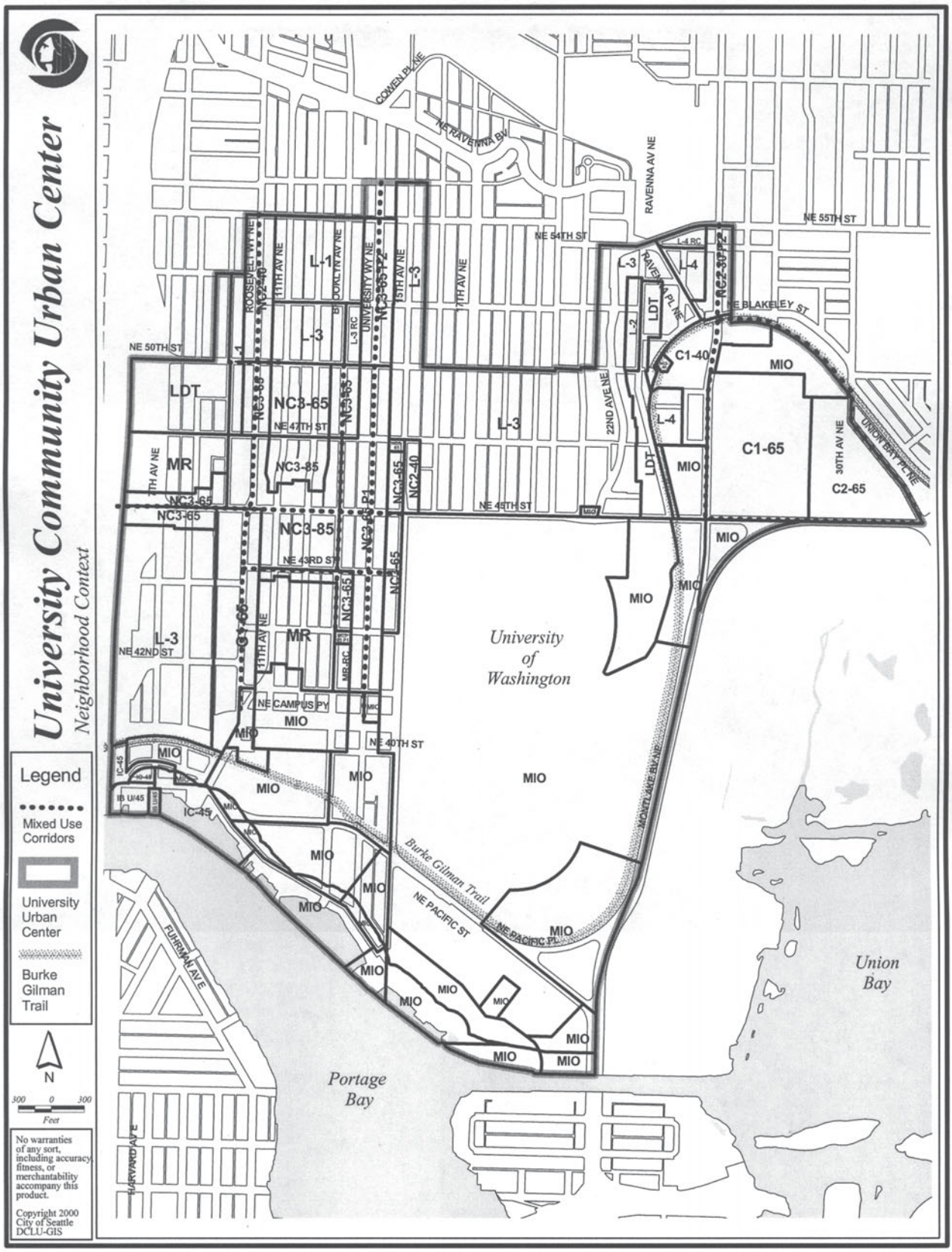
- Projects Subject to Design Review
- How Design Guidelines are Applied
- Who Serves on the Design Review Board
- Development Standards Departures

II. University Community Context and Priority Design Issues

The overriding objective of the Citywide design guidelines is to encourage new development to fit in with its surroundings. Neighborhood guidelines share this objective. Whereas Citywide guidelines are meant to apply throughout the City, neighborhood guidelines provide a more focused opportunity to recognize local concerns and design issues. They may give more specific direction as to the design character, site conditions or community objectives new development should respond to.

The University Community is one of five designated Urban Centers in Seattle. Urban Centers are targeted as the densest areas in terms of housing and employment yet, are intended to be pedestrian-oriented communities with direct access to regional high-capacity transit. The University Community Urban Center (UCUC) includes two urban villages—the University District NW Urban Village and the Ravenna Urban Village. The UCUC is also home to the University of Washington, which is designated as a major institution.

As the UCUC prepared its neighborhood plan, the Citywide Design Guidelines were evaluated to determine whether the guidelines supported the community's visions for new development. In some cases, new or augmenting guidelines were added to supplement the Citywide guidelines. As new development is planned for the University Community, project proponents are encouraged to refer to this handbook which identifies priority design issues for the neighborhood.

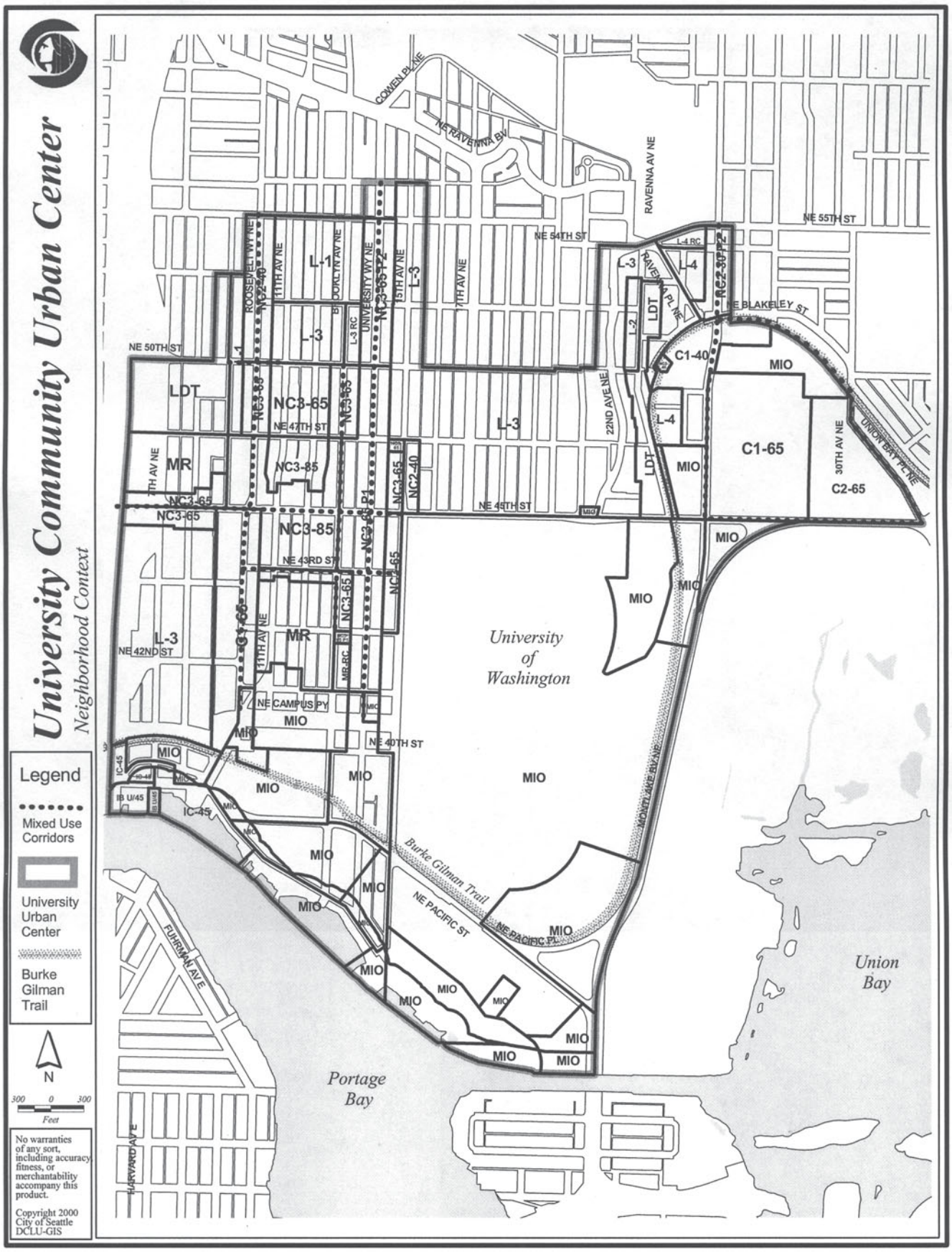


Map 1: University Community and Mixed Use Corridors

Zone Designations:
SF 5000 *(Single Family)*, **LDT** *(Lowrise, Duplex, Triplex)*, **L1, L2, L3** *(Lowrise 1, 2 and 3)*, **MR** *(Midrise)*, **RC** *(Residential Commercial)*, **NC2, NC3** *(Neighborhood Commercial 2, 3)*, **C1** *(Commercial 1)*, **MIO** *(Major Institution Overlay)*, **P2** *(Pedestrian Overlay)*

For the most up-to-date zoning designations, please refer to the official City of Seattle zoning map.

University Community Design Guidelines



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III. University Community Design Guidelines

Projects requiring design review must comply with the community design guidelines in this handbook as well as the Citywide Design Guidelines.

Note: The guidelines are numbered to correspond to the Citywide Design Guidelines (A-1, A-2, etc). A gap in the numerical sequence means there are no community design guidelines for that particular Citywide Guideline.

A

Site Planning

responding to site characteristics

streetscape compatibility

A. SITE PLANNING

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics

Context

The pedestrian-oriented street streetscape is perhaps the most important characteristic to be emphasized in the neighborhood. The University Community identified certain streets as "Mixed Use Corridors". These are streets where commercial and residential uses and activities interface and create a lively, attractive, and safe pedestrian environment. The Mixed Use Corridors are shown in Map 1 (page 2).

Another important site feature in the University Community is the presence of the Burke Gilman Trail. The primary goal is to minimize impacts to views, sunlight and mixed uses while increasing safety and access along the trail.

Guideline

For properties facing the Burke Gilman Trail, new buildings should be located to minimize impacts to views of Mount Rainier, Cascade Mountains and Lake Washington, and allow for sunlight along the trail and increase safety and access for trail users.

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility

Context

Reinforcing the pedestrian streetscape and protecting public view corridors are particularly important site planning issues. Stepping back upper floors allows more sunlight to reach the street, minimizes impact to views, and maintains the low- to medium-rise character of the streetscape. Roof decks providing open space for mixed-use development can be located facing the street so that upper stories are, in effect, set back.

Guideline - Solar Orientation

Minimizing shadow impacts is important in the University neighborhood. The design of a structure and its massing on the site can enhance solar exposure for the project and minimize shadow impacts onto adjacent public areas between March 21st and September 21st. This is especially important on blocks with narrow rights-of-way relative to other neighborhood streets, including University Way, south of NE 50th Street.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street

A

Site Planning

entrances visible to the street

Context

Another way to emphasize human activity and pedestrian orientation, particularly along Mixed Use Corridors, is to provide clearly identifiable storefront entries.

In residential projects, walkways and entries promote visual access and security.

Guidelines

1. **On Mixed Use Corridors, primary business and residential entrances should be oriented to the commercial street.** Secondary and service entries should be located off the alley, side street or parking lots.
2. **In residential projects, except townhouses, it is generally preferable to have one walkway from the street that can serve several building entrances.** At least one building entrance, preferably the main one, should be prominently visible from the street. To increase security, it is desirable that other entries also be visible from the street; however, the configuration of existing buildings may preclude this.
3. **When a courtyard is proposed for a residential project, the courtyard should have at least one entry from the street.** Units facing the courtyard should have a porch, stoop, deck or seating area associated with the dwelling unit.
4. **In residential projects, front yard fences over four (4) feet in height that reduce visual access and security should be avoided.**

A-4 Human Activity

Context

Pedestrian orientation and activity should be emphasized in the University Community, particularly along Mixed Use Corridors. While most streets feature narrow sidewalks relative to the volume of pedestrian traffic, wider sidewalks and more small open spaces for sitting, street musicians, bus waiting, and other activities would benefit these areas. Pedestrian-oriented open spaces, such as wider sidewalks and plazas, are encouraged as long as the setback does not detract from the "street wall."

Guidelines

On Mixed Use Corridors, where narrow sidewalks exist (less than 15' wide), consider recessing entries to provide small open spaces for sitting, street musicians, bus waiting, or other pedestrian activities. Recessed entries should promote pedestrian movement and avoid blind corners.

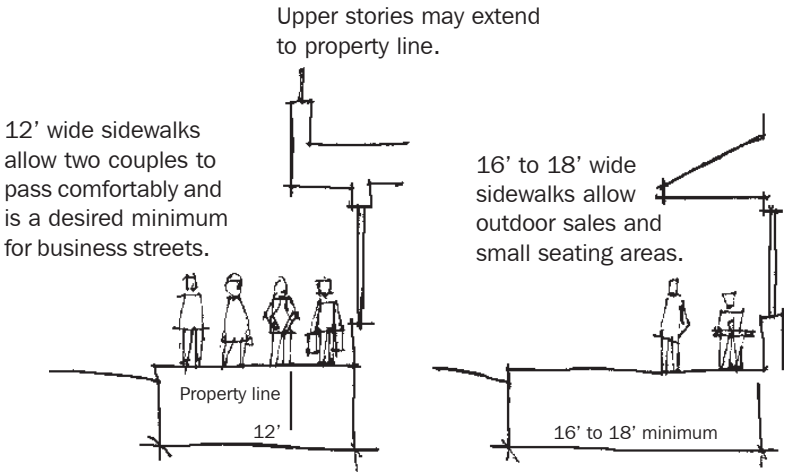


Figure 1: Setting back the first floor of a building provides more area for pedestrian activity.

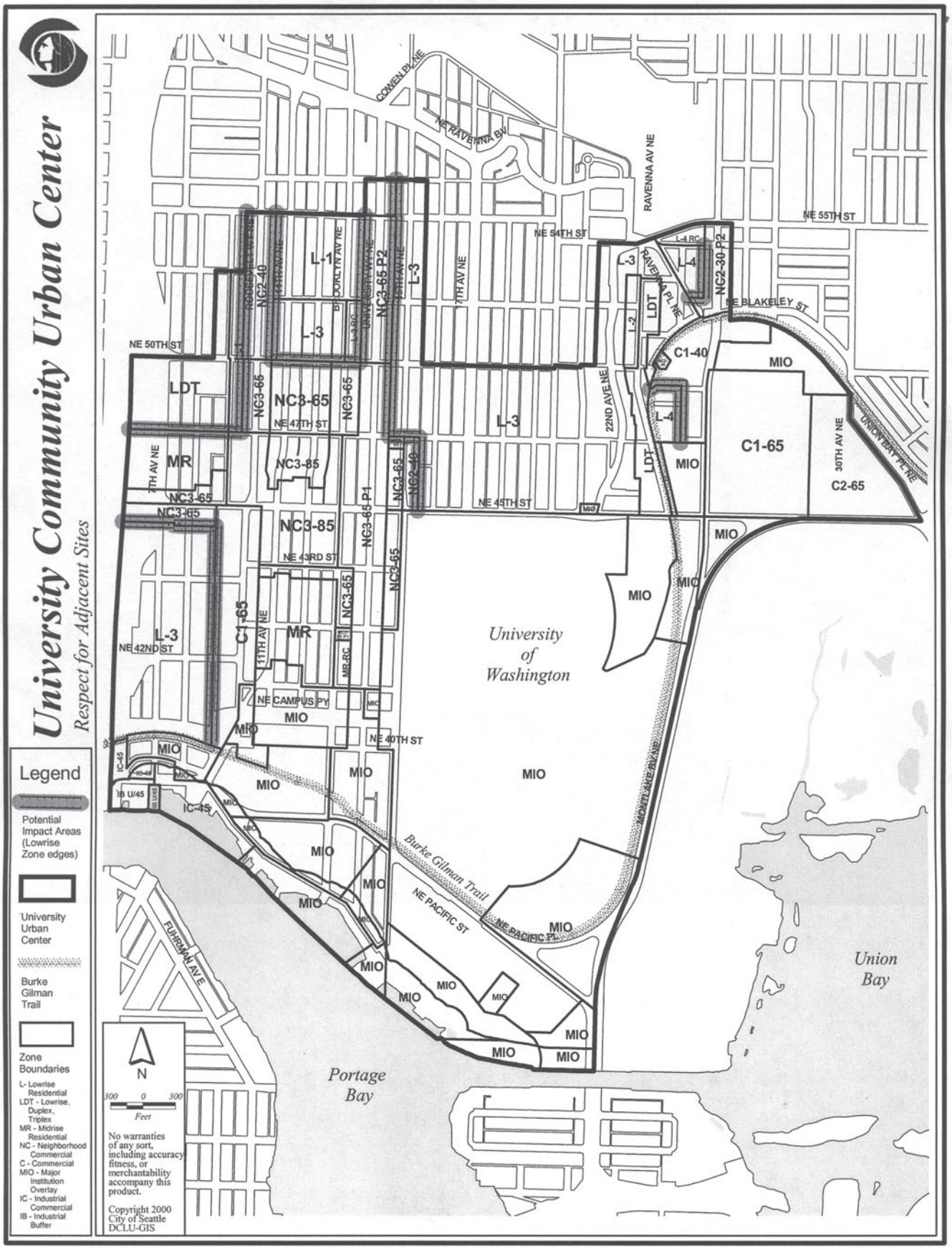
A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites

Context

This Citywide Design Guideline is particularly important where a building's back side, service areas or parking lots could impact adjacent residential uses. Map 2 (page 8) shows potential impact areas—these are where Lowrise zones abut commercial zones.

Guideline

Special attention should be paid to projects in the zone edge areas as depicted in Map 2 to ensure impacts to Lowrise zones are minimized as described in A-5 of the Citywide Design Guidelines.



Map 2: Respect for Adjacent Sites

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A-7 Residential Open Space

Context

There is a severe lack of both public and private open space in the community. Small open spaces—such as gardens, courtyards, or plazas—that are visible or accessible to the public are an important part of the neighborhood's vision. Therefore, providing ground-level open space is an important public objective and will improve the quality of the residential environment.

Figure 2:

This small plaza on Capitol Hill combines street right of way and private property to create a comfortable seating area and is the type of amenity envisioned in the University Community neighborhoods.

Guidelines

1. **The ground-level open space should be designed as a plaza, courtyard, play area, mini-park, pedestrian open space, garden, or similar occupiable site feature. The quantity of open space is less important than the provision of functional and visual ground-level open space. Successfully designed ground level open space should meet these objectives:**
   - Reinforces positive streetscape qualities by providing a landscaped front yard, adhering to common setback dimensions of neighboring properties, and providing a transition between public and private realms.
   - Provides for the comfort, health, and recreation of residents.
   - Increases privacy and reduce visual impacts to all neighboring properties.

2. **A central courtyard in cottage or townhouse developments may provide better open space than space for each unit. In these cases, yard setbacks may be reduced if a sensitive transition to neighbors is maintained.**

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access

Context

In Lowrise residential developments, single-lane driveways (approximately 12 feet in width) are preferred over wide or multiple driveways where feasible.

A-10 Corner Lots

A

Site Planning

corner lots

Context

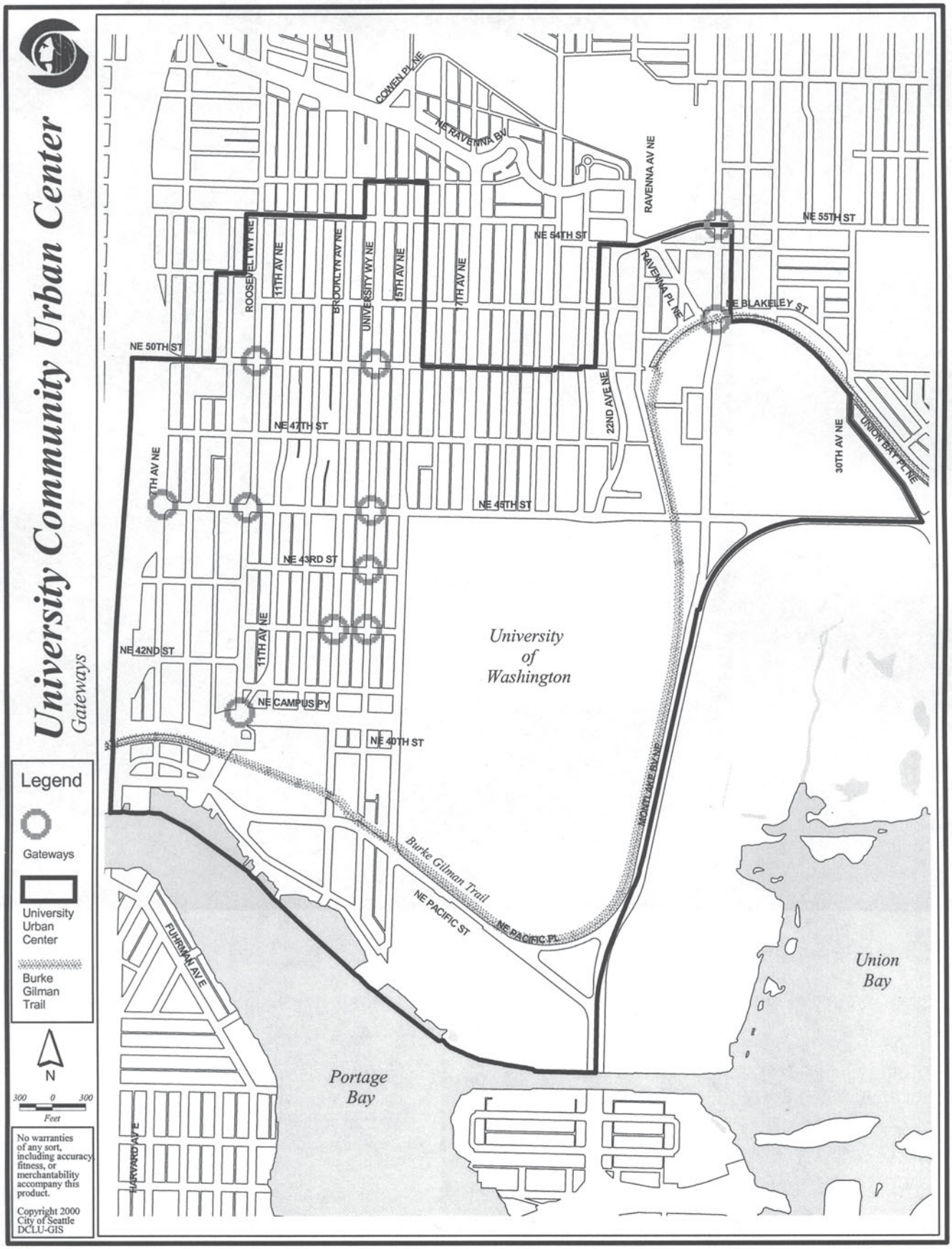
The Citywide Design Guidelines encourage buildings on corner lots to orient to the corner and adjacent street fronts. Within the University Community there are several intersections that serve as "gateways" to the neighborhood.

Guideline

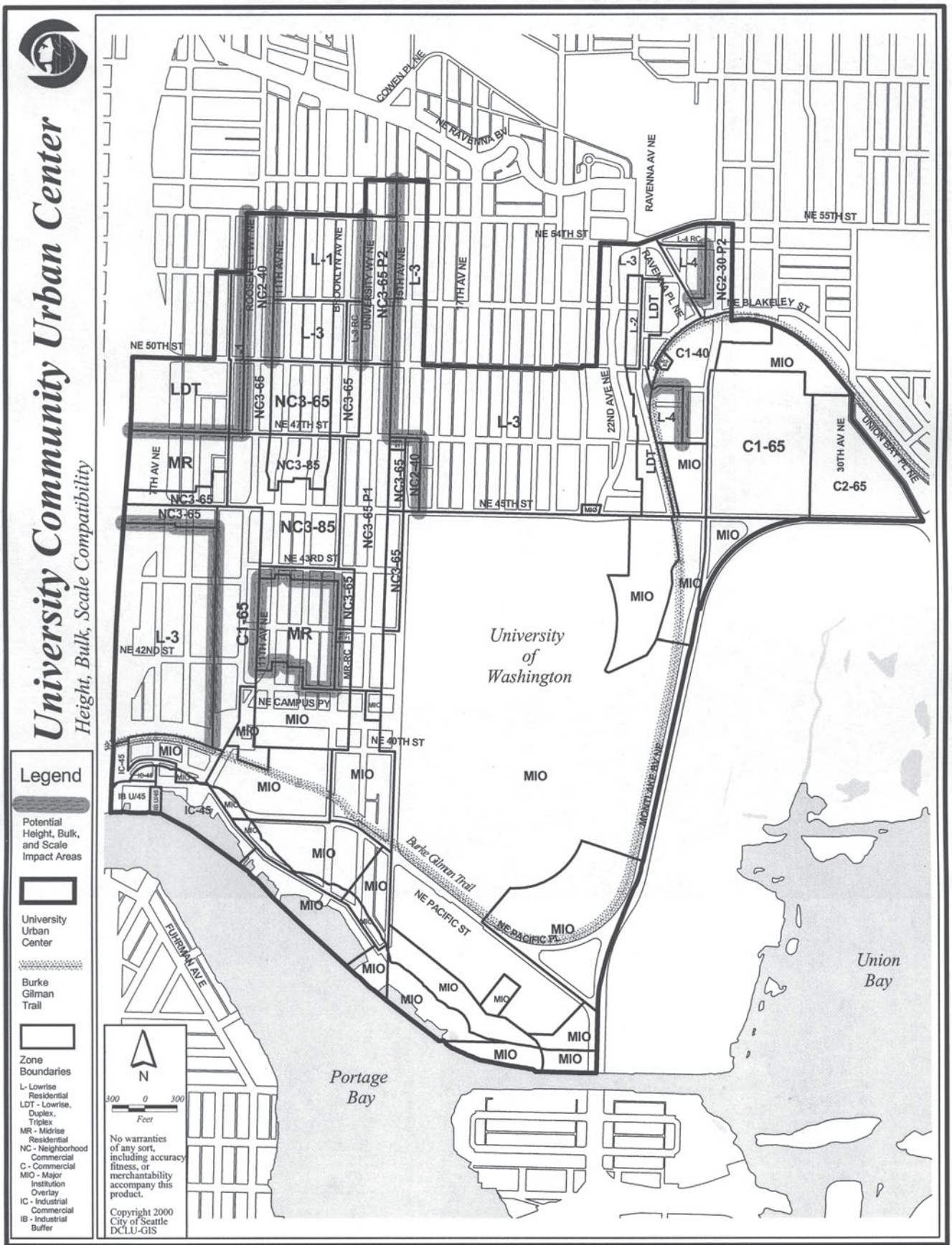
For new buildings located on a corner, including, but not limited to the corner locations identified in Map 3 (page 9), consider providing special building elements distinguishable from the rest of the building such as a tower, corner articulation or bay windows. Consider a special site feature such as diagonal orientation and entry, a sculpture, a courtyard, or other device. Corner entries should be set back to allow pedestrian flow and good visibility at the intersection.

Gateways:

- Roosevelt Avenue NE and NE 50th Street
- Roosevelt Avenue NE and NE 45th Street
- 7th Avenue NE and NE 45th Street
- NE 50th Street and University Way
- NE 45th Street and University Way
- NE 45th Street and 15th Avenue
- NE 43rd Street and University Way
- NE 42nd Street and University Way
- NE 42nd Street and Brooklyn Avenue NE
- 25th Avenue NE and NE 52nd Street
- 11th Avenue NE/ Roosevelt Avenue NE and Campus Parkway/NE 41st Street
- 25th Avenue NE and NE Blakeley Street



Map 3: Gateways



A description of areas requiring special attention to impacts of increased height, bulk and scale can be found on page 11

Map 4: Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

Zone Designations:
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B. HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

B

Height, Bulk and Scale

height, bulk and scale

compatibility

Context

The residential areas are experiencing a change from houses to block-like apartments. Also, the proximity of lower intensive zones to higher intensive zones requires special attention to potential impacts of increased height, bulk and scale. These potential impact areas are shown in Map 4 (page 10). The design and siting of buildings is critical to maintaining stability and Lowrise character.

Guideline

Special attention should be paid to projects in the following areas to minimize impacts of increased height, bulk and scale as stated in the Citywide Design Guideline. These areas are also depicted in Map 4.

- Residential south slope bounded by Brooklyn, Roosevelt, NE 41st and NE 43rd Streets
- West of 15th Avenue NE
- West of 25th Avenue NE
- South of NE 45th Street west of Roosevelt
- West of University Way between NE 52nd and NE 55th Streets
- West of Roosevelt Way NE north of NE 47th Street
- East of Roosevelt Way NE north of 52nd Street
- Along NE 47th Street between Roosevelt and 7th Avenue NE

Explanation and Examples:

In order to reduce the impacts of apparent building height, bulk at specified zone edges, as described in the left hand column, the following alternatives should be considered:

- Along zone edges and specified streets, step back upper floors above 40', or modify the roofline to reduce the negative effects of the allowable height limit.
- Along specified corridors, a gradual setback of the building's facade above 40' in height from the street, alley or property line may be considered.
- In exchange for setting back the building facade, the Board may allow a reduction in the open space requirement.
- Access to commercial parking on corner lots should be sited and designed in a manner that minimizes impact on adjacent residential uses.

C. ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS AND MATERIALS

C

Architectural Elements

architectural context

Figure 3: Art Deco style.

Figure 4:
The original "campus gothic" character.

Figures 5 and 6:
Examples of the classical detailing common on University Way.

C-1 Architectural Context

Context

Buildings in the University Community feature a broad range of building types with an equally broad range of architectural character. Because of the area's variety, no single architectural style or character emerges as a dominant direction for new construction. As an example, the University of Washington campus sets a general direction in architectural style and preference for masonry and cast stone materials, however, new buildings on and off campus incorporate the general massing and materials of this character, rather than replicating it.

The buildings on University Way are a particularly finely grained mix, ranging from wood frame Victorian storefronts to modern structures. The area's larger structures vary from the architecturally significant Meany Hotel to less architecturally noteworthy but well-made structures such as the Safeco Tower and the University Tower. The community also contains some excellent public structures such as the library, fire station and the University Heights Center. The University Community also has several large, featureless, contemporary buildings from the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s.

Because the University Community has and will continue to have an intense mix of uses, the spatial integration of neighboring structures is particularly important. Therefore, new projects should fit into a cohesive setting. This may mean revising building entrances and site plans to encourage better pedestrian circulation (e.g. mid-block pedestrian passages, where appropriate) or reconfiguring building massing to create a better composition with consideration of buildings on neighboring lots.

Inventories that identify local architectural or historically significant buildings, such as the 1975 University District Inventory of Build-

ings and Urban Design Resources (Nyberg, Steinbrueck) - and subsequent updating - should be used as a resource in identifying or describing local architectural or historical character as used in these guidelines.

The architectural context of much of University Way is characterized by a narrow storefront pattern. Long buildings can use architectural methods including modulation, color, texture, entries, materials and detailing to break up the façade into sections that are consistent with the traditional single- and double-bay building configurations.

Unlike the University District area, the Ravenna Urban Village does not want new buildings to reflect the existing architectural character, especially along the 25th Avenue NE commercial strip. The University Community Urban Center Plan (UCUC Plan) calls for greater pedestrian orientation and "main street character" as this corridor redevelops.

Figure 7:
Historical example of midrise building characteristics in the University Community.

C

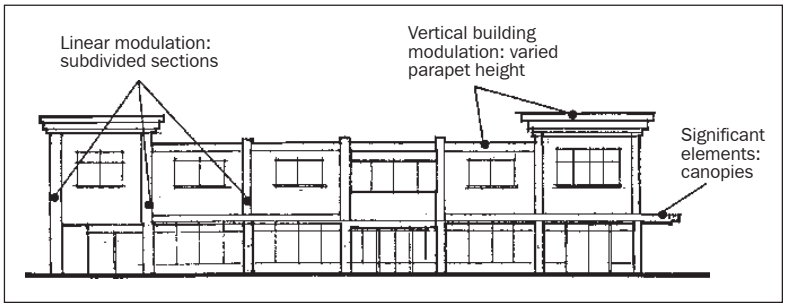
Architectural Elements

architectural context

Figure 8: Late-20th Century architecture on the 25th Avenue NE commercial strip. As this Mixed Use Corridor redevelops, the existing character will be replaced with a "Main Street" character.

Figure 9: Note the relatively narrow storefront pattern on University Way.

Figure 10: Methods of building articulation to break up the façade.



C

Architectural Elements

architectural context

Guidelines

1. **Although no single architectural style or character emerges as a dominant direction for new construction in the University Community, project applicants should show how the proposed design incorporates elements of the local architectural character** especially when there are buildings of local historical significance or landmark status in the vicinity.

2. **For areas within Ravenna Urban Village, particularly along 25th Avenue NE, the style of architecture is not as important so long as it emphasizes pedestrian orientation and avoids large-scale, standardized and auto-oriented characteristics.**

3. **On Mixed Use Corridors, consider breaking up the façade into modules of not more than 50 feet (measured horizontally parallel to the street) on University Way and 100 feet on other corridors, corresponding to traditional platting and building construction.** (Note: This should not be interpreted as a prescriptive requirement. Larger parcels may characterize some areas of the University Community, such as lower Roosevelt.)

4. **When the defined character of a block, including adjacent or facing blocks, is comprised of historic buildings, or groups of buildings of local historic importance and character, as well as street trees or other significant vegetation (as identified in the 1975 Inventory and subsequent updating), the architectural treatment of new development should respond to this local historical character.** New buildings should feature traditional materials or a combination of traditional and contemporary materials employed in a manner that reflects the character of historic buildings in the vicinity.

5. **Buildings in Lowrise zones should provide a "fine-grained" architectural character.** The fine grain may be established by using building modulation, articulation and/or details which may refer to the modulation, articulation and/or details of adjacent buildings. To better relate to any established architectural character encountered within the community, consider the following building features:
   - Pitched roof;
   - Covered front porch;
   - Vertically proportioned windows;
   - Window trim and eave boards;
   - Elements typical of common house forms.

C-4 Exterior Finish Materials

Guidelines

1. **New buildings should emphasize durable, attractive, and well-detailed finish materials, including:**
   - **Brick** (especially appropriate).
   - **Concrete** (if it features architecturally treated texture or color, other refined detailing, and/or complementary materials).
   - **Cast stone, natural stone, tile.**
   - **Stucco and stucco-like panels**, if they feature an even surface and properly trimmed joints and edging around doors and windows. Heavily textured finishes with obvious trowel marks are not generally appropriate. Stucco should be avoided in areas that are susceptible to vandalism and graffiti. Stucco and stucco-like panels must be detailed and finished to avoid water staining and envelope failure. Overhangs and protective trim are encouraged to increase weather resistance.
   - **Art tile** or other decorative wall details.
   - **Wood,** especially appropriate for residential structures.

2. **Sculptural cast stone and decorative tile are particularly appropriate because they relate to campus architecture and Art Deco buildings. Wood and cast stone are appropriate for moldings and trim.**

3. **The materials listed below are discouraged and should only be used if they complement the building's architectural character and are architecturally treated for a specific reason that supports the building and streetscape character:**
   - **Masonry units.** If concrete blocks (concrete masonry units or "cinder blocks") are used for walls that are visible from a public street or park, then the concrete or concrete block construction should be architecturally treated in one or more of the following ways:
     - —Use of textured blocks with surfaces such as split face or grooved.
     - —Use of colored mortar.
     - —Use of other masonry types, such as brick, glass block, or tile, in conjunction with concrete blocks.
     - —Treated to avoid the gray "weeping" effect of wet concrete masonry.
     - —Provided with substantial wood or metal trellis and maintained vine planting such as flowering hydrangea vine, or other non-pest vine.
   - **Metal siding.** If metal siding is used as a siding material over more than 25% of a building's façade, the metal siding should have a matted finish in a neutral or earth tone, such as buff, gray, beige, tan, cream, white, or a dulled color such as barn-red, blue-gray, burgundy, or ocher. If metal siding is used over 25% of the building façade, then the building design should include visible window and door trim painted or finished in a complementary color and corner and edge trim that covers exposed edges of the sheet metal panels.
   - **Wood siding and shingles** except on upper stories or on smaller-scale residential projects.
   - **Vinyl siding.**
   - **Sprayed-on finish** with large aggregate.
   - **Mirrored glass.** This is especially inappropriate when glare could be a potential problem.

4. **Where anodized metal is used for window and door trim, then care should be given to the proportion and break-up of glazing to reinforce the building concept and proportions.**

5. **Fencing adjacent to the sidewalk should be sited and designed in an attractive and pedestrian oriented manner.**

6. **Awnings made of translucent material may be backlit, but should not overpower neighboring light schemes. Lights, which direct light downward, mounted from the awning frame are acceptable. Lights that shine from the exterior down on the awning are acceptable.**

7. **Light standards should be compatible with other site design and building elements.**

C-4 Exterior Finish Materials

Signs

C

Architectural Elements

exterior finish materials

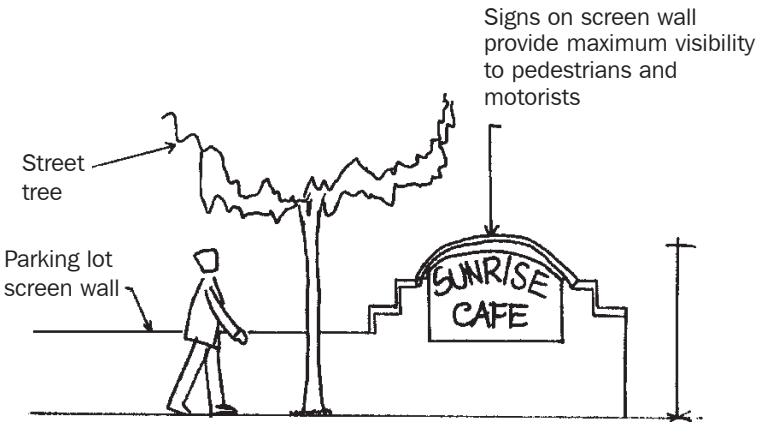
Context

The Citywide Design Guidelines do not provide guidance for new signs. New guidelines encourage signs that reinforce the character of the building and the neighborhood.

Guidelines

1. **The following sign types are encouraged, particularly along Mixed Use Corridors:**
   - Pedestrian-oriented shingle or blade signs extending from the building front just above pedestrians.
   - Marquee signs and signs on pedestrian canopies.
   - Neon signs.
   - Carefully executed window signs, such as etched glass or hand painted signs.
   - Small signs on awnings or canopies.
2. **Post mounted signs are discouraged.**
3. **The location and installation of signage should be integrated with the building's architecture.**
4. **Monument signs should be integrated into the development, such as on a screen wall.**

Figure 11:
Signs on screen walls provide maximum visibility to pedestrians and motorists.



D. PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

Context

The University Community would like to encourage, especially on Mixed Use Corridors, the provision of usable, small open spaces, such as gardens, courtyards, or plazas that are visible and/or accessible to the public. Therefore, providing ground-level open space is an important public objective and will improve the quality of both the pedestrian and residential environment.

Convenient, attractive and protected pedestrian entries should be provided for both business and for upper story residential uses. Entries for residential uses on the street (rather than from the rear of the property) add to the activity on the street and allow for visual surveillance for personal safety.

Guidelines

1. **On Mixed Use Corridors, consider setting back a portion of the building to provide small pedestrian open spaces with seating amenities. The building façades along the open space must still be pedestrian-oriented. Pedestrian-oriented open spaces should meet the objectives below as well as the Citywide Design Guidelines. Required open space may be reduced up to 50% if a substantial amount of the street-level open space (on the order of at least 200 square feet), meets the following objectives:**
   - Plazas should be centrally located, on major avenues, close to bus stops, or where there are strong pedestrian flows on neighboring sidewalks.
   - Plazas should be sensitively proportioned and designed. For example: not more than 60 feet across and no more than 3 feet above or below the sidewalk.
   - Plazas should have plenty of benches, steps, and ledges for seating. For example: at least one linear foot of seating per 30 square feet of plaza area should be provided; seating should have a minimum depth of 16 inches.
   - Locate the plaza in a sunny spot and encourage public art and other amenities. For example: at least 50% of the total frontage of building walls facing a plaza should be occupied by retail uses, street vendors, building entrances, or other pedestrian-oriented uses.
   - Provide plenty of planting beds for ground cover or shrubs. For example: one tree should be provided for every 200 square feet and at a maximum spacing of 25 feet apart. Special precaution must be taken to prevent trees from blocking the sun.

2. On Mixed Use Corridors, entries to upper floor residential uses should be accessed from, but not dominate, the street frontage. On corner locations, the main residential entry should be on the side street with a small courtyard that provides a transition between the entry and the street.

D

Pedestrian Environment

pedestrian open spaces and entrancies

design of parking lots near sidewalks

D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks

Guidelines

1. Screening of surface parking lots should allow views of businesses.
2. On Mixed Use Corridors, walls rather than shrub screens are generally preferred because walls require less space and landscaping can be difficult to maintain in congested areas. If walls are provided, they must be made of "permanent" materials such as masonry.
3. When adjacent to residential zones, surface parking lots adjacent to sidewalks should be screened with shrubs and double rows of street trees for a more sheltered, residential feel.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

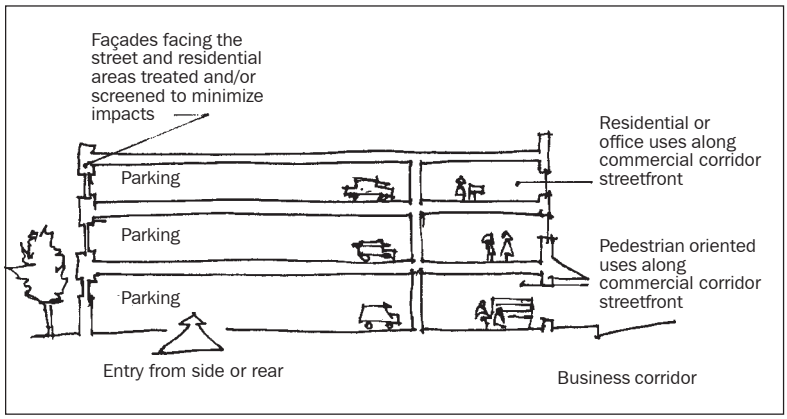


Figure 12:
Section through an acceptable parking structure configuration.

Guidelines

1. The preferred solution for parking structures is to incorporate commercial uses at the ground level. Below-grade parking is the next best solution for parking.
2. There should be careful consideration of the surrounding street system when locating auto access. When the choice is between an arterial and a lower volume, residential street, access should be placed on the arterial.
3. Structured parking façades facing the street and residential areas should be designed and treated to minimize impacts, including sound transmission from inside the parking structure.

E. LANDSCAPING

E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions

Context

The retention of existing, large trees is an important consideration in new construction, particularly on the wooded slopes in the Ravenna Urban Village**.**

The 17th Avenue NE tree-lined boulevard is an important, visually pleasing streetscape.

Guidelines

1. **Retain existing large trees wherever possible. This is especially important on the wooded slopes in the Ravenna Urban Village.** The Board is encouraged to consider design departures that allow retention of significant trees. Where a tree is unavoidably removed, it should be replaced with another tree of appropriate species, 2 ½ inch caliper minimum size for deciduous trees, or minimum size of 4' height for evergreen trees.
2. **The 17th Avenue NE (boulevard) character, with landscaped front yards and uniform street trees, is an important neighborhood feature to be maintained.**

E

Landscaping

pedestrian open spaces and entrances