Northgate Urban Center & Overlay District | **Design Guidelines**

City of Seattle
Department of Planning & Development

Acknowledgments

Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines were first created in 2003 with significant input and support from the following Northgate community member:

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Department of Neighborhoods

Seattle Department of Transportation

Seattle Planning Commission

Office of Policy and Management

Contents

I. Design Review in Seattle's Neighborhoods

What is Design Review?

Design Review is a component of the Master Use Permit (MUP) application and is required for most new commercial, mixed-use and multifamily developments. It provides a forum through which developers and citizens can work together to ensure that new developments contribute positively to Seattle's neighborhoods.

Design Review has three principal objectives:

1. Encourage better design and site planning to enhance the character of the city and ensure that new development fits sensitively into neighborhoods;

2. Provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and

3. Improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors and the City early in the design and siting of new development.

Design Review, as with other components of a MUP application, is administered by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD). Design Review applications require public notice and an opportunity for comment. Projects are brought before a Design Review Board for its recommendations or, alternatively, to DPD staff in what is referred to as Administrative Design Review. The final decision on Design Review recommendations is made by the DPD Director, and is appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

What are Neighborhood-Specific Design Guidelines?

In reviewing development proposals in neighborhoods with City Council-adopted neighborhood-specific design guidelines, the Design Review Board consults two sets of guidelines. The Citywide Design Guidelines are of a general nature and apply throughout the city, whereas the Neighborhood-Specific Design Guidelines address more specific design concerns that have historical, cultural or architectural significance to a particular neighborhood.

The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines augment the existing Citywide Design Guidelines.

The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines carry forward the urban design objectives of the 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan. Thus, the Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines, in conjunction with the Citywide Design Guidelines, can increase overall awareness of good design and involvement in the development review process.

More About Design Review

More information about Design Review can be found in the Citywide Design Guidelines, Client Assistance Memo #238, 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. Northgate Area Context and Priority Design Issues

Building on urban design-related goals and recommendations included in the 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, the Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines are intended to provide methods and identify opportunities for how new developments can make a positive contribution to the neighborhood. The guidelines are intended to help ensure that good urban design will be achieved whenever new development is proposed.

While a few urban infill development projects have occurred in the past few years, the Northgate area is primarily characterized by a "suburban" pattern of commercial development and its role as a regional shopping and employment center. Northgate area residents would prefer new growth to create an environment that is more conducive to pedestrians and include wider sidewalks, extensive landscaping, interesting and permeable facades, decreased and screened surface parking lots, screened parking garages, below grade parking, parking behind buildings, and pedestrian amenities consistent with an urban pattern and character of development. Unlike more established neighborhoods, the Northgate area does not have much in the way of noteworthy building character and patterns of urban form to which new developments should respond.

What its residents have, however, is an overall vision of a vibrant and attractive urban center, with a mix of uses and a pedestrian orientation in terms of character, function and scale. This vision is the result of an extensive planning process involving Northgate area citizens. Since 2003, this vision has continued to come into focus with respect to the preferred open space and pedestrian network that comprises the "public realm." Northgate's success as an Urban Center will rely upon the continued improvement of pedestrian and open space networks that will provide new amenities, improve overall accessibility and walkability, define the urban form by "breaking up the superblocks," and define an identity and "sense of place" for Northgate. This underscores the critical importance of achieving pedestrian-supportive streetscapes and open spaces in future infill development, and the important role of design review processes.

Recent efforts also show interest in environmental sustainability. This encompasses not only support for protecting and enhancing natural features such as Thornton Creek, but also encouraging walking, biking and transit as alternatives to car trips. Reinforcing Northgate's role as a dense Urban Center that is well-served by transit also will support environmental sustainability objectives.

Goals and Objectives Related to the Design Guidelines

The goals and objectives supporting the Northgate vision provide context and clarity for the design guidelines. Four key goals broadly define the community vision and provide the framework for the Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines:

1. **Provide direct and convenient pathways, comfort, visual interest and activity for pedestrians.**

2. **Design identity should be defined block-by-block.**

3. **Increase publicly accessible open spaces and connections between them.**

4. **Landscape design to enhance the site or address special site conditions.**

As concepts, these goals apply to all components of a well-designed urban environment, including streets, sidewalks, open spaces and buildings. The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines further articulate these broad goals by developing specific objectives that new developments should meet. These objectives form the basis for specific design guidelines to be used in combination with the Citywide Design Guidelines.

These design guidelines will apply to new development proposals, along with Northgate Area regulations that include development standards outlined in the Northgate Overlay District (Section 23.71 of Seattle's Land Use Code). These regulations include a Major Pedestrian Street Designation for portions of 5th Avenue NE and NE Northgate Way and Green Street Designation for portions of 3rd Ave NE, which prescribe streetscape standards such as sidewalk width, street trees and minimum commercial storefront transparency. The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines are intended to augment these existing regulations with more descriptive recommendations aimed at improving the quality of the urban environment.

As part of a larger, long-range planning strategy, the design guidelines promote: development that enhances the neighborhood's visual character, function and identity; pedestrian linkages between uses, properties and streets; and high quality design of individual sites. The guidelines are not, however, intended to restrict innovation, imagination or variety in design that further enhances the pedestrian environment or the goals and objectives of the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan. If an alternative design can be demonstrated to achieve the desired character while still meeting the basic intent of the design criteria, the design review board may consider the proposal.

Sub-Area Existing Conditions

The Northgate area is characterized by sub-areas, as defined by both existing physical conditions and redevelopment potential. New developments should respond to specific conditions particular to each of these areas.

Super Blocks

The properties surrounding 1st, 5th, 8th Avenues NE and NE Northgate Way exhibit a "super block" character in scale and automobile orientation. They are large, uninterrupted properties (some with lengths exceeding 800 feet, compared to 240-foot long blocks downtown) that are unfriendly or intimidating to the pedestrian, with expanses of parking separating structures from the sidewalk. This area was the subject of a Rezone study and Environmental Impact Statement.

Super Blocks

Mid and Low Density Residential

Midrise zones and lower density multifamily zones provide a transition from larger and more dense neighborhood commercial zones in the Urban Center core to the single family areas prevalent on the edges of the Northgate area.

Mid and Low Density Residential

Zone Edges

While zoning designations are intended to provide transitions from higher intensity to lower intensity developments, there are places within the Northgate area where abrupt edges between high density and very low-scale buildings exist. These areas require particular attention in mitigating height, bulk and scale impacts on single family houses and smaller multifamily structures.

Zone Edges

Mixed-Use Redevelopment

There are many properties within the area's retail core zoned Neighborhood Commercial where opportunities for interconnected, walkable mixed-use redevelopment exist.

High Density Residential

Several high density, multifamily developments surround the retail core. With improved sidewalks and other desirable street elements as planned in the 5th Avenue Streetscape Design Project, and neighborhood goods and services within walking distance, pedestrian activity should increase considerably. Zoning allows for higher density residential development to occur in proximity to the retail core.

High Density Residential

South of the Mall

The area south of Northgate Mall currently supports the Metro Transit Center with significant local and regional bus service and park and ride capacity. Regional voters have approved funding for Sound Transit's design and construction of a Light Rail line connecting Northgate to downtown, SeaTac Airport, Snohomish County and centers east of Lake Washington. The Northgate Station will be located in this area south of the Mall.

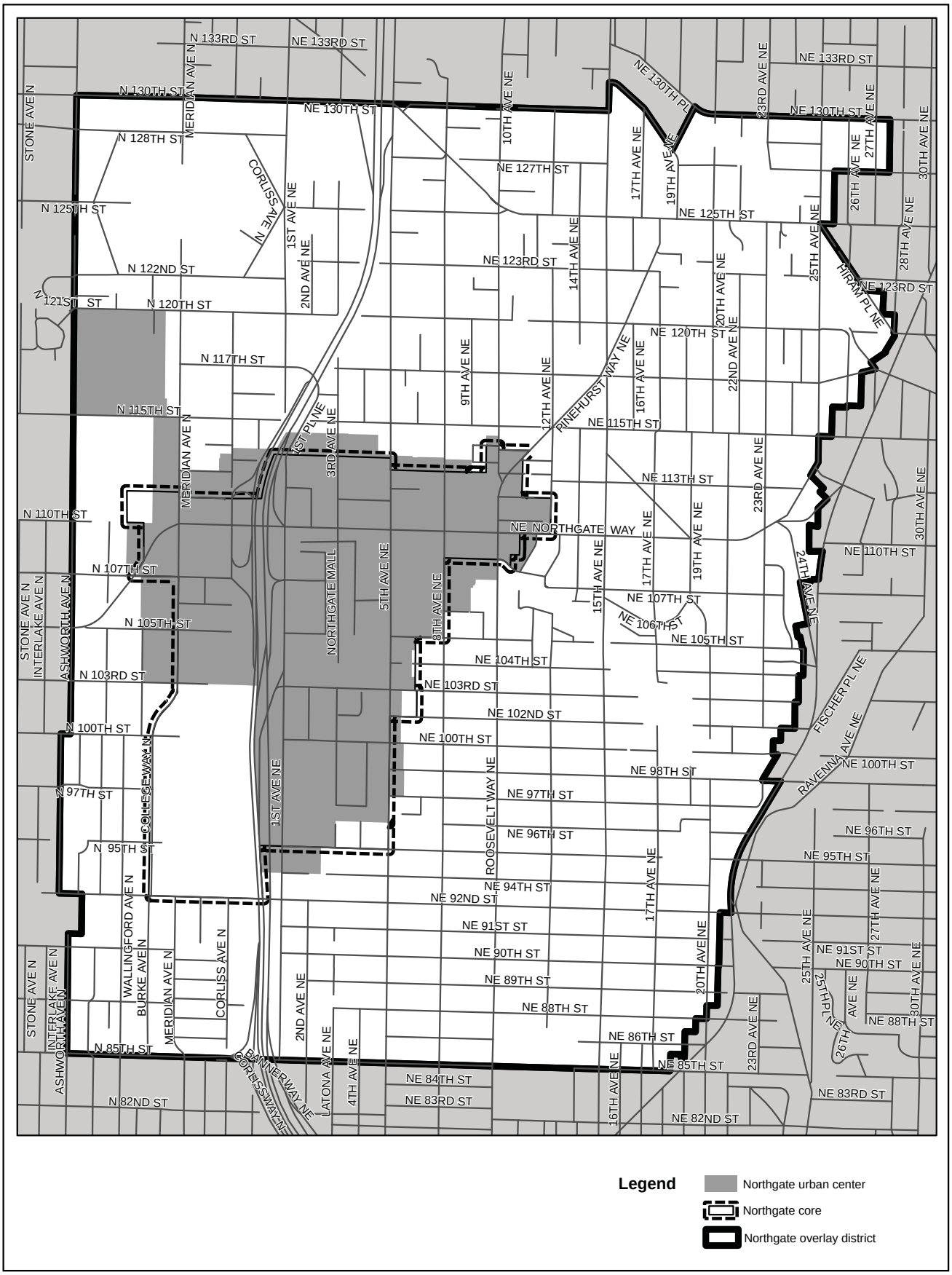
Design Guidelines

Introduction

These neighborhood design guidelines supplement the *Citywide Design Guidelines*, for projects requiring design review within the area depicted in **Figure 1** (opposite).

The guidelines for Northgate support the acheivement of major **Community Goals**. The guidelines are numbered for the convenience of the reader (**1.1**, **1.2**, **1.3**, etc.). Some guidelines have multiple parts, often shown as "bulleted" items.

Figure 1: Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District



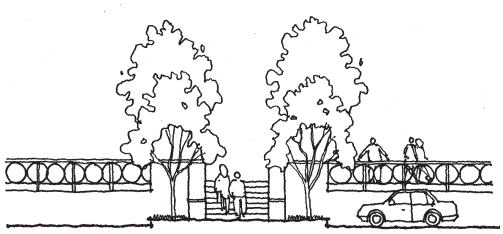
Community Goal 1:

Provide Direct and Convenient Pathways, Comfort, Visual Interest and Activity for Pedestrians

Objective: Pedestrian connectivity encourages pedestrian activity and makes it possible for people to make some of their trips on foot rather than by vehicle. Livelier street edges make for safer streets. Ensure that buildings have visual interest and quality at street level, at a human scale, with accessible, comfortable spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.

1.1 Respond to Site Characteristics

Try to match the grade of abutting public rights-of-way where properties meet. If there is a significant grade difference, create an attractive transition, using creative grading and landscaping. Be sure to incorporate pedestrian access, including walkways, stairs or similar features that can help build greater pedestrian connectivity (also see guideline 3.1).



Where a grade change is unavoidable, consider, where appropriate, incorporating pedestrian access into the design of the project.

Grade change on 5th Ave NE

Example of a dedicated bike lane

1.2 Streetscape Compatibility

Streetscape Design

Northgate's character as an urban place is influenced by the quality of its pedestrian environments, and therefore achieving high-quality design of streetscapes is essential. The community's vision of an enhanced, pedestrian-oriented urban center environment can only be achieved by improving pedestrian network connectivity throughout the neighborhood along specially designated streets including Major Pedestrian Streets, Special Landscaped Arterials and Green Streets, as well as other access streets, and pedestrian connections across private property.

The designated streets warrant special attention when designing landscaping, paving and pedestrian amenities. Detailed guidance is provided in the Overlay District, or in some cases Streetscape Plans have been incorporated into the City's Street *Right of Way Improvements Manual*, providing more detailed design guidance.

The general intent for streetscape improvements throughout the Northgate Area is to:

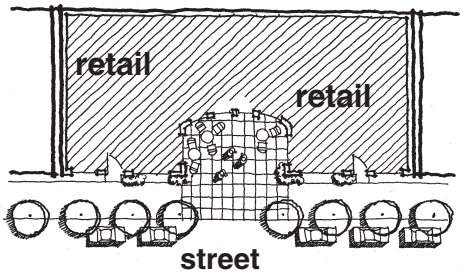
- Create an interconnected system of streets and open spaces to optimize neighborhood permeability (walkability) consistent with a typical urban block pattern;
- Encourage and enhance transit/multi-modal use;
- Emphasize pedestrian and bicycle safety, in part by controlling vehicle traffic speeds and managing volumes;

- Support increased use of designated crossings; and
- Increase urban green space/open space within the public realm by achieving surface treatments that are “more green and less gray.”

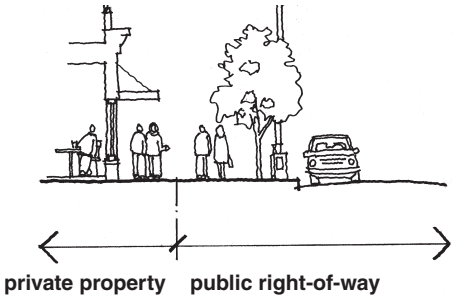
Commercial and Mixed-Use Buildings

- The ground floors of buildings should appear inviting to the public by containing commercial uses and open spaces with direct entry from the sidewalk. Vary these features in size, width and depth to accommodate a variety of appropriate uses and activities for the site and vicinity. This includes providing multiple entries at the street.
- For corridors between commercial spaces, open-air passageways are generally more visible and more inviting than interior hallways. This can be an attractive, successful location for store entries, store windows and restaurant/cafe seating.
- Further articulate the street level facade to provide a comfortable pedestrian experience with placement of street trees, exterior lighting on buildings, planters and overhead weather protection.

1.3 Promote Pedestrian Interaction



Design for uses that are accessible to the general public, generate walk-in business and contribute to a high level of pedestrian activity at street level. Consider extending street-level spaces out to the sidewalk with multiple entrances and open spaces featuring decorative paving, street furniture and artwork. Retail uses should front such spaces.



Setting a building back can create more space for pedestrians and street-level activity.

This area is unique in that the two main commercial corridors, 5th Avenue NE and NE Northgate Way, are designated as Major Pedestrian Streets and intersect at the northeast corner of the mall. The Major Pedestrian Street designation is intended to increase pedestrian circulation with an improved street level environment by creating a public realm that is safe, interesting and comfortable.*

New developments in these designated areas must comply with standards for types, dimensions and orientation of street level uses, and provide streetscape amenities such as overhead weather protection, seating, street trees and street lights. The guidelines in sections 1.3 and 1.4 are of highest priority in helping to meet this objective.

**See SMC 23.71.008 and Map A in 23.71.The Major Pedestrian Street designation occurs on Northgate Way and 5th Avenue NE, including the complete intersections of 3rd Avenue NE and 11th Avenue NE with NE Northgate Way, and the complete intersections of NE 105th Street and NE 113th Street with 5th Avenue NE.*

Human Activity

Sidewalks are the principal place of pedestrian movement and casual social interaction. Designs and uses should complement this function.

- Consider setting portions of the building back to create spaces at street level for pedestrian-oriented activities. Take the “indoors” outdoors by spilling interior space (e.g. dining areas, merchandise displays) onto plazas and walkways and bring the “outdoors” into the building by opening interior spaces to sunlight and views of sidewalk activity.
- Sidewalk widths throughout the Northgate area are less than ideal, and wider sidewalks will allow for more pedestrian circulation and activity. Within active retail areas, proposed developments are encouraged to set back from the street-fronting property line to provide additional space abutting the sidewalk. The Major Pedestrian Street designation calls for 12-foot sidewalks. However, 16-foot sidewalks are preferred in commercial areas, where appropriate.

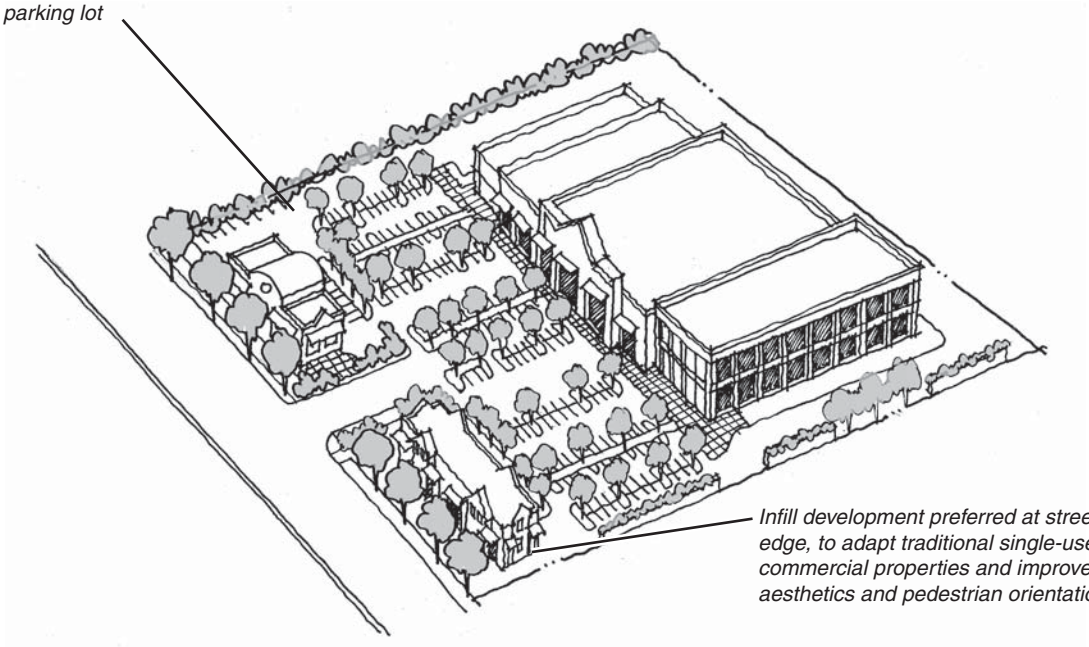
Superblock Development

One of the most important design considerations in meeting the goal of a pedestrian-friendly urban environment is to site and design street-level commercial uses that present a welcoming public face to buildings and to encourage human activity on the street.

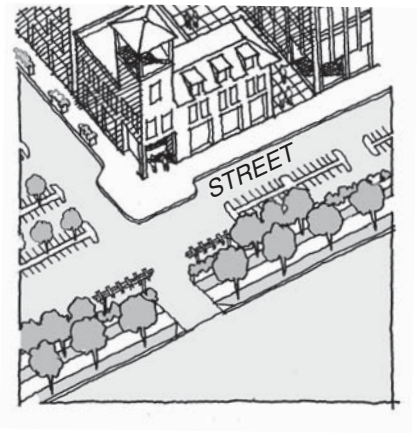
- Superblock developments on Major Pedestrian Streets are expected to be built up to the edge of the sidewalk and meet the other pedestrian street designation standards.
- Where superblock developments are not along designated Major Pedestrian Streets, they should achieve a pedestrian-friendly environment within the internal layout of a superblock site, where commercial buildings may be separated from the public right-of-way by parking.
- Every attempt should be made to link large sites to the greater community by creating lively, interesting pedestrian connections within the site, and also between the site and its surroundings.

Building to edge of sidewalk is expected on Major Pedestrian Streets

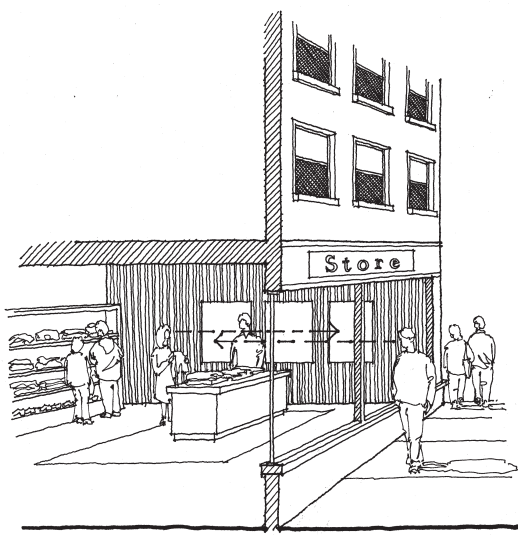
Multiple walkways through parking lot and landscaping connect the site to the neighborhood and create smaller parking areas in place of one large parking lot



Infill development preferred at street edge, to adapt traditional single-use commercial properties and improve aesthetics and pedestrian orientation



Street trees, landscaping and architectural elements such as trellises can present a human-scaled street edge and comfortable pedestrian environment in the public realm. The commercial buildings, when set back from the street, create an internal "streetscape", with open storefronts, special paving and other amenities to create usable and welcoming spaces for people entering the stores from parking areas or surrounding streets.



example of intended function of street level building transparency

- Key internal at-grade passageways accommodating pedestrian and vehicular circulation on large sites should not be ignored as locations for pleasant pedestrian places.
- Developments should have internal drives and walkways adjacent to buildings designed with the basic elements of a good pedestrian-oriented shopping street: buildings oriented close to walkways, landscaping, pedestrian-scale lighting, walkways of sufficient width to encourage social interactions without impeding pedestrian movement, and other similar enhancements.
- Usable pedestrian spaces, such as a plaza or extra-wide sidewalk near entrances to buildings with pedestrian enhancements, are encouraged either at the street or within the site adjacent to a private drive.
- Parking Lots - Surface parking areas located between primary buildings and the public right-of-way should include walkways, landscaping and lighting to delineate safe and comfortable pedestrian circulation within the site.

Street Level Transparency

The intention of transparency in the street level facades of commercial and civic buildings is to provide for interaction between people in the interior of a building and people near the exterior of a building—particularly on the sidewalk––through a direct visual connection. The following are examples of less desirable design treatments that should be discouraged:

- windowless walls;
- mirrored or non-transparent glass;
- glass block;
- display cases;
- narrow windows not meeting the intent above;
- windows located above waist level to persons outside the building on the sidewalk;
- windows into areas that are too small, shallow, or narrow to support normal human activity (e.g. the back of a tall display case, a narrow hallway); and
- any interior wall, equipment, or functional layout that hampers the intent of transparency stated above.

Parking and Vehicle Access

Mnimize Pedestrian/Vehicle Conflicts

Site and design driveways to minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. This is especially important along Northgate Way, 1st Avenue NE, 5th Avenue NE, Roosevelt Way NE, 15th Avenue NE, NE 100th Street, NE 103rd Street, and NE 125th Street. Minimize the number of curb cuts and width of driveways and curb cuts along these streets.

Locate Parking to the Rear

Where feasible, parking areas should be located to the rear of buildings that face NE Northgate Way, 1st Avenue NE, 5th Avenue NE, Roosevelt Way NE, 15th Avenue NE, NE 100th Street and NE 103rd Street. Where surface parking must be located to the side of structures, the following is recommended:

- Place surface parking away from the corners of blocks fronting on NE Northgate Way, 5th Avenue NE, 8th Avenue NE, Roosevelt Way NE, 15th Avenue NE, NE 100th Street, NE 103rd Street and NE 125th Street.
- Limit the frontage of surface parking areas that face NE Northgate Way and 5th Avenue NE (outside the Major Pedestrian Street designations).

Encourage the Creation of Multi-Purpose Parking Areas

These areas can provide parking as well as public open space, such as places for special neighborhood functions (markets, gatherings), cultural events (outdoor theater, music), and recreational activities. Examples of elements for public open spaces include: special surface treatments, art, fountains and seating, locations for removable bollards of other elements to restrict automobile access to public spaces when not used for parking, use lighting to create a safe environment while minimizing glare onto adjacent properties and sidewalks.

Bicycle Parking

When providing bicycle parking, consider incorporating features such as storage and wayfinding for bicycle users into the overall site plan and building design.

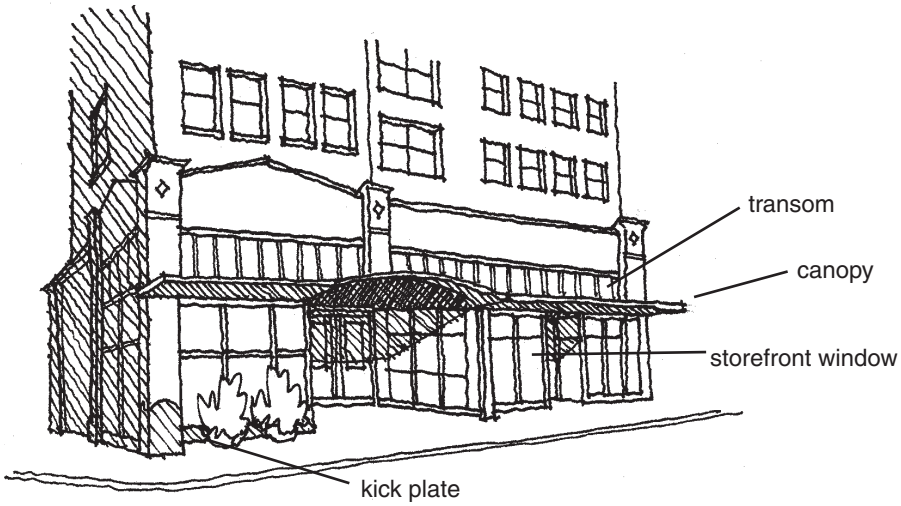
1.4 Foster Human Scale (Architectural Materials and Elements)

Commercial and Mixed-Use Buildings

The ground level of the building must offer pedestrian interest along sidewalks. This includes windows, entrances, and architectural details. Signs, overhead weather protection and ornamentation are encouraged.

All New Developments

Exterior building materials should have a human scale; this helps people relate to the size of the building. Good examples include stone and brick. Non-modular exterior materials, such as stucco, and those in large modules, such as concrete panels, will need finer details to reduce the perceived bulk and create human scale.



Examples of How Materials are Used to Establish Human Scale

Example of desirable scale and proportion in the facade composition of a large building achieved by its fenestration patterns and detailing, and variegated exterior finish materials and detailing.

Human scale elements include:

bays;

Vertically proportioned elements, including windows and porches, articulate the building into intervals.

roof forms; and

Example of a residential building articulated into intervals by its multiple roof line and building elements.

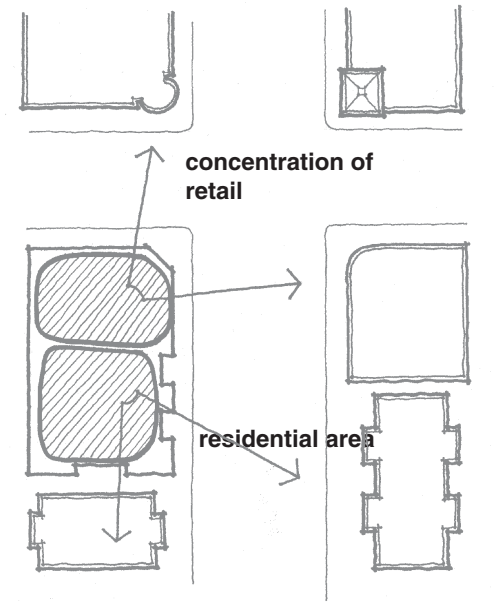
entrances.

Community Goal 2:

Design Identity Should be Defined Block by Block

Objective: Design the character, form and function of the building in an appropriate manner, responding to the immediate surrounding context - both existing and as envisioned through neighborhood planning documents and concepts supported by the community.

Commercial buildings can blend into a residential corridor providing the overall design is sensitive to the surrounding conditions



break the building down into smaller volumes to relate in similarity to the scale, height and configuration of nearby residential structures.

2.1 Streetscape Compatibility

The architecture of individual buildings should relate to their surroundings. This does not necessarily mean a historical approach, but rather one that is sensitive to the surrounding urban, built and natural environments. In areas zoned for mixed-use development outside the retail core area, orient and design the commercial facade at street level to be compatible with the streetscape of the surrounding residential neighborhood. Compatibility can be accomplished through a combination of the following:

- The overall proportion of the facade:
- Building setbacks;
- Placement of windows and bays;
- Location of entries; and
- Exterior materials.

2.2 Corner Lots Treatments

New buildings should reinforce street corners and enhance the street level environment at these key pedestrian areas. Street corners are common areas for informal interaction, and the building's relationship to the street and related elements should promote comfort and interest within the public realm. Provide a building entry and additional building mass at the corner; and provide space for movement and activity.

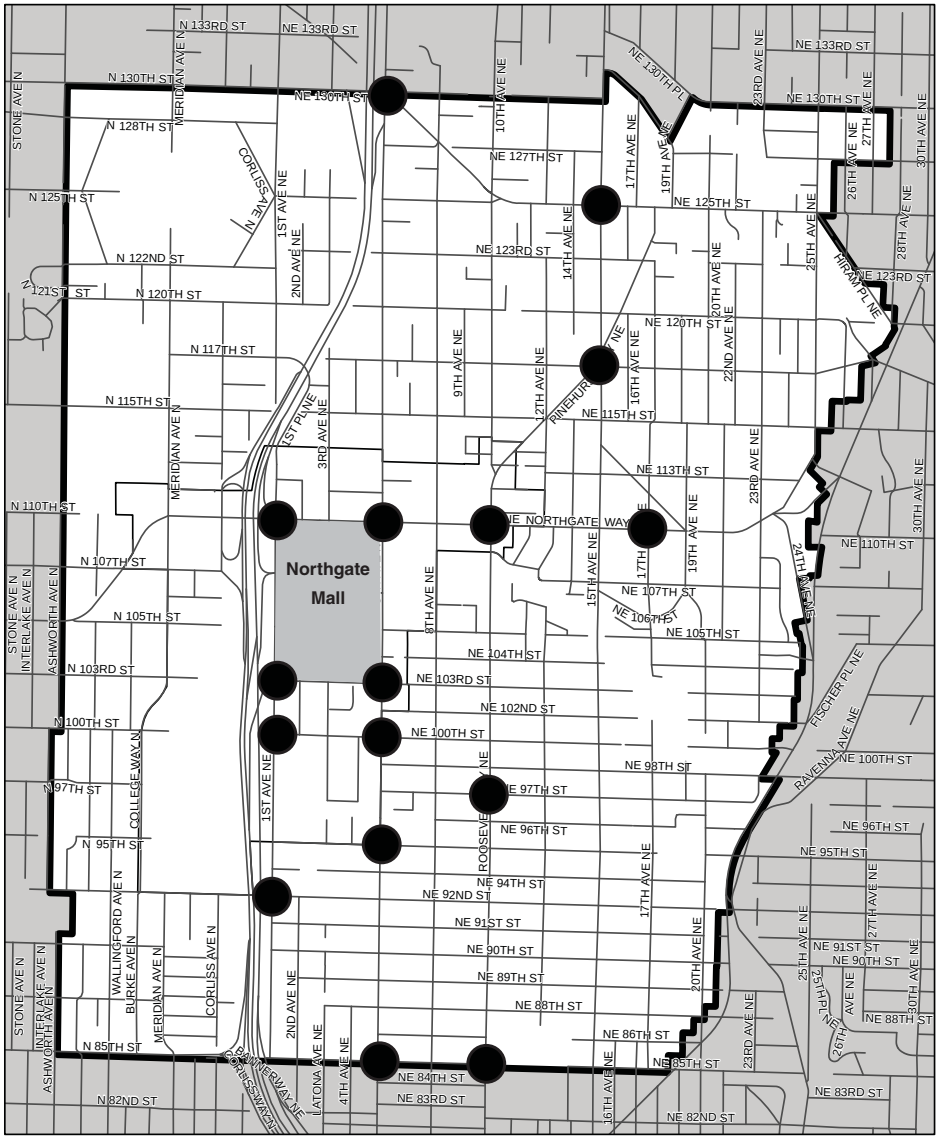
The following streetscape elements are encouraged to help meet this objective:

- Special paving or surface treatments;
- Art;
- Water features;
- Landscaping;
- Seating; and
- Kiosks.

Building form and architectural expression can reinforce the street corner.

Corner Lots as Gateways

New developments on corner lots can aid significantly in marking entry and defining an intersection by "announcing the block" through building forms and features that are visually stimulating and inviting. A gateway can have many forms: a literal gateway expressed through a building form or by the placement of features such as those outlined above. The areas surrounding the following intersections are encouraged to pay particular attention to these guidelines:



NE Northgate Way & 1st Avenue

NE Northgate Way & 5th Avenue
(both Major Pedestrian Streets)

NE 103rd Street & 1st Avenue NE

NE 103rd Street & 5th Avenue NE

NE 100th Street & 1st Avenue NE

NE 100th Street & 5th Avenue NE

NE 92nd Street & 1st Avenue NE

NE Northgate Way & Roosevelt Way NE

NE Northgate Way & 15th Avenue NE

NE 85th Street & Roosevelt Way NE

NE 97th Street & Roosevelt Way NE

NE 85th Street & 5th Avenue NE

NE 95th Street & 5th Avenue NE

15th Avenue NE & Pinehurst Way NE & NE 117th Street

15th Avenue NE & NE 125th Street

Roosevelt Way NE & NE 130th Street

2.3 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

There are several important zone edges within the Northgate Overlay District that warrant special consideration in creating sensitive transitions in height, bulk and scale. Consistent with the 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, the following are methods to establish compatible relationships between different scales of development. These methods are intended to augment building setbacks similar to those specified in the Land Use Code for zone edges where a proposed development project within a more intensive zone abuts a less intensive zone; and techniques specified in Citywide Design Guidelines.

Example of a building stepping back away from smaller adjacent structures in the neighborhood.

Lowrise 4, Midrise, or Highrise development abutting a Single Family, Lowrise Duplex/Triplex, Lowrise 1 or 2 zone:

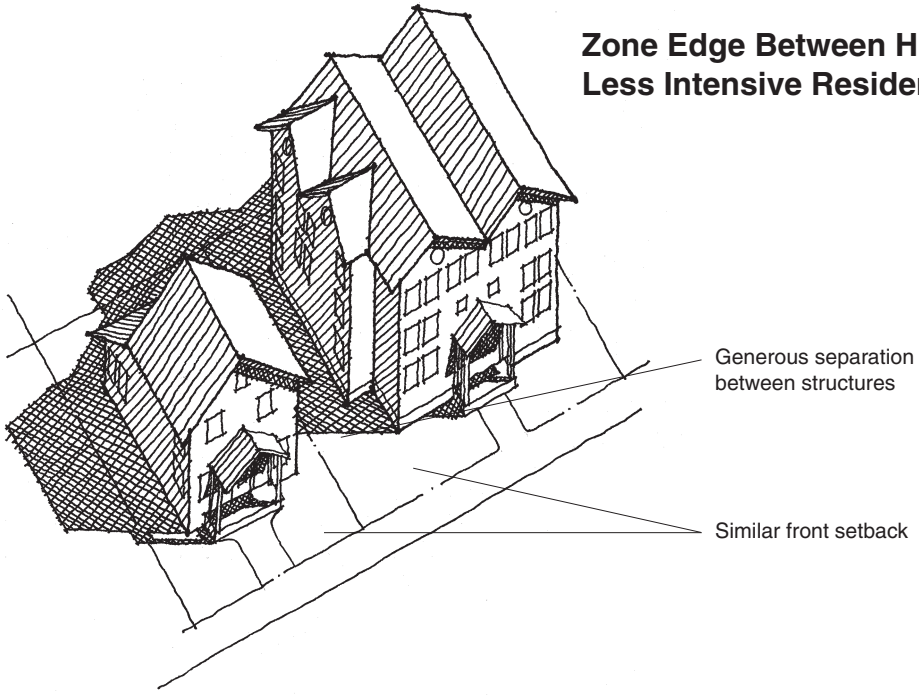
- Multifamily developments should maintain the established front setback pattern of the subject block.
- Pay particular attention to structure depth on the abutting lot lines. Orient the massing of the structure away from less intensive zones to the greatest extent possible.

NC2-40', NC3-40' and higher abutting Single Family, Lowrise Duplex/Triplex, Lowrise 1 or 2:

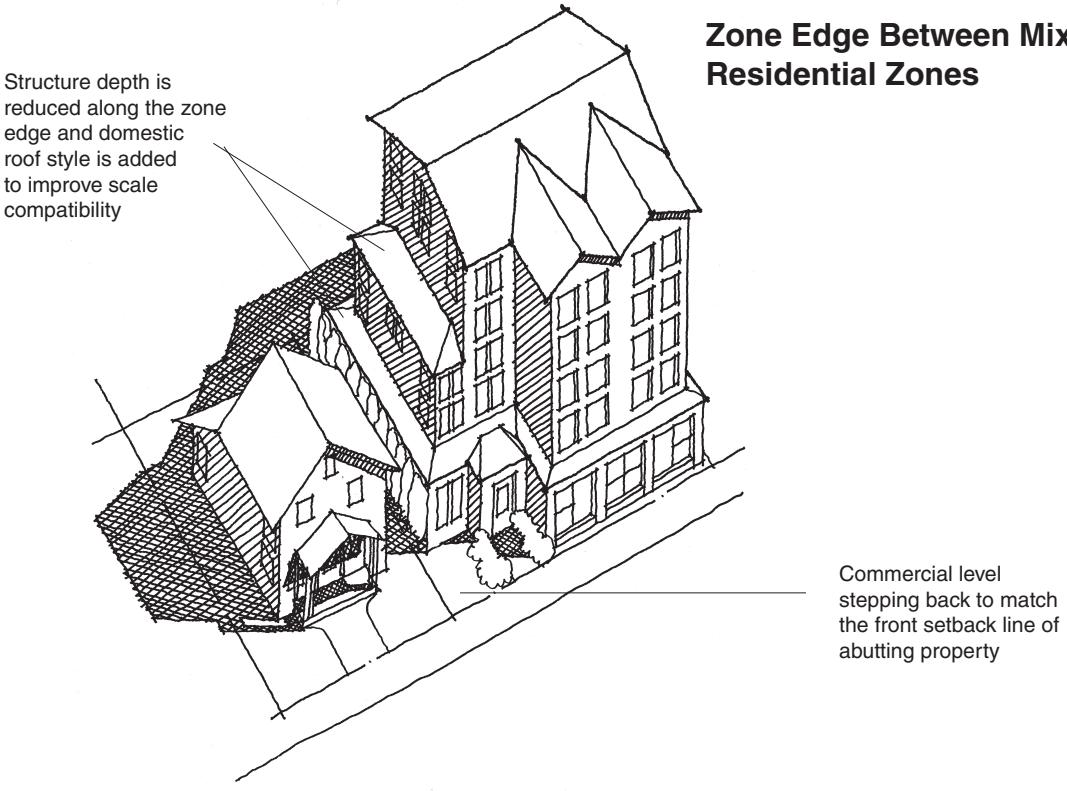
- Step back the ground-level commercial space to match the established front setback pattern on the subject block.
- Pay particular attention to the depth of the commercial level and upper residential levels along the abutting lot line. Orient the massing away from the lot line of an abutting less intensive zone to the greatest extent possible.
- Soften the commercial facade on the abutting lot line with elements such as dense landscaping.
- Repeat residential architectural elements of surrounding buildings on portions of the commercial facade adjacent to such buildings. Examples include roof lines and window styles and proportions.

Along a zone edge without an alley, consider additional setbacks, softening elements, and architectural compatibility to help reduce the potential 'looming effect' of a much larger structure in proximity to smaller existing buildings.

Zone Edge Between Higher and Less Intensive Residential Zones



Zone Edge Between Mixed Use and Residential Zones

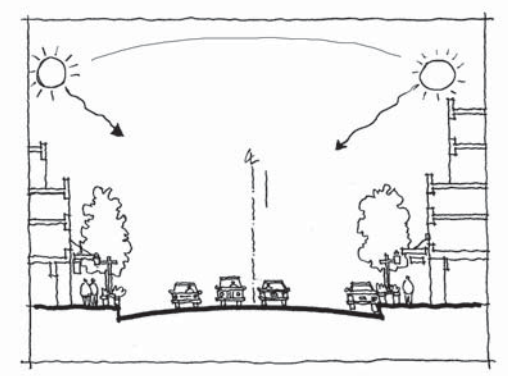


2.3 Super Block Development

A large site should pay particular attention to massing and scale both in terms of its relationship to the surrounding area and within the site itself. Large monolithic structures are discouraged.

Ideally, development on a large, super block-scale site should be arranged into multiple buildings that lend a human scale and provide for pedestrian permeability (see guideline 1.3).

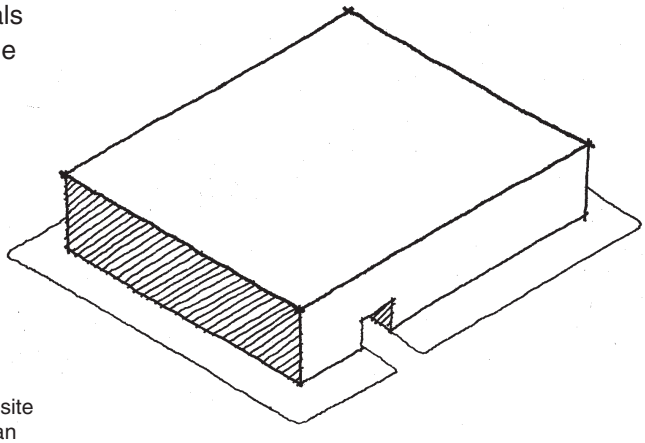
If multiple buildings are not feasible, break down the mass of the building, horizontally and vertically, into a hierarchy of volumes. Within each volume the windows, doors and architectural elements should help define the scale of the structure.



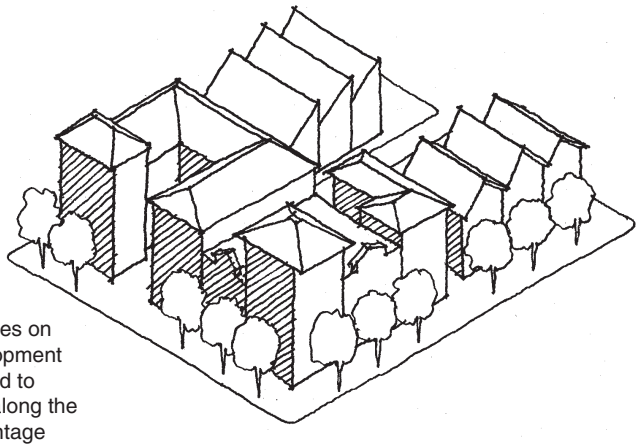
More sunlight at street level with upper level recesses

2.3 Upper Stories

Recessing the upper stories of developments on arterials allows sunlight to pass onto the street and minimizes the impact of height on pedestrians.



Effect of a large site developed with an unarticulated structure devoid of entrances.



Multiple structures on this large development site are designed to create interest along the entire street frontage and within the interior of the site.

Signs that hang underneath awnings and canopies...

add interest to the pedestrian environment.

Signs that are integrated into the building facade are also encouraged.

2.4 Design Signage Compatible with Human Scale and Consistent with Architectural Concept

Signage should be designed so that it is appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area. Signs should be oriented and scaled for both pedestrians on sidewalks and persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood. Signs should add interest to the street level environment. They can help unify the overall architectural concept of the building, or provide a unique identity for an individual business within the larger structure. While regulatory sign review is not in the purview of design review, integration with the overall architectural expression of a building and appropriate scale and orientation are important design considerations. Franchises should not be given exceptions to these guidelines.

The following types of signs are encouraged:

- pedestrian-oriented blade signs; and
- Signs integrated into the design of the building: along a sign band, on canopies and marquees, located in windows.

These types of signs are discouraged:

- Large illuminated box signs (backlit “can” signs); and
- Post-mounted signs.

Community Goal 3:

Increase Publicly Accessible Open Spaces and Connections Between Them

Objective: Improve pedestrian movement throughout the Northgate area by creating quality spaces and pathways through and within development sites connecting to the street system and, where appropriate, public open spaces and parks.

Many streets in the Northgate area are composed of "superblocks" at a scale oriented to the movement of vehicles, rather than pedestrians. North-south streets through the Urban Center create uninterrupted corridors with very few opportunities for movement east to west. The simulation of an urban street grid through sites is an important urban design consideration, and creating interior block pedestrian connections through sites and to the surrounding street system (particularly east-west) is a critical element of an improved pedestrian environment.

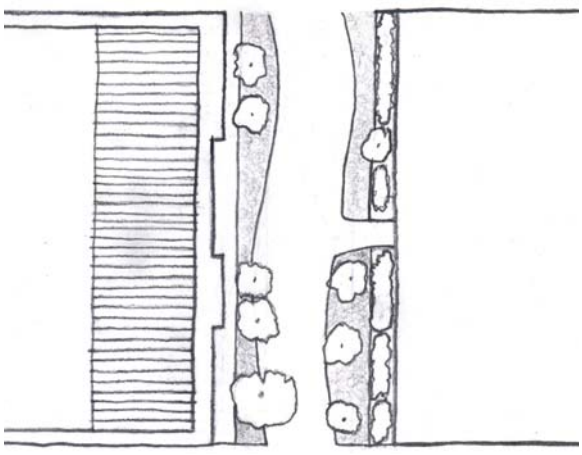
3.1 Incorporate Open Space

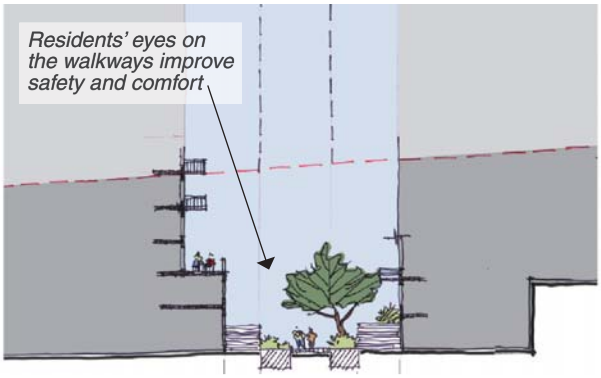
The Northgate Plan places a high priority on open space, especially public spaces that are accessible, comfortable, and in proximity to or on routes to high activity areas. The Northgate Overlay District (Ch.23.71 of the Seattle Municipal Code) includes detailed and specific open space requirements, defining "usable open space" that are open to the public and abutting a sidewalk. The overlay categorizes such spaces by scale and function, ranging from small courtyard spaces to urban plazas and town squares.* The following guidelines augment the open space requirements for some of the categories by providing additional guidance on scale, character and relationship to the public realm.

Open spaces (including parking areas) can also help improve site and project sustainability. Refer to guidelines in Section 4 below as well as the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).** Examples include sustainable landscaping and stormwater run-off, detention and filtration systems.

** Refer to SMC 23.71.014 for specific Northgate Overlay District open space standards.*

*** The LEED Green Building Rating System™ is a program of the US Green Building Council. It is a rating system for what constitutes a "green building." Visit www.usgbc.org for more information.*





Typical interior block pedestrian connection with landscaping, activated street level environment, and upper-level setbacks for light and air

Interior Block Pedestrian Connections

Larger development sites are encouraged to incorporate pedestrian walkways and open spaces to create breaks in the street wall and encourage movement through the site and to the surrounding area. Such walkways, which could be for pedestrians only, for pedestrians and bikes or adjacent to vehicular access through the site, should meet the sidewalk of key pedestrian streets in an engaging and identifiable manner.

Short blocks encourage people to walk. Locating interior block pedestrian connections that create 200 – 300 foot long blocks are optimal. In siting such street level interior block pedestrian connections, designers should analyze the subject site, and the relationship to surrounding properties, streets and activity areas.

Several key community amenities are of particular significance regarding pedestrian movement through the area. The Northgate Transit Center/future light rail station and the adjacent mixed-use transit-oriented development (TOD) with its urban plaza and access to the Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel are important pedestrian destinations. The Northgate Civic Center, Hubbard Homestead Park, the natural areas along Thornton Creek and North Seattle Community College are also important neighborhood amenities that should inform the location and site design of new open space and interior block pedestrian connections in large lot developments.

Consider Interior Block Pedestrian Connections that:

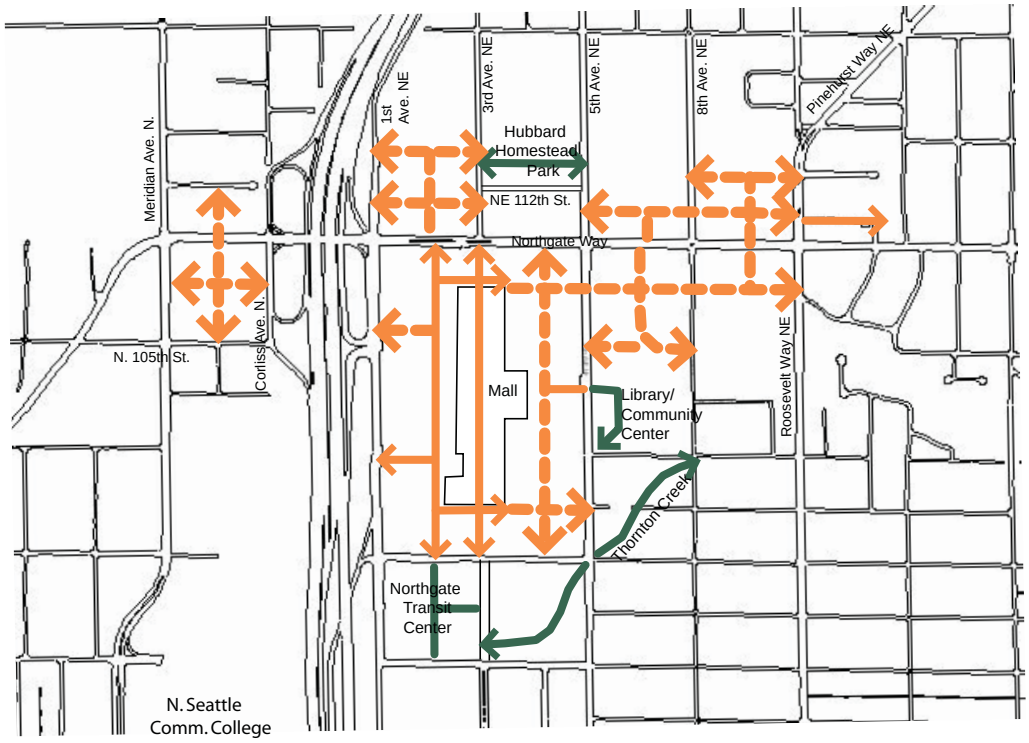
- Optimize neighborhood connectivity;
- Promote a variety of pedestrian uses such as walking, exercise and relaxing;
- Minimize pavement, and provide an equitable balance between pavement and planting areas;
- Use pervious/pedestrian scaled paving for walking surfaces (minimize standard concrete, discourage use of asphalt);
- Accommodate vehicular access only for emergency vehicles;

- Develop integrated rainwater strategies such as rain gardens, natural drainage collection, building water collection and art;
- Provide "garden entries" for townhomes at the base of larger residential buildings; and
- Incorporate built-in and movable seating to optimize flexibility of use.

Walkway with water feature

The illustration below depicts existing and potential future pedestrian routes in the heart of the Northgate Urban Center. When development occurs, designers should consider the opportunities to incorporate interior block pedestrian pathways that add to the network.

Concept: Existing and Potential Future Network of Interior Block Pedestrian Connections



Existing Pedestrian Routes on Private Properties

Potential Future Pedestrian Routes on Private Properties

Existing Pedestrian Routes on Public Properties

Lots adjoining public open spaces

Strive for transitions between public, semi-public, semi-private and private space in the design of new development abutting public open space. The following can help accomplish this goal:

- Where appropriate, site commercial uses facing the public space with outdoor seating to enliven the space.
- For ground floor residential uses, locate residential stoops with a grade separation to provide a transition between the residences and the public space.

Active park with landscaped edge

Commercial uses facing park edge are encouraged, with pedestrian walkways and/or shared pedestrian/vehicle access

Residential uses facing park edge are encouraged, with stoops for transition to public spaces

An effective transition from retail use to park edge

The following are examples of less desirable design treatments that should be discouraged:

- windowless walls;
- fences and/or tall, dense plantings that create areas that are invisible to passers-by.

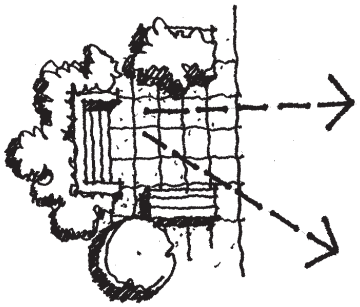
Consider upper story balconies, terraces and windows to provide visual interest and eyes and ears on the public open spaces for greater public safety.

Hierarchy of Open Spaces

Urban Gardens

- New public spaces should provide as many seating opportunities as possible;
- Planter walls should be set at a height that allows for their use as seating; and
- Moveable chairs and tables are strongly encouraged.

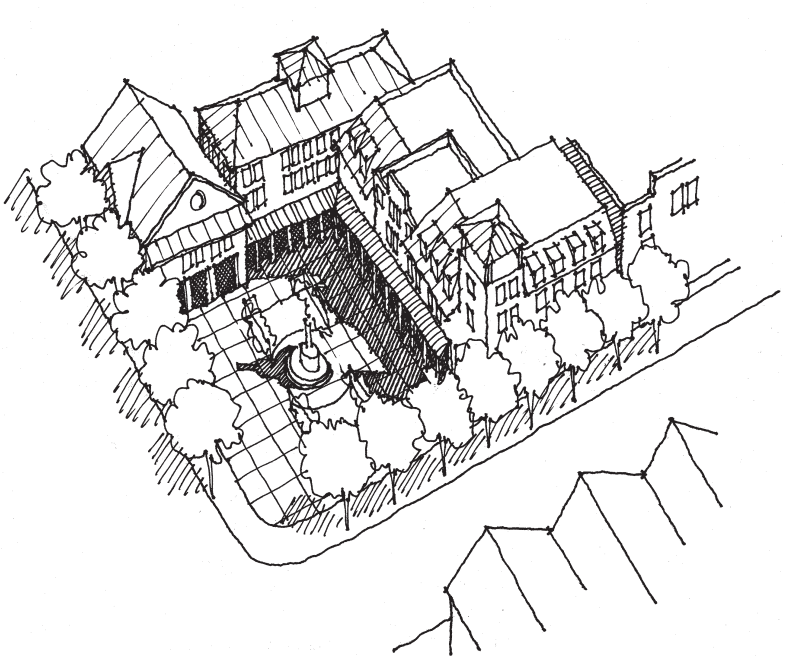
Urban Garden



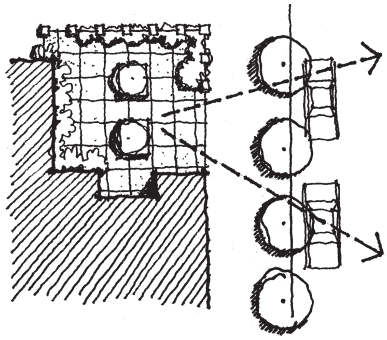
Courtyards

Elements such as planters, benches and steps can be sited to break down the scale of an open space, and provide comfortable seating and opportunities for viewing. Courtyards should be integrated with the scale, character and function of the adjoining building.

A comfortable, intimate space with a visual and physical connection to the public realm



Courtyard



Urban Plazas and Town Squares

Urban Plazas and Town Squares

Public space should be enclosed by active buildings around the perimeter to encourage its use and maintain its safety. Plazas and squares should be surrounded by pockets of activity: shops, stands, benches, displays, gardens. These various pockets of activity should all be next to paths and entrances to facilitate constant movement. The ultimate goal should be to gather enough people in and around these spaces so that they will overlap and spill in toward the center of the square.

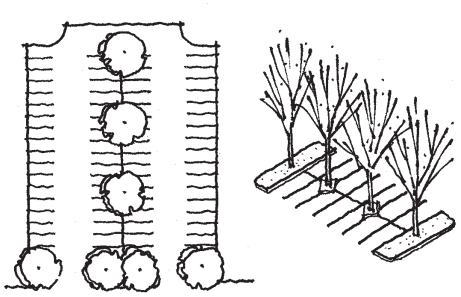
The following can help accomplish this goal:

- Arrange open space elements in a manner that reduces the scale of the larger plaza into smaller spaces more suitable for pedestrian use.
- Design retail spaces that will comfortably “spill out” and enliven public space.
- Provide landscaping that enhances the space and architecture.
- Provide visual and pedestrian access (including barrier-free access) into the site from the public sidewalk.
- Site furniture, art work.
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting and other amenities such as fountains, seating (steps provide excellent seating) and kiosks.
- Design landscaping to enhance the space and architecture and assist in absorbing run-off from paved plaza areas.

3.2 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks

Interior landscaping, in addition to perimeter landscaping, should be installed to help soften the visual impact of surface parking and enhance natural site drainage. To meet this objective, consider the following:

- Interior landscaping: Use landscaping to break large areas into a series of smaller areas. Plant low landscaping in left over portions of parking areas (e.g., turning radii);
- Site landscaping strategically to minimize stormwater run-off;
- Innovative drainage control measures such as swales or treatment islands or pervious pavements;
- Plant enough trees, which at maturity form a canopy over large portions of the parking area with trees interspersed between parking spaces;
- Select tree species that do not obscure signage, amenity features, or opportunities for surveillance;
- Plant a mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees for year-round greenery. Select types of trees, such as sapless trees, that do not impact parked cars.

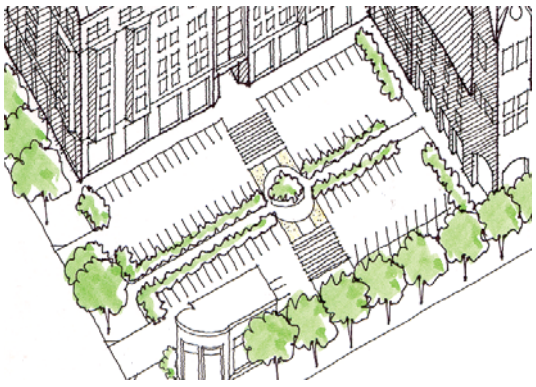


Four foot tree cutouts can be accommodated without losing parking spaces

Large Scale, "Super Block" Development

Surface parking areas should be seen as a resource for the creation of public space. There are many site planning techniques and elements that can help create pedestrian-oriented space.

- The parking area should be laid out as an urban block, at a scale that promotes walking within.
- A network of clearly defined pedestrian walkways should serve as a "grid", connecting these walkways to uses within the site and to the larger street network in a safe and comfortable manner. The necessary elements—lighting, pavement and plantings—should be placed to support those pedestrian objectives.
- The space should be defined by buildings, and secondary structures such as shelters and small retail spaces (placed at corners) should further define the scale.



Thoughtful design provides attractive walkways and connects to sidewalks at street edges

Example of retail fronting the street with parking set back

Landscaping examples in commercial settings

3.3 Parking Structures

Parking structures merit the same quality materials and finishes as the principal buildings in a development.

- Site parking structures away from Major Pedestrian Streets.
- Design a well-proportioned and unified parking structure. Consider techniques specified in Citywide Design Guidelines – those relating to height, bulk and scale compatibility; architectural concept and consistency; and fostering a human scale – to achieve good scale and architectural design quality.
- Consider placing retail at the ground level of a parking structure along the primary facade, where appropriate.
- Parking structure facades should be treated with high quality materials and given vertical articulation and emphasis similar to the principal structure. The facade should be designed to visually screen cars.
- Pedestrian entries should be clearly visible and architecturally expressed on the exterior of the building.

3.4 Landscaping

Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites

Consistent placement of the same types of street trees creates a unified theme in a pedestrian environment. Consider trees on surrounding sites and consult the City Arborist's recommended list when selecting street tree species.

Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site

Quality landscaping is an essential component of the built urban form. Good use of existing and new landscaping adds considerable value to the design of new development and blends new development with surrounding areas, and reduces stormwater runoff.

- The corners of street intersections should be distinguished by special landscape treatments: special paving, low planters and flower displays, sculpture, and decorative lighting.

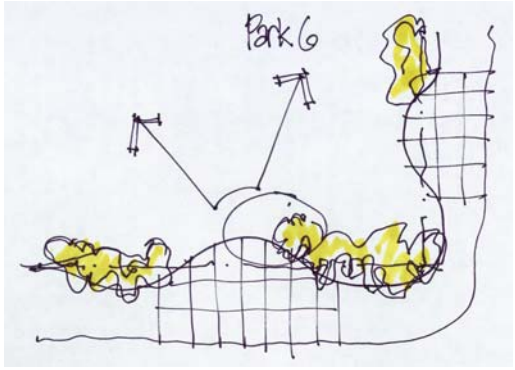
- Mark and define pedestrian crossing and walkways with specimen trees and shrubs.
- Ease of maintenance and durability should help guide the selection of plant species and landscape materials such as paving, seating and other site materials. Use native, drought tolerant species of plants and avoid invasive plant species.

Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions

The natural area east of 5th Avenue NE from NE 103rd to NE 105th and east of 8th Avenue NE from NE 105th Street to Roosevelt Way NE will be developed as per the Thornton Creek Park 6 Long Range Plan prepared by Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle Parks and Recreation. New development adjacent to the natural area should consider:

- Retaining natural greenbelt vegetation, where possible.
- Incorporating gathering areas and lookout points along the edge of the natural area into the design of the project.
- Incorporating native plants into the landscape design to provide the feeling of an extension of the natural area into the project site.
- Providing linkages to the natural area that direct people to designated pathways and away from protected areas.
- The plant list developed for the Thornton Creek Park 6 Long Range Plan can help guide the selection of plant species. Native plants provide ease of maintenance and durability, and are usually drought tolerant.

Thornton Creek natural area



New development adjacent to Park 6 can take advantage of the natural area as an amenity

Community Goal 4:

Landscape Design to Enhance the Site or Address Special Site Conditions

Objective: Incorporate existing natural features into the site design and consider including new landscaping that could provide areas of interest and enhance the site.

In the Northgate Urban Center, opportunities for sustainable design are enhanced through the presence of Thornton Creek and its tributaries and the considerable transit investment including light rail and bus service. The neighborhood is challenged by its proximity to Interstate 5 and a history of site design in the Northgate Way corridor emphasizing auto-oriented commercial activity with limited emphasis on the pedestrian environment and landscaping.

4.1 Retain Existing Natural Systems and Site Features as Landscaping

Consider design strategies to preserve existing on-site natural habitats, significant vegetation or other natural features including drainage features that can be incorporated into the site design. For example, consider retaining natural features such as existing vegetation and wetlands that are aesthetically pleasing, would emphasize natural features like that of Thornton Creek and its tributaries and can create a pedestrian friendly environment by providing natural areas of interest. Also, features such as larger planting strips located adjacent to sidewalks can be used for landscaping to enhance the site and can effectively separate pedestrians from the impacts of traffic.

4.2 Use Landscaping Design to Enhance the Site

Consider design strategies to create natural features or systems that can be incorporated into the site design. For example, consider incorporating rain gardens or drainage swales that are aesthetically pleasing, would emphasize natural features and can create a pedestrian friendly environment by providing landscape designed features or areas of interest. Landscaping features such as larger planting strips can enhance the site and can effectively separate pedestrians from the impacts of traffic.

For more information about Design Review in Northgate and citywide, please visit:

www.seattle.gov/dpd/designreview