



CITY LIFE  
AT STREET LEVEL



City of Seattle  
MAY 2020

# CITY LIFE AT STREET LEVEL

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*What we will go over today*

1/2 original presentation

1/2 ideas for how the recommendations could be adapted to support  
community needs and recovery





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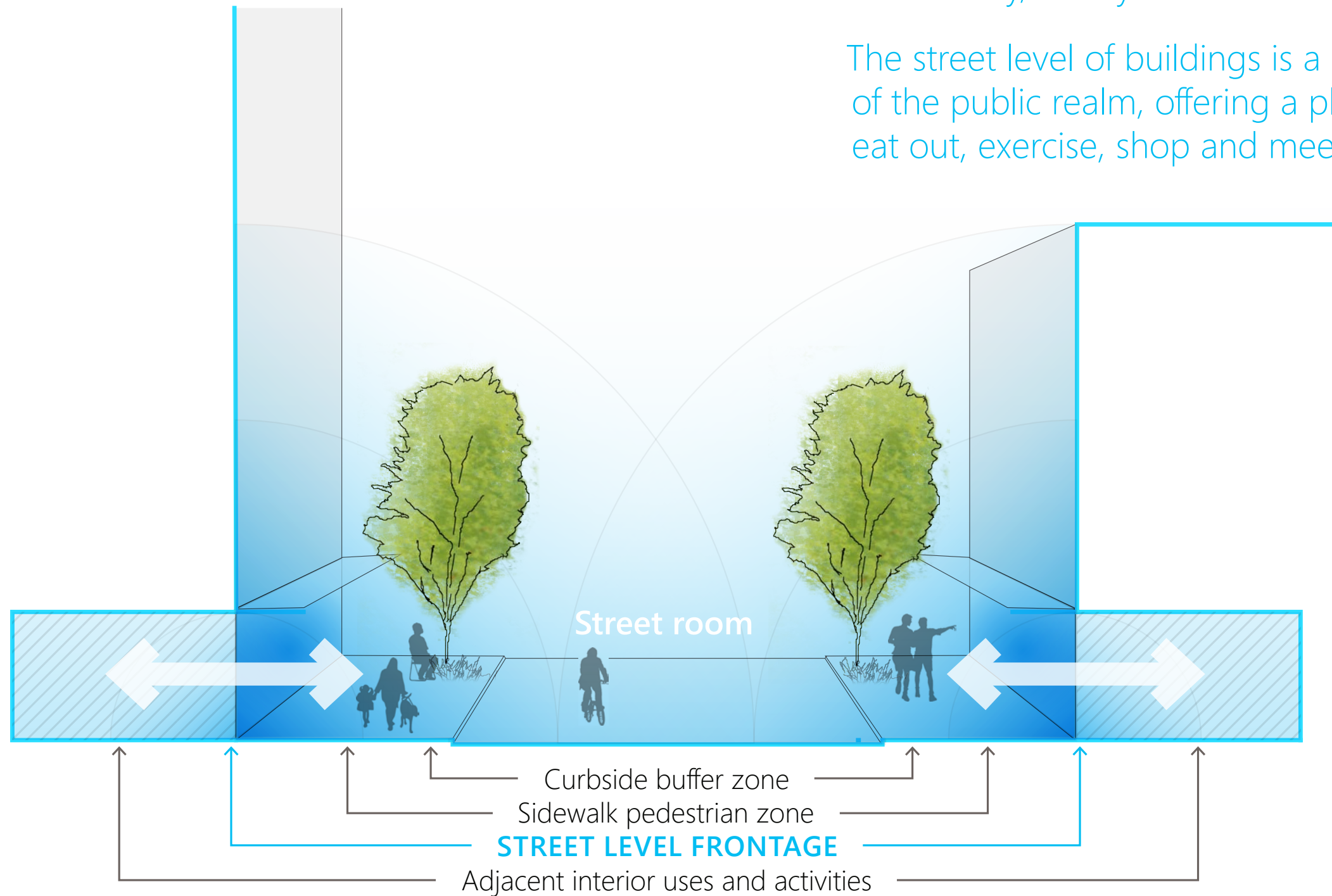
*"We believe in treating every single public space—  
every building, every street, and every corner  
of the city—as an extension of our homes by  
turning our cities into living rooms for everyone."*

*- Cobe Architects*



An active street life — both day and night — is a defining feature of the city and important for livability, vitality and character.

The street level of buildings is a critical part of the public realm, offering a place to travel, eat out, exercise, shop and meet others.



We researched street level frontages in Downtown neighborhoods to better understand which design qualities encourage public interaction and vibrant small businesses. This study focuses on street level frontage—a key element of successful street rooms.

## Who this is for

### **Building Owners and Tenants**

undertaking new projects, remodels or tenant improvements can learn how to host activities and uses that enliven the street.

### **Architects and Designers**

can use this report as a tool to design building edges that encourage city life. This document explains why some projects are more successful than others.

### **General Public and Agencies**

can learn to evaluate the sidewalks zone and lead others to take action.

## 5 MEASURES

examined through

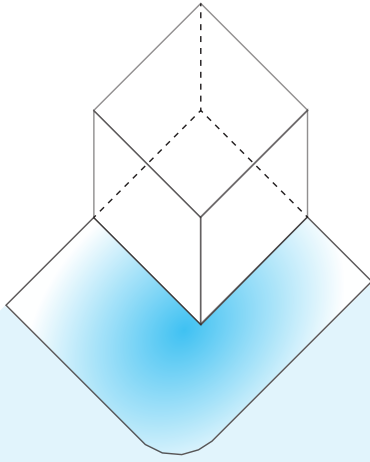
## 10 CASE STUDIES

identified

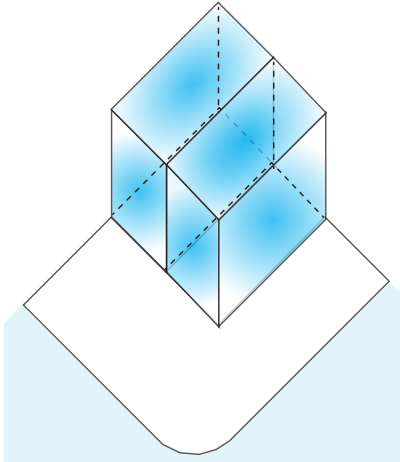
## 14 KEY LESSONS



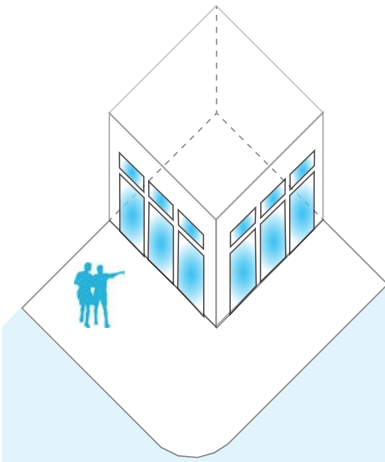
# 5 MEASURES



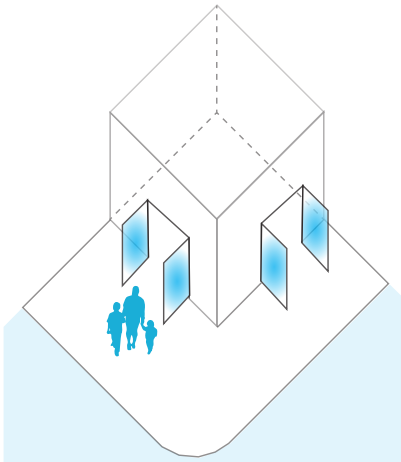
WELCOME  
PUBLIC LIFE



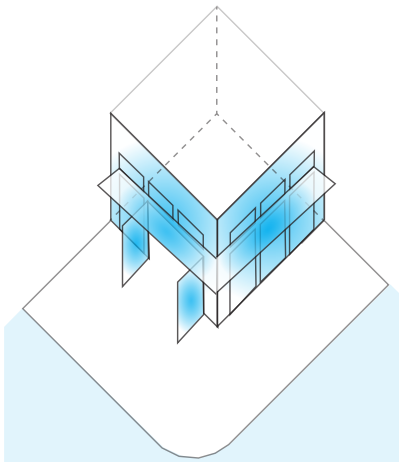
INVITE  
A MIX OF ACTIVE USES



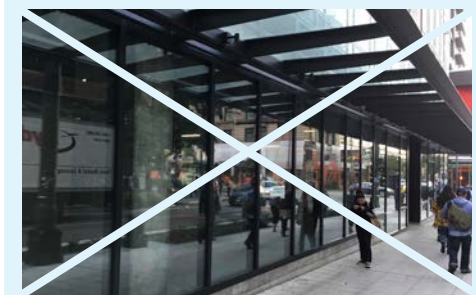
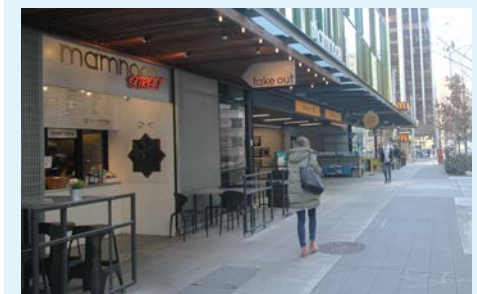
CONNECT  
VISUALLY + PHYSICALLY



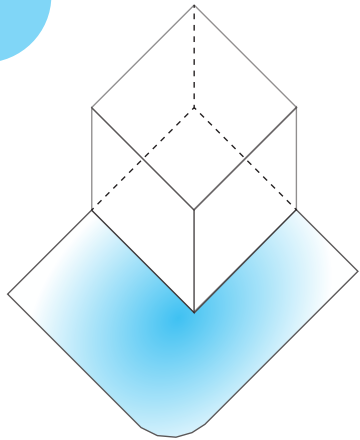
REINFORCE  
BUILDING ENTRIES



ENHANCE  
HUMAN SCALE



1



## WELCOME PUBLIC LIFE

Seattle is a 'street wall' city; the code ensures a consistent street definition, so pedestrians have interesting storefronts along their path. Setbacks, courtyards and other erosions of the street wall are tightly limited.

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*"Frontages comprised of many small units, welcoming awnings, frequent openings, and a variety of functions make the public realm more diverse, stimulating and attractive."*

*-Gehl Architects*







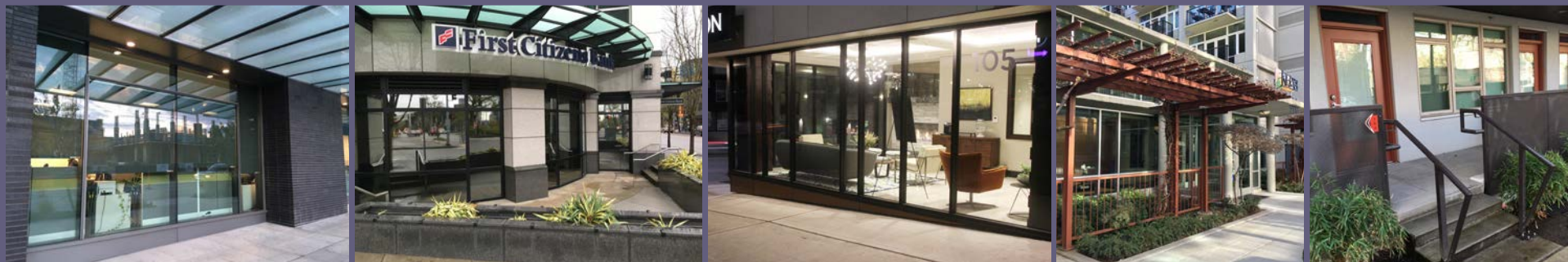
## Active (People Centered)

- Restaurants (visible places for eating, drinking, socializing)
- Arts, creative spaces, bookstores and other maker activities
- Open lounge for music/theatre/museum
- Multi-use community rooms
- Transit entrances



## Mixed (Viewing Focused)

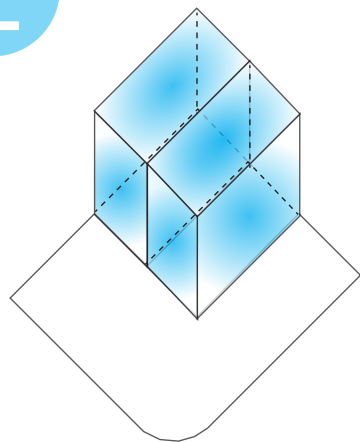
- Retail sales and services (encourage walking in)
- Produce, flowers and other merchandise
- Galleries (which provide engaging displays during day and night)
- Visible craftwork and food prep (bakery, tailor, etc.)



## Limited (Controlled Access)

- Offices, hotels and institutions (tend to be more introverted and offer little activation)
- Residential lobbies
- Live/work units (typically not lively throughout the day)
- Landscaped setbacks

2

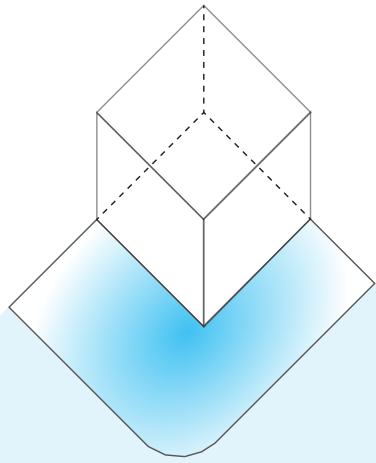


## INVITE

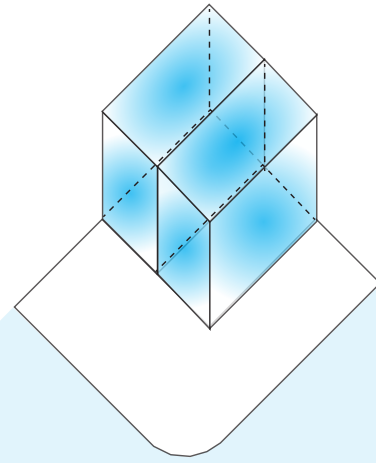
### A MIX OF ACTIVE USES

Uses drive the liveliness of streets; different uses generate different types of pedestrian activity. We grouped indoor functions into three types, **active (people centered)**, **mixed (viewing focused)** and **limited (controlled access)**.

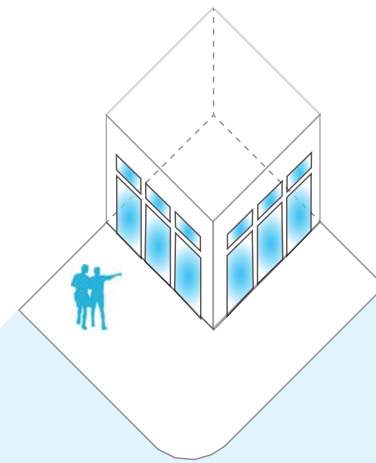
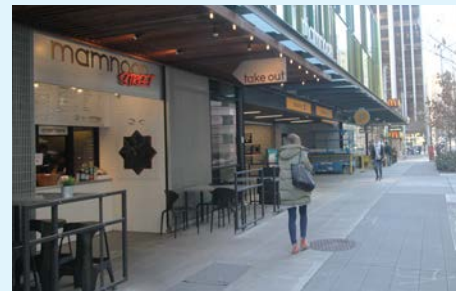
# 5 MEASURES



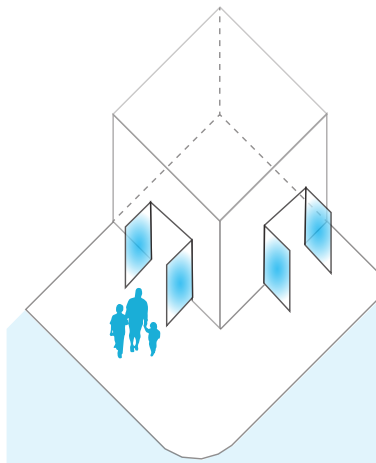
WELCOME  
PUBLIC LIFE



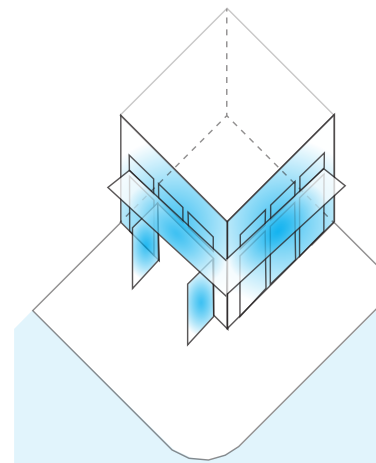
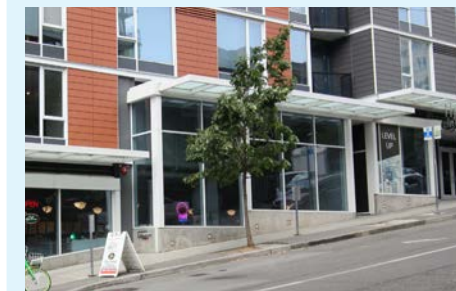
INVITE  
A MIX OF ACTIVE USES



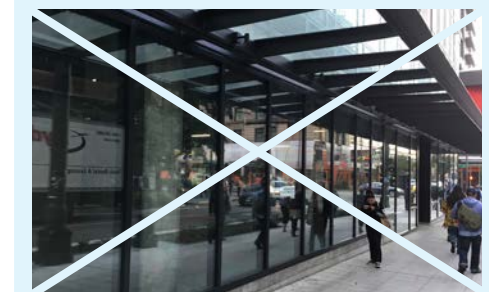
CONNECT  
VISUALLY + PHYSICALLY



REINFORCE  
BUILDING ENTRIES



ENHANCE  
HUMAN SCALE



# 10 CASE STUDIES



A Expo



B Apollo



C Uwajimaya



D Clarendon



E Cielo



F Batik



G 400 Fairview



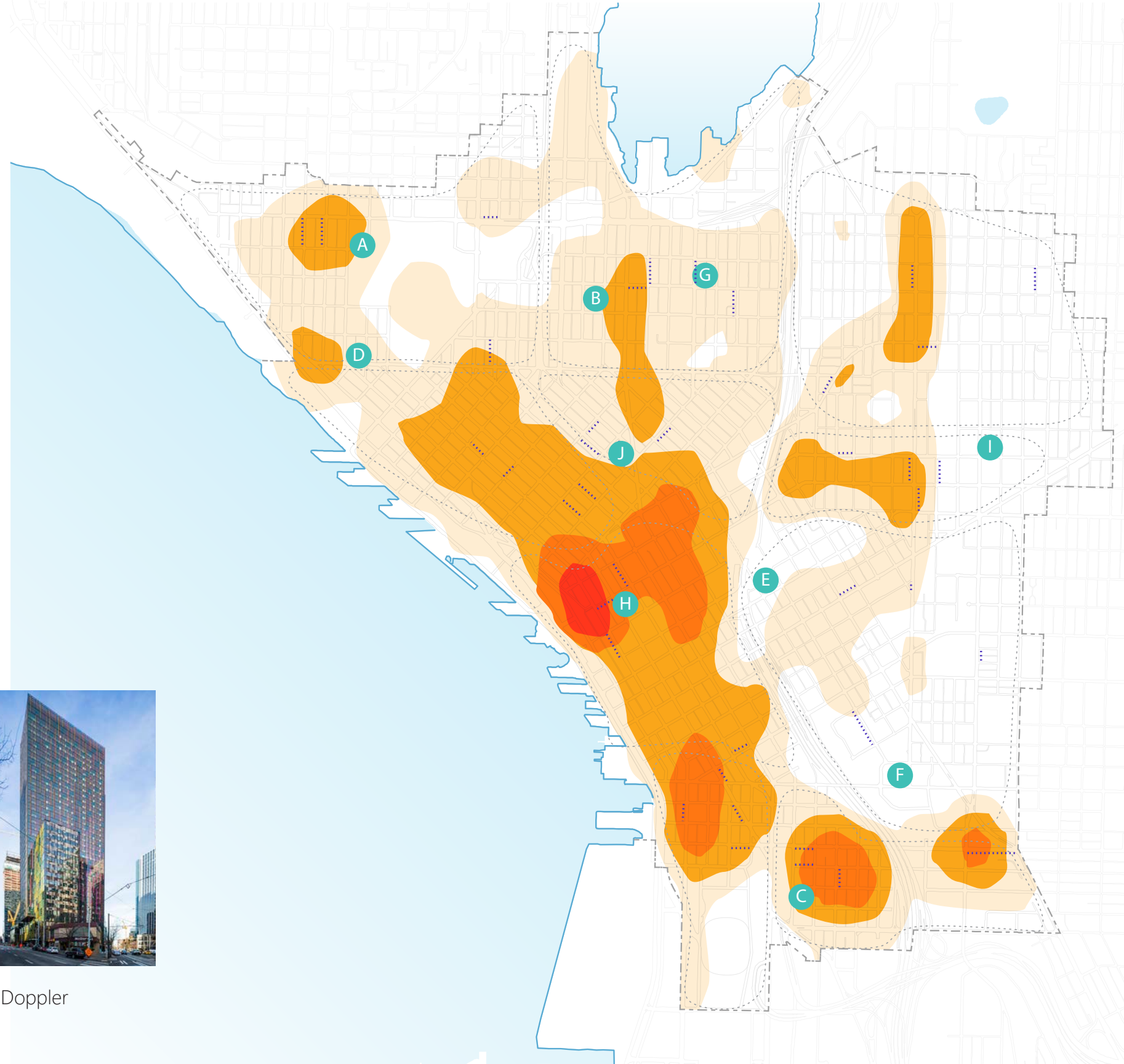
H West Edge



I 12th Avenue Arts



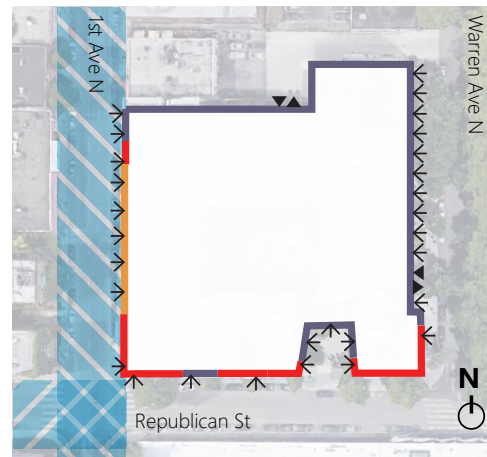
J Doppler



## KEY LESSON #1

# Storefronts should be designed for variety

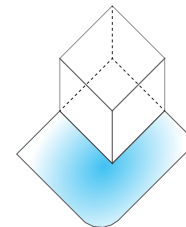
Storefronts play a critical role in creating an active atmosphere and signaling walkability. Fine-grained storefronts, punctuated with multiple doors and individualized storefronts, are especially tied to walkability and thriving activity.



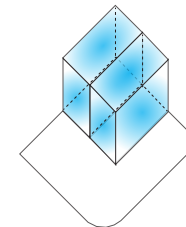
### CASE STUDY A

## EXPO

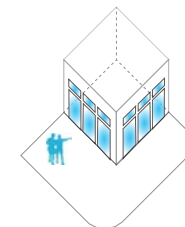
100 Republican Street



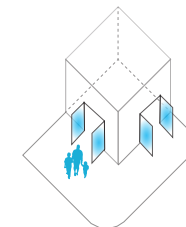
2,080 sf  
of plaza



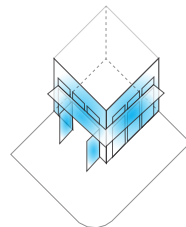
10  
different commercial  
spaces



85%  
transparency



23.5 ft  
average door spacing



12-17 ft  
ground floor height

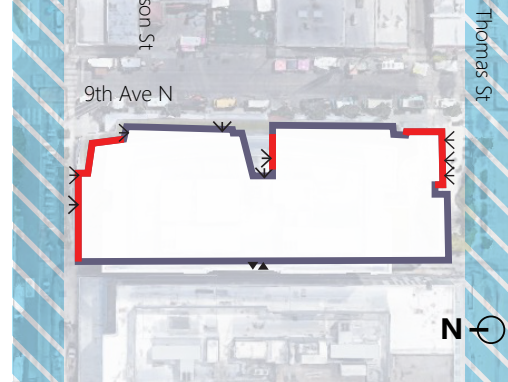
## KEY LESSON #2

# Not all glass is clear

It is desirable to be able to see out of buildings and into them, so that the activities inside and outside are connected visually and can enrich and inspire each other.

Not all glass is made the same—its actual composition can be altered to be more clear or more opaque. Low-iron glass is recommended at the ground-level for its transparent clarity.

Glass does not activate the sidewalk if covered with signs, shelving, equipment or obscuring films, tints or shades. Limited amounts of patterned glass can provide interest, but only if they are outside pedestrian eye-level and are over 50% transparent. Applied films are discouraged; typically they are too opaque, reflective and/or obscuring.



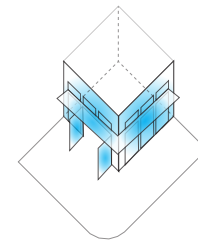
### CASE STUDY B

**Apollo**  
325 9th Ave N

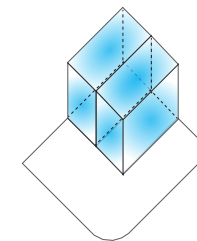


*"Successful ground floor... projects prioritize increased light, openness, and street-level activation...and require resources dedicated to building open and high-finish spaces."*

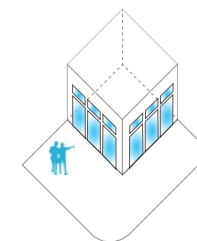
-Downtown Seattle Association



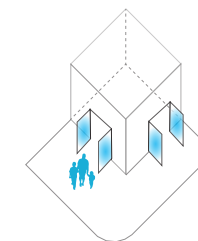
**16-25 ft**  
ground floor height



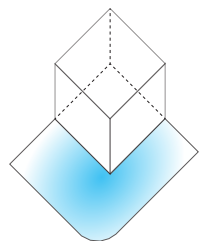
**3**  
commercial spaces,



**91%**  
transparency



**41 ft**  
average door spacing



**4,560 sf**  
of open space

### KEY LESSON #3

## Inside activities invite people

Simply having glass or art is not enough to attract visitors. Active, people-centered uses draw pedestrians and encourage interaction.



### CASE STUDY

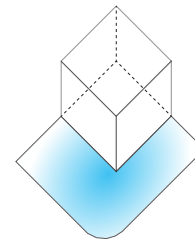
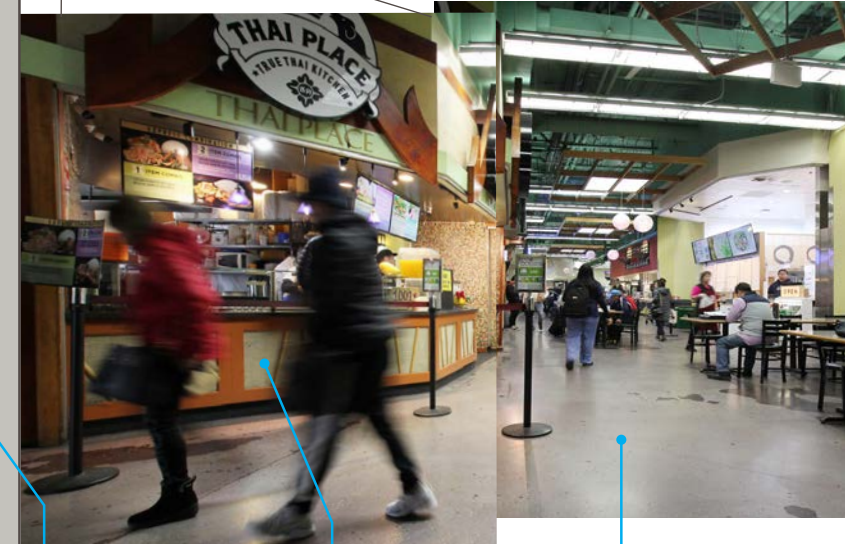
## Uwajimaya

521 S Weller St

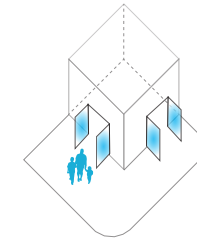


"...a stranger feels at home because they can inhabit the city...by strolling through it without aim or purpose, stopping off at one or another café that lines the streets, and past which the life of the city—the flow of pedestrians—moves along."

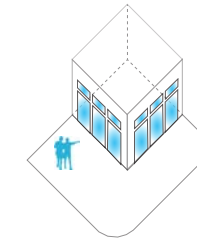
-Hannah Arendt



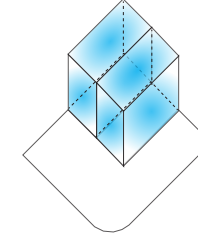
350 sf  
ground level setback



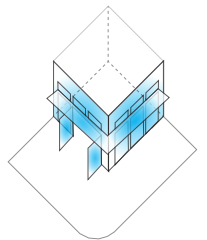
24 ft  
average door  
spacing



70%  
transparency



21  
commercial spaces,



16-20 ft  
ground floor height

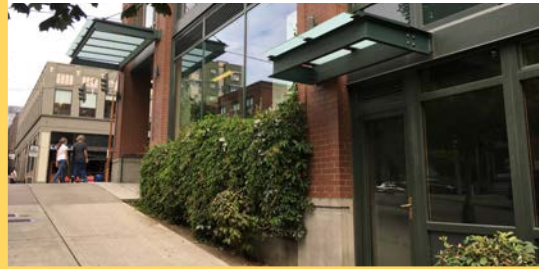
**KEY LESSON #4**

Corners are meeting places



**KEY LESSON #5**

Entries and floors should step with slopes



**KEY LESSON #6**

Vertical rhythms create pedestrian scale



**KEY LESSON #7**

Details ensure visual interest



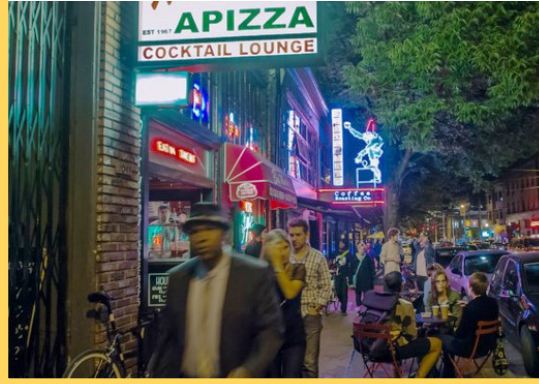
**KEY LESSON #8**

Light, clear canopies work in the Northwest



**KEY LESSON #9**

Lighting adds safety and invites nightlife



**KEY LESSON #10**

Spillover draws people in



**KEY LESSON #12**

Micro retail is an incubator



**KEY LESSON #11**

Infill over time



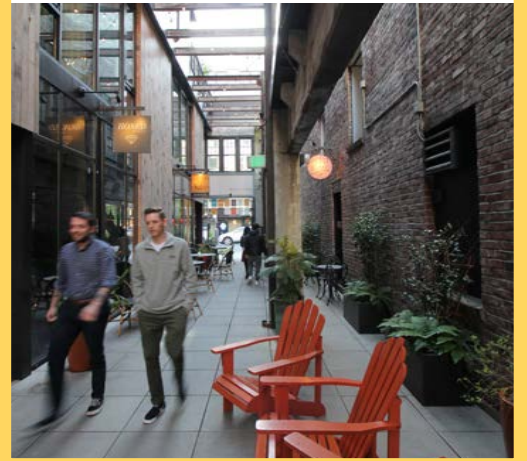
**KEY LESSON #13**

No barriers are needed!

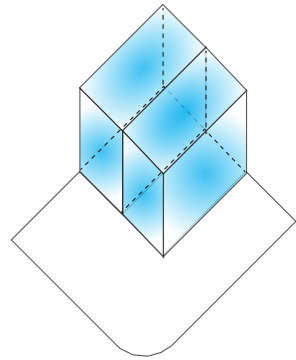


**KEY LESSON #14**

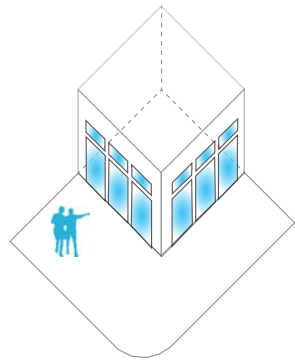
Active arcades are fine; not all setbacks are good



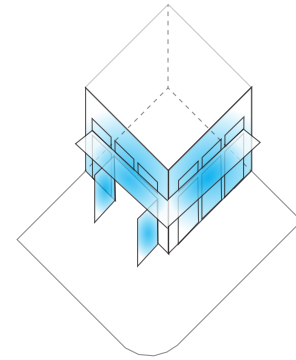
# CASE STUDY AVERAGES



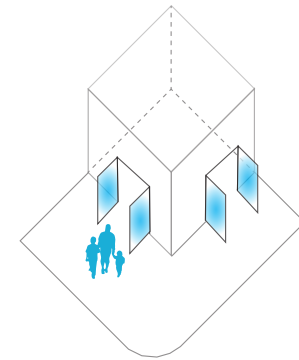
**6.6**  
different  
commercial spaces



**78.9%**  
transparency



**17.5 ft**  
ground floor  
height



**31.65 ft**  
door spacing



**A** Expo



**B** Apollo



**C** Uwajimaya



**D** Clarendon



**E** Cielo



**F** Batik



**G** 400 Fairview



**H** West Edge



**I** 12th Avenue Arts



**J** Doppler





## EXISTING CODE TOPICS

### 1. Reinforce Street Level Use Requirements:

- Reexamine and refine qualifying uses.
- Add new mapped locations and expand active use requirements
- Expand locations where “small commercial space” requirements apply, similar to current Pike/Pine overlay district.

### 2. Strengthen Street Level Transparency Requirements:

- Increase the amount of required transparency.
- Add “low-iron, non-reflective glass” to what is considered ‘transparent’
- Prohibit interior shelving, partitions, signs and other visual obstructions from overlapping the required transparency.

### 3. Increase Minimum Street Level Floor Height:

- Add a minimum street level floor height requirement to Downtown and other high pedestrian zones.
- Increase the minimum floor to floor height to 15 ft and add a minimum clear height of 13 ft to ensure retail viability.

## POSSIBLE NEW TOPICS

- Require Entrance Spacing
- Require Floor Lines to Step on Sloped Sites.
- Prohibit Recessed Moats along Sidewalks.
- Ensure storefront variety with vertical rhythms and materials that establish legible increments of 20-30 ft.
- Create Pedestrian Scale and Interest with code standards for 6-12” façade depth, composition, variation.

FOR ALL PROJECTS  
INCLUDING TENANT IMPROVEMENTS + SMALL REMODELS

- **Large, clear glass:** not reflective or obscured
- **Lively interior activities:** operable windows and doors and open displays
- **Frequent, welcoming entrances:** every 20-30' and pedestrian scale details for visual interest
- **Spillover features:** seating, planters and/or merchandise



## Buildings Outlive Uses

All buildings influence—ideally for the better—the adjacent streets and public realm for their 50–100 year life spans. The initial ground floor uses will change, and storefronts regularly get remodeled over time.

FOR MAJOR REMODELS + NEW BUILDINGS  
ALL LISTED ABOVE PLUS

- **Street level variety:** non-uniform architectural and storefront designs every 20-30'
- **Vertical rhythms:** vertical elements variety and facade depth
- **Light canopies:** full protection, glass and light colors for Northwest climate
- **Lighting;** integrated on building walls and/or canopies at pedestrian scale
- **Limited Sills/bulkheads:** no structural sills or storefront bulkheads along sidewalks, to accommodate future multiple entries and remodels

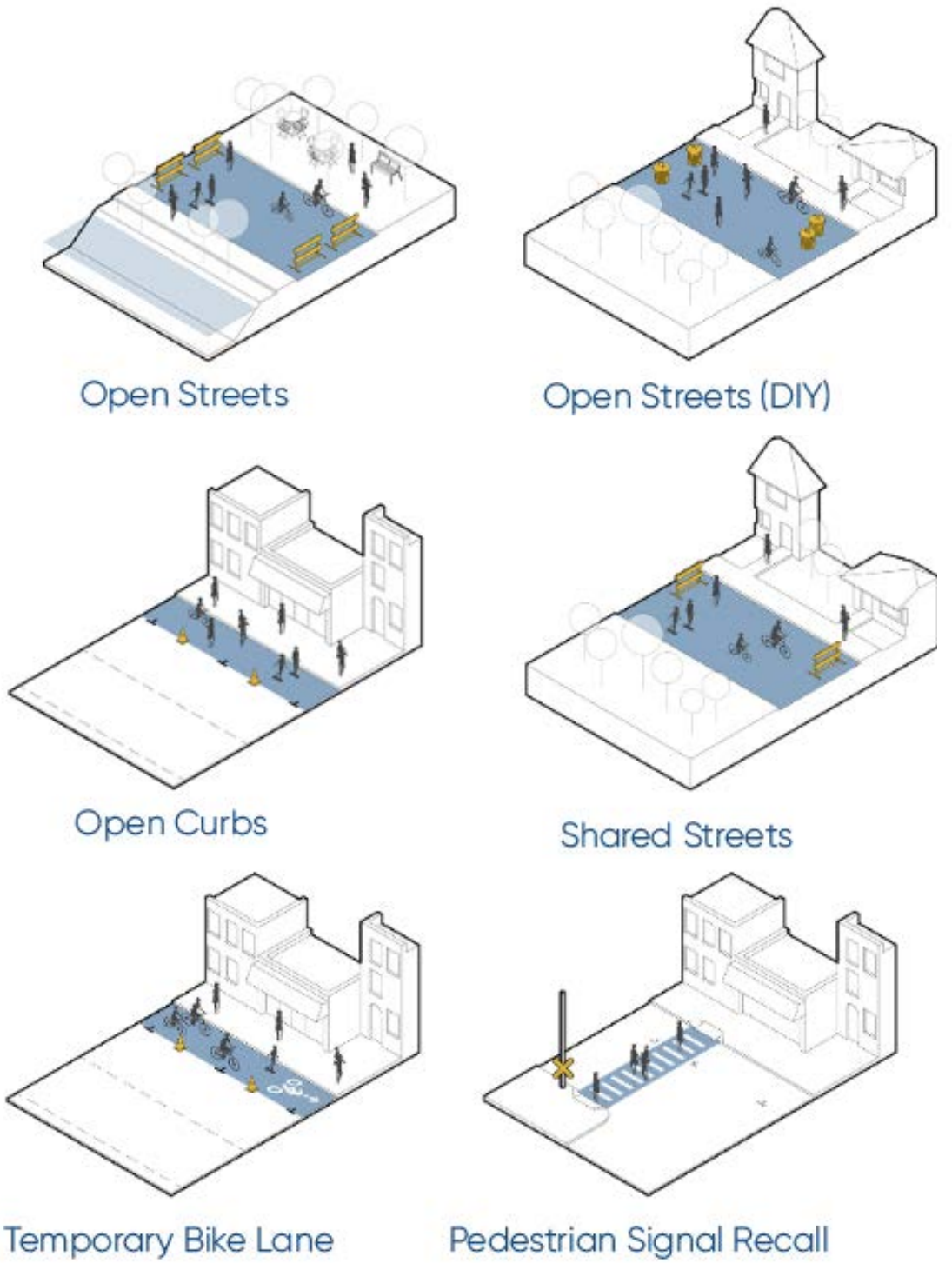
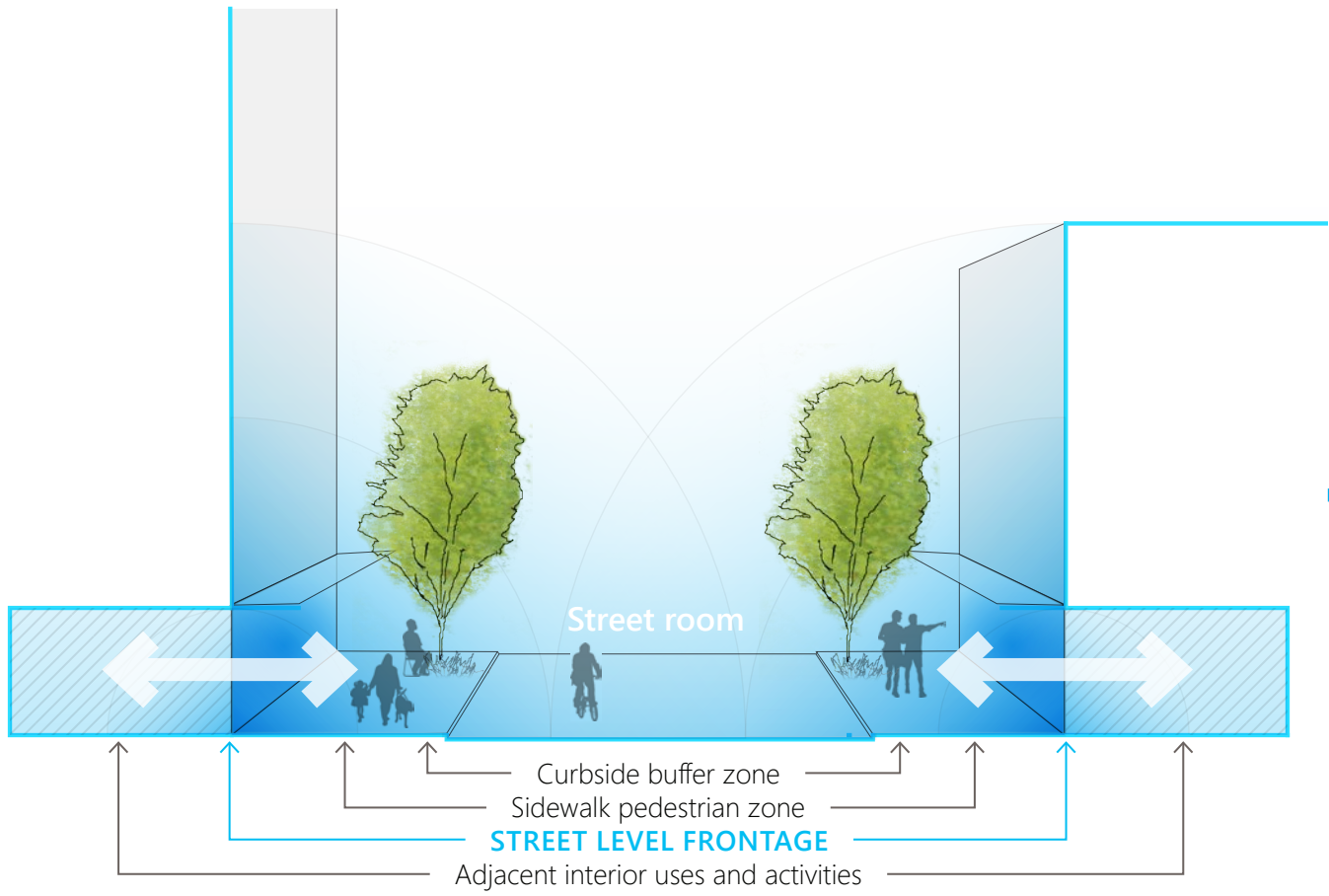


FOR NEW BUILDINGS  
ALL LISTED ABOVE PLUS

- **Open and flexible corners:** diverse commercial uses over time
- **Stepping with slopes:** step the perimeter floors to meet sidewalks
- **Generous floor to floor height:** 15 ft min for long-term tenant viability
- **Limited setbacks and street wall erosion:** active edges and uses on all setbacks and street-facing facades
- **Recessed perimeter columns/elements:** permanent elements should be minimized along sidewalks and recessed 1-3 ft to improve pedestrian visibility and allow future flexibility.



# #COVID19Streets Typology



# WASHINGTON'S PHASED APPROACH

## Modifying Physical Distancing Measures as we Reopen the State

INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES SHOULD FOLLOW ALL REQUIREMENTS LISTED ABOVE DURING ALL PHASES



**Phase 1**



**Phase 2**



**Phase 3**



**Phase 4**

**High-Risk Populations\***

Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy

Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy

Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy

Resume public interactions, with physical distancing

**Recreation**

Some outdoor recreation (hunting, fishing, golf, boating, hiking)

Outdoor recreation involving 5 or fewer people outside your household (camping, beaches, etc.)

- Outdoor group rec. sports activities (50 or fewer people)
- Recreational facilities at <50% capacity (gyms, public pools, etc.)
- Professional sports without audience participation (horseracing, baseball, etc.)

Resume all recreational activity

**Gatherings (social, spiritual)**

- None
- Drive-in spiritual service with one household per vehicle

Gather with no more than 5 people outside your household per week

Allow gatherings with no more than 50 people

Allow gatherings with >50 people

**Travel**

Essential travel and limited non-essential travel for Phase I permissible activities

Essential travel and limited non-essential travel for Phase I & II permissible activities

Resume non-essential travel

Continue non-essential travel

**Business/Employers**

- Essential businesses open
- Existing construction that meets agreed upon criteria
- Landscaping
- Auto/RV/boat/ORV sales
- Retail (curb-side pick-up orders only)
- Car washes
- Pet walkers

- Remaining manufacturing
- Additional construction phases
- In-home/domestic services (nannies, housecleaning, etc.)
- Retail (in-store purchases allowed with restrictions)
- Real estate
- Professional services/office-based businesses (telework remains strongly encouraged)
- Hair and nail salons/barbers
- Pet grooming
- Restaurants/taverns <50% capacity table size no larger than 5 (no bar-area seating)

- Restaurants/taverns <75% capacity/ table size no larger than 10
- Bar areas in restaurant/taverns at <25% capacity
- Movie theaters at <50% capacity
- Customer-facing government services (telework remains strongly encouraged)
- Libraries
- Museums
- All other business activities not yet listed except for nightclubs and events with greater than 50 people

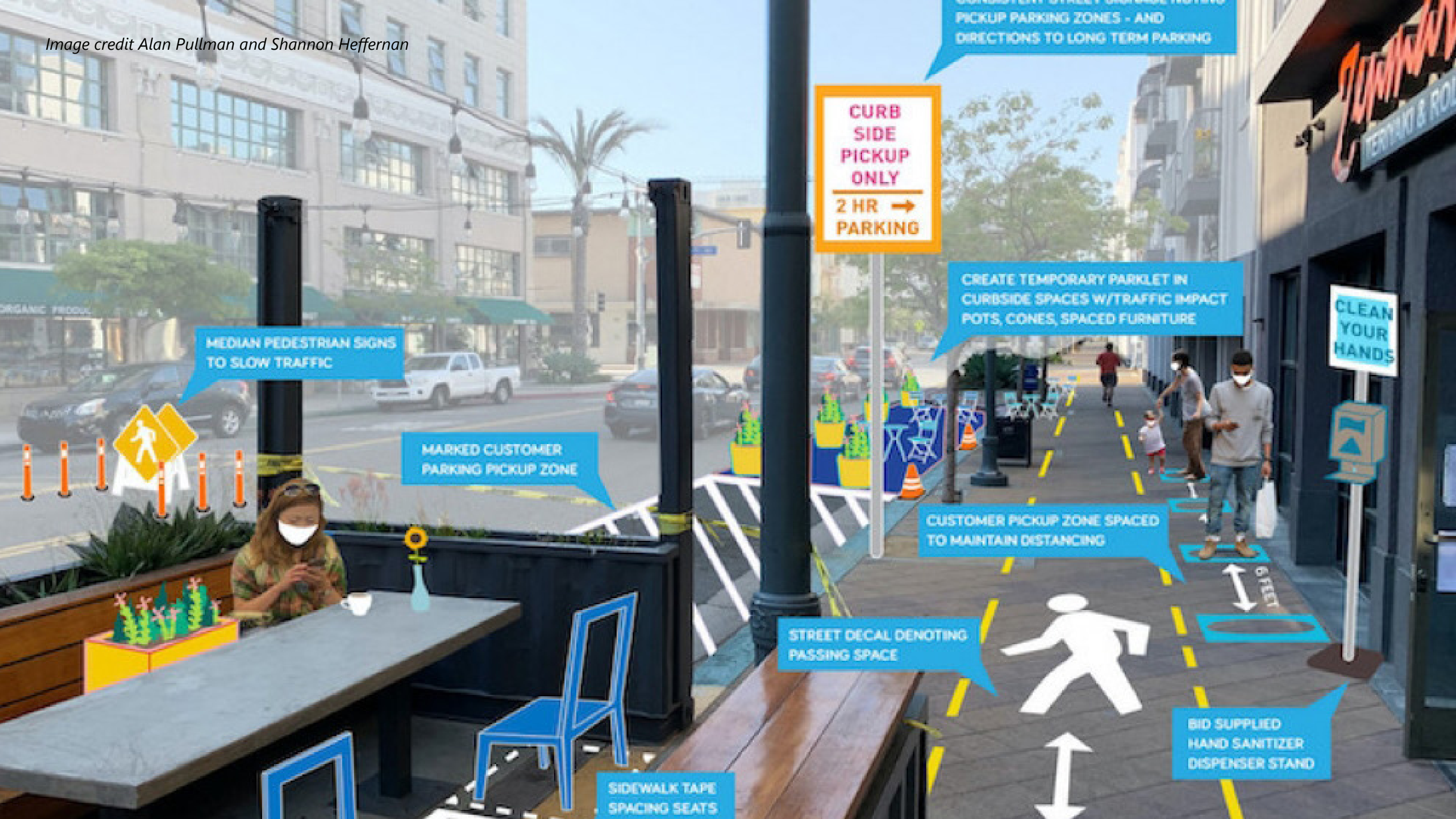
- Nightclubs
- Concert venues
- Large sporting events
- Resume unrestricted staffing of worksites, but continue to practice physical distancing and good hygiene

## KEY LESSON #1

# Storefronts should be designed for variety

Storefronts play a critical role in creating an active atmosphere and signaling walkability. Fine-grained storefronts, punctuated with multiple doors and individualized storefronts, are especially tied to walkability and thriving activity.





MEDIAN PEDESTRIAN SIGNS TO SLOW TRAFFIC

MARKED CUSTOMER PARKING PICKUP ZONE

CURB SIDE PICKUP ONLY  
2 HR → PARKING

CREATE TEMPORARY PARKLET IN CURBSIDE SPACES W/TRAFFIC IMPACT POTS, CONES, SPACED FURNITURE

CUSTOMER PICKUP ZONE SPACED TO MAINTAIN DISTANCING

STREET DÉCAL DENOTING PASSING SPACE

BID SUPPLIED HAND SANITIZER DISPENSER STAND

SIDEWALK TAPE SPACING SEATS

CLEAN YOUR HANDS

CONSISTENT STREET GRADE NOTING PICKUP PARKING ZONES - AND DIRECTIONS TO LONG TERM PARKING

6 FEET





Image credit Luis Santana





*Image credit Eva Plevier*



*Image credit motoelastico*



*Image credit Saulius Žiūra*

## Recommendations to support community needs and recovery,

1. Along Healthy Streets, other streets, or flex zones create “temporary modification” permits that would allow to expand seating to increase their capacity while maintaining social distancing standards. Ask and listen to businesses for the locations. Make sure that there are operators out there that will use these ideas.

2. Lift parking requirements to “allow us to free up additional space” in parking lots for outdoor dining services.

3. Waive any additional fees associated with the temporary permits.



Image credit Saulius Žiūra

Thank you  
and feel free to reach out!

Office of Planning and Community  
Development

Magda Hogness  
[Magda.Hogness@seattle.gov](mailto:Magda.Hogness@seattle.gov)

