

Director’s Report on the Mayor’s Recommended U District Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan - 2015

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Department of Planning and Development

June 2015



Introduction

This document describes the Mayor’s recommendations for amending the City’s Comprehensive Plan, specifically focused on changes relating to the University Community Urban Center. The Comprehensive Plan “Comp Plan” or “Plan” is a collection of goals and policies that guides City actions for managing future population, housing and employment growth. It also includes a Future Land Use Map, which guides zoning and other land use policy decisions. The Plan is a requirement of the state Growth Management Act (GMA), which calls for most counties and cities in the state to prepare plans showing how they will accommodate the state’s projected population growth. The Comp Plan includes goals and policies for the University Community Urban Center. This content is derived from neighborhood planning in the late ‘90s. Most of the goals and policies continue to be consistent with the priorities of the neighborhood today, but some are no longer relevant, or the emphasis in the community has shifted. This legislation proposes amendments to the goals, policies, and Future Land Use Map designations of the U District to bring this section of the Comp Plan into closer alignment with recent public input.

The proposed Comp Plan changes are a result of public processes summarized below.

U District planning background

The City has been extensively involved with several planning efforts in the U District since 2012, with efforts including:

U District Partnership (UDP) – 2012 to present.

Supported by “Only in Seattle” grants from Office of Economic Development, the UDP has grown into an active, broad-based community organization. This group is working to be both an expanded Business Improvement Area (BIA) and a coalition of neighborhood groups and University representatives. It includes residents, business owners, social service providers and the faith community, property owners, and the University of Washington. DPD has participated in the UDP in a support role, providing information about development and planning issues.

U District Urban Design Framework (UDF) – 2012-2013.

Working with a subcommittee of the U District Partnership, DPD hosted a year of meetings and workshops to develop guiding principles and specific recommendations for land use, open space, transportation, and building design. Vetted through broader public involvement, the UDF is a record of community priorities and concerns. When this document was completed in 2013, it identified some desired planning work in the neighborhood, including these proposed Comp Plan amendments.

U District Urban Design Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) 2013-2014.

Building on guiding principles from the Urban Design Framework, DPD and consultants conducted State Environmental Policy Act (“SEPA”) review of a proposal to allow increased height and density in portions of the University District as well as modest Comp Plan changes to reflect current public input. The EIS evaluated two rezone alternatives that would focus increase height and density around the planned Sound Transit light rail station, as well as growth under existing zoning. The EIS analyzed potential impacts of such rezones, and identified mitigation approaches for those impacts. Findings from this study will shape DPD’s zoning recommendations in Fall 2015. DPD also evaluated the need and potential impacts of proposed Comp Plan amendments in the EIS; however, none of the proposed amendments were found to result in a probable significant environmental impact. The EIS process included formal and informal public input opportunities. DPD published the Final EIS on January 8, 2015. The adequacy of the Final EIS was challenged before the Seattle Hearing Examiner and upheld on June 19, 2015.

Community priorities

Throughout these processes, DPD has consistently heard several key messages from the community:

- **Establish a thoughtful, integrated approach to land use and transportation.** While disagreements remain about the specifics of height and density, most people agree that new housing and job growth should be focused on the blocks closest to the light rail station. This is also the area that needs the most careful planning and investment in pedestrian improvements, bike facilities, and integration of transit and cars.
- **Encourage a range of housing types and affordability levels.** In recent years, almost all the new housing built in the U District has targeted student renters. The neighborhood wants to see this balanced by new housing and services that work for families, seniors, and professionals. At the same time that many people want more market-rate housing development in the neighborhood, many also want to see mechanisms to help keep the neighborhood affordable for lower-income residents.
- **A variety of building types is important for neighborhood character.** Almost all development in the past five years has been in the form of wide, 5-6 story midrise structures. The community would prefer to see a broader mix of buildings, including lowrise, midrise, and highrise, together with preservation of historic buildings and the pedestrian-retail character of the Ave.
- **Provide more well-maintained open spaces.** There is widespread support in the neighborhood for more parks, street improvements, and other open spaces – in particular, there is strong interest in a centrally located plaza. However, there are also concerns that any new open spaces need to be managed more effectively to avoid exacerbating the neighborhood’s challenges with criminal activity and street disorder.

- **Increase and broaden employment opportunities.** The neighborhood recognizes the value of the University of Washington as an employment and cultural center, but also would like to see other businesses (large and small) come to the U District.

Summary of proposed amendments

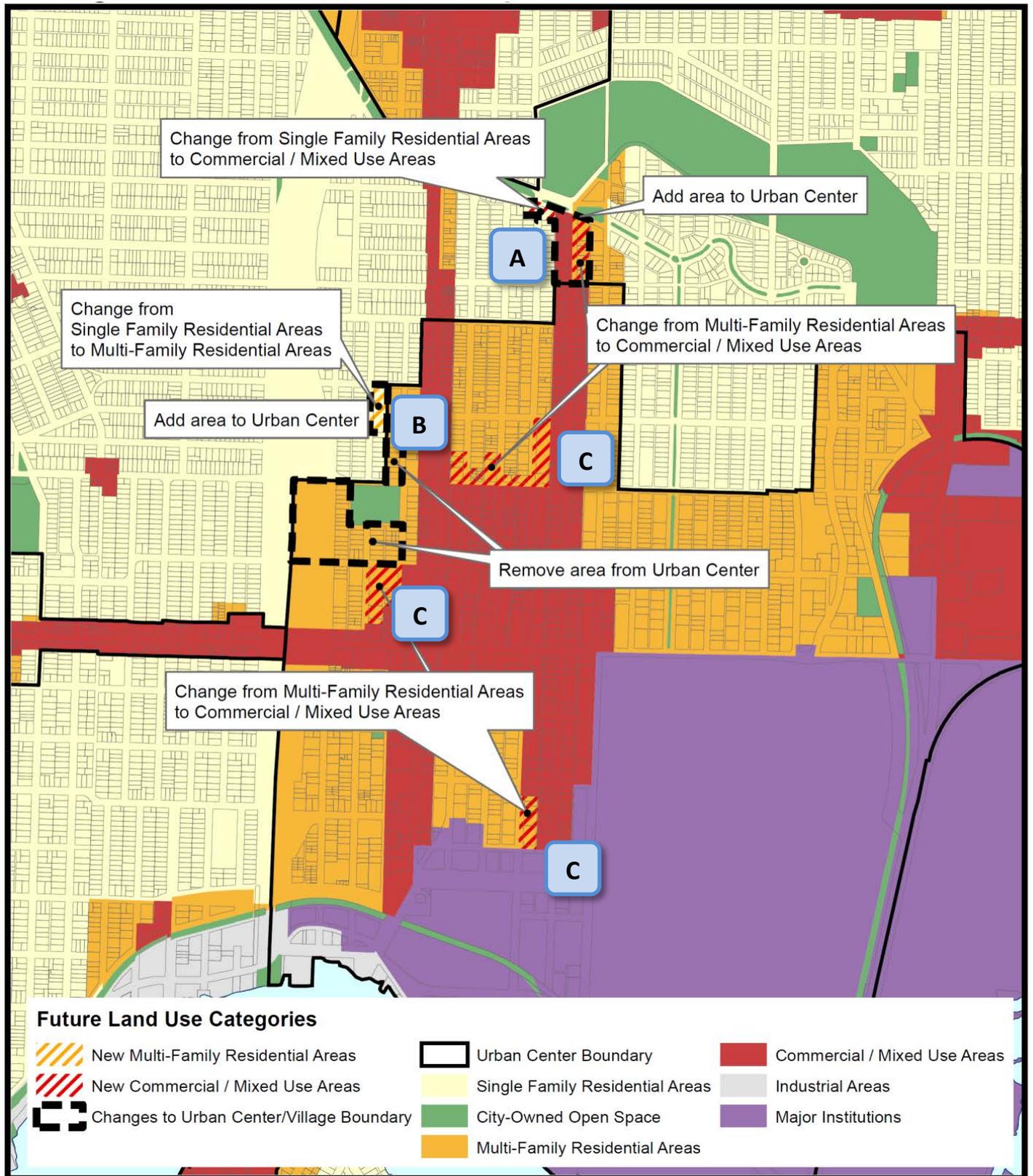
(1) Amendments proposed to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

The FLUM amendments include revising land use designations in some areas, and adjustments to the Urban Center boundary (the latter at the request of residential neighborhood). For details, see Exhibit 1.

(2) Amendments proposed to the Neighborhood Planning Element (“University Community Urban Center”)

The proposed amendments consolidate and revise multiple goals and policies in the UCUC section of the Comp Plan. These amendments align language more closely with recent community input as summarized above, update terms and remove obsolete figures, and clarify intent of certain goals and policies. For details, see Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 1: University District Northwest Future Land Use Map Amendments



Date: 12/18/2014

Background on recommended changes...

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| <p>A</p> | <p>At the north end of University Way (“the Ave”), several existing businesses and apartment buildings have uses and/or buildings that do not conform to existing zoning. This includes a neighborhood grocery store/café across Ravenna Blvd from Cowen Park, and a restaurant and several apartment buildings on the Ave.</p> <p>Property owners and neighbors have requested zoning changes that would allow future improvements or redevelopment of these properties. Specifically, DPD has analyzed Neighborhood Commercial 2 with a pedestrian overlay, with a maximum height of 40’ (NC2P 40). This zoning would allow redevelopment with uses and bulk similar to the existing buildings. Before zoning changes can move forward, Council would need to make these amendments to the Future Land Use Map.</p> |
| <p>B</p> | <p>Proposed changes to the north and south of University Playfield are based on amendment requests from the Roosevelt Neighbors Alliance (RNA). These changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusting the Urban Center boundary to expand around Blessed Sacrament Church and contract around the park; and • Changing the future land use designation on the west half of Blessed Sacrament Church from single-family to multifamily residential. <p><u>Blessed Sacrament Church</u></p> <p>The changes would allow rezoning the west half of the Blessed Sacrament (a designated landmark), which would allow proposed upgrades to the church. Specifically, Blessed Sacrament’s long-range plan calls for new ADA ramps, building new parking below their existing lot, and adding on to the historic rectory. As a split-zoned lot, any of these changes would run into conflicts under the existing single-family zoning. Before changing zoning from single-family residential to Lowrise 1 (LR1), as neighbors have requested, the proposed amendments to the Future Land Use Map are needed first. Blessed Sacrament is working with the surrounding neighborhood, which generally supports their renovation and the proposed Comp Plan changes.</p> <p><u>Carving out lower density areas</u></p> <p>The RNA also requests shrinking the urban center boundary to exclude the relatively low-density residential area around University Playfield. This request reflects concerns about growth in the core of the U District, and how that might eventually push north. Neighbors would like to see this area stay zoned at LR1 in the long-term, to maintain a transition area from the high density core to the lower density north.</p> <p>DPD is not recommending zoning changes to the “carve out” area, whether or not the urban center boundary moves. RNA neighbors are aware of this, but they view the boundary adjustment as a longer term commitment from the City to direct growth to the area closer to the light rail station.</p> <p>The “carve out” area is just outside the 10-minute walkshed of the light rail station, and includes affordable rental housing in free-standing single-family structures. Under existing zoning, these homes will likely redevelop to townhouses over time. Changing the urban center boundary does not eliminate development pressure, but it could prevent development pressure from increasing. Note that the RNA’s original amendment request carved out a larger area, including some LR2 on the blocks abutting Roosevelt. DPD recommends drawing the new boundary as shown here, because the Roosevelt blocks provide a valuable transition from high density growth on Roosevelt to the west.</p> |
| <p>C</p> | <p>Recent community input, the U District Urban Design Framework, and the EIS process all suggest a greater density and mix of uses in certain locations currently designated as “multifamily residential.”</p> <p>“Commercial/mixed use” would be required to align with parts of the zoning scenarios covered in the EIS – specifically, rezoning from residential to “Neighborhood Commercial” and “Seattle Mixed.” This includes frontage along NE 50th St., and two higher-density, mixed-use areas to the south.</p> |

Exhibit 2: Recommended Goal and Policy Amendments Summary

| Goals | Comments |
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| <p>UC-G1 Stable residential neighborhoods that can accommodate projected growth and foster desirable living conditions</p> | |
| <p>UC-G2 Vibrant commercial districts serving local needs and offering regional attractions. <u>((specialties. (See Map on Figure 1 for locations of principal commercial districts.))</u></p> | <p>Figure 1 is outdated and removed.</p> |
| <p>UC-G3 An efficient transportation system that balances different modes, including public transit, pedestrian, bicycle and automobile, and minimizes negative impacts to the community.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G4 A community in which the housing needs and affordability levels of major demographic groups, including students, young adults, families with children, empty nesters, and seniors, are met and which balances home ownership opportunities with rental unit supply.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G5 A community with a wide range of neighborhood recreation facilities and open space and which meets the Comprehensive Plan’s open space goals.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G6 A community that builds a unique physical identity on its historical and architectural resources, attractive streets, university campus, and special features.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G7 An urban center that is home to the University of Washington; the region’s foremost educational institution which is expanding to meet new challenges while enhancing the surrounding community.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G8 A community in which public education resources are readily available.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G9 A community that is regionally recognized for its arts and cultural activities and that uses cultural activities as a community building asset.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G10 An integrated social service delivery network that serves the entire community.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G11 A community where people are and feel safe.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G12 A community where the historic resources, natural elements, and other elements that add to the community’s sense of history and unique character are conserved.</p> | |
| <p>UC-G13 A community that supports innovation, discovery, and job creation through <u>collaboration between businesses and the University.</u></p> | <p>Innovation and UW/business partnerships are a recurring theme in the U District.</p> |

| Policies | Comments |
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| <p>UC-P1 In pursuit of Comprehensive Plan <u>Housing Element policies</u>, ((Policy H12,)) encourage ((ground-related)) <u>lower density housing types in the Roosevelt, University Heights</u> ((portions of the northern tier)), and Ravenna areas of the community, <u>with options at a variety of affordability levels.</u></p> | <p>This policy is edited to make a more consistent reference to Comp Plan Policy H12 regarding affordable housing. Also, the term “ground-related” has taken on a different meaning since the ‘98 plan – this language is intended to clarify the original intent.</p> |
| <p>UC-P2 ((Encourage high quality development, up to 65 feet, or about five stories, south of NE 43rd Street, and from just east of Brooklyn to the west)) <u>South of 50th and west of 15th, encourage high quality development with a variety of building types,</u> ((to enhance this residential)) <u>enhancing a vibrant mixed-use area with excellent proximity to the University and to the Sound Transit Light Rail</u> ((LRT)) stations.</p> | <p>P-2 is edited to remove obsolete subarea references and overly specific language relating to height. Language in P-3 regarding “vibrant mixed use areas” is incorporated and combined with P-2.</p> |
| <p>((UC-P3 Encourage a vibrant mixed-use residential neighborhood in the University Gardens Core area (between NE 50th Street, Brooklyn Avenue NE, NE 43rd Street, and 9th Avenue NE.))</p> | <p>This is deleted because it has been combined with P2 above.</p> |
| <p>((UC P4 These goals and policies of the UCUC Neighborhood Plan are not intended to change the policy basis for consideration of rezones proposed after adoption of these goals and policies.))</p> | <p>Deleted because rezone criteria and policies are articulated in the LU Code.</p> |
| <p>UC-P ((5)) 3 <u>Continue to s</u> ((S)) <u>trengthen pedestrian-oriented retail on University Way through physical improvements to the street and sidewalk and encouraging</u> ((private)) <u>property and business owners to improve</u> ((their properties)) <u>frontages. Encourage new improvements to University Way north of NE 50th St.</u></p> | <p>This updates the community’s intentions for policies relating to University Way (The “Ave”) and builds on completed City and community improvements on the Ave south of 50th</p> |
| <p>UC-P ((6)) 4 <u>Strengthen a diverse mix of retail and commercial activities on NE 45th Street and Roosevelt Avenue NE.</u></p> | |
| <p>UC-P ((7)) 5 <u>Support the University Village Shopping Center’s activities in a way that furthers economic and housing goals while requiring mitigation of significant and cumulative impacts according to SEPA.</u></p> | |

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| <p>UC-P((8))6 Encourage the development of retail businesses that serve local needs on 25th Avenue NE, and encourage the redevelopment of a diverse mix of housing and compatible retail, where appropriate, in adjacent areas.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((9))7 Involve the community and contiguous neighborhoods in the monitoring of traffic, and the identification of actions needed to preserve the multi-modal capacity of the principal arterial streets, to accommodate projected growth and protect residential streets from the effects of through-traffic. ((Give priority to transit, bicycle and pedestrian modes for those networks identified in the Comprehensive Plan and where specific mode improvements are noted on the map in Figure 2.))</p> | <p>The last sentence is struck because it is now articulated in the new UC-P8 (below). Figure 2 is struck as outdated.</p> |
| <p>UC-P((10))8 In pursuit of Comprehensive Plan <u>Transportation Policies</u> ((T42, T43, and T44)), emphasize comfortable, safe, attractive pedestrian and bicycle access throughout the center, especially those routes identified ((in Figure 2)) <u>in citywide modal plans</u>.</p> | <p>The language taken from the hold P-9 is articulated and updated here. Reference is made to the city-wide modal plans developed and adopted since the original University District Urban Center plan.</p> |
| <p>UC-P((11))9 Take advantage of Sound Transit improvements ((to address)) <u>and coordinate</u> local transportation needs and impacts and facilitate intermodal connections, such as bus ((and monorail)), <u>streetcar, bicycle, pedestrian travel, and surface vehicle traffic</u>.</p> | <p>This policy was updated to be more specific about current and planned modes of travel.</p> |
| <p>UC-P((12))10 Work with King County Metro and Community Transit to create efficient bus circulation. Address bus layover impacts, bus routing, and transfer issues as well as street improvements to facilitate transit.</p> | |
| <p>((UC-P13 Explore local shuttle transportation options.))</p> | <p>This is removed as it is no longer a community priority.</p> |
| <p>UC-P((14))11 Carefully manage parking to provide needed accessibility while minimizing traffic and on-street parking impacts when considering on-street parking actions, off-street parking requirements for new development, and public parking development. Strongly discourage “park-and-ride” parking for commuters.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((15))12 Employ a variety of ((housing types and development)) <u>strategies to preserve existing housing while supporting new residential growth that diversifies unit types, sizes, and affordability.</u> ((effectively provide for identified needs, including existing housing preservation, code enforcement, accessory units, new ground related housing, and mixed use mid-rise</p> | <p>This is an edit and update. The code enforcement reference is moved to the new P13.</p> |

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| <p>residential development.))</p> | |
| <p>UC-P13 <u>To maintain safe housing for all, and to reduce conflicts between student and non-student neighbors, encourage collaboration between residents, the City, and the University to enforce code requirements.</u></p> | <p>Added to address and make specific the code enforcement reference that came out of the preceding policy.</p> |
| <p>UC-P(16)14 <u>Employ a variety of strategies to bring housing development to ((desired))the affordability levels identified in the Housing element of the Comprehensive Plan, including development partnerships, zoning modifications, and subsidies.</u></p> | <p>This is an edit and update to improve consistency with the rest of the Comp Plan.</p> |
| <p>UC-P(17)15 <u>In order to serve existing residents to the north and emerging residential neighborhoods, support the community((organize a)) services ((spine))cluster roughly along NE 50th Street, which includes a ((-Include a wide)) variety of public, recreational, educational, community, and human services, plus churches, playfields, and other facilities.((See Figure 3.))</u></p> | <p>This is an edit and update. The obsolete Figure 3 is deleted.</p> |
| <p>UC-P(18)16 <u>Employ a variety of strategies to increase open space, such as park acquisition through a major open space funding program, improvement of and better access to existing assets, adding open space functions in rights-of-way, and creation of small spaces with new development.</u></p> | |
| <p>UC-P(19)17 <u>Encourage the establishment of a local open space fund that can be used to purchase and improve small parcels when the opportunity arises, and to support programming and maintenance costs.</u></p> | |
| <p>((UC P20 Place highest emphasis on open space and recreation facilities projects that will benefit the greatest number of people in areas that are least well served.))</p> | <p>This is a policy for parks acquisition throughout the city. Also, other policies provide more specific direction about desired open space locations.</p> |
| <p>((UC P21 In the Southwest Quadrant (the area generally south of NE 45th Street and west of Roosevelt Avenue NE), make convenient pedestrian connections to nearby parks and the waterfront and seek to develop a small shoreline park on the Lake Union shoreline at the south end of 7th Avenue NE.))</p> | <p>The policy intention of the (originally numbered) P-21, P-22, P-23, P-24, and P-25 is updated and expressed in the following policies, now numbered P-18, P-19, P-20 and P-21. Better physical and pedestrian connections between the campus, the District and the Waterfront, centrally located public open space and</p> |

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| | recreation facilities and activating uses near the Sound Transit station, and a network of smaller public spaces continue to be community priorities. |
| UC-P((22))18 <u>Provide better physical connections from the University District to campus that takes into consideration the U District Urban Design Framework, the UW Landscape Plan, and the UW Master Plan.</u> ((In Lower Brooklyn (the area generally south of NE 43rd Street between Roosevelt Avenue NE and the UW campus), provide open space for the large population including residents, workers, and students and strengthen physical connections to the waterfront and campus. Encourage better physical integration between the campus and the community.)) | (see above) |
| UC-P((23))19 ((In the University Gardens Core (the area generally between NE 50th Street, Brooklyn Avenue NE, NE 43rd Street, and 9th Avenue NE),)) <u>South of NE 50th St and west of 15th Ave NE, create a ((connected-))network of open spaces integrated with development, including improved sidewalks and pedestrian pathways that increase accessibility through and along long blocks. Provide open space and recreation facilities for seniors.</u> | (see above) |
| UC-P((24))20 <u>Pursue the creation of a centrally-located, flexible open space, ideally within two blocks of the Sound Transit light rail station at Brooklyn and 43rd. Surround this open space with active uses, and manage it to ensure that it is a positive addition to the neighborhood.</u> ((In the Northern Tier (the low rise multi-family residential areas above NE 45th Street between 22nd Avenue NE and 15th Avenue NE and north of NE 50th Street and west of Brooklyn Avenue NE), seek to establish and enhance a central open space and community facility as part of the NE 50th Street Community Services Spine. (See policy UCUC 17 above.)) | (see above) |
| UC-P((25))21 <u>In University Way-15th Avenue NE corridor between NE 55th Street and NE 41st Street, encourage the provision of more sidewalk cafes, alley activation, and street-oriented public space through both public and private investment.</u> | The policy intention of the (originally numbered) P-21, P-22, P-23, P-24, and P-25 is updated and expressed in the |

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| | <p>adopted 2013 UDF and the policies currently numbered P-18, P-19, P-20 and P-21. Better physical and pedestrian connections between the campus, the District and the Waterfront, centrally located public open space and recreation facilities and activating uses near the Sound Transit station continue to be community priorities. (see above)</p> |
| <p>UC-P22((26)) In the Ravenna Urban Village, seek to protect and enhance natural areas and features.</p> | |
| <p>((UC-P27 Focus visual improvements on key streets, corridors, and gateways as identified in Figure 4))</p> | <p>Deleted because now expressed in the gateway policy below (P24).</p> |
| <p>UC-P((28))23 Seek to preserve and enhance the following design characteristics within the community: Pedestrian orientation and visual interest to the pedestrian, high quality, human-scaled design details in larger buildings, streetscape continuity on commercial corridors, integration between the UW campus and the surrounding community, buildings with attractive open space and low rise multi-family development that fits with the design character of adjacent single-family houses.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((29))24 Enhance gateways into the University Community, especially at <u>NE 45th St and 7th Ave NE, NE 50th Street at Roosevelt Avenue NE, ((NE 50th Street))NE 45th St at 15th Ave((at University Way)) NE, the Sound Transit light rail station, the “landing” of the University Bridge at NE 40th St, ((11th Avenue NE at NE 41st Street,)) 25th Avenue NE at NE 55th Street, and NE 45th Street at 25th Avenue NE((, and Roosevelt Avenue at NE 42nd Street)). “Gateways” means visual enhancements that signify entries into the community, such as improved landscaping, signage, artwork, or architectural features((or other features, that signify the entries into the community)).</u></p> | <p>Updated to include language from P-27 as noted above and also to reflect the 2013 UDF and other community input.</p> |
| <p>UC-P((30))25 Accommodate new ((u))University growth in a way that benefits the surrounding community.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((31))26 Work to connect and integrate the campus and the community visually, ((and</p> | |

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| <p><u>))physically, socially, and functionally.</u></p> | |
| <p>UC-P((32))27 ((In pursuit of Comprehensive Plan Policy L130, e)) Ensure that the University Community plays an active role in the UW’s Campus Master Plan on subjects of mutual interest.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((33))28 Pursue opportunities to work with Seattle Public School District #1 in locating a public school in the community, capitalizing on the area’s excellent accessibility and proximity to the University of Washington.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((34))29 Work with Seattle Public School District #1 to ensure appropriate, equitable school resources are available in the community, including after-school activities and facilities.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((35))30 Encourage the local coordination of arts and cultural activities, including museums, theaters, commercial activities, galleries, classes, performance halls, arts groups and informal performance groups, for the mutual enhancement of those efforts.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((36))31 Provide the opportunity for local public involvement in City-sponsored art projects and the design of major public facilities.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((37))32 Ensure that the full range of cultural activities and backgrounds is represented in publicly-funded arts.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((38))33 Foster the coordinated efforts of local social service providers to identify and meet the specific service delivery needs in the urban center.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((39))34 ((As called for in Comprehensive Plan Policies HD 44 53, e)) Encourage effective partnerships between service providers and integrate these efforts into other community improvement activities.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((40))35 Place a high priority on controlling illegal activities on streets and in public spaces.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((41))36 Encourage legitimate uses and a sense of ownership in parks and public spaces.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((42))37 Support public safety through urban design.</p> | |
| <p>UC-P((43))38 Seek to conserve the special historic and cultural resources in the University Community including significant structures on commercial corridors, registered landmarks, and significant public structures.</p> | |

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| <p>UC-P((44))39 Identify and conserve areas of special design character, such as Greek Row and 17th Avenue NE boulevard.</p> | |
| <p>Capital facilities & utilities The goals and policies of the capital facilities and utilities elements of the Comprehensive Plan express <u>the</u> vision of the University Community Urban Center.</p> | <p>Replace missing word.</p> |
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| <p>REMOVE FIGURES 1, 2, 3, and 4.</p> | <p>Figures include various concepts that are outdated or inconsistent with community process from 2012-present.</p> |