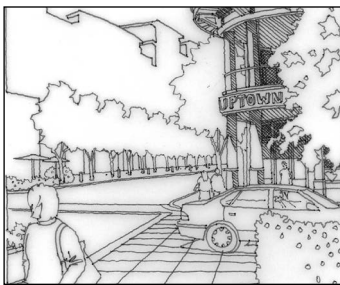




Othello

Neighborhood Design Guidelines



Revised 2013
Adopted 2006

City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development

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Acknowledgments

The following individuals were instrumental in preparing the original **Othello Neighborhood Design Guidelines** in 2006:

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Introduction

What are Neighborhood Design Guidelines?

Design guidelines are the primary tool used by Design Review Boards. The [Othello Design Guidelines](#) apply to development that is subject to design review as set forth at SMC 23.41.004 if it is located in the Othello Urban Village (aka MLK@Holly Urban Village) as reflected in Map 1 (page 2). Guidelines define the qualities of architecture, urban design, and public space that make for successful projects and communities. There are two types of guidelines used in the Design Review Program:

- [Seattle Design Guidelines](#)—applying citywide except for downtown; and
- Neighborhood design guidelines—applying to a specific geographically-defined area, usually within a neighborhood urban village or center.

Once a set of neighborhood guidelines is adopted by City Council, they are used in tandem with citywide guidelines for the review of all projects within that neighborhood that fall within the scope of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) section 23.41.004. Not all neighborhoods within the city have neighborhood-specific guidelines, but for those that do, both sets of guidelines—citywide and neighborhood—are consulted by the Boards, with the neighborhood guidelines superseding the citywide ones in the event of a conflict between the two. Neighborhood guidelines are very helpful to all involved in the design review process for the guidance they offer that is specific to the features and character of a specific neighborhood.

As of November 2013, there were nineteen sets of neighborhood design guidelines, each following the same organization and numbering system of the City's original citywide guidelines entitled [Design Review: Guidelines for Multi-family and Commercial Development](#) that were adopted in 1993.

The [Othello Design Guidelines](#) reveal the character of Othello district as known to its residents and business owners. The guidelines help to reinforce existing character and protect the qualities that the neighborhood values most in the face of change. Thus, a neighborhood's guidelines, in conjunction with the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#), can increase overall awareness of design priorities and encourage involvement in the design review process.

Revised Neighborhood Design Guidelines

The [Othello Design Guidelines](#) were developed by community members and design consultants, and adopted in 2006. In 2013, the City adopted new, updated guidelines entitled [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) to replace the citywide guidelines that had been in effect since the inception of the Design Review Program in 1993.

Because the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) uses a different organizational and numbering system than the original guidelines, DPD has revised each set of neighborhood design guidelines to match the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) in format, organization, and numbering system. The revised neighborhood design guidelines will help Board members, applicants, staff, and the public better correlate neighborhood guidelines with the updated [Seattle Design Guidelines](#).

Guidelines at a Glance

The Othello design guidelines apply to development that is subject to design review as set forth at SMC 23.41.004 if it is located in the Othello Urban Village (aka MLK@Holly Urban Village) as reflected in Map 1 (page 2). The neighborhood guidelines augment the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) adopted in 2013. The list below correlates the guidelines by subject matter and shows which [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) are augmented by [Othello Design Guidelines](#). A “yes” indicates supplemental guidance is provided; a “no” indicates that the citywide guideline is sufficient. Note that the numbering system of the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) is different from the original numbering applied to the Othello guidelines in 2006.

Context and Site

CS1. Natural Systems and Site Features	no
CS2. Urban Pattern and Form	yes
Streetscape Compatibility (former A-2)	
Respect for Adjacent Sites (former A-5)	
Corner Lots (former A-10)	
Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility (former B-1)	
CS3. Architectural Context and Character	no

Public Life

PL1. Connectivity	no
PL2. Walkability	yes
Personal Safety and Security (former D-7)	
PL3. Street-Level Interaction	yes
Human Activity (former A-4)	
Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances (former D-1)	
Transition Between residence and Street (former A-6)	
PL4. Active Transportation	no

Design Concept

DC1. Project Uses and Activities	no
DC2. Architectural Concept	no
DC3. Open Space Concept	no
DC4. Exterior Elements and Finishes	yes
Exterior Finish Materials (former C-4)	

Context and Priority Issues: Othello

The Othello Neighborhood is emerging from a history of dramatic changes into the vibrant new commercial and residential community that will sustain its future light rail station. The commercial core of this community along Martin Luther King Jr. Way South reflects the style of an Asian market bazaar where business is transacted in a variety of languages. Its streets are lined at a uniform level with signage in stark primary colors. During spring and summer months, artistic banners hang high over the streets accentuating these colors and reflecting the symbols of the neighborhood's many cultures.

Surrounding that core is a hillside covered with residential streets that suggest a multifaceted history. Originating as part of a larger farming community in the early 1900s, the Othello Neighborhood streets (especially South Brighton Street) still retain examples of New England-style farm houses and single family bungalows. These styles are reflected in many homes and townhouses of the recent New Holly Development.

Like many Seattle neighborhoods, Othello is blessed with the natural beauty of the Puget Sound region. Hillsides rising to the west above the commercial core on Martin Luther King Jr. Way South are crowned with trees. The eastern ridge features views of Mount Rainier and the Cascade Mountains. There is easy access to a ribbon of parks running from South Van Asselt Court through several mini-parks within New Holly to Othello Park, and even to the many parks and beaches along the west shore of Lake Washington.

Othello Neighborhood (MLK@Holly) Design Guidelines

The MLK@Holly Neighborhood Plan provides a framework for specific goals, policies and recommendations aimed at helping the area realize its full potential as a thriving social, educational, residential and business community. The plan recommends many land use and urban design concepts to be implemented, in which new development plays a significant role. These concepts include:

- establishing new or reinforcing existing commercial “nodes” of development;
- improving commercial facades;
- identifying “gateway” design elements at major entry points into the community;
- promoting sensitive transitions from commercial to residential land;
- encouraging pedestrian comfort and safety;
- creating community identity (particularly in the public realm); and
- providing strategies to improve physical connections within the community.

The [Othello Design Guidelines](#) incorporate the themes and concepts contained in the neighborhood plan. These guidelines include site specific guidance for several areas in the Othello neighborhood and are contained on p. 13.

Othello
Design Guidelines
2013

CS2

Urban Pattern and Form

Citywide Guideline:

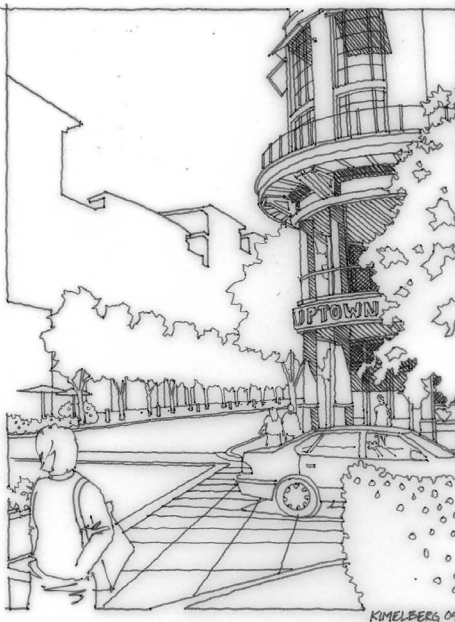
Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

Othello Supplemental Guidance

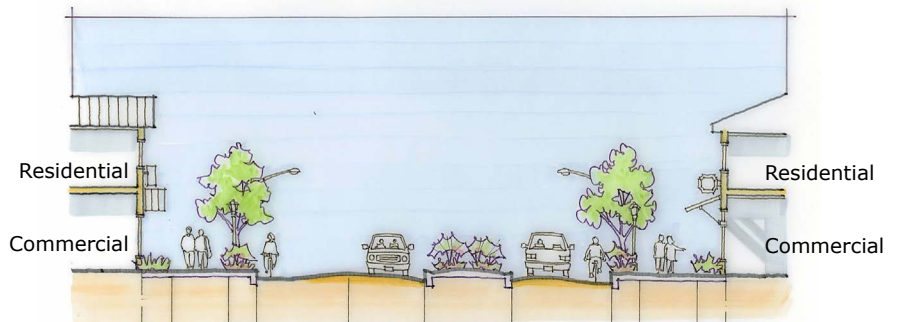
I. Streetscape Compatibility

A strong relationship between the building and the street adds character and quality to the Othello business district.

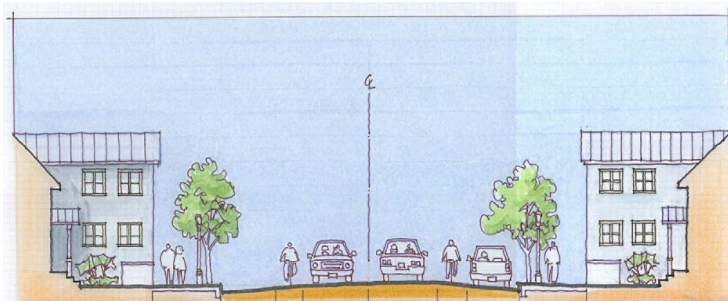
- i. Building spaces for commercial use at or near the edge of the sidewalk and limiting vertical grade separations is encouraged where commercial uses occupy the street-level floor.
- ii. Shallow setbacks and a minor grade separation are encouraged between the first floor and the sidewalk where residential uses occupy the ground floor; this will promote privacy and also accommodate entry porches and stoops.



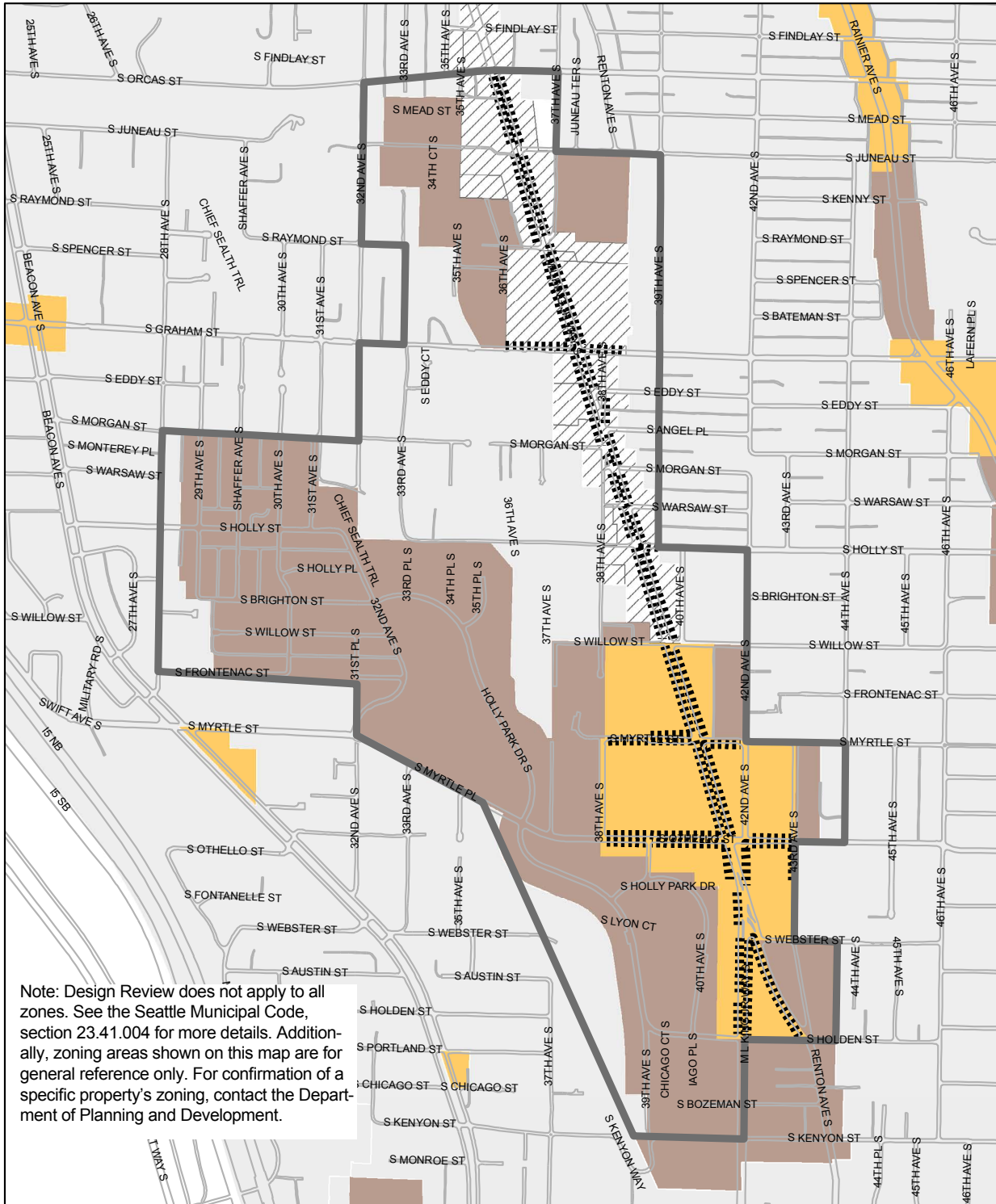
A strong building form that serves as visual anchor.



At-grade, street-level commercial uses promote an active business district.



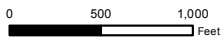
Minor grade separations create residential privacy and provide opportunities for front porches and stoops.



Note: Design Review does not apply to all zones. See the Seattle Municipal Code, section 23.41.004 for more details. Additionally, zoning areas shown on this map are for general reference only. For confirmation of a specific property's zoning, contact the Department of Planning and Development.

Othello Design Guidelines
Map 1: Urban Village

- Urban Villages Boundary
- Commercial
- Street fronts where development is encouraged out to the sidewalk
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Multi-Family
- Single Family

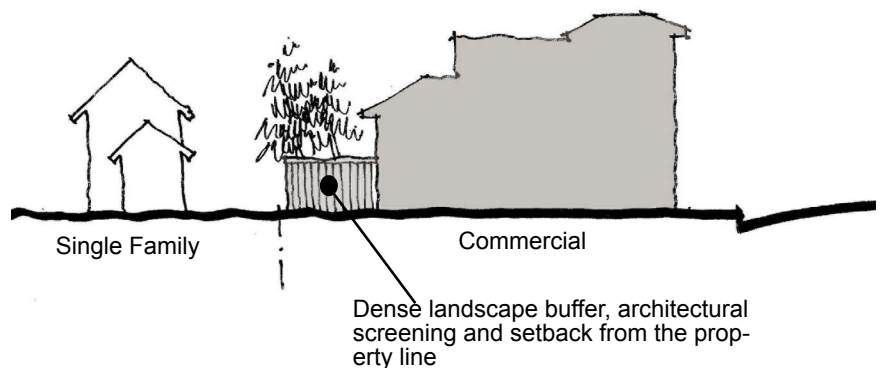


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II. Respect for Adjacent Sites

Several zone edges between commercial (C1) and single family-zoned properties exist in the neighborhood. This could result in visual impacts, as well as traffic and noise conflicts between these properties. To help prevent these situations, consider:

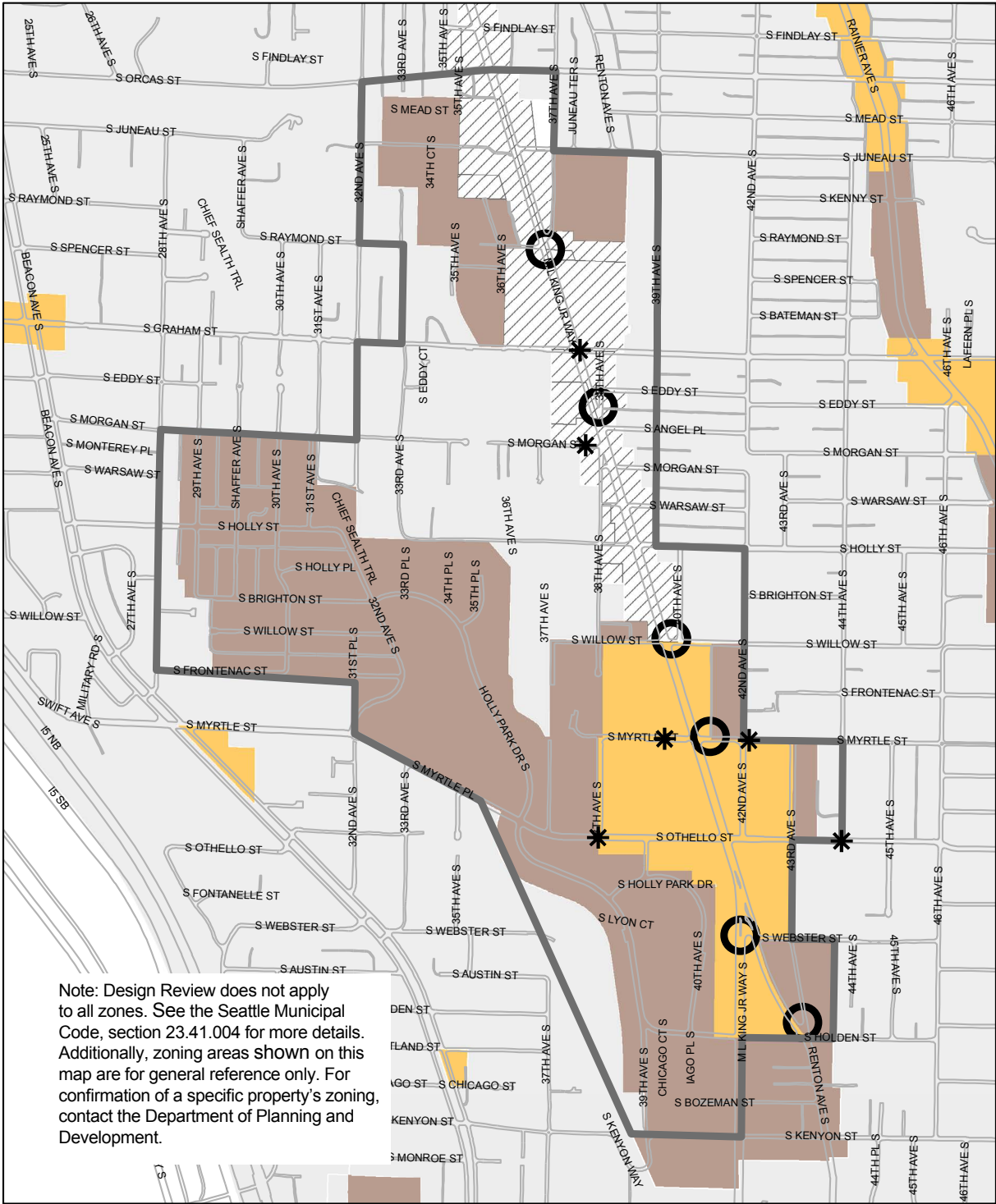
- i. preventing service, loading and storage areas from directly facing single family residential areas (see Map 2, page 4); and
- ii. buffering single family areas from the undesirable impacts of commercial-related service facilities; use landscaping or cohesive architectural treatment to screen service areas and facilities.



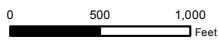
Public art and other focal elements help focus activity on public places.








III. Corner Lots

- i. Consider siting and designing structures on corner lots to take advantage of their role as gateways and activity nodes in the community. Locating open spaces such as plazas for public use can promote a physical and visual connection to the street.
- ii. Consider adding a focal element, for instance, a sculpture or civic art piece to outdoor space. Consider building on current public art themes in the neighborhood, including a kiosk for the use of the community.
- iii. Employ strong building forms to demarcate important gateways, intersections, and street corners. Strong corner massing can function as a visual anchor for a block.

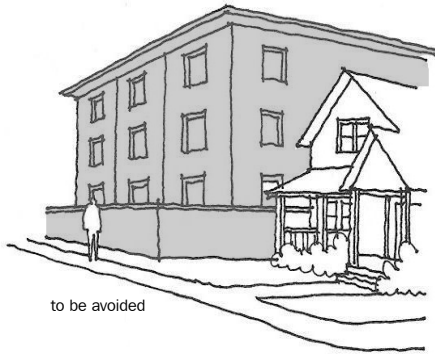


Map 2: Activity Locations & Potential Gateways



-  Activity Locations
-  Potential Gateways
-  Urban Villages Boundary
-  Commercial
-  Neighborhood Commercial
-  Multi-Family
-  Single Family

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Sensitive Infill Development

IV. Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

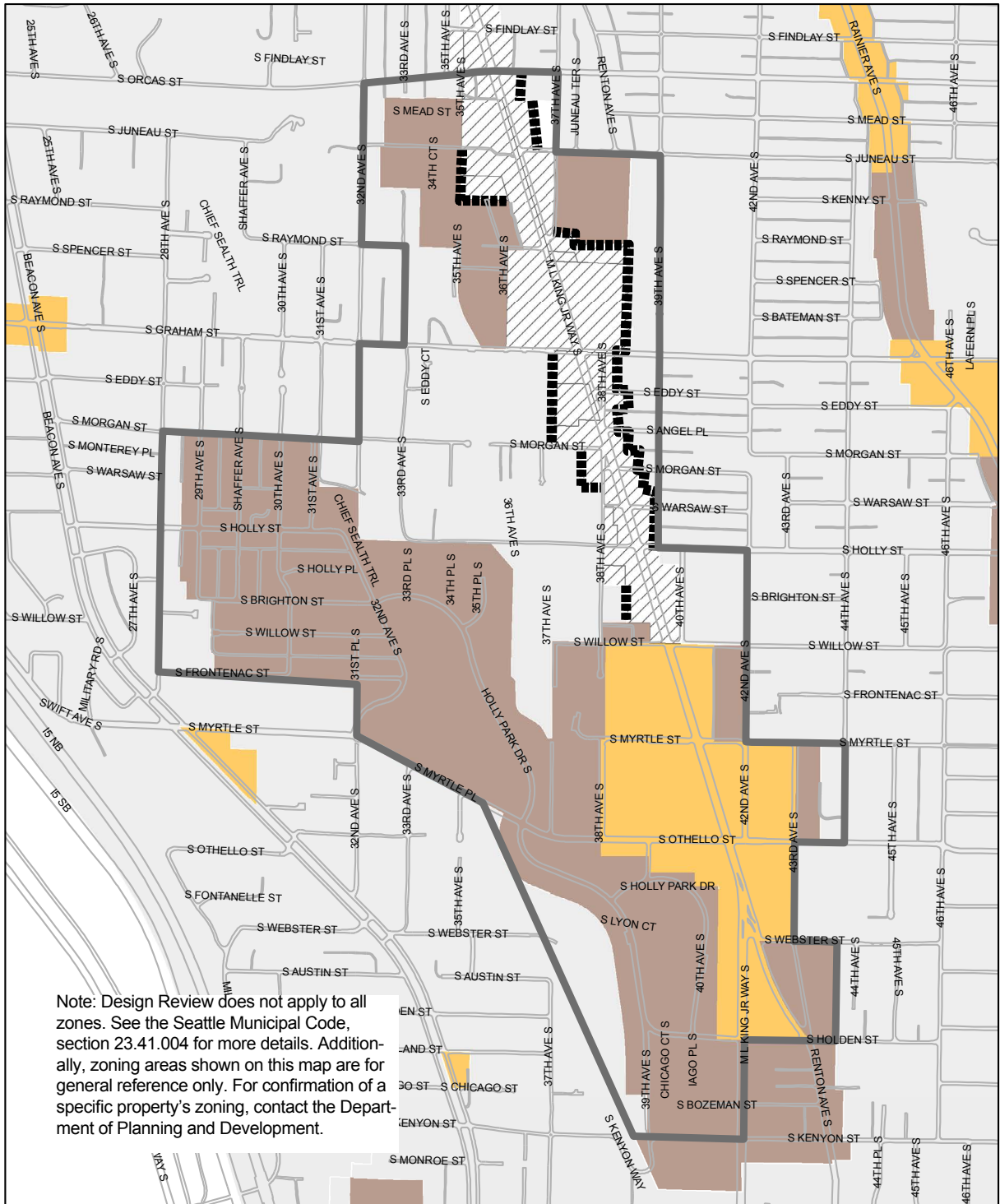
Much of the MLK@Holly business district is zoned for large, 65' tall buildings. Careful siting, building design and building massing at the upper levels is encouraged to achieve a sensitive transition between the 65' commercial zone and adjacent residential zones. Large, monolithic buildings are discouraged. Consider the following:

- i. Design building volumes to maintain a compatible scale with smaller buildings nearby.
- ii. Rely on building massing and orientation to place strong visual emphasis on the street in activating public space.
- iii. Use smaller sub-volumes in the massing of a building to create a transition in size to adjacent residential structures that are smaller in scale (see Map 3, page 6).



smaller sub-volumes in the massing of a mixed-use buildings as a good transition in scale to an adjacent residential area

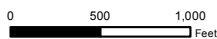
emphasis placed on the street to promote active, pedestrian-oriented uses



Note: Design Review does not apply to all zones. See the Seattle Municipal Code, section 23.41.004 for more details. Additionally, zoning areas shown on this map are for general reference only. For confirmation of a specific property's zoning, contact the Department of Planning and Development.

Map 3: Zoning and Example Areas of Transition

- Urban Villages Boundary
- Example Areas of Transition
- Commercial
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Multi-Family
- Single Family



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PL2

Walkability

Citywide Guideline:

Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

Othello Supplemental Guidance

I. Personal Safety and Security

Address specific principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). The goal of CPTED is the reduction of crime, and it is achieved by giving security concerns a high priority in the building process. To fully understand how CPTED is used, one must examine its components and the philosophy behind them. The following is a brief summary of techniques applicable to the design review process.

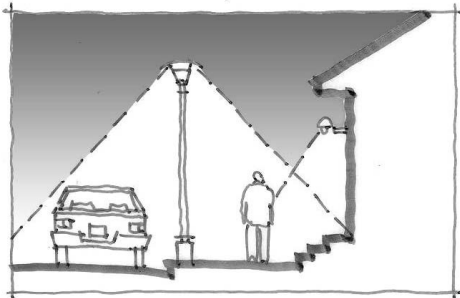
- i. **Defensible Space:** “Defensible space” is the term used to describe an area that has been made a “zone of defense” by the design characteristics that create it. Under the defensible space guidelines, areas associated with a development site are categorized as either public, semi-public, semi-private or private. This designation helps define the appropriate activity and use for each area.

Public Zones. These areas are generally open to anyone, such as the public sidewalk.

Semi-public, Semi-private Zones. These areas create a buffer between public and private zones, and serve as common use spaces, such as plazas or courtyards on private property. They are accessible to the public, but are set off from the public zone of the right-of-way. This separation is accomplished with design features that establish definite transitional boundaries between the zones.

Private Zones. These are areas of restricted entry on a building site, such as interior open spaces, residential entries, and on-site parking areas. Access is controlled and limited.

- a. Consider the type of “zone of defense” most appropriate for specific spaces and entries included in the development proposal. Private open spaces and entrances should include physical barriers, such as fencing, some forms of landscaping and locked doors. Symbolic barriers are appropriate for semi-private spaces, and require only a visual perception that a transition has occurred. Nearly anything could serve as a symbolic barrier, and examples include: bollards, flower beds, changes in sidewalk patterns or materials, and signs.



Exterior lighting fixtures and street lamps are sized to the scale of the building and sidewalk, directing light to the sidewalk and building entrance, thus increasing personal safety.

ii. Lighting: Good lighting is one of the most effective crime deterrents. When used properly, light discourages criminal activity, enhances natural surveillance opportunities, and reduces fear. Lighting can influence an individual's feelings about his environment from an aesthetic as well as a safety standpoint. A bright, cheerful environment is much more pleasing than one that appears dark and lifeless.

- a. New developments are encouraged to provide lighting on buildings and in open spaces. This includes: exterior lighting fixtures above entries; lighting in parking areas and open spaces; and pedestrian street lights near sidewalks. To the degree possible, a constant level of light providing reasonably good visibility should be maintained at night. Bright spots and shadows should be avoided. Highly vulnerable areas and those that could conceal a potential attacker should be illuminated more brightly than areas designed for normal activity.

iii. Landscaping: Landscaping, like architectural design, plays a significant role in CPTED. One function of landscaping in crime prevention is aesthetics, as an attractive environment generates a sense of pride and ownership. Landscaping can be used to perform a variety of design functions, as outlined below.

- a. As a symbolic barrier, landscaping can mark the transition between zones. Consider employing features such as decorative fencing, flower beds, ground cover, and varied patterns in cement work to clearly show separation between zones. If more substantial barriers are needed, shrubbery such as evergreen hedges can be used to create more formidable edges.

PL3

Street-Level Interaction

Citywide Guideline:

Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

Othello Supplemental Guidance

I. Human Activity

The life of the neighborhood should be closely tied to the character of its public space. It is especially important to recognize streets as public space. The design of buildings can help determine the level of activity on the street. Where storefronts meet the sidewalk, social interaction can be intensified adding vitality. New development is encouraged to support the area's pedestrian designated streets and the Station Area Overlay District by contributing to a consistent building line at or near the sidewalk. Consideration of the following design features is encouraged:

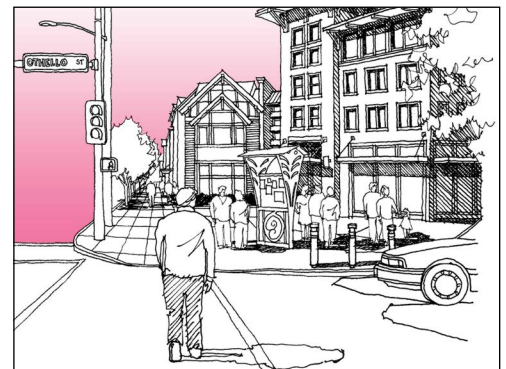
- i. Recessed building or individual shop entrances to help create a traditional "main street" feel;
- ii. Stoops or landscaping to help provide privacy for residential use at street level;
- iii. Large developments are encouraged to include plazas or gracious entry forecourts along the street edge, provided street continuity is not unduly interrupted along the majority of the block. (This guidance addresses a potential unintended consequence of NC zoning and the pedestrian zone designation that when applied to a very large, full-block development, could create a long, uninterrupted street wall not conducive to pedestrian comfort;
- iv. Overhead weather protection along the sidewalk for pedestrian comfort; canopies and awnings are encouraged.



An example of well-designed overhead weather protection in New Holly.



An example of a well-marked, articulated building entrance that is oriented to the sidewalk and provides overhead cover.



An example of public open space including street-level retail space with direct access from the adjacent open space or street.



Design elements such as separate storefronts, display windows, shop entrances, pedestrian-scaled signs, awnings, overhangs and landscaping add interest and give a human dimension to this street-level building facade.

I. Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

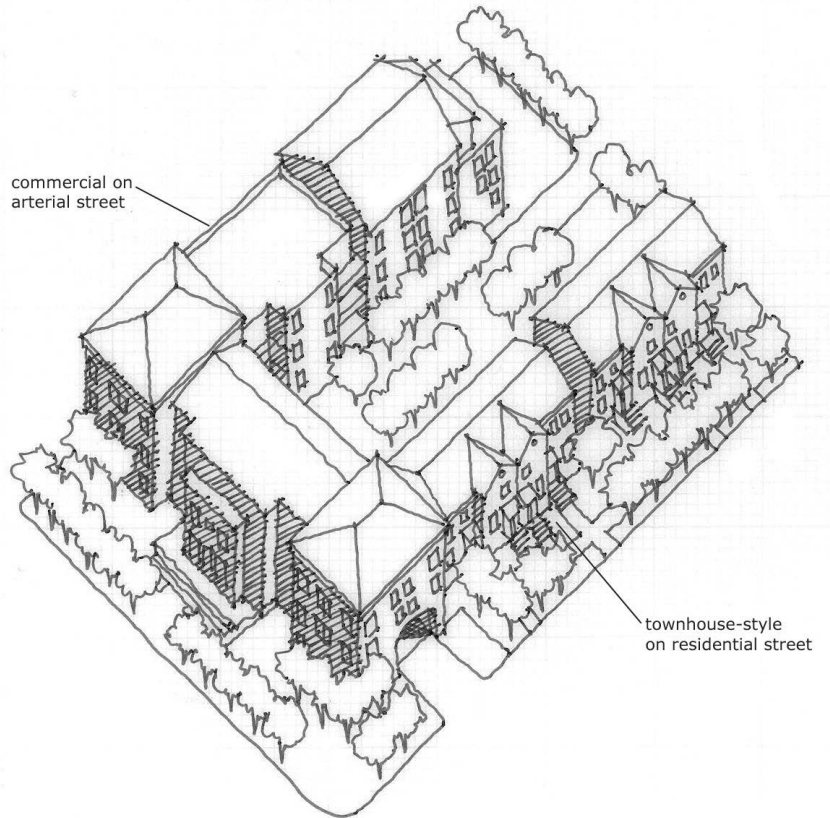
Activate the Street Edge

Providing space for intermingling of pedestrians and shoppers at the street-level on Martin Luther King Jr. Way South will help create a socially and visually stimulating MLK@Holly business district. Multiple storefronts, shop entrances and activities enliven the street and provide a safe pedestrian environment. Generous windows placed at the ground floor give people inside an awareness of activity on the street. This is commonly referred to as “eyes on the street,” and supports an active day and night street environment.

- i. Buildings that are designed for multi-tenant occupancy and walk-in pedestrian traffic at the street level are encouraged.

II. Transition Between Residence and Street

Ground-related residential development, such as townhouses, is encouraged at locations along public open spaces such as Othello Park to create human activity along the park and provide for social interaction among residents and neighbors.



DC4

Exterior Elements and Finishes

Citywide Guideline:

Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.



A limited number of materials and colors used on the exterior of a new building creates visual simplicity and harmony.

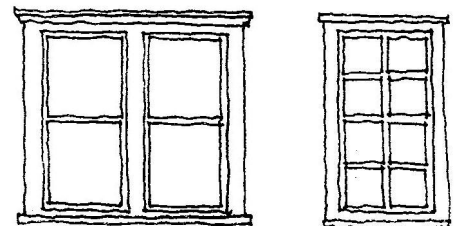
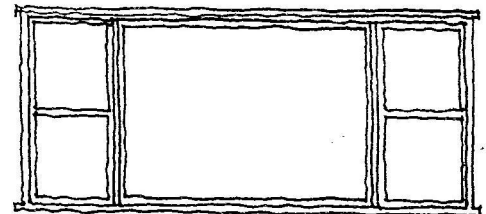
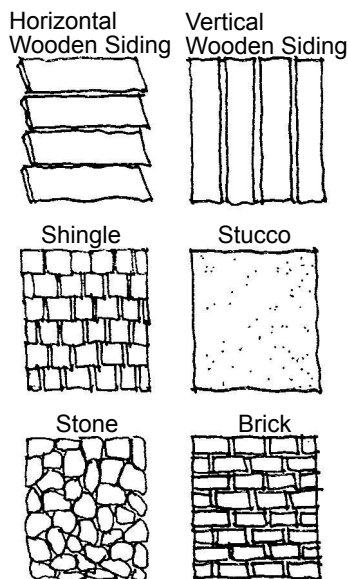
Othello Supplemental Guidance

I. Exterior Finish Materials

- i. **Encourage High-Quality Construction:** All new buildings are encouraged to be constructed as long-term additions to the urban fabric.
- ii. **Residential Development**
 - a. Use exterior building materials that are typically residential in character. The most commonly-found traditional cladding material in the Othello Neighborhood is wood: shingle, horizontal or vertical. Stone, or other masonry with human-scale texture, is also encouraged—particularly as accent materials.
 - b. Creative combinations of the above are encouraged; other materials can also be considered, such as stucco and vinyl shaped to reflect natural textures, so long as they meet the overall objective of conveying a sense of permanence, human scale and proportion.



An example of high-quality and variegated use of residential exterior materials in New Holly.



Variation in window design is encouraged



A street-facing commercial facade containing elements of traditional storefront design, including large, transparent display windows, metal framing for storefronts, and a combination of brick and masonry with channel reveals. This type of treatment is encouraged for commercial facades in new development proposals.

iii. Commercial and Mixed-Use Development

- a. Use exterior building materials typically found in traditional storefront design. This includes brick, masonry and metal on the ground floor. Mixed-use developments could use a combination of materials, such as brick, masonry, metal, wood and stucco in a manner that creates a coherent overall building design.
- b. Consider window design as an opportunity to provide variation and definition along building facades. Avoid monotonous repetition of window types.

Site Specific Design Guidance

i. Northwest Corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Way South and South Othello Street

Consideration of the following neighborhood recommendations is encouraged:

- Consider adding a focal element, for instance, a sculpture or civic art piece to outdoor space. Consider building on current public art themes in the neighborhood, including the community kiosk.
- Employ strong building forms to demarcate important gateways, intersections, and street corners. Strong corner massing can function as a visual anchor for a block.
- Create a mid-block pedestrian plaza adjacent to the sidewalk and enclose the plaza with active retail uses. This could also aid in reducing the bulk of a large development on Martin Luther King Jr. Way South.
- Modulate the facade into “human scale” sub volumes on both street frontages.
- Locate small storefronts along Martin Luther King Jr. Way South, possibly with roll-up windows to provide “open-air” retail spaces.
- Provide overhead weather protection along Martin Luther King Jr. Way South and retail portions of South Othello Street.
- Preserve the privacy of residential neighbors to the west with an appropriate transition in height, bulk and scale.



ii. Northeast and Southeast Corners of Martin Luther King Jr. Way South and South Othello Street

Consideration of the following neighborhood recommendations is encouraged:

- Consider orienting buildings around a community kiosk, and create a public open area using the kiosk as a focal point.
- Employ highly visible and accessible entrances to ground level commercial uses, particularly around a public open space plaza.
- Create a mid-block pedestrian plaza adjacent to the sidewalk and enclose the plaza with active retail uses. This could also aid in reducing the bulk of a large development on Martin Luther King Jr. Way South.
- Avoid a “monolithic” building mass at this location; rather, break up the development site into multiple buildings.

