

U DISTRICT URBAN DESIGN



Seattle Dept. of Planning and Development
February 20, 2014

Overview

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- ❑ What projects are underway?
- ❑ Community participation
- ❑ Urban Design Framework
- ❑ EIS process
- ❑ Green street planning



What changes are underway?

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- Light rail (2021)
- U District Partnership – new community organization
- Urban Design Framework (2013)
 - ▣ Streetscape designs (2014)
 - ▣ Comp Plan amendments (2015)
 - ▣ Zoning (2015)
 - ▣ Design guidelines (2016?)
- Alley activation planning
- Uptick in development

**EIS
required**

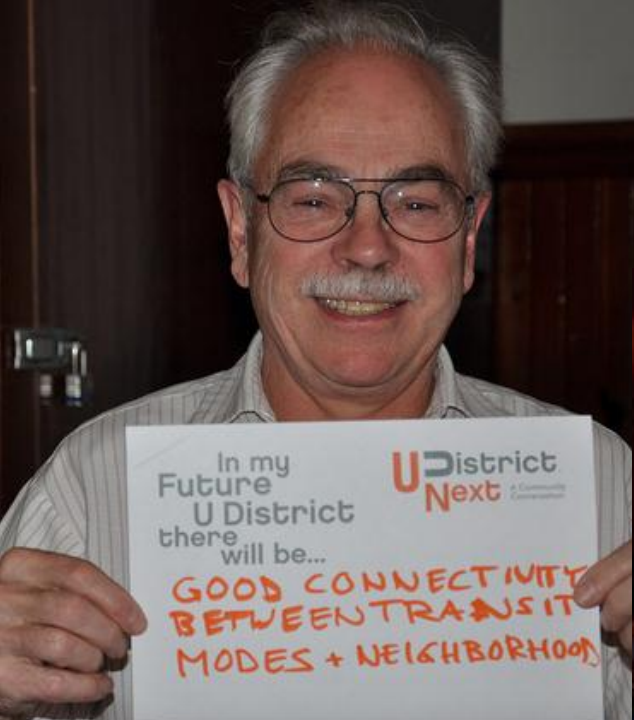


Community participation

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- U District Partnership
 - ▣ New community org: “BIA+”
 - ▣ Started 2012
 - ▣ Participants: residents, developers, businesses, UW, social services, City staff...
- Broader public input
 - ▣ Walking tours
 - ▣ “U District Next”
 - ▣ Open house
 - ▣ 150+ smaller meetings





What is an urban design framework?

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- A shared community vision for coordinated improvements in a neighborhood
- Focus on the full range of physical factors: streets, parks, buildings, etc.
- A conceptual plan to guide specific policy changes



Development

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- Where is new development most likely?
- Based on building value, property assembly
- Biggest, most likely sites clustered between NE 50th St and NE Campus Pkwy



UDF: housing choices

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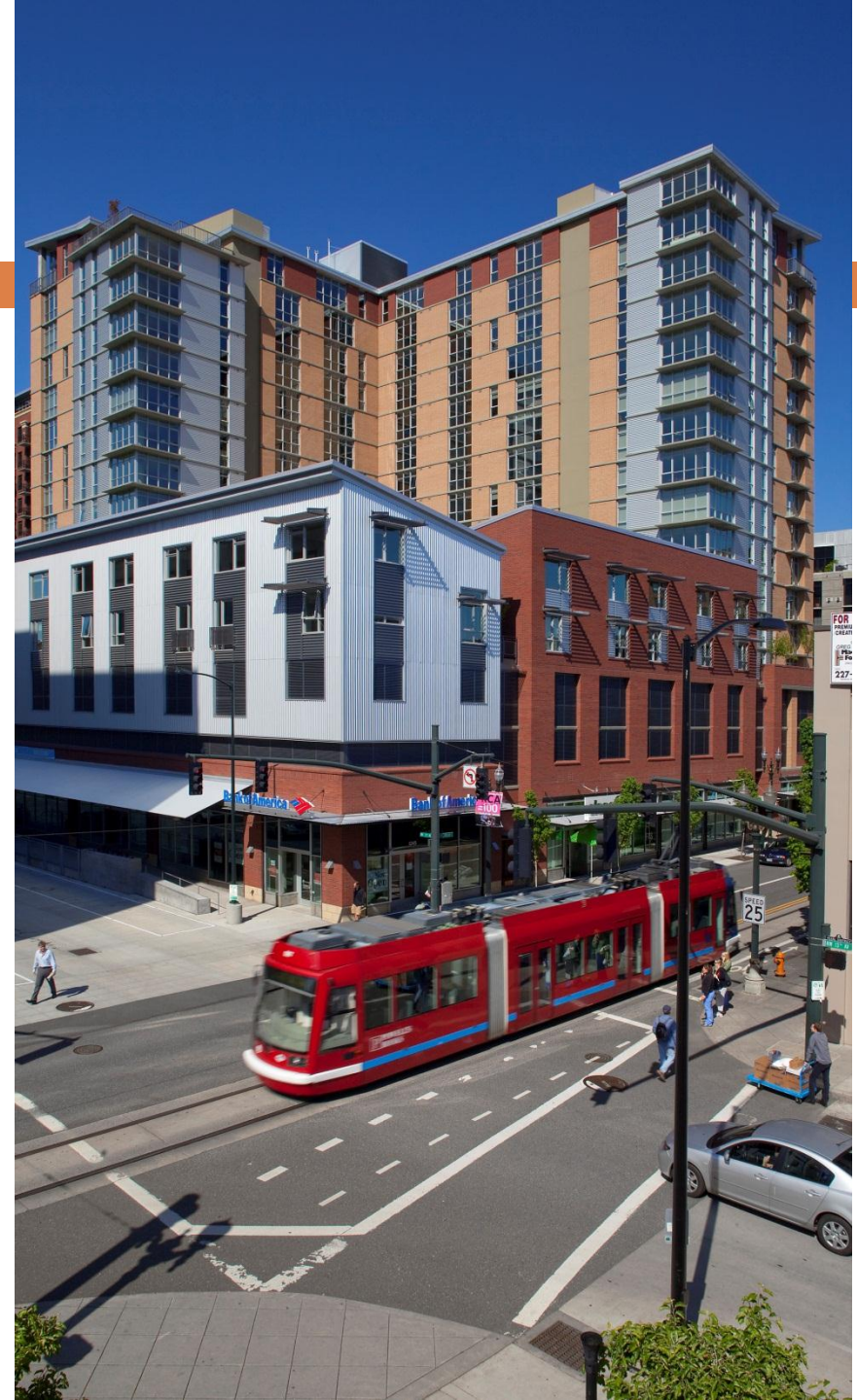
- Options for more permanent residents: professionals, seniors, “workforce”
- Preserve affordable housing options
- Need for amenities, services, jobs to serve new residents
- “Ground-related” housing – stoops, landscaped setbacks



UDF: urban form

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- Discussion the future shape of the U District:
 - ▣ What kinds of buildings?
 - ▣ How should development meet the street?
 - ▣ Design lessons from other neighborhoods/cities
 - ▣ What aspects does the community want to keep, and what should change?





Highrise separation.

Space between tall buildings reduces shading and bulk.

Focus on the first 30 feet. The most important part of buildings is the portion where they meet the street. This area should have the most design attention and the best materials.

Midblock pedestrian access.

Pathways could improve connections through long blocks.

Preserving character

buildings. Pursue zoning tools to encourage preserving special buildings. Older buildings lend to variety, character, and affordability.

Individual unit entries. Entry from the street (instead of internal access from a hall) can help reinforce a neighborhood feel, with activity all along a residential facade.

Landscaping and horizontal separation. A landscaped setback area helps mark the boundary between private and public without a large wall or fence.



Vertical separation. Raising the entry level 2 - 6 feet above the sidewalk helps provide privacy for the ground floor.

Curb bulbs. Widening the sidewalk at intersections helps make pedestrians more visible to cars and shortens the distance from one curb to the other.



Floor plates. Limit the footprint of the tallest buildings for a slimmer building form.

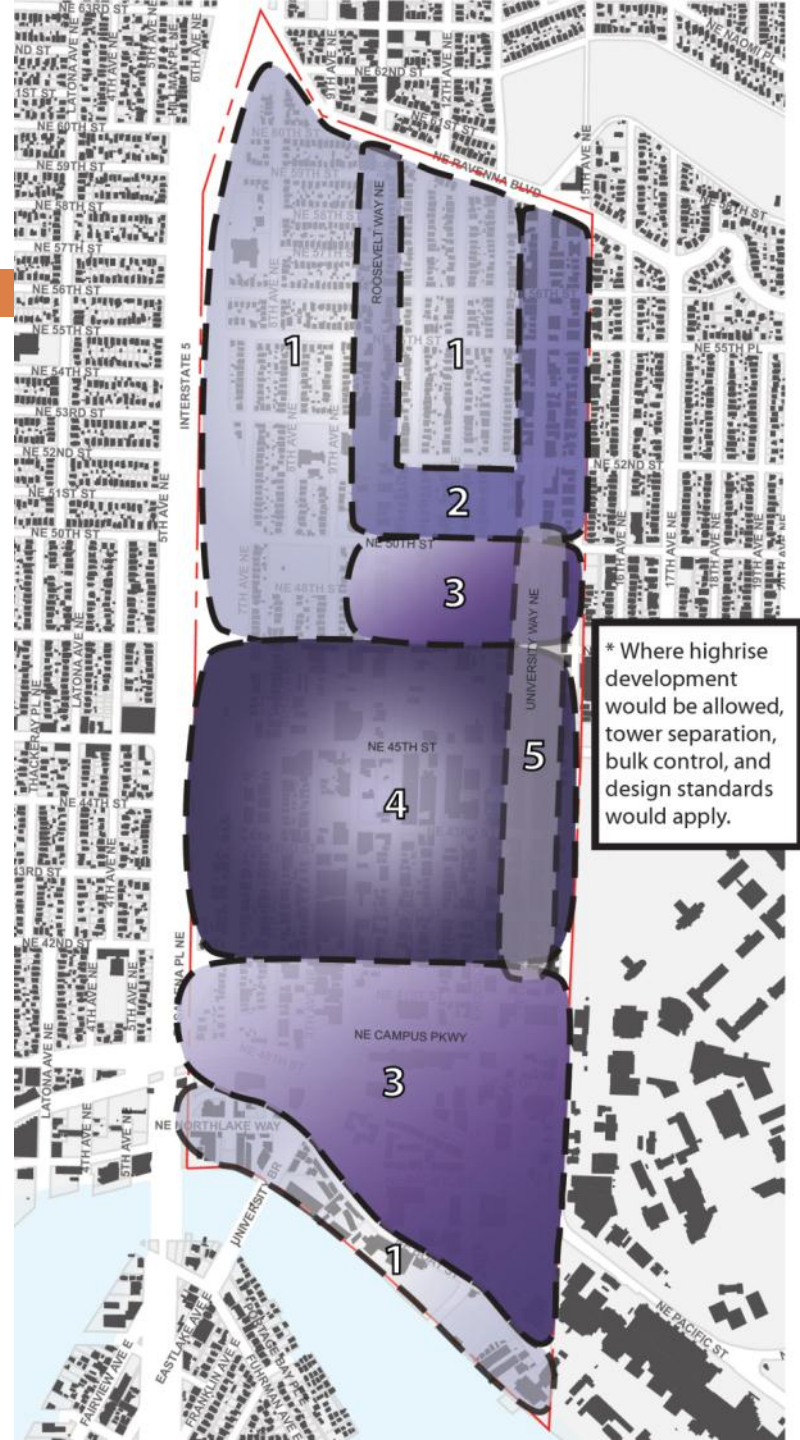
Podium height. Control the height of the lower portion of highrise buildings to maintain a lower-scale street edge in key locations.

Building width. Establish standards or guidelines for building width to avoid monotony along a block face.

UDF: building height

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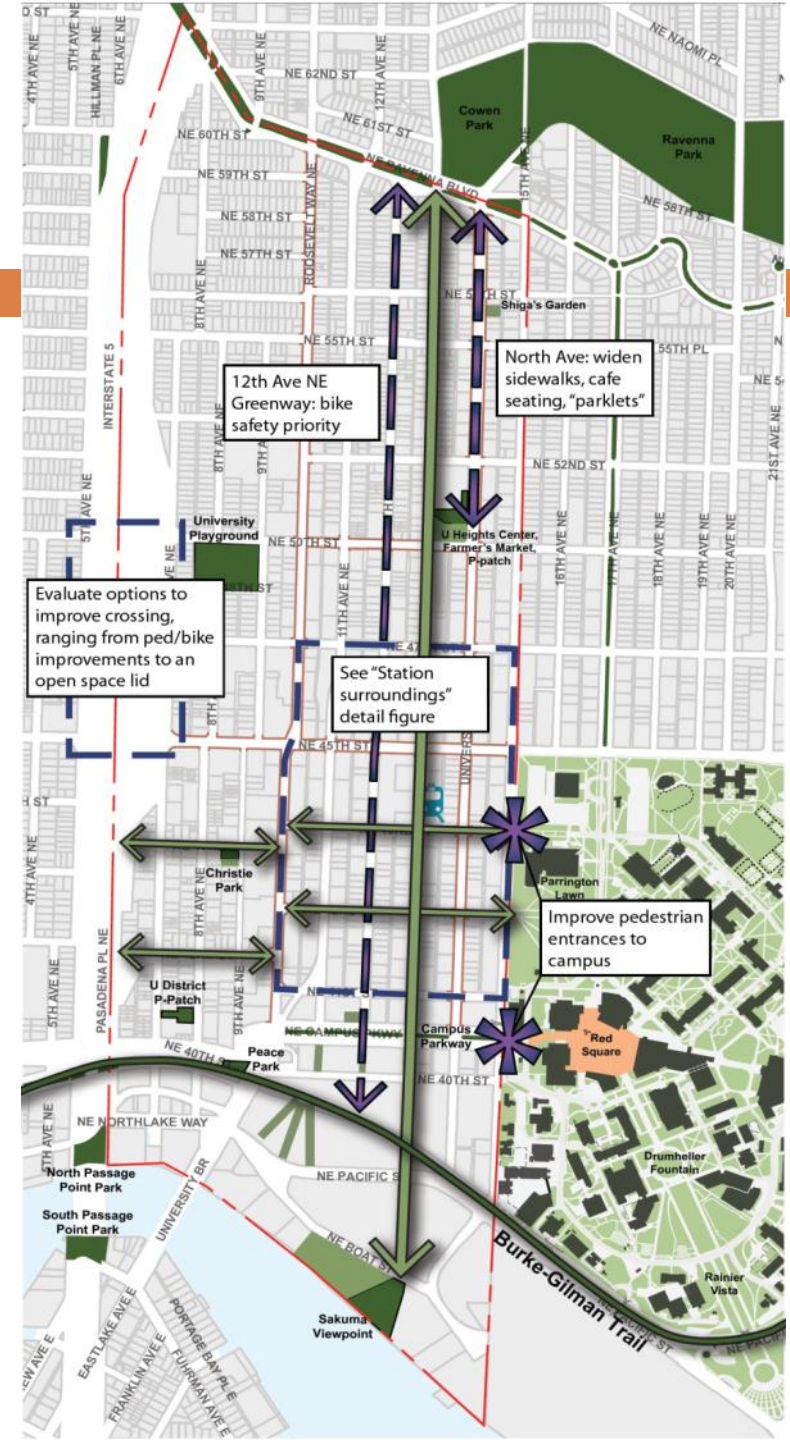
- Consider height increases – especially between 50th and 41st
- Rationale: variety of buildings, focus growth, leverage for public benefits
- Lowrise in the north, highrise in the core (~125' – 340')
- Concern about increased height and density from some residents



UDF: public space

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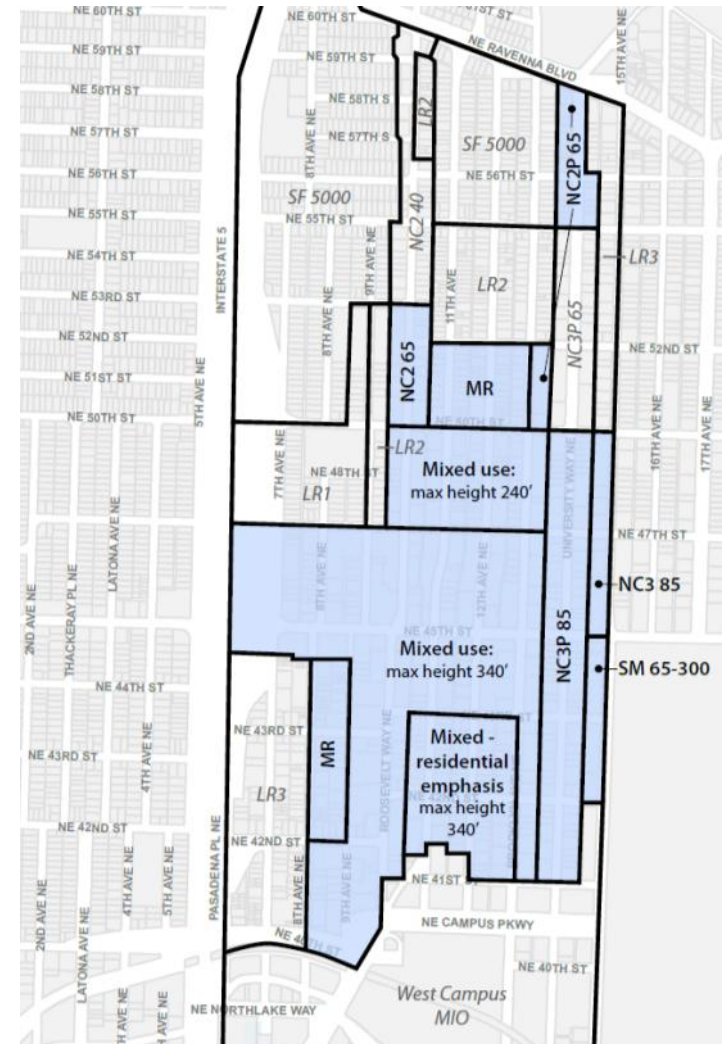
- Great existing resources at the north and south ends, new parks underway
- Opportunity: green streets, festival streets, Ave improvements
- Improve access to campus
- Ongoing debate re: open space in the core



Next step: EIS process

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- Planning horizon: 2015-2035
- Growth projections:
 - ▣ 3,700 households
 - ▣ 4,800 jobs
- Zoning alternatives build off the Urban Design Framework
- Evaluate potential impacts before making recommendations



EIS Alternatives

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- Alt 1:
 - Upzone the core, moderate towers (160') with closer spacing
 - Upzone Ave with surrounding area
 - Moderate growth spreading north
- Alt 2:
 - Upzone the core, taller towers (340')
 - Keep Ave heights in the midrise range
 - Greatest concentration of height/density
- Alt 3:
 - Keep existing zoning
 - Growth distributed through planning area



Scope of analysis

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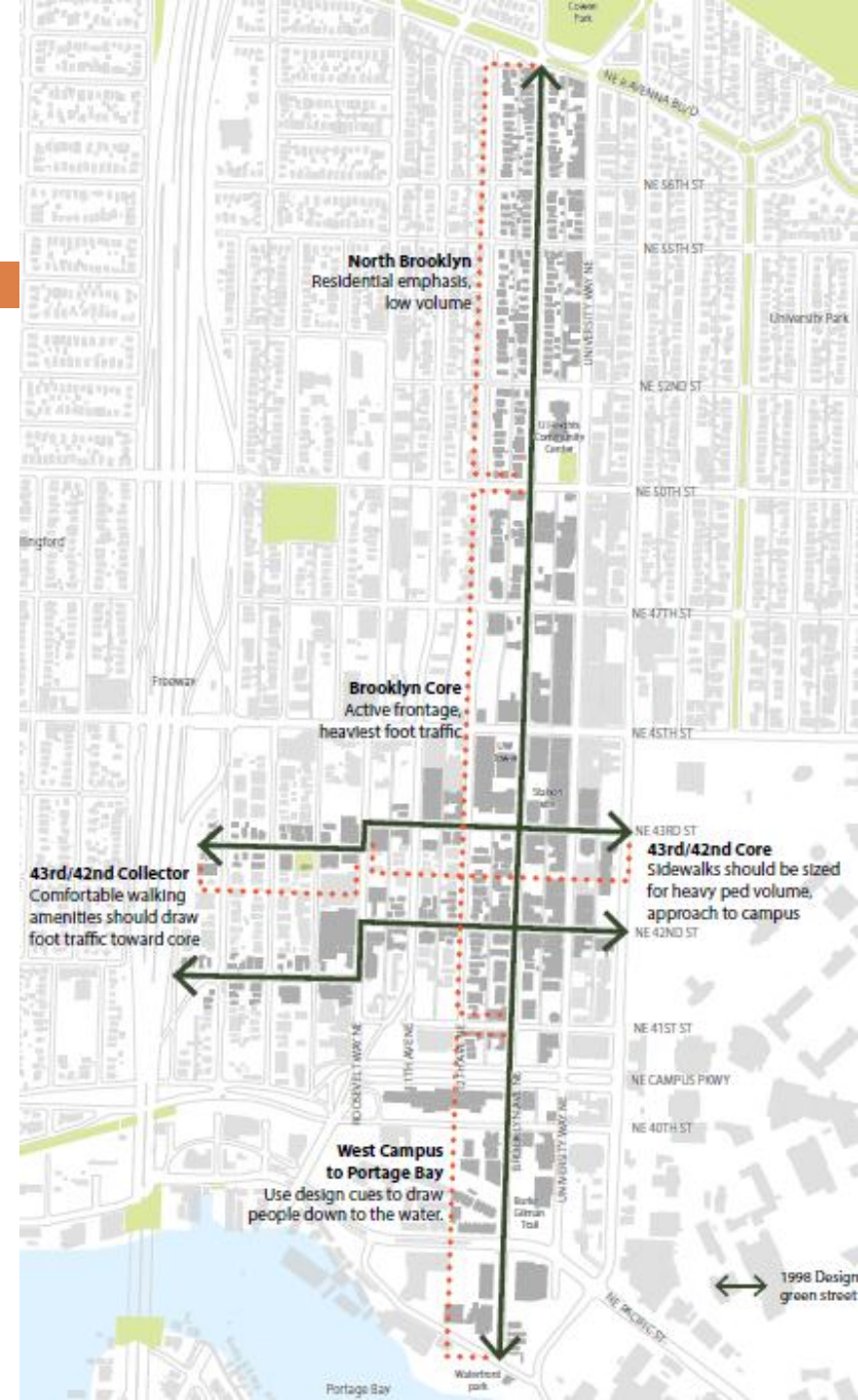
- Land Use Plans and Policies
- Aesthetics
- Transportation
- Population, Housing, Employment
- Open Space and Recreation
- Public Services and Utilities
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Historic Resources



Green streets

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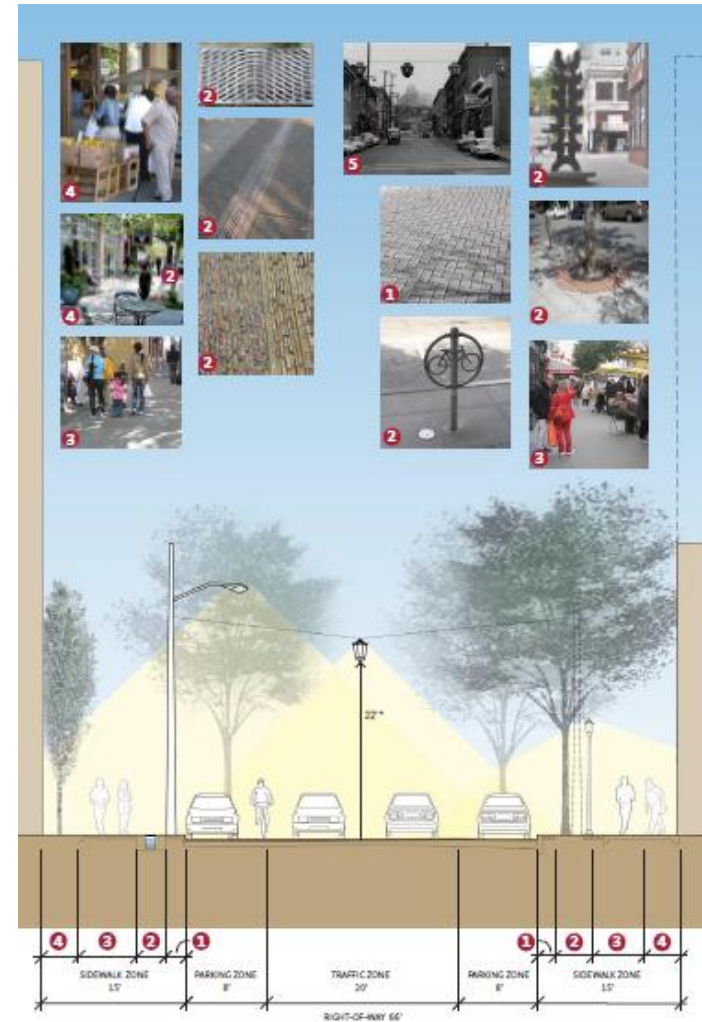
- Quiet streets (typically non-arterials) improved to provide:
 - High quality pedestrian amenities along key routes
 - Generous landscaping
- Designated by communities through neighborhood plans (U District examples, 1998)
- Detailed concept plans help guide improvements, improving consistency over time



How do they happen?

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- Concept plan sets vision, some detail for key areas
- Private development – concept plan gives predictability
- Capital projects (i.e., the City, County, or other agency builds something)
- Grant funding (Neighborhood Street Fund, etc.)



Green street features

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Typical

- Wide sidewalks (8' +)
- Consistent street trees
- Planting strips and/or rain gardens
- Some on-street parking (typically reduced)
- Curb bulbs
- Special paving details

Sometimes...

- Dedicated bike facilities (sometimes)
- Bike parking
- Café seating, courtyards
- Pedestrian lighting
- Seating
- Public art
- Wayfinding signs



Terry Ave before and after

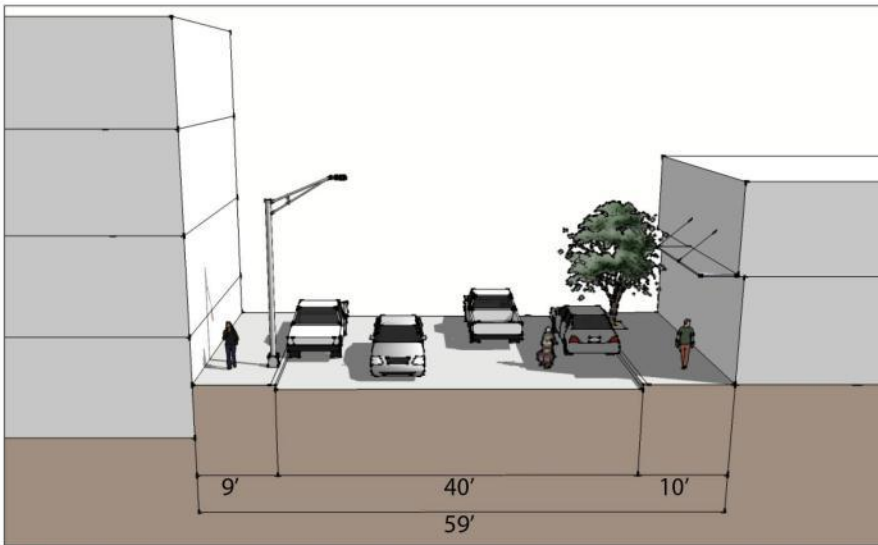
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2012



2005





B Looking north on Brooklyn Avenue between NE 47th Street and NE 50th Street.

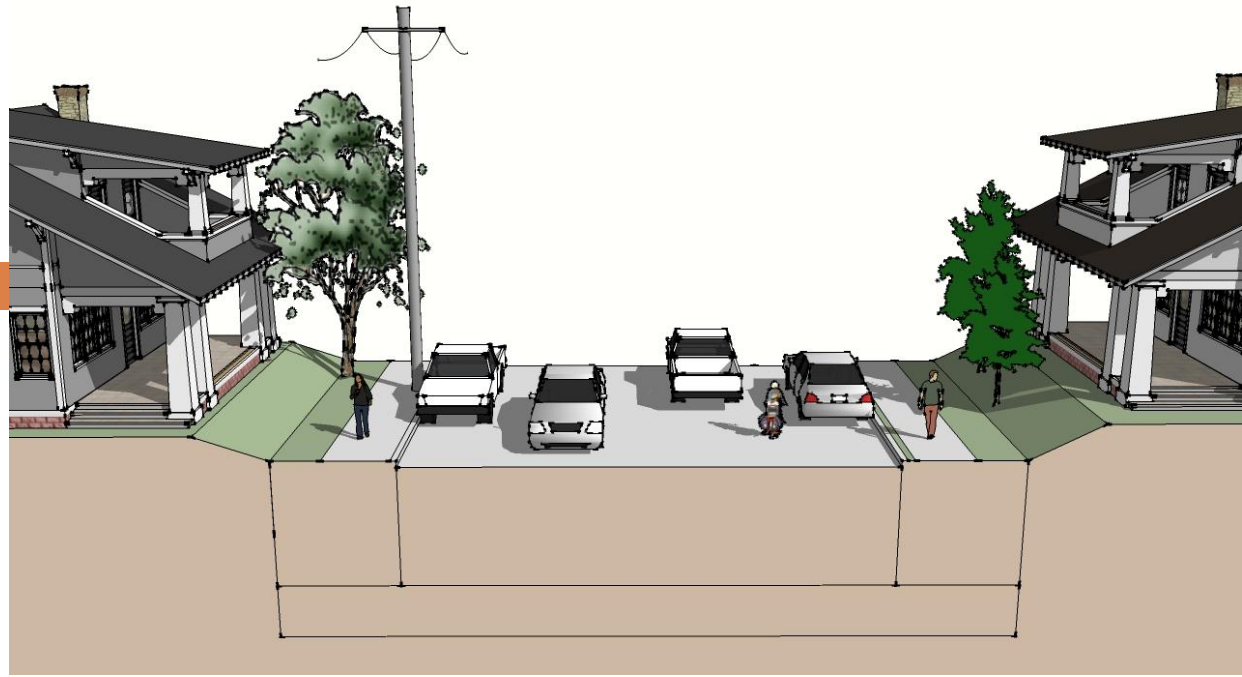
Character

- Transition: Auto-oriented commercial, low-rise multifamily, parking
- High ped and vehicular traffic
- Road width: Changes, larger than needed in some places
- Sidewalks: Narrow, inadequate separation from roadway
- Parking: Both sides
- Landscaping: Absent

Opportunities / challenges

Can the roadway width be reduced to accommodate wider sidewalks, curb bulbs and regular street trees? Will pedestrian lighting help? How can landscaping help improve the sidewalk environment next to parking?

Brooklyn Ave NE (existing right-of-way)



Brooklyn Ave NE DRAFT option B



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