

Director's Report and Recommendation Roosevelt Design Guidelines Update

Overview

In 2006, the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association (RNA) updated its neighborhood plan to accommodate the planned light rail station. This was followed by a rezone in 2012 that accommodates commercial and higher density mixed-use development in the commercial core near the light rail station and establishing appropriate transitions between uses of differing intensities.

The 2012 rezone package included 25 individual zone changes focused on the business district adjacent to Roosevelt Way NE and NE 65th St summarized as follows:

- Apply Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zones along the commercial cores arterials.
- Extend the Pedestrian (P) designation to promote a more pedestrian friendly, mixed-use core.
- Add the Station Area Overlay District to support transit-oriented development near the new light rail station.
- Apply multifamily zoning designations, including the Midrise zone, to accommodate anticipated demand for higher density residential uses.

In addition to adopting the rezone recommendations, the Council passed a resolution (31347) regarding livability in Roosevelt that directed the DPD to update the existing neighborhood specific design guidelines, and prepare a streetscape concept plan. The streetscape concept plan was adopted into the City's Right of Way Improvements manual in November of 2013.

The neighborhood has experienced development within the urban village over the past year, emphasizing the need for updated neighborhood-specific design criteria that are consistent with the goals of the 2006 Roosevelt Neighborhood Plan. While the format of the Roosevelt Guidelines was revised in 2013 when the new citywide guidelines were adopted, the substance of the document has remained unchanged since the original approval in 2000. The existing guidelines do not address the changing conditions in the neighborhood. For example, the new guidelines would help to emphasize the integration of private development with the public right-of-way, also known as the public realm. This, is an element of urban design that zoning regulations and the existing guidelines do not fully articulate.

Guideline Update Process

In October of 2014 the RNA's Sustainability and Land Use Committee restarted their effort to update the design guidelines. Previous to this, in 2012, members of the RNA convened to begin work on the guidelines update but a final version was not completed. A subcommittee focused on drafting the guidelines was formed and held a series of meetings between October and December 2014 to collect input, revise the 2012 draft, and refine goals and policies from the Neighborhood Plan into design criteria that could be used by the Design Review Board. A draft was presented to the RNA Board in January 2015, which served as an opportunity for public comment and facilitated further discussion regarding redevelopment opportunities in the neighborhood (Roosevelt Reservoir, Sound Transit's property, and the Sisley properties).

Interest in using the updated design guidelines to influence these future opportunities was expressed as a prime motivation for moving the draft through the City's approval process.

Analysis

The updated Roosevelt Neighborhood Design Guidelines further refine the goals and policies of the Roosevelt Neighborhood Plan. While the updated version relies on the original guidelines' general framework, new emphasis is placed on transitions between zones and development of different scales that is expected to continue with the light-rail station's development. Connections to and from the station, how ground floor uses accommodate the needs of the pedestrian, and what this means for parking and multi-modal access are themes that differentiate the update from the original guidelines.

The updated design guidelines prioritize the following:

- Pedestrian Environment;
- Street-level Design;
- Green Streets and Green Ways;
- Transitions;
- Sustainability;
- High School Heritage; and
- Ravenna Park and Boulevard Heritage.

Finding 1: The neighborhood's zoning has changed to accommodate the anticipated growth resulting from the new light-rail station.

Current zoning allows a different scale of development than has previously existed in Roosevelt, resulting in larger multi-family buildings being built in former low-rise zones, for example. This is creating new scale transitions not contemplated by the existing design guidelines.

Additional design guidance articulating how to address transitions is needed and is appropriate.

Finding 2: Given the relatively rapid pace of new development in the neighborhood, greater emphasis on encouraging the continuation of existing design themes and patterns is needed. The current design guidelines do not adequately address this need.

Elements that contribute to Roosevelt's unique character include existing iconic buildings within the neighborhood, such as the high school, the pattern and form of 20th century commercial buildings along Roosevelt Way, and existing open spaces.

Additional design guidance specifying design components that can help new buildings reinforce existing design themes and patterns is appropriate. This includes new guidance for materials, colors, textures, and integration with open spaces.

Finding 3: The light-rail station will reshape certain circulation patterns in the neighborhood. The current design guidelines do not guide how structures and streetscapes should be designed to accommodate functional connections to transit.

Commuters will be accessing light rail transit by foot, bicycle, and bus. Connections to the station need to be facilitated by the streetscape and public realm to accommodate the different infrastructure requirements associated with these different modes. Transit stops, bicycle lanes, and bicycle parking all affect the function of the public realm when located in the public right-of-way (ROW). Design guidance is needed to address how private development can integrate and contribute to existing and planned for transportation infrastructure; such as emphasizing the design of the first 30 feet of a building at a pedestrian scale, for both residential and commercial purposes.

New guideline language to identify priorities and provide guidance on ways private development can contribute to and accommodate a variety of transportation modes is necessary and appropriate.

Finding 4: The proposed update represents an articulation of the community's priorities and preferences.

The existing design guidelines do not fully reflect the goals and priorities from the 2006 neighborhood plan, because they predate that plan. The updated design guidelines will implement the plan's desired outcomes with respect to design and integration of development into the neighborhood. The updated guidelines were drafted and reviewed by community members through a process that was led by the Land Use and Sustainability Committees of the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association.

The new guidelines emphasize how to address transitions between building types, identify where architectural reference points exist, and provide guidance regarding how to integrate buildings into existing streetscape concepts and planned infrastructure improvements in the right-of-way. This includes the following:

- Identification of neighborhood icons of historical importance;
- Articulation of how massing should address zone edges; and
- Clarification of appropriate colors and exterior materials to maintain and complement existing design themes and patterns in the neighborhood.

Finding 5: The proposed update is consistent with and supplements the Citywide Design Guidelines and allows the Design Review Board to address issues within the Design Review program's purview.

The guidelines provide the Design Review Board with the ability to supplement the Citywide Design Guidelines with neighborhood-specific guidance in order to achieve the goals and realize the vision articulated through the Roosevelt Neighborhood Plan.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency

The following Goals and Policies from the updated neighborhood plan, as incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan, are directly applicable to this proposal:

R-HP2: Encourage an appropriate fit of scale and architectural character in all new developments.

R-LUG3: Promote the design of private development and public facilities that protects and enhances public views and vistas.

R-TP2: Promote sidewalk design on principal and minor arterials to encourage pedestrian use and improve pedestrian safety.

R-TP6: Promote site planning that reduces conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.

R-TP9: Promote improvements of pedestrian and bicycle facilities to ensure safe and convenient access to the light rail station.

R-CFG1: As growth in the neighborhood occurs and density increases, provide public open spaces and indoor and outdoor community gathering places for neighborhood enjoyment.

R-CFP1: Protect the value of Roosevelt’s public spaces by controlling shadow impacts from surrounding development, enhancing and maintaining the landscape and facilities, and preserving public views from these spaces of the Olympic Mountains and Mount Rainier, the downtown Seattle skyline, and other City Landmarks.

R-UP3: Encourage the participation by all Roosevelt residents and businesses in voluntary programs for yard waste reduction and recycling, rain water collection and reuse, solar connection to the City’s electrical grid and other such programs as may be sponsored the City, private utilities or other public organizations.

R-UP4: Promote the use of sustainable building products and energy/water conserving fixtures in all new construction.

R-EP5: Promote the use of environmentally-friendly modes of transportation and other ways of reducing greenhouse gases, such as alternative heating systems and reduced use of gasoline-powered devices.

R-EP6: Promote site planning and building design that reduce energy use through natural lighting, natural ventilation and solar orientation.

Recommendation

DPD recommends adoption of the updated Roosevelt Design Guidelines. This action will provide the Design Review Program with the direction it needs to implement the community’s vision for the built and natural environments. The updated design guidelines reflect the values and expectations held by the neighborhood for multi-family and commercial building design excellence.