

BALLARD

municipal center master plan area

Design Guidelines

Effective January 15, 2001



City of Seattle
Department of Design,
Construction & Land Use

Design Review: *Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area*

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Acknowledgments

BMC Master Plan Steering Committee
City of Seattle Executive Services Department
Seattle Department of Design, Construction and
Land Use (DCLU)

I. Design Review in Seattle's Neighborhoods

What is Design Review?

Design Review provides a forum for citizens and developers to work toward achieving a better urban environment through attention given to fundamental design principles. Design Review is intended to affect how new development can contribute positively to Seattle's neighborhoods. Design guidelines offer a flexible tool—an alternative to prescriptive zoning requirements—which will allow new development to respond better to the distinctive character of its surroundings.

Design Review has three principal objectives:

1. to encourage better design and site planning to enhance the character of the city and ensure that new development sensitively fits into neighborhoods;
2. to provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and
3. to improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors and the City early in the design and siting of new development.

Design Review is a component of a Master Use Permit (MUP) application, along with other components, such as environmental review (SEPA), variances, etc., administered by the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use (DCLU). Like these other components, Design Review applications involve public notice and opportunity for comment. Unlike other components, projects subject to Design Review are brought before the Design Review Board for its recommendations or to staff through Administrative Design Review. The final decision on Design Review is made by the DCLU Director, together with the decisions on any other MUP components. This decision is appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

What are Neighborhood-Specific Design Guidelines?

Design Review uses the both Citywide Guidelines and guidelines that are specific to individual neighborhoods. Once adopted by the City Council, neighborhood-specific design guidelines augment the Citywide Guidelines. Together they are the basis for project review within the neighborhood.

The guidelines for the Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan augment the existing Citywide Design Guidelines.

The Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan neighborhood design guidelines reveal the character of the proposed Municipal Center area as supported by the residents and businesses of Central Ballard. The guidelines help to reinforce existing character and protect the qualities that a neighborhood values most in the face of change. Thus, a neighborhood's guidelines, in conjunction with the Citywide Design Guidelines, can increase overall awareness of good design and involvement in the design review process.

More About Design Review

More information about Design Review can be found in the Citywide Design Guidelines and in the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC 23.41). Information includes:

- Projects Subject to Design Review
- How Design Guidelines are Applied
- Who Serves on the Design Review Board
- Development Standards Departures
- Client Assistance Memo (CAM) 238

II. Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Context and Priority Design Issues

Ballard Municipal Center Mission:

The Ballard Municipal Center (BMC) is the priority element that emerged from the Ballard/Crown Hill Neighborhood Plan. The BMC is intended to facilitate a healthy, vibrant urban core. It would bring together well-used public services, a new library, an urban park, retail and new midrise residential units into a “center piece” venue that would be pleasant to visit and easy to access.

Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan

Purpose: The BMC Master Plan identifies potential sites for a new public park, neighborhood library, and city service center and establishes design criteria and guidelines for the development of a six block area in the heart of Ballard (see Map 2).

Goals: Create critically needed open space, increase the supply of housing, improve access to city services, spur economic development in the core of the hub urban village, and provide a focal point for transportation improvements.

Plan Area: This plan covers an area of approximately 30 acres - ten acres of which include existing streets and land planned to be in public ownership in the near future (for the park, library and neighborhood service center). The area extends from 20th Avenue NW to 24th Avenue NW and from NW 56th Street to NW 58th Street, including abutting properties. Currently, the area is primarily zoned Neighborhood Commercial with a 65 foot height limit (NC-65'), which calls for mixed use (commercial/residential) development.

BMC Design Guidelines

The Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan is intended to be a catalyst to encourage high quality public and private development in the core of the urban village. In order to articulate the desired mix of civic character and vibrant, pedestrian-oriented mixed use/residential development, the community evaluated the Citywide Design Guidelines to determine whether the guidelines supported the Master Plan’s design criteria for new development. The existing Citywide guidelines were found to be generally appropriate, however, neighborhood-specific guidelines have been added to address particular master plan-related siting and design issues.

The overriding objective of the Citywide design guidelines is to encourage new development to fit in with its surroundings. Neighborhood guidelines, such as the BMC Master Plan Design Guidelines, share this objective. Whereas Citywide guidelines are meant to apply throughout the City, neighborhood guidelines provide a more focused opportunity to recognize local concerns and design issues. The Ballard neighborhood identified several design issues - both general and specific to site conditions (e.g. adjacency to the park, mixed use development on North-South avenues, etc.) - to which new development should respond. These have been incorporated into the BMC Master Plan Design Guidelines, and serve as augmenting guidelines to supplement the Citywide Design Guidelines for projects subject to design review.

Master Plan Elements

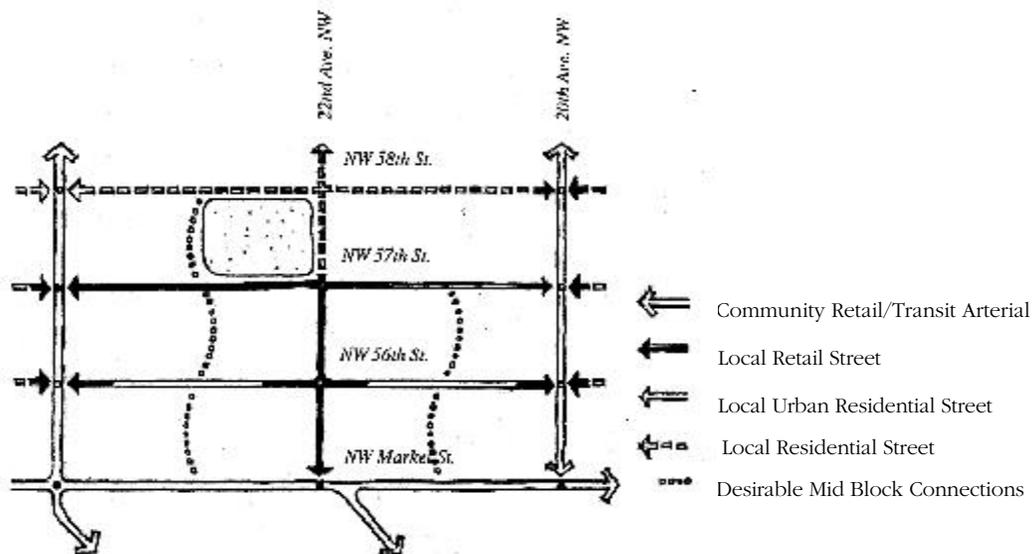
The plan is organized into three elements: the park, streets, and buildings. The building element describes appropriate siting and design principles for distinct areas within the master plan area by augmenting applicable Citywide Design Guidelines and identifying potential departures from development standards. However, an understanding of the other two elements (park and streets) is important to new development, as they contribute greatly to overall context to which new buildings should respond. Therefore, project proponents should carefully study both the master plan and design guidelines documents when developing in the BMC Master Plan area.

Park

A new park is the centerpiece of this vision. In general, the park should be characterized by a broad lawn for public gatherings and linked to the surrounding neighborhoods by pedestrian friendly sidewalks. A distinctive civic character is an important neighborhood goal, and the plan envisions a co-located new library and neighborhood service center on 22nd Avenue NW, either directly south or southeast of the park.

Streets (Public Right-of-Way)

A clearly identifiable and consistent streetscape will help extend the park to the surrounding neighborhoods. Clear connections between the park, library, Market Street and the surrounding neighborhood is a key master plan objective. In addition to streetscape continuity, mid-block pedestrian connections are desired to break up the long East-West blocks between 20th and 24th Avenues NW.



A framework for flexible application of the design elements is intended to encourage different types of high quality development yet maintain the right amount of continuity. The master plan streetscape recommendations have been formalized as the “Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Street Improvement Design Standards”. These include specific paving, lighting, and other sidewalk and streetscape standards with which new development shall comply. As a set of standards separate and distinct from the BMC Master Plan Area Design Guidelines, the proposed street improvements are not intended to provide design guidance to new development through the Design Review process. Rather, implementation of the Street Improvement Design Standards would occur at a different stage of the Master Use Permit review process.

Buildings

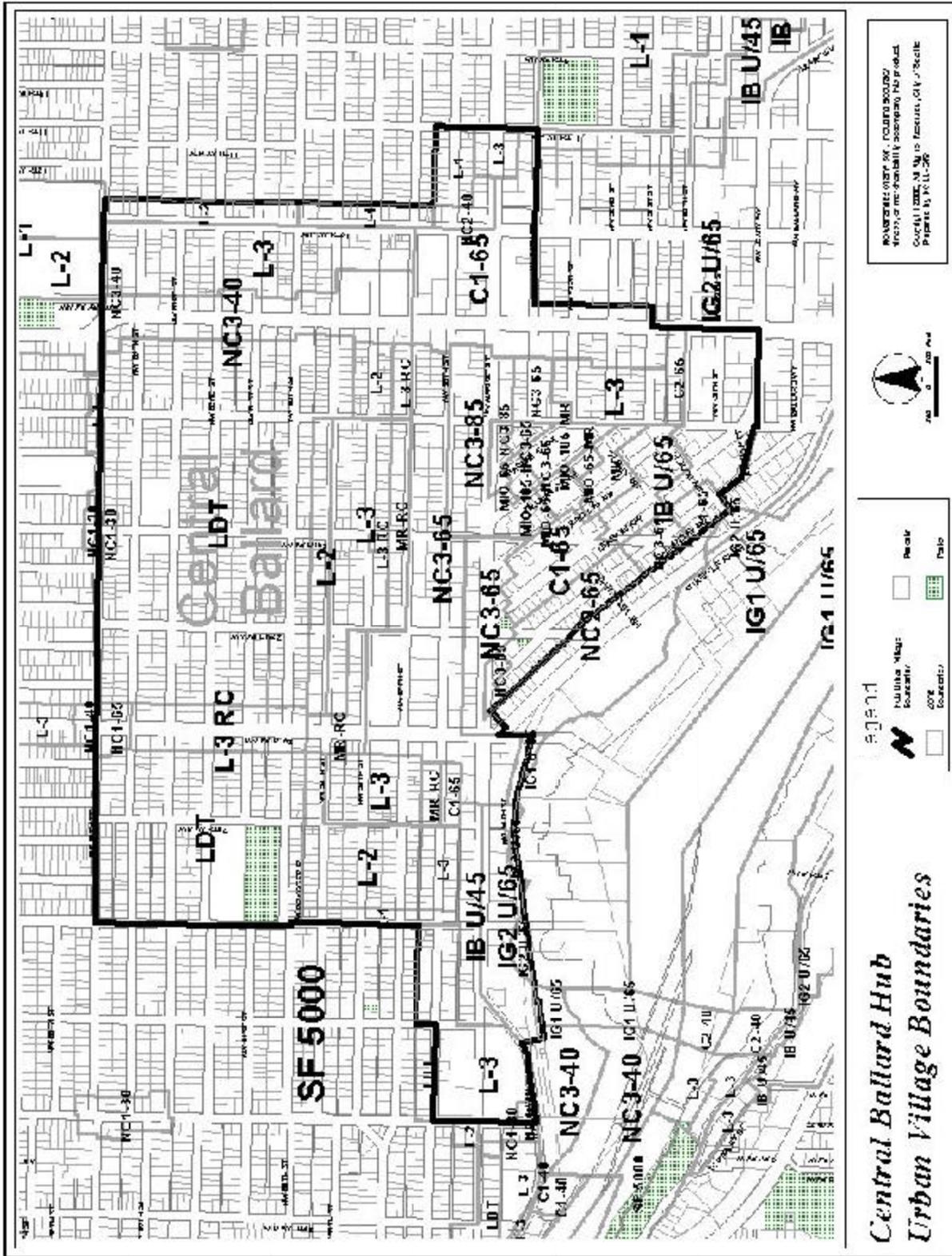
This plan will guide the development of attractive and high quality new commercial, mixed use and residential buildings that clearly define the public street spaces, maximize solar access to the street/park and provide a delightful and vibrant pedestrian environment. The master plan emphasizes unique design guidance for five distinct areas:

- Developments surrounding the park
- Institutional developments
- Mixed-use developments on 20th, 22nd and 24th Avenues NW
- Mixed-use/residential developments located mid-block on NW 56th, 57th and 58th Street.
- Single-use residential developments on NW 58th Street.

Design departures from development standards to help meet master plan goals and objectives related to new development are identified in applicable design guidelines. For example, these departures include: an additional level in building height in exchange for providing townhouse style units at street level abutting the park, and a reduction in open space requirements when a mid-block pedestrian connection is provided.

Uses

In addition to the new library and neighborhood service center, the plan also proposes that townhouses, with retail behind and parking below, are the most appropriate development directly fronting the park to the west. A mix of residential, commercial, cultural and civic uses is desired. Residential developments that provide units with direct access to the public street are preferred since they help enliven the street environment. Overall, the area is intended to have a civic quality while accommodating a variety of uses and activities giving the area a vitality 24 hours a day.

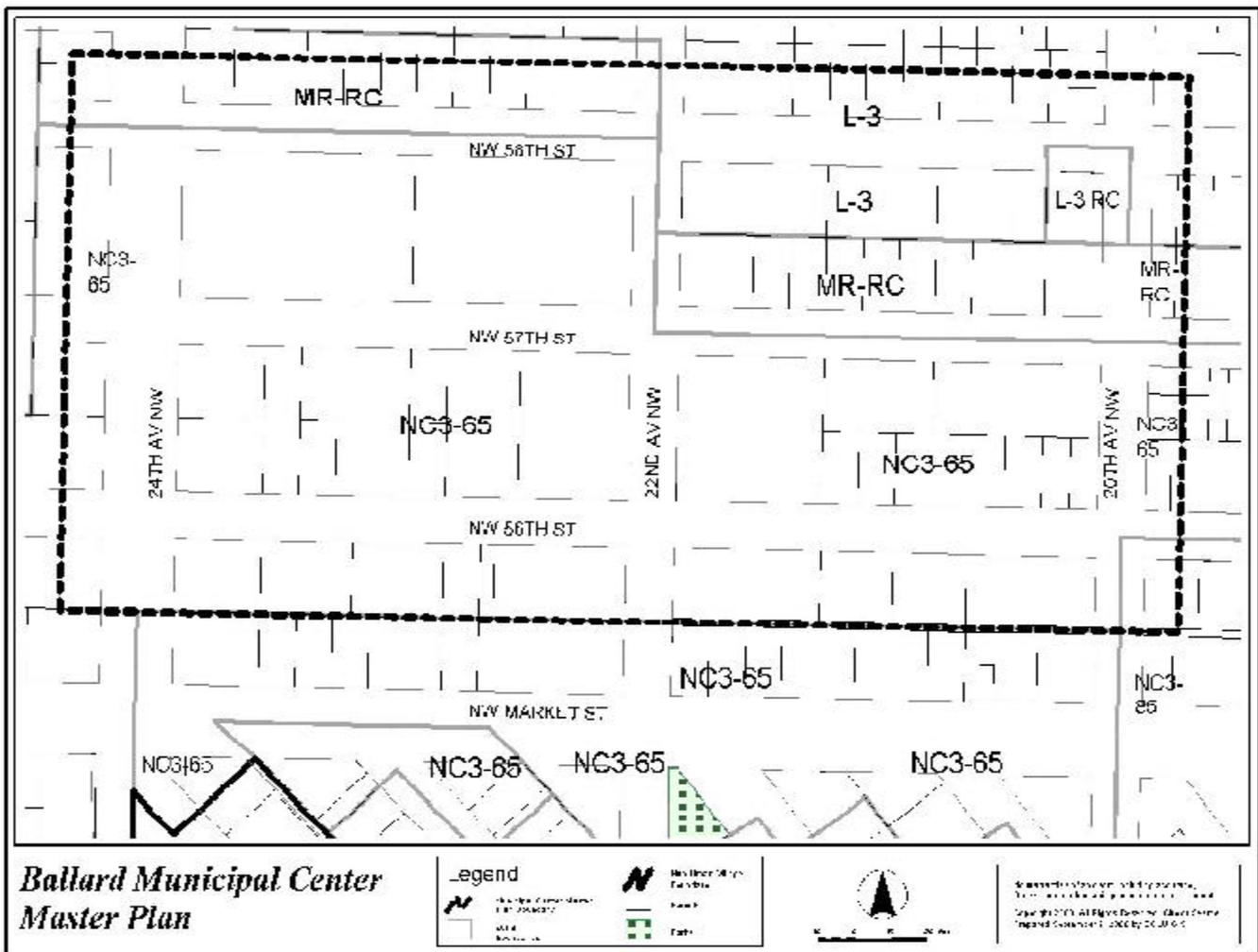


Map 1: Central Ballard Hub Urban Village

Zone Designations:

SF 5000 (Single Family), LDT (Lowrise, Duplex, Triplex), L1, L2, L3 (Lowrise 1, 2 and 3), MR (Midrise), RC (Residential Commercial), NC2, NC3 (Neighborhood Commercial 2, 3), C1 (Commercial 1), MIO (Major Institution Overlay), P1, (Pedestrian Overlay)

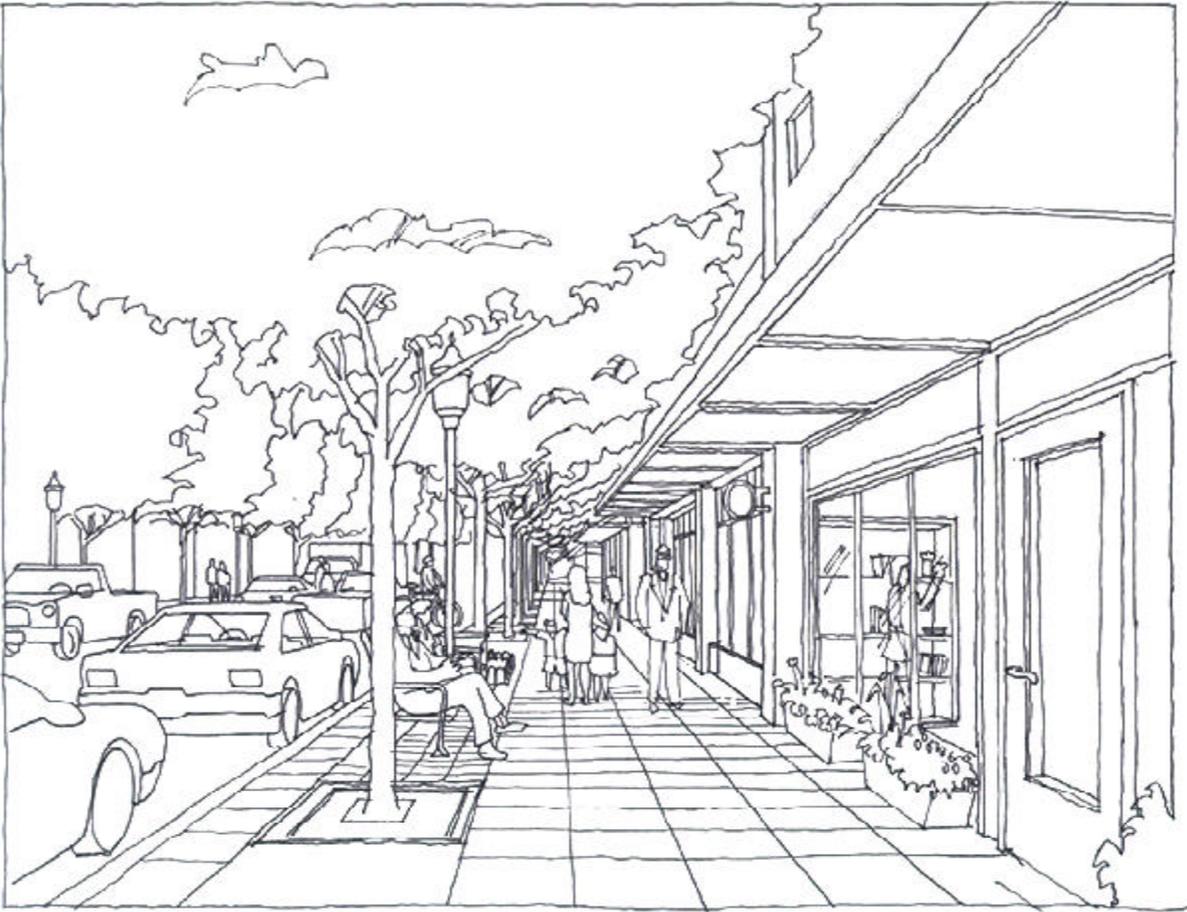
For the most up-to-date zoning designations, please refer to the official City of Seattle zoning map.



Map 2: BMC Master Plan Area

Zone Designations:
SF 5000 (Single Family), **LDT** (Lowrise, Duplex, Triplex), **L1, L2, L3** (Lowrise 1, 2 and 3), **MR** (Midrise), **RC** (Residential Commercial), **NC2, NC3** (Neighborhood Commercial 2, 3), **C1** (Commercial 1), **MIO** (Major Institution Overlay), **P2** (Pedestrian Overlay)

Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines



III. Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines

Note: The guidelines are numbered to correspond to the Citywide Design Guidelines (A-1, A-2, etc). A gap in the numerical sequence means there are no additional community design guidelines for that particular Citywide Guideline.



Site Planning

responding to site characteristics

A. SITE PLANNING

Context

The BMC Master Plan envisions a civic district and identifies sites for a park, library, Neighborhood Service Center and potential senior center in Ballard's core urban village area. These elements are envisioned to comprise a new 'center' for the community. A new park is the centerpiece of this vision, characterized by a broad lawn for public gatherings and linked to the surrounding neighborhoods by pedestrian-oriented streetscapes.

A co-located new library and Neighborhood Service Center on 22nd Ave. NW, either directly south or southeast of the park, is planned. New mid-rise residential units and retail space adjacent to the park will add to the vitality of the master plan area. In general, the plan proposes a mix of residential, mixed use, commercial, cultural and civic uses.

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics

Development Surrounding The Park

West, North and East sides of the park:

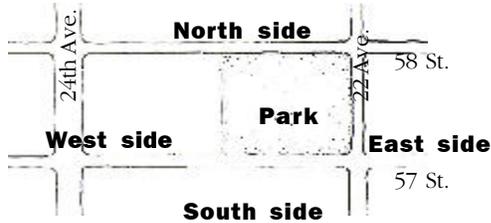
Buildings are encouraged to create a consistent two-story street wall with ground related entries. Development above the base should be set back and/or modulated to increase solar exposure to the street and other public places.

South side of the park:

Cultural and civic uses are planned in this area. However, if mixed use development occurs, a consistent street wall with a two story minimum base is encouraged. Development should be set back above the two story height and/or modulated in a manner that enhances solar exposure to the park.

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility

Development Surrounding The Park



Site Planning

streetscape compatibility

West, North and East sides of the park:

Townhouse style design is appropriate at street level adjacent to the park. Residential developments that provide units that directly access the public right-of-way are preferred since they help enliven the street environment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe and welcoming.

South side of the park:

If mixed use development occurs around the park, it is desirable to provide active storefronts along the entire south edge of NW 57th Street, west of 22nd Avenue NW, and a consistent street wall with a two-story minimum height.



A maximum 10-foot setback to allow for the desired transition from townhouse units to the public right-of-way (see A-6, Transition Between Residence and Street) is encouraged.

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility (cont'd.)

Mixed Use and Residential on East-West Streets

Buildings should maintain a consistent street wall up to a minimum of two story development and provide a setback(s), particularly on the south side of the street, beyond three stories to enhance solar access to the street and avoid a 'canyon'. Deviations from the consistent street wall should be allowed for public usable open spaces.

Where appropriate, mid-block pedestrian connections are strongly encouraged. The Design Review Board may consider a departure to reduce open space requirements in exchange for a mid-block pedestrian connection. Such spaces shall be sited and designed in a manner that are clearly public in nature and engaging to pedestrians.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street

Development Surrounding the Park

West side: Access to the front doors of townhouse residences should be provided via a paved and well lit pedestrian connection.

The non-residential development west of the park should provide at least two separate retail entrances on 24th Avenue NW. Residential access (both vehicular and pedestrian) is most appropriate on NW 58th Street.

Streets

The mid block pedestrian connection should foster social contact in a safe environment. New development is highly encouraged to front retail and/or townhouse style units on the mid block connection at street level. To further promote vitality and safety in the pedestrian experience, entries to retail and townhouse units should be placed in an identifiable and engaging manner.

As implied in the discussion above, this type of development includes a mix of uses within close proximity of one another. As a result, walking is promoted and therefore if retail or townhouse style development is provided to the satisfaction of the Design Review Board, a design departure to allow for an exemption (similar to a P2 overlay) to the parking requirement for the mid block fronting retail use(s) may be considered. Also, if townhouse style development is provided at the street level, an additional floor level in height may be considered as a departure by the Board. This additional floor area is meant to encourage human scale, ground-related units at street level, which typically results in less density.



Site Planning

entrances visible to the street

Site Planning

entrances visible to the street

A-4 Human Activity

Development Surrounding the Park

South sides: Setbacks from the property line should be allowed up to ten feet consistent with pedestrian zoning requirements for outdoor activity.

Mixed Use Development on Avenues

Commercial uses are encouraged to setback in order to provide opportunities for pedestrian activities where appropriate.

A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street

West side of the park: For residential units with direct access to the street, a ten foot landscaped setback or pedestrian walkway immediately adjacent to the park property edge is recommended with a low landscaped fence or low hedge to help define the relationship between the property and the park edge.

North and East sides: New development should provide a landscaped fence or low, dense hedge to help define the street edge. No more than a ten foot setback to provide an effective transition between townhouse units and the public realm is desirable.

In general, the landscaped setback from the park to the building edge should be integrated as an extension of the mid-block pedestrian connection system.

Single-use residential

Townhouse or other residential developments that have direct unit entrances on the sidewalk are encouraged. New development should mark the property line with a landscaped fence or low hedge planting to enhance the continuity of the street.



Site Planning

human activity
transition between
residence and street

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access

In Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zones, vehicular entrances are discouraged on the avenues. When absolutely necessary, they should be limited to right turn ingress and egress only.

Vehicular access to sites is most appropriate along NW 56th, 57th, and 58th Streets. Commercial vehicular access is most appropriate on NW 56th and/or NW 57th Streets.

New at-grade parking areas should minimize exposure to the street edge. At-grade parking areas and driveways are discouraged directly adjacent to the park.

Where curbcuts are provided, the number and width should be minimized.



Site Planning

parking and vehicle access

Site Planning

location of parking on
commercial street fronts

B. HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

Development Surrounding the Park

West, North and East sides of the park: In general, the overall development massing should maximize the solar access to the park through careful massing arrangement of the upper levels, set back above a two-story base containing townhouse style units.

South sides: Civic and cultural uses are anticipated to be developed along the south edge of the park. However if mixed use development does occur, it should provide a consistent street wall with a two-story minimum height. Development should be set back above the two story height and/or modulate the facade to enhance solar exposure to the park.

Townhouse/retail related departures:
In providing solar access through design treatments such as significant modulation and setbacks above townhouse units, the Design Review Board may consider allowing an additional floor level (not to exceed 9 ft.) in height.

If retail and/or townhouse units are placed along the midblock connection with active facades and identifiable entries, the Board may consider an additional floor level (not to exceed 9 ft.) in height (provided that the additional height is set back and does not diminish solar access to the park).

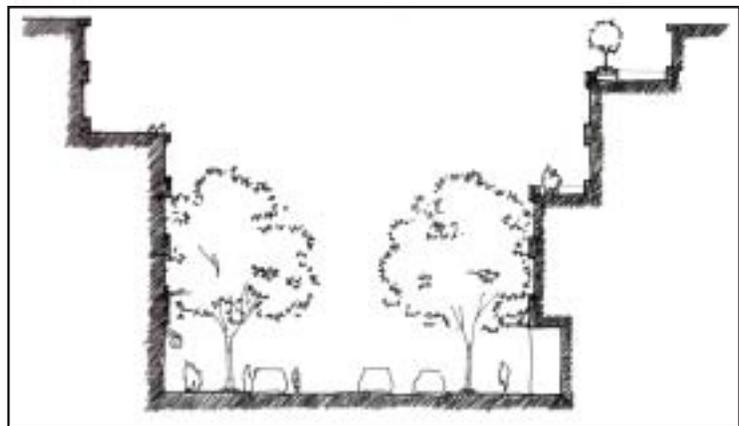
Mixed Use Development on North-South Avenues

Buildings should maintain a consistent street wall up to a minimum of two stories and provide a setback(s), particularly on the west side of the avenue, beyond three stories to enhance solar access to the street and avoid a 'canyon' effect.

Mixed Use and Residential Development on East-West Streets

Same as above, except with setbacks particularly on the south side of the street beyond three stories to enhance solar access to the street. Buildings should provide facade modulations that break down the scale of larger developments to recall the underlying original 50' parcel widths.

The Board may consider exceptions of up to 10 ft. from the recommended consistent street wall for public usable open space. Design should provide facade modulation that breaks down the scale of larger development to recall the underlying original 50 ft. parcel width.



Building developments should set back above a consistent street wall to allow sunlight in.



Height, Bulk and Scale

height, bulk and scale

compatibility

C. ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS AND MATERIALS

In general, the master plan intends to guide the development of attractive and high quality new commercial, mixed use and residential buildings that clearly define the public street spaces, maximize solar access to the street/park and provide a delightful and vibrant pedestrian environment.



Architectural Elements

architectural concept and consistency

exterior finish materials

C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency

Institutional Development: The design of institutional buildings should be distinguished from commercial and residential buildings by location on the site, materials and massing. A building with public uses should exhibit a civic presence through careful attention to its relationship with the public realm. A primary entrance, building form, and architectural elements should be designed and scaled to reflect the public activities contained within.

C-4 Exterior Finish Materials

New development should exhibit craftsmanship through the use of durable, attractive materials. Building materials and interesting details found on older buildings on Market Street and the Ballard Avenue Landmark District should be recalled.

D. PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

Context

The Master Plan places particular emphasis on connecting development-related pedestrian activity to the street and clearly defining public space.

Guidelines

New development is encouraged to contribute to a mid-block, north-south connection system for pedestrians. Active, pedestrian-oriented commercial design and/or ground related town house units are encouraged to extend from the street facing facade and front the pedestrian connection path, thereby contributing visual interest and more opportunity for social contact.

considerations

open commercial facades that encourage pedestrians to look into the building interior;
configure retail space to attract tenants with activity that will “spill-out” onto the sidewalk;
street front open space that features artwork, street furniture, and landscaping; and
multiple building entries.

A reduction in a development’s open space or lot coverage requirement may be granted in return for landscape and hardscape treatment that provides and/or enhances the pedestrian connection.

Mixed Use Development

Continuous overhead weather protecting canopies are encouraged on buildings adjacent to the sidewalk. Transparent or translucent canopies along the length of the street provide welcome weather protection, define the pedestrian realm, and reduce the scale of taller buildings.

considerations

Overhead weather protection should be designed with consideration given to:

the overall architectural concept of the building;
uses occurring in the building (entries, commercial space) or adjacent environment (bus stops);
continuity with weather protection provided on nearby buildings;
the scale of the space defined by the height and depth of the weather protection; and
when opaque material is used, the illumination of the underside.

Avenues

The Design Review Board may consider relaxing setback requirements for Pedestrian-2 Overlay Zones at street corners, in exchange for providing generous, usable open space or well-designed indoor/outdoor retail-lined spaces.



Pedestrian Environment

pedestrian open spaces and entrances



Pedestrian Environment

blank walls

visual impacts of parking structures

screening of dumpsters, utilities and service areas

D-2 Blank Walls

Development Surrounding the Park

Active, open, interesting building facades are strongly encouraged, particularly on sites adjacent to the park.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

When surface parking and/or first level parking adjacent to the park is unavoidable, it should be concealed in an attractive manner through the use of screening devices such as landscaping (e.g. low hedge), art-work, well executed fencing/ walls, and use of site topography to provide a buffer between the parking area and the public realm.

New at-grade parking areas are discouraged directly adjacent to the park.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas

Service areas, loading docks and refuse should be internal to the development or carefully screened, especially on sites directly adjacent to the park.

