

## **November 7 2013 Uptown Urban Design Framework Open House**

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### Summary of public comment

On November 7 2013, over 70 people attended the Uptown Urban Design Framework Open House. The event kicked off of the planning process to develop an Urban Design Framework for the Uptown Urban Center neighborhood. Attendees were asked what should be studied and considered as the Framework is developed. The Framework will describe the community's vision for the future of Uptown and guide both City departments and private developers as they make investments in public infrastructure, neighborhood services and new development. Attendees were asked specific questions related to connectivity to and through Uptown, economic vitality in the neighborhood, living in Uptown, the public realm and Seattle Center.

Following is a summary of the comments heard at and following the Open House followed by specific comments.

### **Overarching themes**

Many Open House participants noted the need to recognize the dual role of Uptown – both as a residential neighborhood and as an arts and culture destination. Improvements to the public realm and associated infrastructure as well as public and private investment need to recognize the needs of these two distinct groups. Concern about the maintenance of the sidewalks for public safety in terms of tripping hazards as well as in terms of looking cared for and safe was noted. Seattle Center was mentioned by many as an asset and a desire for better connections to and through the Center was expressed. Many participants voiced a keen interest in preserving the physical character of the neighborhood while accommodating and attracting a diversity of ages, housing affordability and size.

### **Connectivity Summary**

Participants urged that Uptown be recognized as both a destination as well as a place people pass through or visit. Many suggested that Uptown needs to be better served by transit and that a prioritization of pedestrian movement be achieved through traffic calming, improved sidewalk condition and additional pedestrian scaled lighting.). Sightlines for pedestrians, bikes and cars were noted as concerns. Some participants expressed an interest in residential permit parking. Many expressed a desire for a more permeable edge to Seattle Center.

### **Economic Vitality Summary**

Many participants suggested that occupancy and density on the commercial core of Uptown be maximized while maintaining existing character. It was suggested that additional retail and services be oriented to residents while acknowledging and building on the neighborhood's current cultural assets. A need for stronger businesses and a diversity of businesses was expressed by many participants.

### **Living in Uptown Summary**

The preservation of the neighborhood's character and attracting a diversity of ages were raised as significant issues. Commenters wondered how to cue visitors and residents alike that they are in Uptown. Several noted the need to 'spruce' the neighborhood up, cleaning up the sidewalks and open spaces and making it feel safer and cared for. Street maintenance and traffic calming were both

### Summary of public comment

mentioned as important actions to improve the livability of the neighborhood. Many described the need for a community center/public gathering space for residents.

#### **Public Realm Summary**

Participants commented that the streets could be more pedestrian friendly. The activation of the public realm – sidewalks, Kinneer park etc. could help make these places for friendly and welcoming. Many noted the need for better connections to the Seattle Center and the waterfront. Denny was noted by several participants as particularly unfriendly; maintenance being a primary issue. Many commenters suggested taking advantage of topography (or relative lack thereof). Several voiced concerns about bike trail and Kinneer park visitors interface with industrial uses along Elliott. It was suggested that real traffic and transportation issues be addressed before aesthetics and recreation.

#### **Seattle Center Summary**

Many participants acknowledged that Seattle Center is a significant asset for the neighborhood. Several expressed interest in a more permeable edge of Seattle Center. Many asked how Uptown and Seattle Center can integrate their movement patterns (pedestrian, bike, and transit). Questions were raised regarding the status of talk between the City and the Seattle School District regarding the future of Memorial stadium. Many noted support for the redevelopment of the parking garages between Mercer and Roy.

#### **Specific comments**

##### **Connectivity**

###### *Pedestrian*

- Need to address issues with getting to and out of Seattle Center
- Sidewalks need to be accessible - concerned about the walkability of the neighborhood
- Crossing Mercer is horrible – needs improvement
- Traffic calming is needed at Fifth and Mercer – fast traffic
- Need sidewalk on Mercer (From Elliot to Mercer, Amgen bridge not accessible to Uptown)
- Better lighting, more people, and improved sidewalk conditions are a concern – walking sometimes doesn't feel safe, especially at night
- Lighting improvements are necessary
- Some expressed feeling unsafe about people hanging out at Seattle Center
- Visibility at Seattle Center could be improved
- Security/ police presence at Seattle Center is needed
- Sidewalks by Comcast building need improvement

###### *Public transportation*

- Frequency of transit is one of the most desirable qualities of transit and Queen Anne has that with the existing bus service. How can that help shape the vision of Uptown?
- Want faster transit into and out of neighborhood

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- Density and transit are connected – if zoning changes, transit will need to accommodate additional growth
- Need better transit connections in the east west direction on Mercer
- Ideally the proposed 1<sup>st</sup> Ave N Streetcar will connect Uptown to the SODO Stadiums (MLB, MLS, NFL, NBA, and NHL) instead of ending at Pike-Pine.
- Need more transit

### *Neighborhood*

- Uptown is an area where people both pass through and want to stay
- Need to connect the people who live here – make them the priority
- We need additional attractive stores (not more restaurants)
- We want people to stroll, enjoy and relax
- With the viaduct coming down there will be a much greater awareness of the waterfront. How can Uptown benefit from this by further enhancing our connection to the waterfront?
- Improve both pedestrian and transit connections to South Lake Union
- Better physical connections needed to Seattle Center in character with Seattle Center
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### *Environmental*

- Concerns about air quality (Uphill on Mercer PI) from Elliot to 3<sup>rd</sup> on Mercer
- Truck routes impact Mercer in terms of noise, vibration, and being trapped in driveways

### *Automobile*

- Noise of truck/commercial traffic on Harrison is a concern
- Queen Anne Ave N and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave N should become 2 way streets
- There are too many trucks, need traffic calming on Mercer St.
- A stop sign is needed at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Roy Street
- Trim trees at 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave W and Roy St. to improve visibility
- There is poor visibility
- Nervous about bikes along Roy St west of Queen Anne Ave N.
- More traffic enforcement and traffic calming is needed on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave N and Roy St.
- Re-align Roy St at intersection with Queen Anne Ave N
- Connect Kinneer Park to Elliot
- Increase east-west transit capacity
- Tie any recommendations into mobility plan
- Make west Queen Anne Ave N driveway local access only
- Remove right turn lane from Queen Anne Ave N at intersection of Denny & Queen Anne Ave

### *Parking*

- The uptown neighborhood needs permit parking, like Capitol Hill – expand zone #13 to Mercer Street for residents.

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### Summary of public comment

- 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue N and Mercer parking meters are 2hrs until 8:00 pm (Would like to see paid parking go back to 6pm).
- No parking left for residents on west side of Queen Anne Avenue N.

### **Economic Vitality:**

#### *Building*

- What are the height limits?
- Need creative ways to create more density (maybe taller and skinnier buildings)

#### *Neighborhood*

- Reduce crime
- Blend with existing look
- Create more mixed use opportunities at Roy and Mercer parking lots
- Maximize density and occupancy in the central retail core that is currently zoned Neighborhood Commercial with a Pedestrian overlay and 40 foot height limit (NC3P40)
- Retail and services are more connected to Seattle Center than to the neighborhood
- Capitalize on being in a cultural center: businesses that are reflective of performing arts, etc.
- Embrace Seattle center as an asset
- Interest in denser commercial areas that can accommodate growth without losing or altering existing character
- Build on current cultural assets (Seattle Center/theaters)
- Dedicated clean and safe strategies
- Place more emphasis on theater (an important asset)

#### *Transportation*

- Reduce traffic
- Accommodate freight mobility - for example, designate truck routes. This will contribute to business vitality
- What is the appropriate balance between parking and bicycles?
- What is the appropriate balance between pedestrian friendly routes and freight mobility?

#### *Business*

- Promote businesses for locals – not event crowds (applies to both Uptown and top of hill)
- Business and service needs and desires: Coin-operated laundry, hardware, shoe repair, vet, bike shop, hardware store, record store, restaurants
- Need stronger businesses and a greater diversity of businesses
- Uptown desperately needs retail. Uptowners have to visit other neighborhoods to shop. We need a merchant's row like the West Seattle Junction, Ballard Market Street, Capitol Hills' Broadway, etc...
- Keep character of district through the new community development (CVS on Queen Anne Ave N and Roy St.)

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- Marijuana sales outlets seem to be poised to compete with nail salons. Neither seems to reflect the character of the neighborhood
- Business support is needed for businesses on Broad and Thomas Streets during construction (Uptown triangle)
- How to increase business density and diversity without sacrificing the original neighborhood character?
- What is the future of industry in Uptown?

### *Public space*

- Kinneer Trail – overhead bike path – Pro parks levy (reduced parking/deliveries access)
- Façade and graffiti site and/or removal

### **Living in Uptown**

#### *Neighborhood*

- Preserve character of neighborhood
- Access to schools is important
- Public safety and ensuring a sense of public decorum is of concern
- Cigarette butts on sidewalk are an eyesore – need receptacles at businesses
- Want a mix of ages
- Find ways to attract owner occupants, as they are more invested in the community
- Desire to see more affordable and low income housing options
- Avoid chain stores to keep uniqueness
- There is an increase in homelessness along Queen Anne Ave N, Roy and Mercers streets
- Planning should be done within context of the community
- Expand Uptown to include area north of Roy St.
- Uptown needs affordable housing, especially for homeless
- Need to serve a diversity of household income and size in terms of affordable family size units.
- Need more affordable housing – Multi Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program doesn't go low enough for "affordable" rents
- Historical buildings should be inventoried
- How do you know when you are entering Uptown? How can we cue visitors and residents that they are here?
- How can Uptown benefit from the surge of employment in South Lake Union? What can Uptown do to be a symbiotic member to SLU?
- Proposed CVS: an example of what we don't want
- Mercer St. between 1<sup>st</sup> Ave N and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave W feels dangerous

#### *Public Space*

- Could a running track be installed around Seattle center?
- Can the neighborhood be spruced up with benches, signage, etc?
- Take smoking out of Seattle Center
- Is smoking allowed at bus stops – it happens and is unpleasant. Trash needs attention

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### Summary of public comment

- Vagrants in counter balance park keeps others out
- Poor lighting in Kinnear Park makes it feel dangerous
- More benches should be installed on major streets
- There are not enough small parks
- Dog park in Kinnear = good!
- We need to take care of our street trees –they can be a tripping hazard if ill maintained.
- Where is the Uptown Community Center? Where do we gather inside? Where do we gather outside?

### *Pedestrian*

- Need better street maintenance
- Walkability – being able to walk to everything is desirable – rarely need to use car
- Neighborhood is pedestrian friendly – convenient
- Don't like Mercer traffic
- Sidewalk in front of Pesos block is broken, crowded and narrow
- Scary to cross street because cabs may cut pedestrians off
- How about a 4- way crossing at Queen Anne Ave N and Mercer St?
- Mercer has gotten more dangerous to navigate.
- Walkability is a huge issue
- Need better crosswalks on 5th and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue
- Need a light on 5<sup>th</sup> avenue
- Bike lane on Elliot Ave works well, but is detrimental to traffic flow and dangerous for bikers and pedestrians.

### *Business*

- Some nightlife oriented businesses do not contribute to a friendly neighborhood feel – raucous and loud clientele.
- Restaurants with lines on the streets impede pedestrian flow

### *Building*

- Raise height limit to 65 ft. in front of Gates Foundation
- Buildings cannot go higher – lose sight of mountains, space needle, water
- Maybe east side of Uptown can add height
- Maximize density – current commercial core is underbuilt with single story buildings. The existing zoning allows 40 feet building height. We need more development
- CVS proposal needs housing above
- Maintain older building with character
- Availability of two bedroom housing units is too low
- A lot of 21+ establishments in the neighborhood – not family friendly
- Historic character of buildings is important
- Interested in upzoning
- Existing land use in LR is 4 stories – Don't let development go higher

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- Want to help maintain building fabric, preserve character.

#### *Auto mobile*

- Need better street maintenance
- Queen Anne Ave N and Harrison St. need more lighting
- Traffic is dangerous traffic – need to find ways to redirect it
- Utility poles at intersection cut off driver vision – not safe
- Mercer St. has gotten more dangerous to navigate.
- Truck route on Mercer is not good between 5<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> avenues

#### *Parking*

- The Uptown neighborhood needs permit parking like capitol hill – Expand Zone 13
- New developments are not providing sufficient parking
- Diversify height to allow public space
- Lack of parking i.e. spots on Roy St. are being removed
- Consider permit parking on Roy St.
- Parking density – impacts to access of services
- Issue of parking on Elliot: Not enough for residents, but at odds with business owners.
- Concern about parking density at Elliot Ave

### **Public Realm**

#### *Pedestrian*

- Streets could be more pedestrian friendly
- Street lighting should be improved
- Move activation is needed on streets
- Better connections to Seattle Center are needed
- Confusing and dangerous intersections
- Better sidewalk maintenance + wider sidewalks
- Denny – “direct but nasty”
- Mercer – trucks/hard to cross, unfriendly to pedestrians
- Connections to Amgen need to be better
- Need sidewalks in “panhandle” – dangerous walking near park
- Walkability: hard to cross mercer ( west end) more and more truck traffic
- New overpass good but we want more waterfront connections
- Streets could be a lot better – pedestrian friendly (confusing intersection)
- Sidewalk maintenance along Mercer, especially with property owners
- Sidewalk improvements are needed
- Sidewalk condition is hard to walk on, but we don’t want to lose the trees that are causing the sidewalks to buckle
- Maintain connection to South Lake Union - mobility plan
- Coordinate design of North Portal crossings with South Lake Union green streets

### Summary of public comment

#### *Environment*

- Underground overhead power to allow more trees
- Putting power lines underground limits trees
- More tree cover is desirable
- Improve greenbelt ecosystem
- Talk about greenbelt ecosystem/habitat
- Green belt preservation is desired – not for recreation
- Permeable sidewalks – natural landscape (native plants) – pursue a sustainable environment

#### *Public Space*

- There are not enough parks or pocket parks in Uptown
- More benches are needed
- Kinnear – better pathways, improved tennis court
- Improve safety of greenbelt
- White concrete sidewalks do not look great over time
- End un-policeable pathways in Kinnear Park greenbelt
- Active park with activities
- Vagrancy in Counterbalance Park drives others out.

#### *Neighborhood*

- Lake to Bay – needs vision and master plan
- Is there only one heart location that is at the center of things or are there many that when connected makes the “heart-beat” of Uptown?
- How can uptown benefit from being relatively flat? (When compared to neighboring residential communities-Upper Queen Anne, Capitol Hill, Magnolia)
- How do you deal with security?
- Address real traffic and transportation issues before aesthetics and recreation
- Plan together with Seattle Center next 50

#### *Business*

- Why are businesses on “panhandle” connected to Uptown, we’re different
- Concern about bike trail and Kinnear park visitors interface with industrial uses along Elliott

#### *Transportation*

- Bike path should bypass bad intersection at Mercer
- Sidewalks not ADA compliant
- Since Nickerson was closed, trucks have resulted in bad air quality
- Cars come down 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues W too fast
- Where is the mass transit connection?

#### *Automobile*

- Confusing and dangerous intersections

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- Connections to Amgen need to be better
- New overpass is good but we want more waterfront connections

#### *Parking*

- The uptown neighborhood needs permit parking like Capitol Hill. The new developments are not providing sufficient parking.
- Introduce expand residential parking permits/zones
- More metered spots for community
- More metered spots for commercial
- Expand permit parking!

### **Seattle Center**

#### *Public space*

- Limit bikes in Center
- Open Center to Uptown
- Eliminate smoking
- Introduce an art walk on campus: collaborate with arts tenants ( Pacific Northwest Ballet, Opera, The Rep, Seattle Children's Theater, VERA Project, Chihuly Glass Museum, EMP, SIFF, etc)
- Is the proposed redevelopment of Seattle Center sustainable? Green space is good but what about the costs to maintain it? Open space for festivals is good but how many events would it take to make it efficient?
- Off leash area for dogs?

#### *Neighborhood*

- Noise Abatement: loud music early AM on weekends (marathons and charity walks)
- Memorial Stadium – any progress?
- Wouldn't it be great if we could say "The world famous Seattle Center located in the fabulous neighborhood of Uptown?"

#### *Transportation*

- How can Uptown and Seattle Center integrate their movement patterns (pedestrian, bike, transit)?

#### *Business*

- Armory restaurants need to stay open until 7-7:30 pm so those who attend theatres may have a dining option.

#### *Parking*

- Redevelop parking garage between Mercer and Roy
- Any plans to improve parking lot on Roy St.? It is a real blight