



2007 Main Street Conference

Revitalizing the Ave: Working Together to Revitalize the University District

TIMELINE

January 1994 - The Ave Planning Group is formed, a joint committee of the Greater University Chamber of Commerce, the University of Washington and the University District Community Council. Its goal is to address community-wide concerns about the future vitality of University Way NE., the commercial heart of the District. The group began an in-depth study and planning process to develop a business revitalization plan for "the Ave."

January 1995 - The Ave Planning Group published "The Ave Report" which identified a three part revitalization plan for the Ave including 1) improvement of the physical streetscape, 2) economic development of local businesses, 3) assessment of public safety and social programs.

May 1995 - The Ave Planning Group Principles are agreed on and published setting out planning policies in the three major areas. Top priority is given to renovation of the physical streetscape, the basis for all other improvements.

Fall 1995 - The group briefed all City council members, the Mayor's office and appropriate City staff on The Ave issues and agenda and asked their support.

January 1996 - A Small and Simple grant is secured, \$12,500 in City funds and a Chamber of Commerce match of \$12,500 totaling \$25,000. Makers Architecture and Urban Design is retained to develop a streetscape improvement plan for The Ave.

May 1996 - Makers began coordination and analysis with City departments and Metro, and a public planning process to develop the plan. The process included community meetings, interviews, and coordination with the wider UCUC neighborhood planning process.

September 1996 - Seattle Planning Commission, RTA and UCUC participate with Makers and the APG in a charette to develop design concepts for light rail stations, pedestrian and transit connections to the Ave.

October 1996 - A large public workshop is held to develop the design plan and receive public input.

November 1996 - August 1997 - APG and Makers continued to meet with community groups, City Light, city utilities, for further support and analysis.

August 1997 - Makers published The Ave Street Design Plan which recommended a four-part series of improvements including: 1) wider sidewalks, 2) improved bus stops, 3) safer intersections, 4) character amenities. The report identifies a bus stop bulb demonstration project as the first implementation step. The community gave its support to the plan.

September 1997 - Makers and the APG worked with Council and City staff on bus stop demonstration, largely funded by the Chamber.

October 1997 - Councilmember Richard Mc Iver authorized Metro to implement project

January 1998 - SeaTran secured Puget Sound Public Transportation Account grant of 500,000, SeaTran match of \$100,000 and a Metro match of \$50,000 to construct a bus stop bulb demonstration project and begin design development of Ave. The Plan was presented to Deputy Mayor Tom Byers.

May 1998 - The demonstration project on the 4200 block of University Way was installed and a six month study of impacts begun. Results showed that the new configuration made little difference in bus speeds and was more convenient for riders.

Summer, Fall 1998 - Design and funding work began at the City level and community meetings and interviews presented choice and placing of urban design features.

January 1999 - The city submitted applications for project funding. Later in 1999 SeaTran received two federal grants totaling \$4.1 million.

March 2000 - SeaTran was notified that \$1 million had been obligated for design. A SeaTran design team was formed to start preliminary design work, including representatives from Makers and the Ave Group. Construction was expected to begin in 2002.

July 2000 - The design team learned that the remaining federal funds would not be available until 2004 due to over-obligated bonds at the regional level. The City investigated to feasible means to advance construction in order to keep the project on schedule

August 2000 - The Arts Commission announced that San Francisco sculptor, Brian Goggin was selected to create a piece of public art on the Ave through the One Percent for Art Program.

Fall 2000 and Winter 2001 - The Ave Group, community organizations and the UW mounted a lobbying campaign to convince City staff and officials to find a solution to the funding delay.

February 2001 - Eight community organizations and the UW joined to ask Mayor Schell to advance the funds and allow construction to proceed on schedule.

March 2001 - Daryl Grigsby, SeaTran director, requested that Mayor Schell enter into an advance construction agreement with WSDOT that would require "fronting" \$4.6 million to close the funding gap.

August 2001 - Mayor Schell, at a press conference at University Heights, recommends that City funds be advanced to start construction in 2002.

September, October 2001 - The community mobilizes an intense lobbying campaign to assure funding in the City Council 2002 budget. The odds of approval are 50/50.

November 2001 - After a show stopping demonstration of support at the final City Council budget hearing, funds for construction are approved.

June 2002 - Ground breaking is celebrated with Mayor Nickels in attendance.

July 2002 - September 2003 - Construction starts at the south end of the Ave and moves north block by block. Art Brochet (Muir Public Relations) is hired by the City to be a liaison between the businesses, the City and contractor. Each block forms an organization to keep communications open and solve on the spot problems.

February 2003 – Mayor Greg Nickels announces plan to revitalize the University District.

March 2003 – Completed comprehensive assessment of the retail and residential development environment and recommendations to stimulate housing and retail environment.

March 2003 - University of Washington Architecture students initiate their first in a series of "Storefront Studios" aimed at offering free architectural design services to local retailers to encourage the use of Facade Improvement Grant funds. The studio concept started on the Ave and has reached into other retail cores since March of 2003.

September 2003 - The stunning new Ave is reopened.

March 2004 - Adopted renewal legislation for Multi-Family Tax Exemption Program for the U-District in March 2004 to encourage the development of more affordable housing units in the neighborhood.

June 2004 - Included the University District in the latest expansion of the Alcohol Impact Area boundaries to limit the sale of certain alcoholic beverages to limit chronic public inebriation and illegal activities associated with alcohol sales and use.

November 2004 - Limits on UW leasing lifted to bring more UW faculty, staff and students into the business district.

May 2005 – City adopts new residential parking reductions that better reflects car ownership rates to remove barriers to new housing and mixed-use development.

May 2005 – Wi-Fi pilot initiated in May 2005 to provide visitors and businesses along the Ave with free wireless access.

