ENVISIONING NORTHGATE’S 5TH AVENUE NE

Overview

Today’s automobile-oriented Northgate commercial area is envisioned to become one of Seattle’s few mixed-use urban centers. 5th Avenue NE is a central and vital artery running through Northgate’s commercial core and serves as an important vehicular and transit corridor. Proposed private redevelopment and public investment create opportunities for this street to serve as a primary pedestrian connection to housing, retail and community facilities within the area.

Background

The 5th Avenue NE Streetscape Design Project presents a streetscape design for 5th Avenue NE from NE 100th St to NE 112th. It reflects the community’s vision for transforming this street into a pedestrian corridor for the Northgate Urban Center. Making 5th Avenue NE into a pedestrian-friendly street has been a high priority for the Northgate community, first in the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan and then during the Northgate Community Workshop held in 2000. Initial street design concepts were developed over a period of six months, during which, the Planning Commission sponsored a community workshop to ensure community input.

The Vision for 5th Avenue NE

As pedestrians walk along 5th Avenue NE, their experience will be both stimulating and comfortable. Sidewalks and crossings will allow for generous walking movement and an increase in width at key corners. Inviting spaces will encourage sociability and introduce a ‘boulevard’ effect. As a key pedestrian street within a larger corridor, 5th Avenue NE will have connections with surrounding streets and properties for an improved overall pedestrian network.

Streetscape Design Plan

This streetscape design plan focuses on improvements within the street right-of-way, design guidelines for private development, and unique design opportunities on properties adjacent to the right-of-way. It is intended to serve as a guide and a catalyst for physical improvements to the public realm and as part of subsequent private development on 5th Avenue NE. The goal is to change 5th Avenue NE from an arterial with a vehicular emphasis to an engaging pedestrian-friendly corridor. This vision is articulated through specific street design elements, design guidelines and an implementation strategy.

Implementation

Components of the streetscape design plan are expected to be implemented in phases, culminating in a 20-year transformation from a suburban pattern of single-oriented office and retail development into a street where people walk, between shops, restaurants, offices and residences. An implementation strategy lays out near-term and long-term actions needed to realize the plan. The plan’s success will require a shared commitment between the City and the community, as well as an on-going stewardship effort.

Key Elements of the Streetscape Design Report

The Streetscape Design Report groups specific elements around design themes:

• improving pedestrian mobility ("Pedestrians in Motion"),
• improving the definition of the pedestrian environment ("Defining the Pedestrian Realm").

Widened sidewalks, clearly defined street crossings and increased crossing opportunities help to create a network for pedestrian movement between the community and key destinations points, such as a library, a neighbor’s house or a cafe. The pedestrian realm is better defined with elements that introduce unifying patterns to the street (line, area and medians), increased buffering of the pedestrian from traffic, and identification of unique opportunities to create a sense of place.

The design report also identifies areas where street operation changes have been identified as needed to improve traffic flow and operations. These potential changes must be carefully considered to ensure that they do not further compromise the pedestrian environment. Specific pedestrian considerations are recommended to mitigate the impacts these changes may have on goals of achieving a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Beyond the specific design elements, the Streetscape Design Report identifies some broader planning strategies to further improve pedestrian opportunities in the larger Northgate area. These include more comprehensive approaches to addressing the balance of mobility needs in an area still dominated by vehicular traffic.

The Concept Map

See other side for a highlighted streetscape design plan and description of basic design elements.

CONCEPT MAP
Crossing Northgate Way
Explore opportunities to improve pedestrian comfort and safety.

Wider Sidewalks to provide adequate access and movement
Expand existing sidewalks to six feet instead of 10-foot walkways, depending on the existing right-of-way (R.O.W.) widths, along the corridor length. Currently most sidewalks are six feet against the north curb. For those areas with limited R.O.W., the additional footage allowing a two-foot sidewalk would occur when adjacent properties redevelop along the street and within areas designated as major pedestrian routes.

Edge Treatment
Protect property owners and residents by designing a signature street trees, artwork, and other pedestrian-friendly design elements. This could include large-scale designs such as trellises, growing surfaces and creative street lighting along the length of 5th Avenue NE, especially along the west side.

On-Street Parking
Expand on-street parking opportunities at all signalized intersections by converting the east and west sides of 5th Avenue NE to dedicated on-street parking. This would also allow the installation of design elements that improve safe pedestrian movement.

Additional Buffer between the pedestrian and the street when one lane is not needed to address peak hour traffic needs, include design elements that improve safe pedestrian movement.

Create a Pedestrian Promenade across 5th Avenue NE at the mall entrance and onto the surrounding neighborhoods.

Recycling Cans and Route Kiosks
Install recycling cans and route kiosks along the street frontage and traffic islands to improve pedestrian comfort and safety.

Street Trees
Plant tree strips or in tree pits within expanded crosswalks to help buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic.

Relocated Bus Stops and Enhanced Bus Shelters
Create additional bus shelters at all signalized intersections to provide adequate waiting space and comfort for passengers.

Landscape Median
Irrigate landscaped medians to reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts and to create a sense of place.

Park & Improvements
Integrate an overlook or plaza at Thornton Creek park into the streetscape.