

3.7 Open Space & Recreation

This section of the Draft EIS describes the existing open space and recreation opportunities in the U District study area and surrounding site vicinity, and evaluates how each of the alternatives would affect open space and recreation opportunities.

3.7.1 Affected Environment

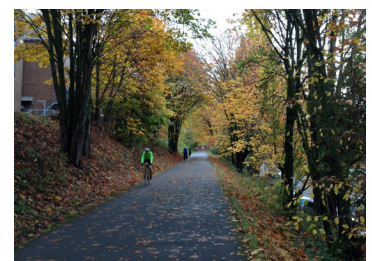
The U District contains many parks and open spaces; more are located in surrounding neighborhoods. The following is an inventory of existing and planned open spaces in the U District and vicinity as shown in Figure 3.7-1.

Seattle Parks—owned and managed by the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

- ▶ **University Playground** occupies 2.75 acres adjacent to NE 50th Street. The park includes two tennis courts, a children's play area, and a baseball/softball field that can be converted into a soccer field. The playground is well used by neighborhood residents and residents of surrounding neighborhoods. Community involvement in 2012–2013 led to playground upgrades, new exercise stations, and some programmed activities.
- ▶ **The Burke-Gilman Trail** passes through the southern end of the U District. This recreational trail does not contribute much open space acreage to the neighborhood, but it does provide a valuable connection for cyclists, runners, and walkers to many parks in the surrounding areas. Generally, the trail is managed jointly by Seattle Department of Transportation and Seattle Parks. On campus, it is managed by UW.
- ▶ **Peace Park** is a 0.3 acre park located at NE 40th Street and NE Pacific Street. This small landscaped open space contains a memorial bronze statue of Sadako Sasaki, a victim of the Hiroshima bombing.



University Playground



Burke-Gilman Trail

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- **Christie Park** occupies 0.11 acres on a converted residential lot. It includes landscaped areas, a small picnic shelter with a table and benches, and a basketball hoop. The park is well located to serve the residential community south of NE 45th Street and west of Roosevelt Way NE but activities are somewhat constrained since homes are directly adjacent it.
- **Northlake Park** is a small (0.04 acre) park on the Ship Canal under the Interstate-5 bridge. It provides a viewpoint and a small amount of landscaping. This park was recommended in the Neighborhood Plan.
- **North Passage Park** is a 0.8 acre park located directly under Interstate-5 at 600 NE Northlake Way. It offers passive recreation and views of the Ship Canal.



Shiga Gardens



University Heights P-Patch

Open spaces owned and managed by other departments or organizations

- **Sakuma Viewpoint** is a small waterfront park at the south end of Brooklyn Avenue NE, owned by University of Washington (UW). It includes a lawn, seating, a water overlook, and landscaping.
- **University District P-Patch**, just north of NE 40th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues NE, is owned by King County Metro and operated in the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods' "P-Patch" program. It is approximately 0.4 acres.
- **Shiga Gardens** is a 0.11 acre P-Patch established in 2010 and located on the Avenue between NE 55th and NE 56th Streets. While the property is privately owned, the P-Patch program has a lease until 2018 with the option to extend.
- **University Heights P-Patch** is a 0.14 acre P-Patch adjacent to the University Heights Community Center. It is jointly managed by the community center and the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods.
- **NE Campus Parkway Median** provides 1.2 acres of open space, maintained by UW. It includes sculptures, trees and landscaping, seating, and lighting.

Table 3.7-1: **Village Open Space in the U District**

	Area (acres)
Existing	
University Playground	2.75
Peace Park	0.30
North Passage Park	0.80
In progress	
Christie Park	0.23
University Heights South Lot	0.34
Waterfront park	1.62
Total	6.04

Source: City of Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

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Ravenna Boulevard

Open spaces adjacent to the planning area

- ▶ **Cowen Park and Ravenna Park** are two large and heavily used City parks that abut the north end of the U District. Together, they total 58.3 acres, with trails, tennis courts, a playground and a play area, a ball field, and picnic areas.
- ▶ **Ravenna Boulevard** is a 6.4 acre park boulevard at the north end of the U District. One of Seattle's historic Olmsted Boulevards, it connects several neighborhoods to Green Lake and Ravenna Park.
- ▶ **The University of Washington Central Campus** contains roughly 300 acres of gardens, lawns, plazas, and open spaces. The campus is open to the public—while occupants are mostly students, faculty, and staff, many people from the U District community also visit campus.

Planned Seattle Parks—anticipated to be built and managed by the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation by 2020

- ▶ **University Heights South Lot** will become a new 0.34 acre park, yet to be named. Following recommendations of the University Community Urban Center Plan (Neighborhood Plan) and the University District Parks Plan, Seattle Parks purchased this property for development as a public park. As of April 2013, improvements are funded and the planning process is finishing.
- ▶ **Christie Park Expansion** In 2013, Seattle Parks acquired a residential lot on the south side of Christie Park, which will add 0.11 acres to the park when improved.
- ▶ **New waterfront park** To help mitigate the impacts of expanding SR 520, the Washington State Department of Transportation will pay for shoreline restoration and recreation improvements at Sakuma Viewpoint and the larger property to the west. Both are currently owned by UW, but the new park will be owned and managed by Seattle Parks. It is expected to be about 1.62 acres.

Abbreviations & Acronyms

Seattle Parks

Seattle Department
of Parks and Recreation

UW

University of Washington

Neighborhood Plan

University Community
Urban Center Plan

POPS

Privately owned
public spaces

Planning Context

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OPEN SPACE GOALS

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan establishes goals for open space and recreation facilities both inside and outside urban villages. These goals fall into three general categories: total supply of open space, specific types of facilities, and distribution of open space.

For total supply of open space, the following goals apply:

- ▶ One acre of Village Open Space per 1,000 households (within the urban center)
- ▶ One acre of Village Open Space per 10,000 jobs (within the urban center)
- ▶ One acre of “Breathing Room Open Space” per 100 residents (citywide)

Comprehensive Plan goals for specific facilities within urban centers:

- ▶ At least one “Village Commons” of at least one acre in size
- ▶ One indoor, multiple use recreation facility
- ▶ One dedicated community garden for each 2,500 households, with at least one dedicated garden site

Goals for distribution of open space in the Comprehensive Plan:

- ▶ All locations within an urban village boundary should be “within approximately ⅛ mile of Village Open Space”
- ▶ All locations outside of urban villages should be within ¼ to ½ mile of Usable Open Space”

GOALS AND PRIORITIES FROM OTHER COMMUNITY PLANNING EFFORTS

The 1998 University Community Urban Center Plan recommends improving NE 43rd Street, NE 42nd Street, and Brooklyn Avenue NE as “green streets.” Following that recommendation, the City’s Right-of-Way Improvements Manual designates those streets as green streets, defined as follows:

A Green Street is a street right-of-way that, through a variety of design and operational treatments, gives priority to pedestrian circulation and open space over other transportation uses. The treatments may include sidewalk widening, landscaping, traffic calming, and other pedestrian-oriented features. The purpose of a Green Street is

Village Open Space

Dedicated open spaces of at least 10,000 square feet in size, publicly accessible, and usable for recreation and social activities

2005 Comp Plan

Village Commons

A Village Open Space that is at least one acre in size

2005 Comp Plan

Breathing Room Open Space

Combined acreage of all dedicated open spaces (parks, greenspaces, trails, and boulevards,) but not including... submerged parklands

*Seattle Parks & Recreation
2006 Development Plan*

Open Space Offsets

School grounds, recreation facilities, green streets, etc. These spaces may not be owned by Seattle Parks, but are used or experienced in a similar manner.

*Seattle Parks & Recreation
2006 Development Plan*

Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)

Parks and plazas on private property, but open to the public as a condition of development

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to enhance and expand public open space, and to reinforce desired land use and transportation patterns on appropriate City street rights-of-way.

—Seattle Right-of-Way Improvements Manual, Section 6.2

Development adjacent to these designated green streets is required to provide street improvements that prioritize pedestrian and open space functions priorities. These street improvements are not counted toward the Village Open Space goals stated in the Comprehensive Plan, but they do provide public amenity space for residents and workers.

The 2005 University District Park Plan provides a detailed analysis of open space needs specific to the U District. It establishes open space priorities based on community input:

- 1. **Highest Priority:** A centrally located park, approximately one-half acre, in a high-volume pedestrian area with current or projected multi-family mixed-use buildings; this type of park should be designed to accommodate a variety of recreation uses. Work with property owners in the vicinity of Brooklyn Avenue between NE 43rd and NE 47th streets to develop a central multi-use park.*
- 2. **Highest Priority:** A number of smaller plazas in high-volume pedestrian areas. The design of these parks should be coordinated with adjacent development and need not necessarily be provided through Department of Parks and Recreation acquisition.*
- 3. **High Priority:** Smaller neighborhood-oriented parks (approximately one-quarter acre) to serve local needs. The type of needs to be served will vary depending on the locale.*

The U District Urban Design Framework, a document summarizing community input in 2012–2013, reaffirmed community support for a centrally located open space on or near the Sound Transit light rail station planned at NE 43rd Street and Brooklyn Avenue NE. However, this process also highlighted concerns from business owners and some residents about safety and behavior problems in the U District’s existing open spaces. While many participants in the planning process support a new central open space, others have concerns about how that space would be maintained and managed to avoid creating problems.

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3.7.2 Significant Impacts

As discussed in the previous section, the Comprehensive Plan sets goals for the total supply, specific types, and distribution of open space to be provided in a neighborhood, based on density and urban village designation. Generally, these goals are based on the idea that growing neighborhoods need an increasing supply of open space facilities to serve residents and workers.

Table 3.7–2 summarizes assumptions about residential and job growth between 2013 and 2035. Growth projections are the same for all three EIS alternatives, but distribution of growth varies under each alternative. (See Section 2 of this document.)

Table 3.7–2: **U District EIS growth projections for Alternatives 1, 2 and 3**

	Households	Jobs
Existing (2013)	6,137	6,332
Projected (2035)	3,900	4,800
2035 totals	10,037	11,132

Source: City of Seattle, 2013

IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES

Today, the U District does not meet some of the open space goals established by the Comprehensive Plan. While several planned parks will increase the supply of open space, this increase alone will not be enough to catch up to a growing neighborhood. Without additional open spaces, the deficit in the study area will grow from approximately 3 acres to 5 acres. (See Table 3.7–3.) Similarly, the U District does not meet the goal for indoor recreational space. With future growth, the goal for community gardens will not be met unless additional space is allocated.

The projections suggest that growth in the neighborhood will out-pace the expansion of open spaces and recreation facilities—generally this means that the neighborhood will be farther from meeting these goals in 2035 than it is today. These existing and projected deficiencies clearly support the acquisition and development of additional open space and recreational facilities to serve the study area. But because the growing deficiencies in supply and type of open space are the same with or without zoning changes, these deficiencies are not considered impacts for purposes of this EIS.

As for the 2004 Comp Plan citywide goal for Breathing Room Open Space, Seattle’s 2012 population (634,535 residents) already surpassed the eligible Breathing Room Open Space. To meet the goal of one acre per 100 residents, Seattle would need 6,345 acres—as of 2011, there were 6,187 acres. Citywide population growth by 2035, projected to be approximately 140,000 new residents, will likely out-pace growth of Breathing Room Open Space—

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therefore it is likely that the city will be farther from meeting its 2004 goal. (Growth in the U District accounts for about 5% of the citywide total over this period.) Like the deficiency in Village Open Space, the growing deficiency in Breathing Room Open Space is projected to be the same with or without zoning changes. Consequently, the increasing lack of Breathing Room Open Space is not considered an impact for purposes of this EIS.

Inconsistencies relating to Village Open Space goals and Breathing Room Open Space goals are true of all the alternatives, including the “no action” Alternative 3. Because these inconsistencies result from anticipated growth, not the proposed rezone and related actions, they are not significant impacts for purposes of this EIS.

Table 3.7–3: **Comprehensive Plan Open Space and Recreation Facility Goals for U District**

	Comprehensive Plan Goal	U District Target	Resource	Status
	Open Space Supply			
2013	Village Open Space ► one acre per 1,000 households ► one acre per 10,000 jobs	6.77 acres total 6.14 acres, by household 0.63 acres, by jobs	3.85 acres	Goal not met: 2.9-acre deficit
2035	Village Open Space ► one acre per 1,000 households ► one acre per 10,000 jobs	11.15 acres total 10.04 acres, by household 1.11 acres, by jobs	6.04 acres anticipated, per planned projects	Goal not met: 5.1-acre deficit
	One “Village Commons” ► where the existing or projected households total 2,500 or more	1 Village Commons	1 Village Commons (University Playground)	Goal met
	Specific facilities			
	One indoor, multi-use recreation facility ► per Urban Center	1 recreation center	No City-owned recreation center	Goal not met
2013	One dedicated community garden ► for each 2,500 households	2 community gardens	3 community gardens	Goal met
2035	One dedicated community garden ► for each 2,500 households	4 community gardens	3 community gardens	Goal not met

Source: City of Seattle, 2014

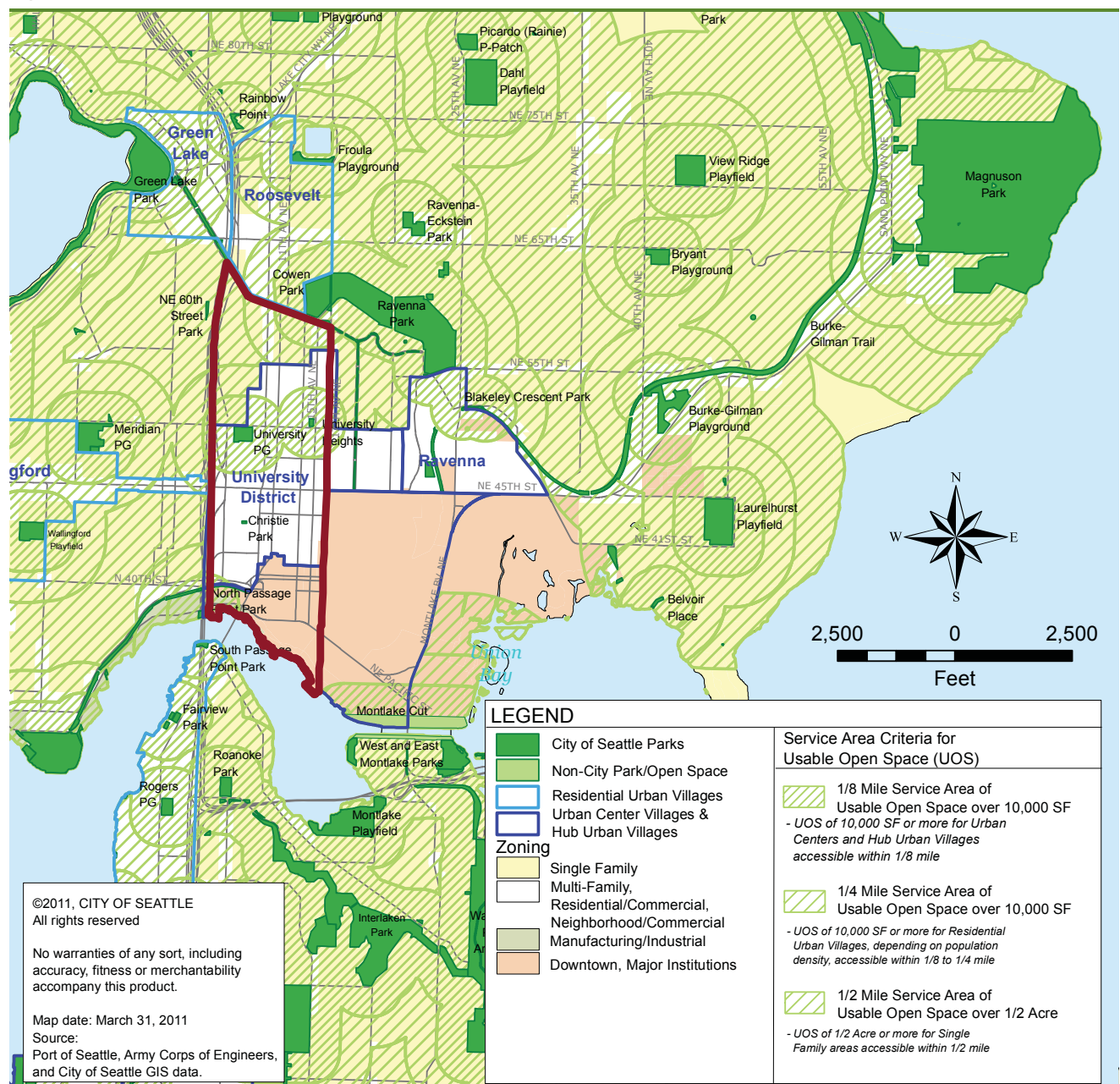
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ALTERNATIVE 1

While the deficiencies outlined above do not differ from one alternative to another, there are differences between the alternatives in terms of the distribution of development, and ease of access for future residents to get to open space.

Figure 3.7–2: Gaps in open space: U District Urban Center



Source: An Assessment of Gaps in Seattle's Open Space Network: the 2011 Gap Report Update. Seattle Parks, 2011

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3.7.2 Significant Impacts

The Comprehensive Plan establishes the goal of having all locations in an urban center within approximately 1/8 mile from Village Open Space. As shown in Figure 3.7–2, there is a large existing gap in open space access in the area between NE 47th and NE 41st streets.

Alternative 1 increases the capacity for job and residential growth in this same core area, which is currently under-served with open space amenities. This increases the likelihood that more people will live and work in an area that does not meet Comprehensive Plan goals for access to open space. This is a potential adverse impact of Alternative 1.

When the three planned parks (Christie Park expansion, University Heights south lot, and the waterfront) are complete, they will reduce but not eliminate the gap in the U District’s core.

ALTERNATIVE 2

Same as Alternative 1. More development capacity in the core of the neighborhood increases the likelihood that new jobs and homes will not meet Comprehensive Plan goals for access to open space. This is a potential adverse impact of Alternative 2.

ALTERNATIVE 3

There are no impacts unique to Alternative 3.

3.7.3 Mitigating Measures

Section 3.7.2 highlights existing deficiencies and potential future adverse impacts relating to Seattle’s open space goals and policies. Various actions could help provide more open spaces and recreational opportunities for the growing neighborhood (including Village Open Space, Breathing Room Open Space, and open space “offsets”):

- ▶ New property acquisition and improvement by Seattle Parks, funded through a future levy, open space impact fees, or other means—especially in the existing gap between NE 47th and NE 41st streets
- ▶ Provision of dedicated, publicly accessible open space as part of private development (“POPS”), through development standards or an incentive zoning program in the Land Use Code
- ▶ On-site open space provided as residential amenities through new development
- ▶ Public/private partnerships to develop, manage, and program public open spaces.
- ▶ Additional community gardens.
- ▶ Improvement of designated green streets to provide outdoor seating and other amenities. Adopt green street concept plans to the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual to guide private development, and/or grant funding for streetscape improvements.
- ▶ Improvement of “festival streets,” i.e., special streets that can be shut down to vehicular traffic for community events.
- ▶ Improved access to campus for the public for the purposes of public access to open spaces located on the UW campus within the immediate vicinity of the planning area.

3.7.4 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

This section describes potential significant adverse impacts to open space that could result through implementation of the rezone alternatives. The proposed mitigation packages would reduce the magnitude of all identified impacts of the rezone alternatives to a less than significant level.

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