



Othello *neighborhood*



Design Guidelines

effective April 7, 2006



City of Seattle
Department of Planning
and Development



Seattle Design Review Program

Design Review:

Othello Neighborhood Design Guidelines

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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 shape how new development can contribute positively to Seattle's neighborhoods. Design guidelines are a flexible tool to be used as a supplement to prescriptive zoning requirements, that will allow new development to respond better to the distinctive character of the surrounding environment.

Design Review has three principal objectives:

1. To encourage building design and site planning that enhances the character of the city and ensures that new development fits sensitively into neighborhoods;
2. To provide flexibility in the application of prescriptive 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 and, along with other components such as environmental review (SEPA) and variances, is administered by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD). Like these other components, Design Review applications involve public notice and opportunity for public comment.

Unlike other components, projects subject to Design Review are brought before one of the city's several Design Review Boards for recommendations or to DPD staff for Administrative Design Review. The final decision on Design Review is made by the DPD Director together with decisions on any other MUP components. Any appeals to these decisions are made to a Hearing Examiner.

More About Design Review

More information about Design Review can be found in the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC 23.41 online at <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/code1.htm>) and Citywide Design Guidelines (online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/Publications/Design_Review_Guidelines/default.htm), or by contacting the Design Review Program manager (online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/CityDesign/ProjectReview/DRP).

Another important way the public can influence new development is by serving on one of the City's seven Design Review Boards.

What are Neighborhood-Specific Design Guidelines?

Design Review uses both the Citywide Design Guidelines and guidelines that are specific to individual neighborhoods, and together these documents provide the context for project review. The Citywide Design Guidelines are applicable to private development projects and have a legal basis in the land use code. Neighborhood-specific design guidelines are intended to augment the Citywide Design Guidelines by providing recommendations on issues unique to a particular neighborhood that are not addressed in the Citywide Design Guidelines, and, after adoption by the City Council, become part of the land use code. The option to create Neighborhood Design Guidelines was extended to Urban Center and Urban Village neighborhoods following Seattle's Neighborhood Planning process (which concluded in 1999) in response to the large number of neighborhood plans that included urban design objectives.

What are the Othello Neighborhood (MLK@Holly) Design Guidelines?

The area identified in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan as the MLK@Holly Urban Village is also known as the Othello Neighborhood. The Othello Neighborhood Design Guidelines reveal the character

of the several neighborhood centers and corridors in the area as known to their residents and businesses. The guidelines draw attention to preferred architecture and design, and highlight the qualities the neighborhood values most for new development. Thus, the Othello Neighborhood Design Guidelines, in conjunction with the Citywide Design Guidelines, strengthen the awareness of good design and inspire use of the Design Review process.

The draft guidelines are developed in accordance with the Design Review program's format, and draw on both the Citywide Design Guidelines and recommendations that are specific to the Othello neighborhood. Much in the Citywide Design Guidelines provides sufficient direction for various Othello environments. Only those Citywide Design Guidelines that need more specificity, additional clarification, or site examples unique to Othello have been addressed in these neighborhood design guidelines.

In identifying neighborhood priorities to be addressed in the Guidelines, the MLK@Holly Neighborhood Plan, and the Design Review Program's guideline categories were reviewed. The following document was also referenced: *Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily & Commercial Buildings*, City of Seattle - Oct. '93; Rev. Nov. '98.

In 1998, the City of Seattle's Design Review program began creating neighborhood specific guidelines in response to the large number (27 of the 34) of neighborhood plans that include urban design objectives. The MLK@Holly Neighborhood Plan requests that neighborhood specific guidelines be created to augment and fine-tune the City's general urban design guidelines. The Citywide Design Guidelines are applicable to private development projects and have a legal basis in the Land Use Code.



Othello Neighborhood Context

The Othello Neighborhood is emerging from a history of dramatic changes into the vibrant new commercial and residential community that will sustain its future light rail station. The commercial core of this community along Martin Luther King Jr. Way South reflects the style of an Asian market bazaar where business is transacted in a variety of languages. Its streets are lined at a uniform level with signage in stark primary colors. During spring and summer months, artistic banners hang high over the streets accentuating these colors and reflecting the symbols of the neighborhood's many cultures. Surrounding that core is a hillside covered with residential streets that suggest a multi-faceted history. Originating as part of a larger farming community in the early 1900s, the Othello Neighborhood streets (especially South Brighton Street) still retain examples of New England-style farm houses and single family bungalows. These styles are reflected in many homes and townhouses of the recent New Holly Development.

Like many Seattle neighborhoods, Othello is blessed with the natural beauty of the Puget Sound region. Hillside rising to the west above the commercial core on Martin Luther King Jr. Way South are crowned with trees. The eastern ridge features views of Mount Rainier and the Cascade Mountains. There is easy access to a ribbon of parks running from South Van Asselt Court through several mini-parks within New Holly to Othello Park, and even to the many parks and beaches along the west shore of Lake Washington.

Othello Neighborhood (MLK@Holly) Design Guidelines

The MLK@Holly Neighborhood Plan provides a framework for specific goals, policies and recommendations aimed at helping the area realize its full potential as a thriving social, educational, residential and business community. The plan recommends many land use and urban design concepts to be implemented, in which new development plays a significant role. These concepts include:

- establishing new or reinforcing existing commercial “nodes” of development;
- improving commercial facades;
- identifying “gateway” design elements at major entry points into the community;
- promoting sensitive transitions from commercial to residential land;
- encouraging pedestrian comfort and safety;
- creating community identity, (particularly in the public realm); and
- providing strategies to improve physical connections within the community.

Othello Guidelines Augment Citywide Guidelines

The Othello Neighborhood Design Guidelines apply to projects within the Othello Design Review Area (depicted in the map on page 2) and augment the 1998 “Citywide Guidelines for Multifamily & Commercial Buildings.” The chart below indicates the citywide guidelines for which Othello-specific supplemental guidance has been written, which can be found on the following pages.

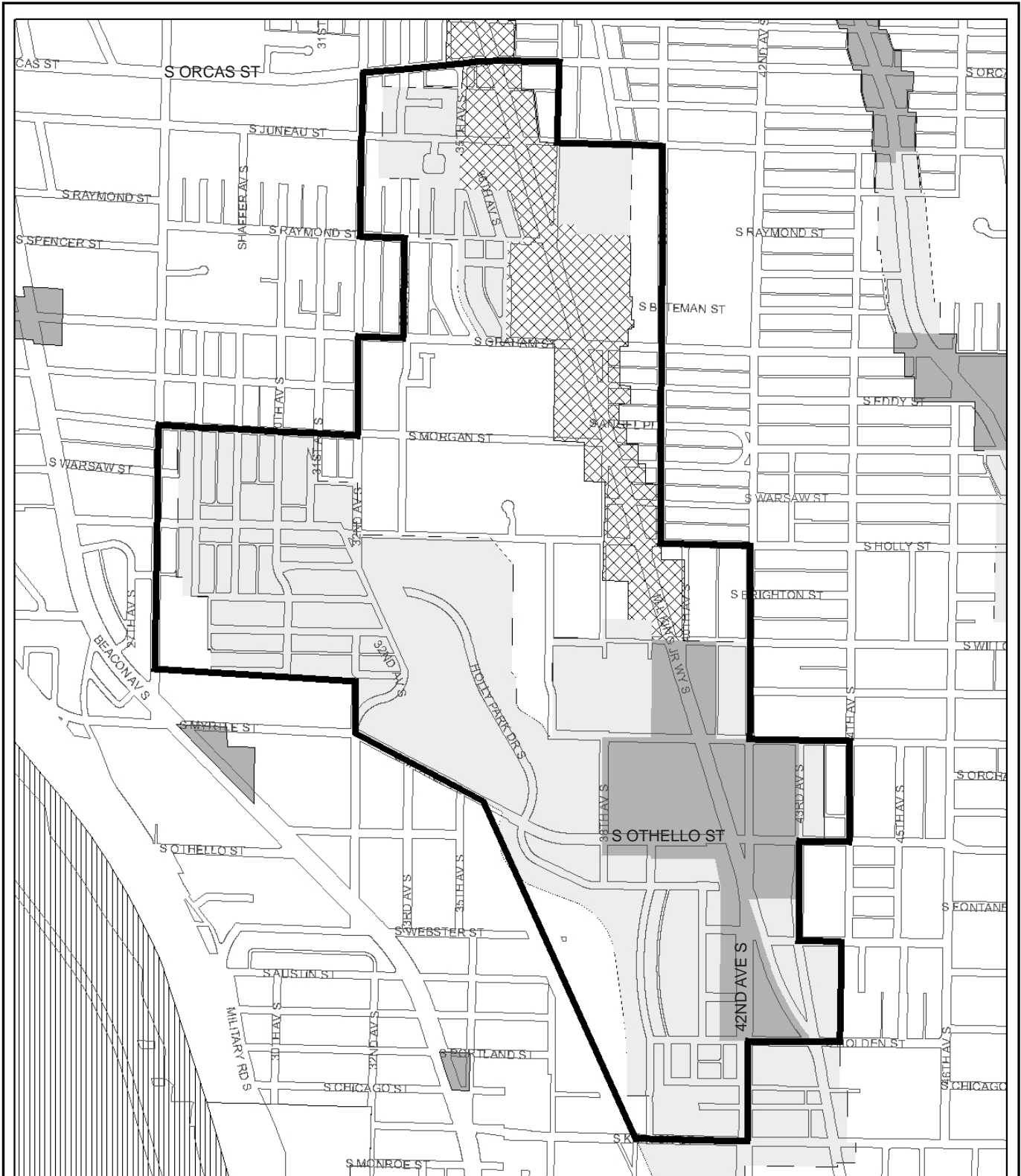
Citywide Design Guidelines at a Glance

Othello-specific
supplemental
guidance needed?

A	Site Planning		
	A-1	Respond to Site Characteristics	No
	A-2	Streetscape Compatibility	Yes
	A-3	Entrances Visible from the Street	No
	A-4	Human Activity	Yes
	A-5	Respect for Adjacent Sites	Yes
	A-6	Transition Between Residence and Street	Yes
	A-7	Residential Open Space	No
	A-8	Parking and Vehicle Access	No
	A-9	Location of Parking on Commercial Street Fronts	No
A-10	Corner Lots	Yes	
B	Height, Bulk and Scale		
B-1	Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility	Yes	
C	Architectural Elements and Materials		
	C-1	Architectural Context	No
	C-2	Architectural Concept and Consistency	No
	C-3	Human Scale	No
	C-4	Exterior Finish Materials	Yes
C-5	Structured Parking Entrances	No	
D	Pedestrian Environment		
	D-1	Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances	Yes
	D-2	Blank Walls	No
	D-3	Retaining Walls	No
	D-4	Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks	No
	D-5	Visual Impacts of Parking Structures	No
	D-6	Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas	No
D-7	Personal Safety and Security	Yes	
E	Landscaping		
	E-1	Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites	No
	E-2	Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site	No
	E-3	Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions	No

Othello Neighborhood Design Guidelines





Othello Neighborhood Area



Prepared by: Department of Planning and Development
April 19, 2005



Downtown



Commercial



Neighborhood Commercial



Mixed-Use



Industrial



Major Institution



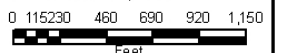
Multi-Family



Single Family

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Note: Design Review does not apply to all zones. See Citywide Guidelines for details. Additionally, zoning areas on this map are for general reference only. For confirmation of a specific property's zoning, contact the Department of Planning and Development.

A. Site Planning

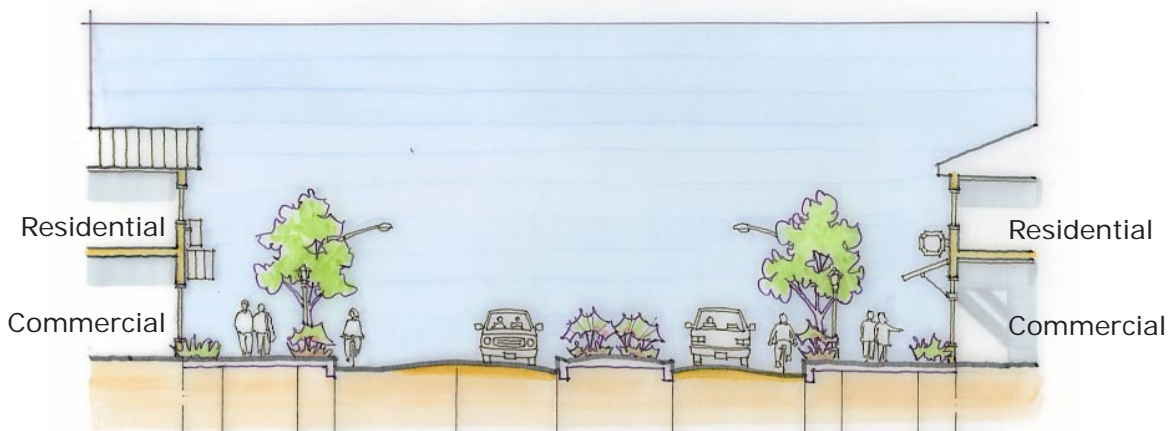
A-2 Streetscape Compatibility

A strong relationship between the building and the street adds character and quality to the Othello business district.

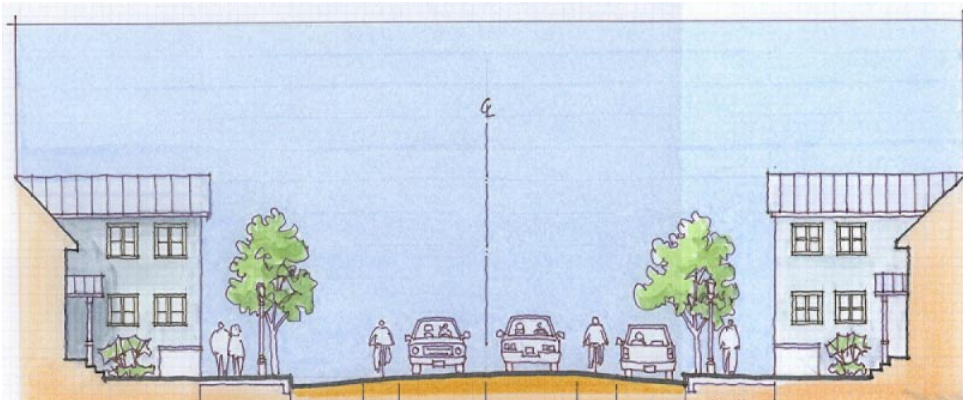
- Building spaces for commercial use at or near the edge of the sidewalk and limiting vertical grade separations is encouraged where commercial uses occupy the street-level floor.
- Shallow setbacks and a minor grade separation are encouraged between the first floor and the sidewalk where residential uses occupy the ground floor; this will promote privacy and also accommodate entry porches and stoops.



Site Planning
streetscape
compatibility



At-grade, street-level commercial uses promote an active business district.



Minor grade separations create residential privacy and provide opportunities for front porches and stoops.





Site Planning
human activity

A-4 Human Activity

New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street. (Excerpted from the Citywide Design Guidelines)

The life of the neighborhood should be closely tied to the character of its public space. It is especially important to recognize streets as public space. The design of buildings can help determine the level of activity on the street. Where storefronts meet the sidewalk, social interaction can be intensified adding vitality. New development is encouraged to support the area's pedestrian designated streets and the Station Area Overlay District by contributing to a consistent building line at or near the sidewalk.

Consideration of the following design features is encouraged:

- Recessed building or individual shop entrances to help create a traditional “main street” feel;
- Stoops or landscaping to help provide privacy for residential use at street level;
- Large developments are encouraged to include plazas or gracious entry forecourts along the street edge, provided street continuity is not unduly interrupted along the majority of the block. (This guidance addresses a potential unintended consequence of NC zoning and the P1 designation that when applied to a very large, full-block development, could create a long, uninterrupted street wall not conducive to pedestrian comfort;
- Overhead weather protection along the sidewalk for pedestrian comfort; canopies and awnings are encouraged.



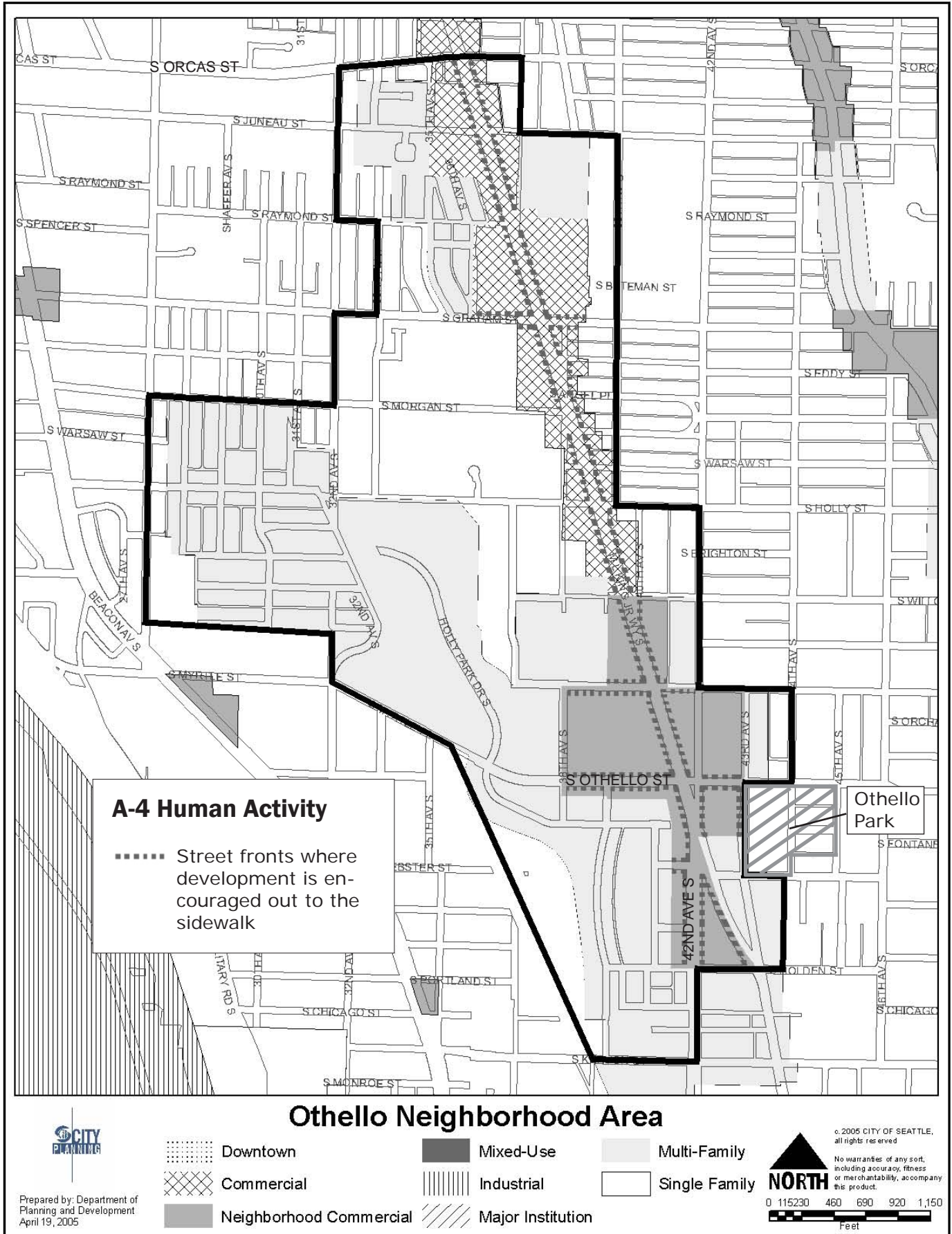
An example of a well-marked, articulated building entrance that is oriented to the sidewalk and provides overhead cover.



An example of public open space including street-level retail space with direct access from the adjacent open space or street.



An example of well-designed overhead weather protection in New Holly.



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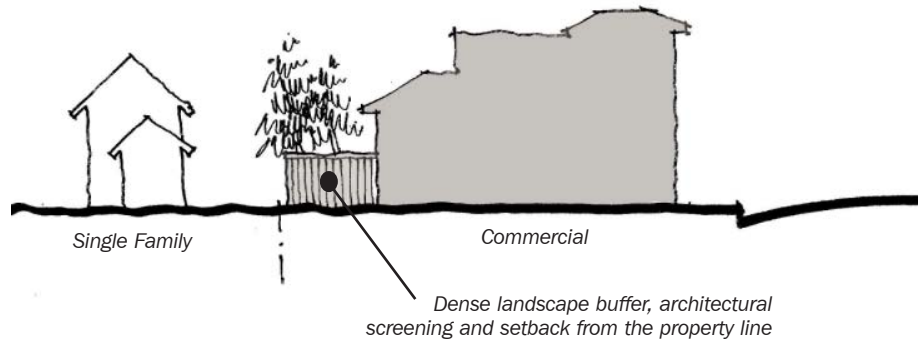
A

Site Planning respect for adjacent sites

A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites

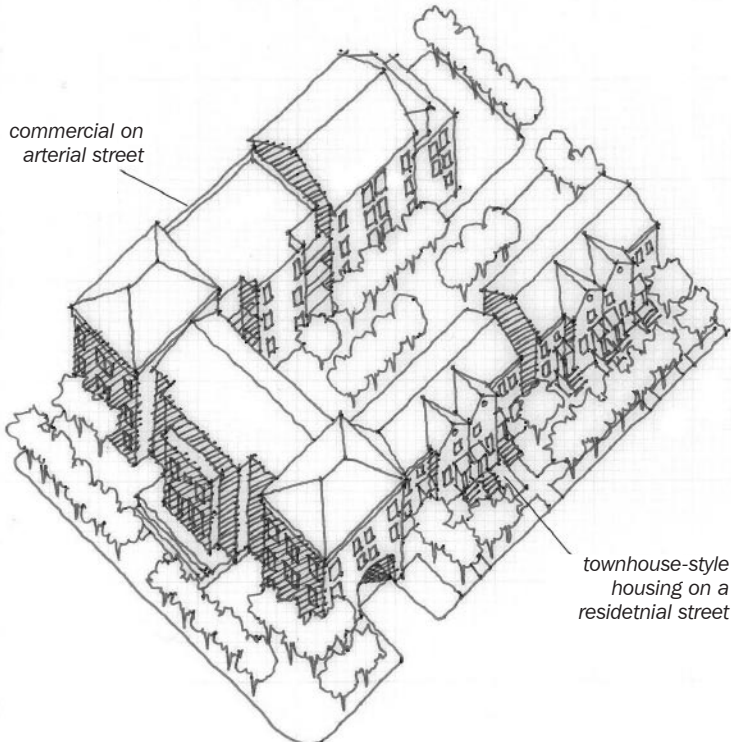
Several zone edges between commercial (C1) and single family-zoned properties exist in the neighborhood. This could result in visual impacts, as well as traffic and noise conflicts between these properties. To help prevent these situations, consider:

- preventing service, loading and storage areas from directly facing single family residential areas;
- buffering single family areas from the undesirable impacts of commercial-related service facilities; use landscaping or cohesive architectural treatment to screen service areas and facilities.



A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street

Ground-related residential development, such as townhouses, is encouraged at locations along public open spaces such as Othello Park to create human activity along the park and provide for social interaction among residents and neighbors.



A-10 Corner Lots

Consider siting and designing structures on corner lots to take advantage of their role as gateways and activity nodes in the community. Locating open spaces such as plazas for public use can promote a physical and visual connection to the street.

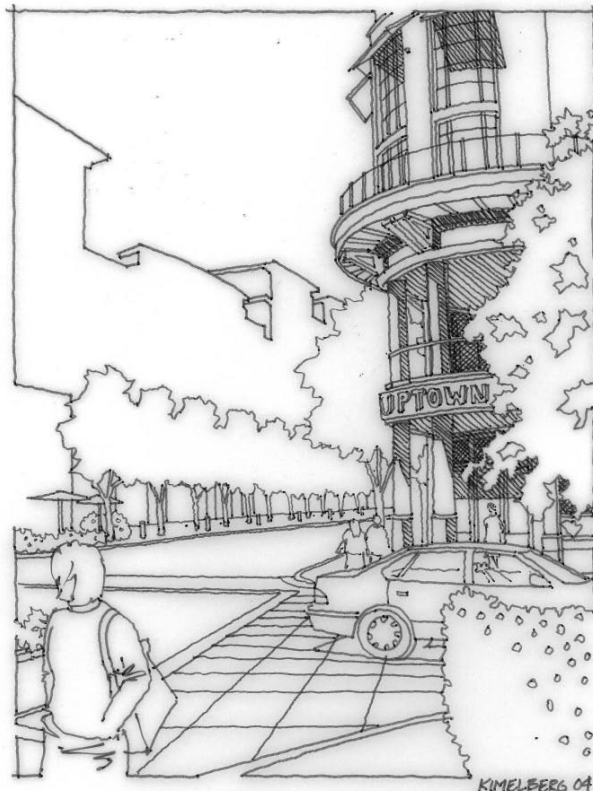
- Consider adding a focal element, for instance, a sculpture or civic art piece to outdoor space. Consider building on current public art themes in the neighborhood, including a kiosk for the use of the community.
- Employ strong building forms to demarcate important gateways, intersections, and street corners. Strong corner massing can function as a visual anchor for a block.



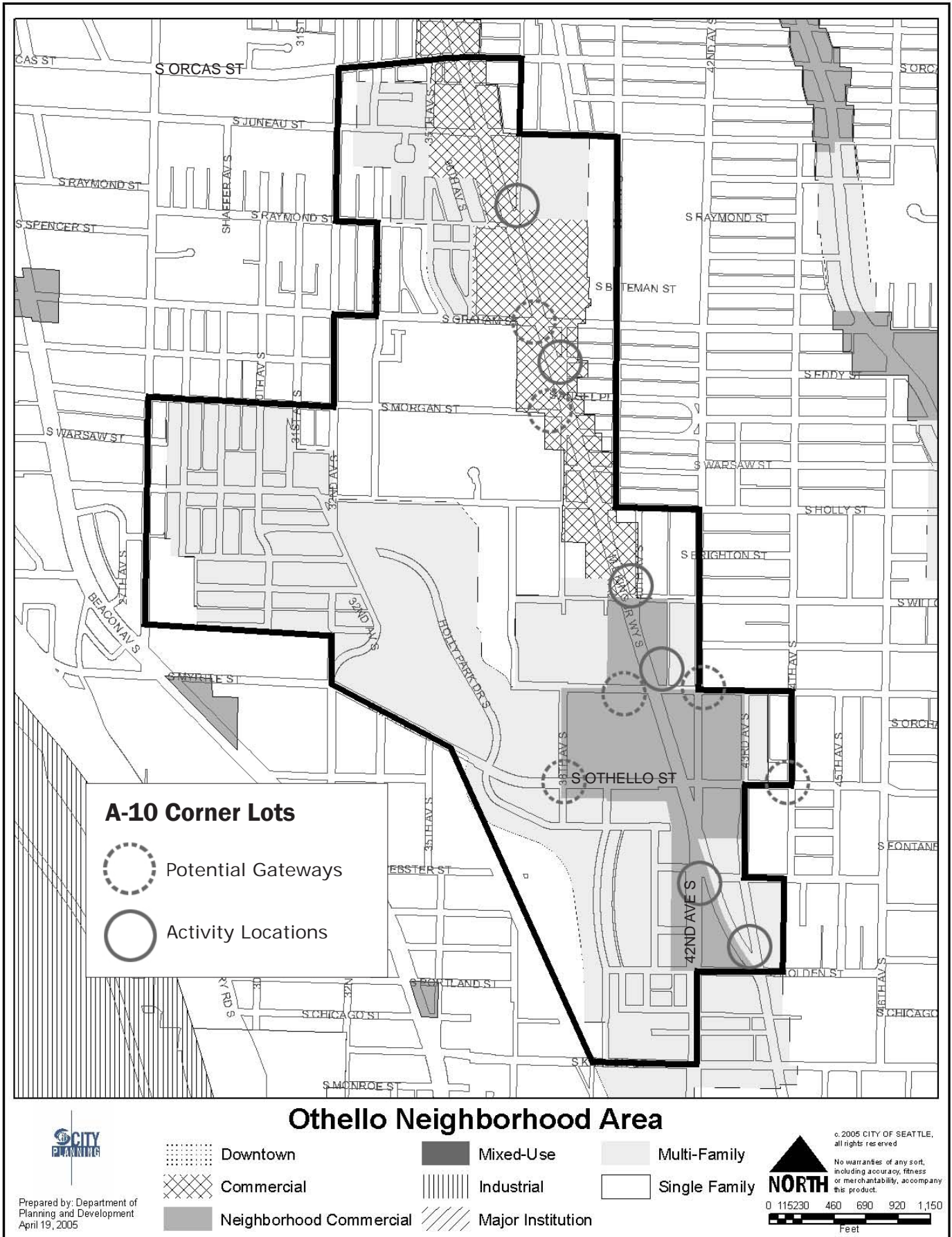
Site Planning
corner lots



Public art and other focal elements help focus activity on public places.



A strong building form that serves as visual anchor



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B. Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

Much of the MLK@Holly business district is zoned for large, 65' tall buildings. Careful siting, building design and building massing at the upper levels is encouraged to achieve a sensitive transition between the 65' commercial zone and adjacent residential zones. Large, monolithic buildings are discouraged. Consider the following:

- Design building volumes to maintain a compatible scale with smaller buildings nearby.
- Rely on building massing and orientation to place strong visual emphasis on the street in activating public space.
- Use smaller sub-volumes in the massing of a building to create a transition in size to adjacent residential structures that are smaller in scale.



Height, Bulk and Scale

height, bulk and scale compatibility

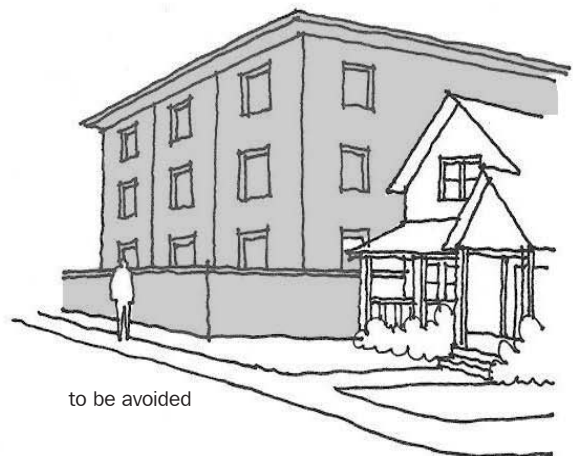


smaller sub-volumes in the massing of a mixed-use buildings as a good transition in scale to an adjacent residential area

emphasis placed on the street to promote active, pedestrian-oriented uses

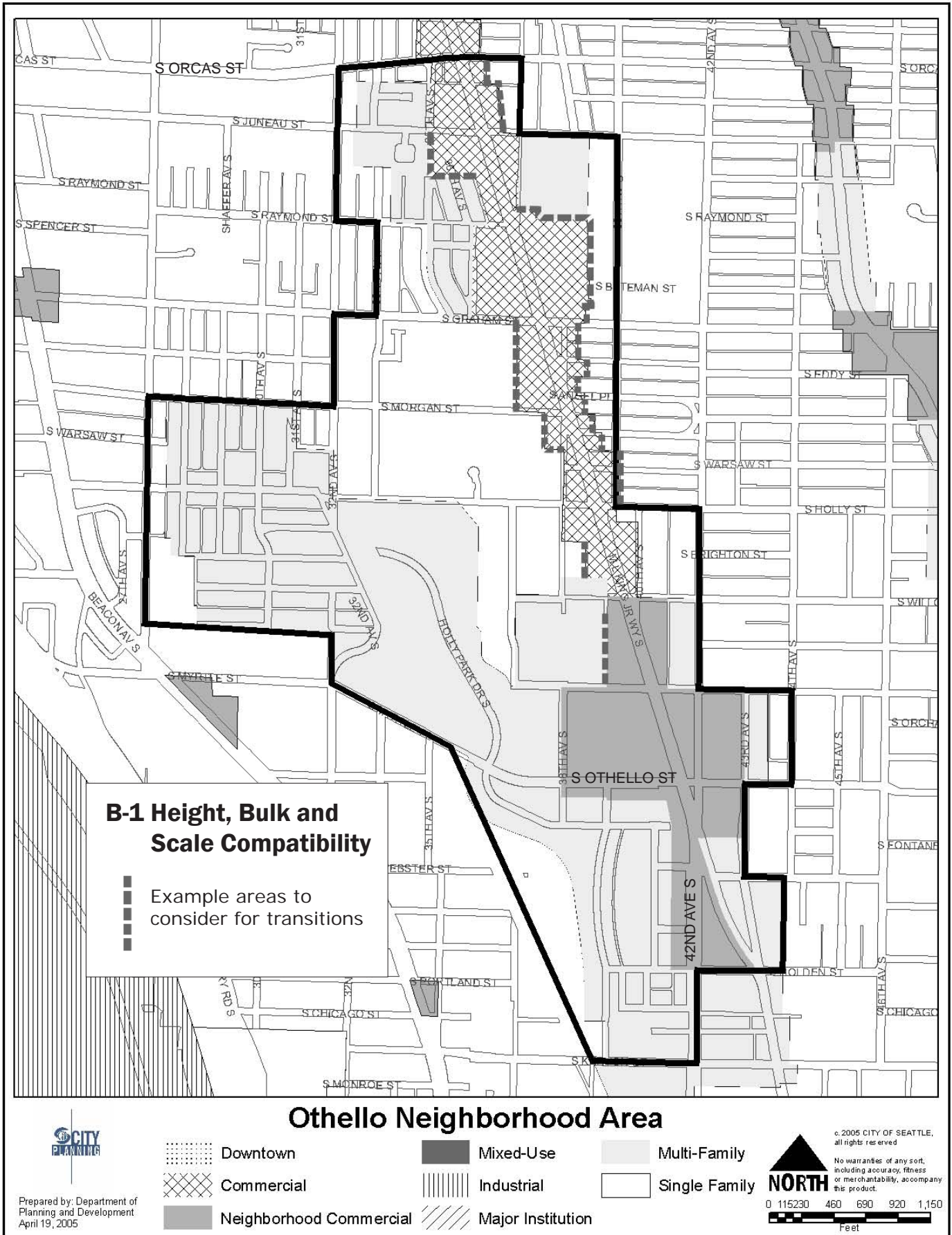


preferred



to be avoided

Sensitive Infill Development



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C. Architectural Elements and Materials

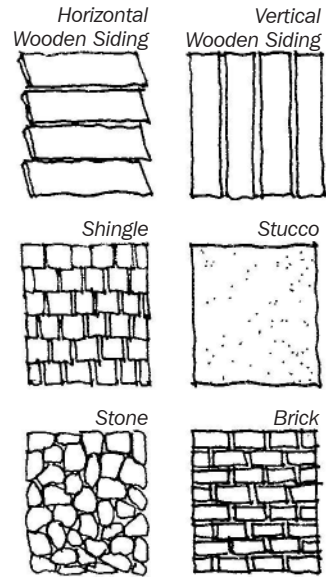
C-4 Exterior Finish Materials

Encourage High-Quality Construction

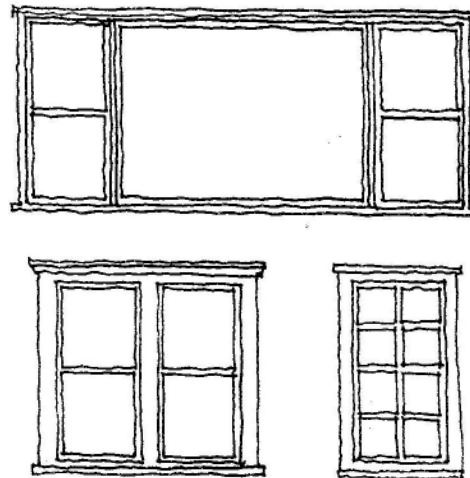
All new buildings are encouraged to be constructed as long-term additions to the urban fabric.

Residential Development

- Use exterior building materials that are typically residential in character. The most commonly-found traditional cladding material in the Othello Neighborhood is wood: shingle, horizontal or vertical. Stone, or other masonry with human-scale texture, is also encouraged—particularly as accent materials.
- Creative combinations of the above are encouraged; other materials can also be considered, such as stucco and vinyl shaped to reflect natural textures, so long as they meet the overall objective of conveying a sense of permanence, human scale and proportion.



An example of high-quality and variegated use of residential exterior materials in New Holly.



Variation in window design is encouraged

Commercial and Mixed-Use Development

- Use exterior building materials typically found in traditional storefront design. This includes brick, masonry and metal on the ground floor. Mixed-use developments could use a combination of materials, such as brick, masonry, metal, wood and stucco in a manner that creates a coherent overall building design.
- Consider window design as an opportunity to provide variation and definition along building facades. Avoid monotonous repetition of window types.



Architectural Elements and Materials

exterior finish materials



A limited number of materials and colors used on the exterior of a new building creates visual simplicity and harmony.



A street-facing commercial facade containing elements of traditional storefront design, including large, transparent display windows, metal framing for storefronts, and a combination of brick and masonry with channel reveals. This type of treatment is encouraged for commercial facades in new development proposals.

D. Pedestrian Environment

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

Activate the Street Edge

Providing space for intermingling of pedestrians and shoppers at the street-level on Martin Luther King Jr. Way South will help create a socially and visually stimulating MLK@Holly business district. Multiple storefronts, shop entrances and activities enliven the street and provide a safe pedestrian environment. Generous windows placed at the ground floor give people inside an awareness of activity on the street. This is commonly referred to as “eyes on the street,” and supports an active day and night street environment.

- Buildings that are designed for multi-tenant occupancy and walk-in pedestrian traffic at the street level are encouraged.



Pedestrian Environment

open spaces and entrances



Design elements such as separate storefronts, display windows, shop entrances, pedestrian-scaled signs, awnings, overhangs and landscape add interest and give a human dimension to this street-level building facade.



**Pedestrian
Environment**

personal safety
and security

D-7 Personal Safety and Security

Add specific principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to the existing Citywide Design Guideline “D-7: Personal Safety and Security.”

The goal of CPTED is the reduction of crime, and it is achieved by giving security concerns a high priority in the building process. To fully understand how CPTED is used, one must examine its components and the philosophy behind them. The following is a brief summary of techniques applicable to the design review process.

Defensible Space

“Defensible space” is the term used to describe an area that has been made a “zone of defense” by the design characteristics that create it. Under the defensible space guidelines, areas associated with a development site are categorized as either public, semi-public, semi-private or private. This designation helps define the appropriate activity and use for each area.

Public Zones. These areas are generally open to anyone, such as the public sidewalk.

Semi-public, Semi-private Zones. These areas create a buffer between public and private zones, and serve as common use spaces, such as plazas or courtyards on private property. They are accessible to the public, but are set off from the public zone of the right-of-way. This separation is accomplished with design features that establish definite transitional boundaries between the zones.

Private Zones. These are areas of restricted entry on a building site, such as interior open spaces, residential entries, and on-site parking areas. Access is controlled and limited.

Othello Supplemental Guidance

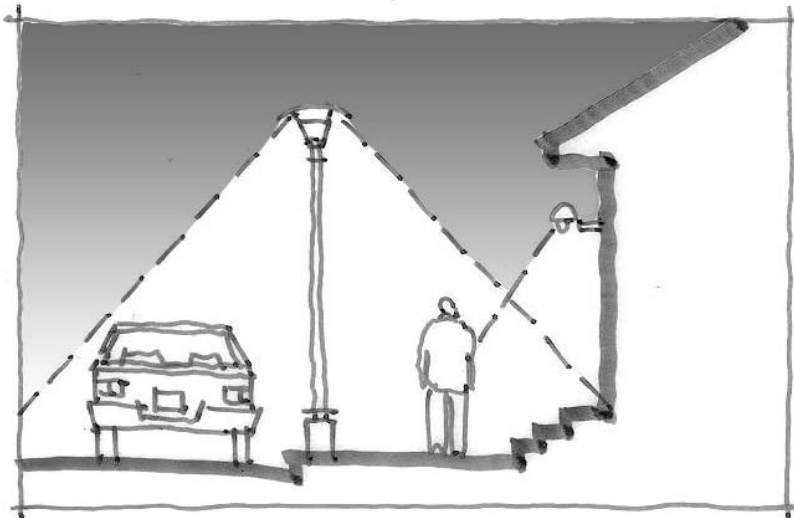
- Consider the type of “zone of defense” most appropriate for specific spaces and entries included in the development proposal. Private open spaces and entrances should include physical barriers, such as fencing, some forms of landscaping and locked doors. Symbolic barriers are appropriate for semi-private spaces, and require only a visual perception that a transition has occurred. Nearly anything could serve as a symbolic barrier, and examples include: bollards, flower beds, changes in sidewalk patterns or materials, and signs.

Lighting

Good lighting is one of the most effective crime deterrents. When used properly, light discourages criminal activity, enhances natural surveillance opportunities, and reduces fear. Lighting can influence an individual's feelings about his environment from an aesthetic as well as a safety standpoint. A bright, cheerful environment is much more pleasing than one that appears dark and lifeless.

Othello Supplemental Guidance

- New developments are encouraged to provide lighting on buildings and in open spaces. This includes: exterior lighting fixtures above entries; lighting in parking areas and open spaces; and pedestrian street lights near sidewalks. To the degree possible, a constant level of light providing reasonably good visibility should be maintained at night.



Exterior lighting fixtures and street lamps are sized to the scale of the building and sidewalk, directing light to the sidewalk and building entrance, thus increasing personal safety.

Bright spots and shadows should be avoided. Highly vulnerable areas and those that could conceal a potential attacker should be illuminated more brightly than areas designed for normal activity.

Landscaping

Landscaping, like architectural design, plays a significant role in CPTED. One function of landscaping in crime prevention is aesthetics, as an attractive environment generates a sense of pride and ownership. Landscaping can be used to perform a variety of design functions, as outlined below.

Othello Supplemental Guidance

- As a symbolic barrier, landscaping can mark the transition between zones. Consider employing features such as decorative fencing, flower beds, ground cover, and varied patterns in cement work to clearly show separation between zones. If more substantial barriers are needed, shrubbery such as evergreen hedges can be used to create more formidable edges.



Pedestrian Environment

personal safety
and security

Site-Specific Design Guidance

1. Northwest Corner of Martin Luther King Way Jr. South and South Othello Street

Consideration of the following neighborhood recommendations is encouraged:

- Consider adding a focal element, for instance, a sculpture or civic art piece to outdoor space. Consider building on current public art themes in the neighborhood, including the community kiosk.
- Employ strong building forms to demarcate important gateways, intersections, and street corners. Strong corner massing can function as a visual anchor for a block.
- Create a mid-block pedestrian plaza adjacent to the sidewalk and enclose the plaza with active retail uses. This could also aid in reducing the bulk of a large development on Martin Luther King Jr. Way South.
- Modulate the facade into “human scale” sub volumes on both street frontages.
- Locate small storefronts along Martin Luther King Jr. Way South, possibly with roll-up windows to provide “open-air” retail spaces.
- Provide overhead weather protection along Martin Luther King Jr. Way South and retail portions of South Othello Street.
- Preserve the privacy of residential neighbors to the west with an appropriate transition in height, bulk and scale.



**Othello
Neighborhood**
site-specific guidance



A hypothetical redevelopment concept for this site that incorporates the guidance outlined above.

Site-Specific Design Guidance

2. Northeast and Southeast Corners of Martin Luther King Jr. Way South and South Othello Street

Consideration of the following neighborhood recommendations is encouraged:

- Consider orienting buildings around a community kiosk, and create a public open area using the kiosk as a focal point.
- Employ a highly visible and accessible entrances to ground level commercial uses, particularly around a public open space plaza.
- Create a mid-block pedestrian plaza adjacent to the sidewalk and enclose the plaza with active retail uses. This could also aid in reducing the bulk of a large development on Martin Luther King Jr. Way South.
- Avoid a “monolithic” building mass at this location; rather, break up the development site into multiple buildings.



**Othello
Neighborhood**
site-specific
guidance

