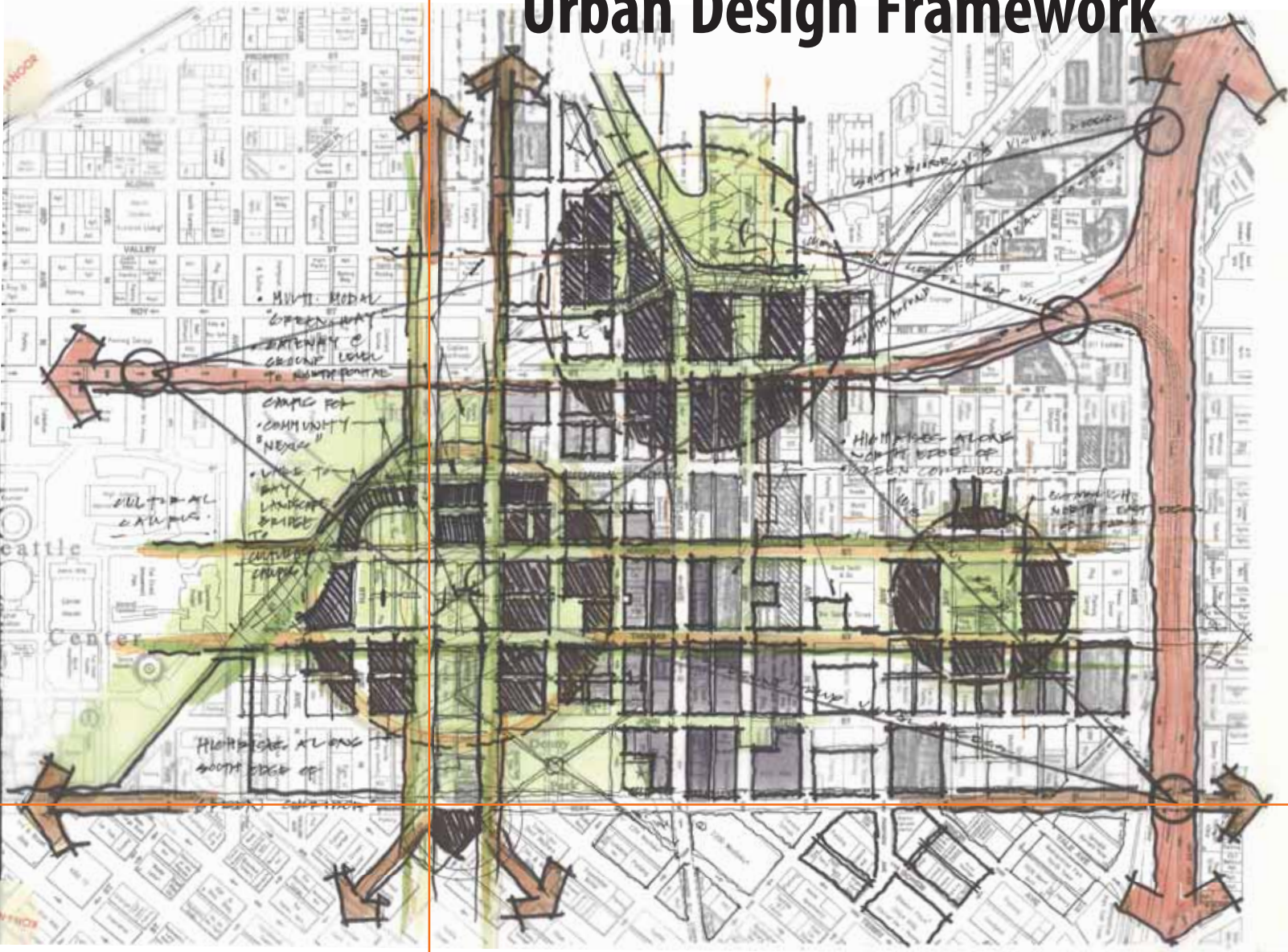


SOUTH LAKE UNION Urban Design Framework



City of Seattle

Department of Planning and Development



WEBER THOMPSON

December 31, 2010



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through years of neighborhood planning, a clear vision has emerged for South Lake Union as a thriving, sustainable, and diverse urban center. South Lake Union has the potential to demonstrate smart growth at its best – a livable, vibrant urban neighborhood that builds on its history and physical setting, continues to grow an innovative local economy, supports a mix of residents of all ages and incomes, and provides rich cultural opportunities.

This Urban Design Framework (UDF) for South Lake Union charts the course for a range of specific actions, both public and private, needed to realize this vision. Developed through intensive involvement from community stakeholders and design and planning professionals, the UDF implements the goals and policies established in the South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan.



Specific recommendations include organizing the neighborhood around community “hearts” including Lake Union Park, Westlake Avenue, and Cascade People’s Center, creating innovative new green streets and other street types, and clustering residential and retail uses, including a requirement for pedestrian-oriented uses along Westlake and Valley Streets. Residential clusters in these recommendations would be anchored by highrise towers wrapped with ground-level housing and open space. View corridors and sunlight access to streets were carefully considered, leading to recommendations to limit the number of new towers allowed close to Lake Union and for upper-level setbacks to preserve a range of public views.



Incentive zoning is proposed as a key tool to implement community goals as part of new development, with a focus on creating a new center for community arts and culture at the 100 Dexter building in Denny Park, green street improvements, preserving historic buildings and affordable housing, and creating new public spaces. Finally, this document provides a work plan that outlines specific actions needed and parties responsible for acting on the framework. This last piece is essential to ensure both the City, SLU community and the development community work together to realize the vision for South Lake Union.

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Figures and photos by Seattle Department of Planning and Development and Weber Thompson

PURPOSE AND PROCESS

The South Lake Union Urban Design Framework establishes a shared design vision and implementation strategy for the future of South Lake Union (SLU). Translating 15 years of community planning into guiding principles, conceptual recommendations, and implementation actions, it will help realize the vision described in the Neighborhood Plan.

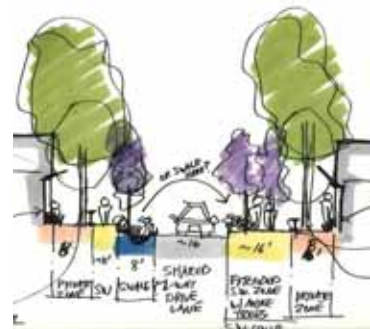
In November 2008, the City proposed three alternative height and density alternatives to study in an environmental impact statement. While these alternatives help analyze potential environmental impacts of new development, they don't directly address many of the variables that define the character of a neighborhood: streetscapes, parks and amenities, connections to surrounding neighborhoods, etc. This Urban Design Framework explores how these elements can contribute to quality of life in SLU. It articulates the role that place-making and urban design can play in creating a successful neighborhood.

Developed with guidance from a range of constituents, this document builds on past public planning processes to identify more specific recommendations. It advances goals and policies set out in the SLU Neighborhood Plan, and will help coordinate private and public investments toward the development of a livable neighborhood.

Strategies identified in this process will guide zoning changes, amendments to SLU Design Guidelines and the Right-of-Way Improvement Manual, and other implementation actions. Goals from the Neighborhood Plan that are not related to physical design (such as childcare and affordable housing) receive some consideration, but will be more thoroughly addressed in the rezone process.

A project team of public and private planners, urban designers, architects, landscape architects, and neighborhood constituents convened for a series of workshops in the summer of 2009. Building on previous public planning efforts, the project team explored ideas in greater detail, incorporating new information about major infrastructure projects and refining design concepts.

After an initial brainstorming charrette, workshops progressed from larger scale issues that affect all of South Lake Union down to the neighborhood and block scale. Between meetings, project team members presented their findings to a working group of neighborhood constituents who scrutinized assumptions, provided constructive criticism, and gave direction on how to best condense recommendations. Lastly, workshops were held with community stakeholders to discuss incentives and implementation strategies.





BACKGROUND

The project team’s recommendations are based on Comprehensive Plan and Neighborhood Plan goals, SLU’s history and existing conditions, and future development potential.

Comprehensive Plan/Neighborhood Plan highlights

SLU was designated as an urban center in 2004, recognizing the substantial growth anticipated for the neighborhood and establishing growth targets of 8,000 new residential units and 16,000 new jobs. 2010 growth allocations from Puget Sound Regional Council are expected to increase these targets by around 50%. The urban center designation also recognizes the importance of high-capacity transit and a wide range of supportive land uses including retail, recreation, public facilities, parks, and open spaces.



2004 Growth Targets for South Lake Union

(expected to increase based on new city-wide goals)

	2004	2009	2024 Projected
Housing units	1,306	2,940	9,306
Jobs	19,690	22,979*	35,690

**The new Amazon campus will bring an estimated 5,000 jobs not included in this number.*

An updated neighborhood plan was completed in 2007. This plan includes goals and policies for how SLU should change over time, accepting new growth while preserving historic elements and building on existing strengths. The result of years of work by neighborhood constituent groups, University of Washington, and the City, this plan establishes five priorities:



1) Community Character. Encourage pedestrian-oriented activities by building a network of pedestrian nodes and corridors. Preserve landmarks, support existing community organizations, and keep a diversity of businesses in the neighborhood. Support schools and child care, arts and cultural activities, and community interaction.

2) Transportation. Reduce car dependence by improving transit, pedestrian and bike routes, and establishing new public/private partnerships to reduce vehicle miles traveled. Improve Mercer, Valley Street, and connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

3) Parks and open space. Support improvements to Lake Union Park, Cascade Playground/P-Patch/People’s Center, and Denny Park.

4) Housing. Create a diversity of housing options including affordable units. Provide amenities to make the neighborhood attractive to families. Concentrate housing in some areas to create a distinct residential environment. Promote live-work housing.

5) Sustainable development. Encourage green building practices including green stormwater infrastructure to improve Lake Union water quality. Coordinate to reduce per capita energy usage. Protect natural light and view corridors at street level, and increase vegetation within the neighborhood and along the shoreline.

Physical setting

The south end of present-day Lake Union was forested until the late 19th Century. European settlement brought clear-cut logging and rapid urbanization; South Lake Union was an established industrial and commercial center by the 1920s. Regrading flattened the neighborhood and filled in approximately one third of Lake Union. Actions during this period significantly changed hydrological and ecological conditions.

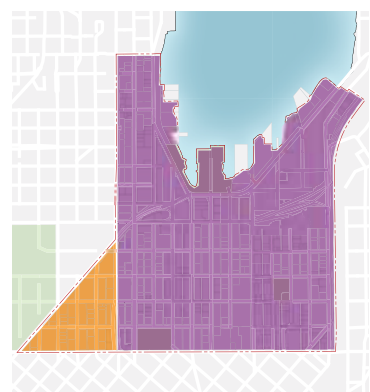
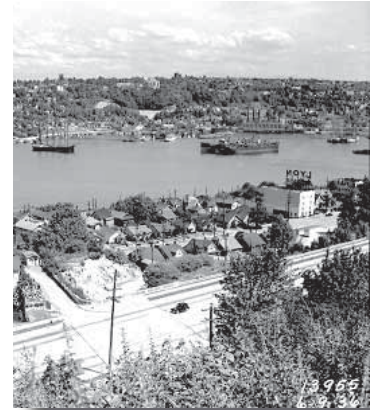
Now a valley between Capitol Hill and Queen Anne, South Lake Union gently slopes toward Westlake Ave from both sides. Stormwater drains directly to Lake Union through separated storm drains, and also contributes to combined sewer overflows.

Completion of the Lake Union Ship Canal in 1917 permanently changed the lake’s significance in terms of transportation, local economics, and aquatic ecology. As part of the connection between Lake Washington and Puget Sound, the lake experiences heavy boat traffic and provides critical migratory habitat for fish populations including the endangered Puget Sound Chinook salmon.

The lakeshore is SLU’s greatest physical asset. It shaped the neighborhood’s early development around water-dependent industrial uses, and is now shifting toward greater public access and cultural facilities. With the development of Lake Union park, establishment of the new Cheshiahud Loop, public access improvements on private property, and two regionally significant museums, the lakefront is becoming a major destination.

South Lake Union offers notable views to the Space Needle and Lake Union. The neighborhood is highly visible from surrounding neighborhoods, Aurora, and I-5. This proximity to highways offers certain advantages to South Lake Union, but also presents planning challenges; they cut SLU off from Queen Anne and Capitol Hill, and are a major source of traffic to the neighborhood’s street network.

While not designated as part the SLU urban center, the Uptown Triangle (bounded by Aurora, Broad St., and Denny Way) is considered as part of this Urban Design Framework. When the north portal of the Aurora tunnel is complete, new at-grade connections at Harrison, Thomas, and John will stitch SLU and the Uptown Triangle together. At a minimum, street and public space improvements should be coordinated at this neighborhood interface.



South Lake Union in purple, Uptown Triangle in orange.



Development potential

Where will new growth in South Lake Union go? At first glance the neighborhood may look like a blank canvas for development, but many areas are recently developed, have significant proposals in the permitting pipeline, or have older buildings unlikely for near-term development. Most of the blocks that do provide substantial redevelopment opportunities are clustered in three areas: A) the Fairview corridor; B) the Valley blocks south of Lake Union Park; and C) the area bounded by Aurora, Westlake, Aloha, and Denny.

Base image courtesy of Vulcan Inc.



LEGEND
Clustered Development Opportunities

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The SLU Working Group put forward a wide range of recommendations for South Lake Union planning and urban design, many of which are presented in this document. Recommendations point to seven guiding principles (relevant goals and policies from the SLU Neighborhood Plan cited in parentheses):

Set a clear vision for South Lake Union's future development that reflects the neighborhood's unique physical setting on Lake Union, embodies the goals of the 2007 SLU Neighborhood Plan, and guides future growth of the neighborhood.

Integrate South Lake Union with adjacent neighborhoods by creating better connections to the west, east and south consistent with plans and policies of adjacent neighborhoods, and seizing the opportunity presented by a new at-grade Aurora Avenue. (P18, G8, P22, P23, P25).

Create a network of great streets with safe connections for all modes and which supports better transit service; create new urban boulevards on Mercer and the new at-grade Aurora Avenue, improve Fairview and Dexter Avenues, and transform Thomas, John, and 8th Avenues into green streets. (P5, G1, G6, P17, P19, P24, P32).

Develop a diverse system of open spaces and community services including a mix of public spaces and civic uses, community-serving retail, arts and culture, human services, maritime and educational organizations. (P7, P10, G4, P11, G10, P26, P27, P28, P30).

Revise zoning and design guidelines to support an urban form appropriate to SLU's physical setting and Urban Center designation. Ensure new development activates streets, helps preserve neighborhood landmarks, enhances public views and encourages sustainable design, and leverages resources to support needed affordable housing and infrastructure to serve growth – all while expanding and enhancing SLU as a hub for employment and housing opportunity. (P1, P3, P9, P29, G13, P45).

Create opportunities for families in clusters along 8th Ave and around Cascade Park, focusing on appropriate housing types and sizes, public spaces, small businesses and other services needed to attract and retain families. (P2, G5, P14, P36, G11, P39).

Guide new affordable housing investments, make full use of incentive zoning potential, and utilize surplus property to ensure the neighborhood remains affordable to people from all walks of life, consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan. (G11, P33, P34, P35, G12, P40).





GATEWAYS, HEARTS, AND EDGES

Gateways are the notable passages into and out of the neighborhood, hearts are the centers of community life, and edges are the boundaries that define SLU. Recommendations throughout this report build on or respond to these concepts.

Gateways

Gateways are transition locations that mark entry or departure points to SLU. They provide a physical marker for the community to notice they are entering a special place. SLU Design Guidelines suggest: “Reinforce community gateways through the use of architectural elements, streetscape features, landscaping and/or signage.”

Mercer is major gateway for drivers and bicyclists at the west end of SLU, while the I-5 ramps at the east end of Mercer create a car-oriented processional gateway. Thomas will become a key passage for pedestrians in and out of SLU when it is reconnected over Aurora. Aurora acts as a major entrance and exit for SR-99 drivers. Westlake and Fairview are the two main neighborhood entrances from the south, while the Valley blocks present a series of key gateways between the neighborhood and the water, as well as for traffic coming from the north.



Hearts

Heart locations are the centers of commercial and social activity within the neighborhood. They provide anchors for the community and give form to the neighborhood. Development in these locations should enhance their central character through appropriate uses and architecture.

Cascade Park and Denny Park form two of SLU’s hearts. These existing open spaces already contribute to surrounding blocks, but could be further strengthened by adjacent uses and streetscape design. Retail and eateries along Westlake form a commercial heart. The “teardrop site” at Dexter and Mercer could become a new civic heart, if redeveloped as a library, school, or similar use. The lakefront is SLU’s defining heart location, with Lake Union Park, MOHAI, the Center for Wooden Boats, Cheshiahud Loop, and the Lake to Bay Trail.

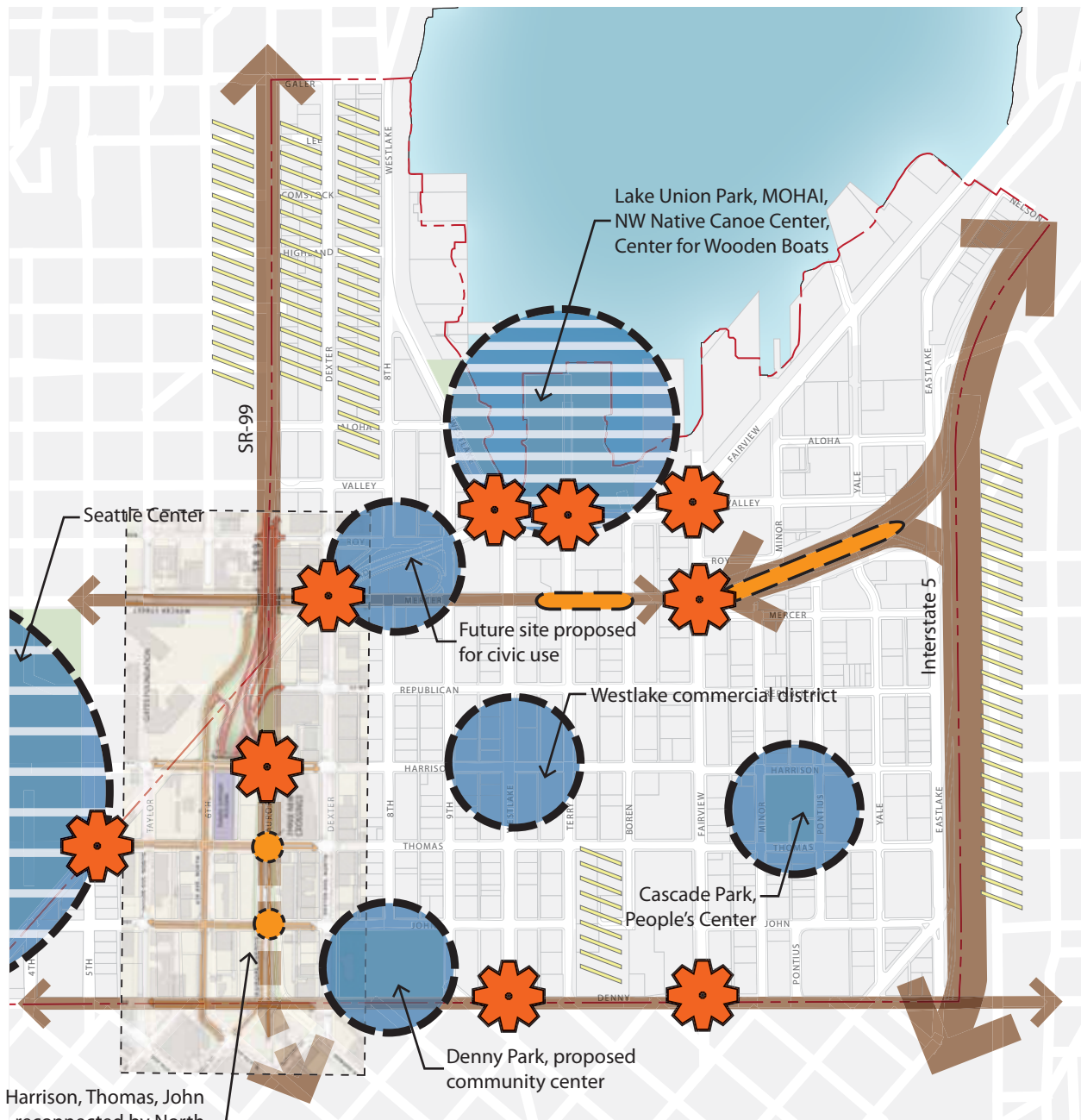


Edges

SLU is defined by clear edges or topographical barriers on all sides, both natural and man-made. These edges are important to understanding the area’s unique physical setting.

In cases such as the lakeshore and steep slopes, edges are physical characteristics that help define the neighborhood. In cases like Aurora, Dexter, and I5, these are barriers that should be addressed through planning and design.

GATEWAYS, HEARTS, AND EDGES



Harrison, Thomas, John reconnected by North Portal project

LEGEND	
	Neighborhood Heart
	Regional Heart
	Gateway
	Processional gateway
	Infrastructure barrier
	Challenging topography



STREET CHARACTER

For purposes of this study, streets are classified as one of seven types. After highways, the other six are as follows:

Boulevards/Great Streets are streets of grand scale or importance, often commercial corridors with relative high intensity for all modes of transportation. When designed well, landscaping and tree canopy help provide human scale spaces in the midst of wide streets. The pedestrian environment should be vibrant, with wide sidewalks and active uses (retail where appropriate). Pedestrian safety is paramount, and curb bulbs, textured paving, and other design cues should help alert drivers that pedestrians may be present. Medians may be appropriate, creating a pedestrian refuge for crossings on the widest boulevards.



Mixed Use Streets are typical downtown streets with a mix of commercial, residential, and retail uses. These streets contain higher traffic volumes than neighborhood streets but less than boulevards/great streets. These are secondary routes through and to the neighborhood. These streets may contain transit, but may not be primary routes. The pedestrian environment should include standard sidewalks in terms of width and landscaping.



Festival Streets are flexible use streets that may be easily closed for specified time periods, such as street fairs. Street design needs to allow ways to close down to auto traffic, transforming from road to open space. Paving or curbs may help signal this dual purpose.

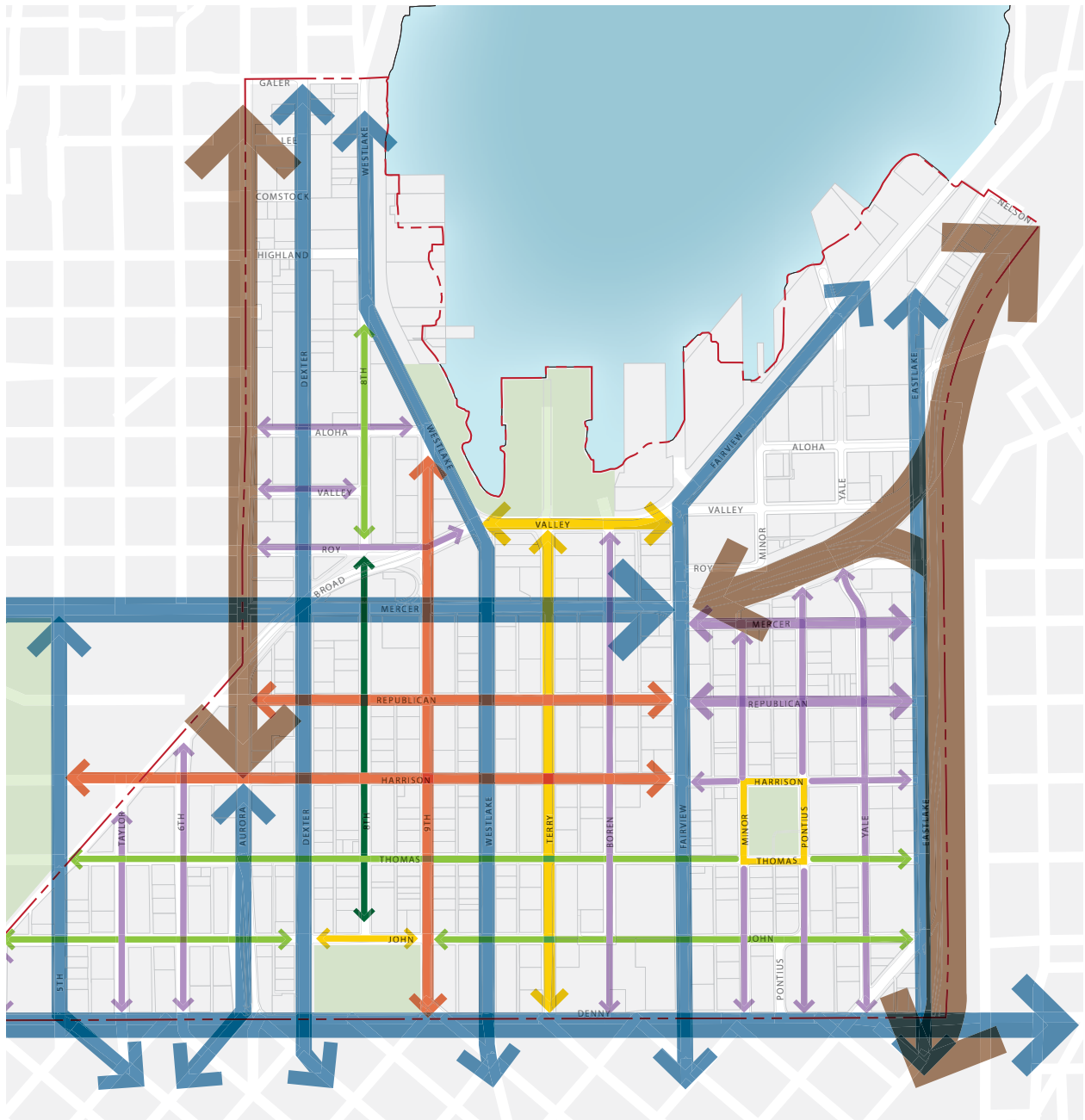


Neighborhood Streets are standard local access streets with low traffic volumes. They are not designated for the same level of coordinated design and investment as green streets, but should use many of the same features (narrower roadways, generous plantings) on a block-by-block basis.

Green Streets are low intensity streets that prioritize pedestrian and bike mobility over automobiles. These corridors have particular importance as connectors through or between neighborhoods, and receive a higher level of investment than typical streets. Some green streets may have an ecological focus, capturing rainwater, providing habitat for native species, and/or providing a significant canopy trees. Traffic calming measures are encouraged, as is an emphasis on pedestrians, biking, and landscape amenities.

Woonerf Streets substantially reduce auto capacity of a street to emphasize the pedestrian or bicycle user. They may be closed to all vehicles except deliveries or emergency vehicles. They may act as linear open spaces, utilizing the ROW for active or agricultural uses like P-Patches. These are primarily residential corridors, or areas where limited auto use is expected.

STREET CHARACTER



LEGEND			
	Freeway		Neighborhood Street
	Boulevard / Great Street		Green Street
	Mixed Use Street		Woonerf
	Festival Street (Mixed Use)	(Line weight represents traffic volume)	



RESIDENTIAL AND RETAIL FOCUS AREAS

While there should continue to be a mix of uses throughout SLU, the Neighborhood Plan identifies areas that should concentrate particular uses, and the Urban Design Framework workshops elaborated on this concept. Cross-referencing the figure to the right with other recommendations will show how proposals for streets, open space, and other features would line up with these focus areas.

Residential focus areas

To successfully market residential buildings, a critical mass of units is often necessary. Clustering residential uses also helps plan appropriate open spaces and other elements, which in turn help build community.

This plan presents two proposed types of residential focus areas. In “primary residential” areas, incentive zoning would encourage or require residential uses and discourage or disallow commercial uses above 20 feet. Further, ground-related residential units would be encouraged at the street. A residential node of this type has already taken shape around Cascade Park, and a second is proposed along 8th Avenue. The latter would be sited along a green street or woonerf designed to reinforce a residential character.

In “Residential Emphasis” areas, zoning should encourage residential uses, but provide more flexibility than “primary residential” areas.



Retail focus areas

Similarly, a certain concentration and continuity of retail uses is necessary to create a viable commercial area.

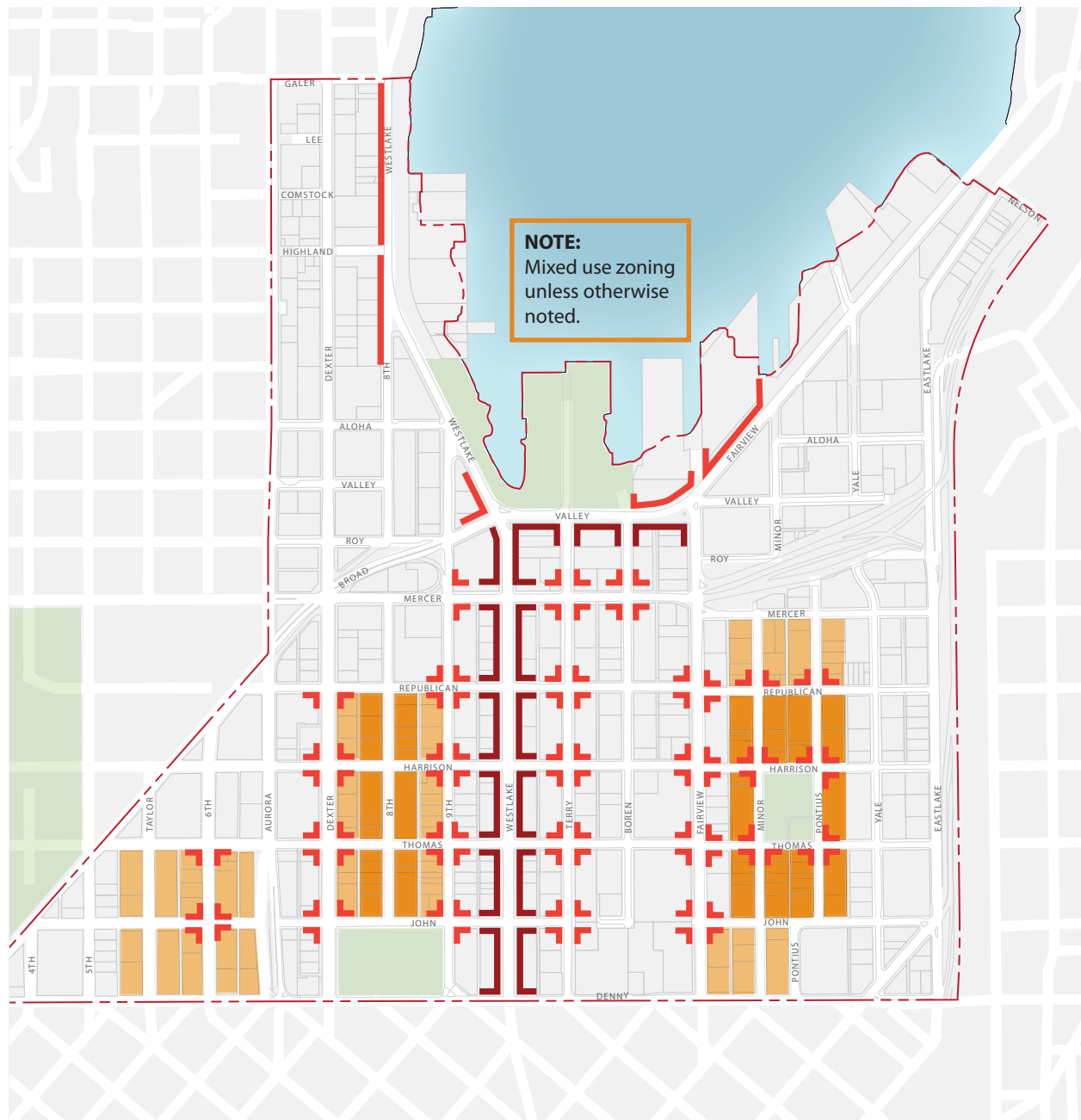
Along “Pedestrian-Oriented Retail and Services Required” corridors, typical establishments would include drug stores, banks, restaurants, coffee shops, specialty retail, destination retail, etc. Larger, sub-dividable commercial spaces may be most appropriate in these locations. The goals of reinforcing existing retail along Westlake Ave and establishing a new corridor of pedestrian-oriented uses along Valley St. are consistent with current zoning, which designate both as Class I Pedestrian Streets.



Corners designated as “Neighborhood Retail and Service Incentives” areas would be given incentives to provide small commercial establishments to meet neighborhood needs.

Because the locations shown for retail focus may exceed near term demand, other uses may be proposed for these spaces with the idea that long-term flexibility will allow for retail to grow with demand. These uses may be partnerships with arts organizations, low rent artist studios, small offices, day cares, etc.

RESIDENTIAL AND RETAIL FOCUS AREAS

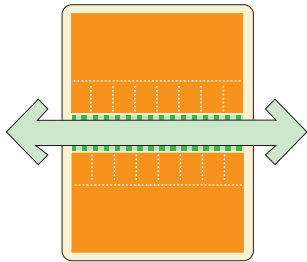


LEGEND

- Primary Residential
- Mixed Use - Residential Emphasis
- Pedestrian-Oriented Retail & Services Required
- Neighborhood Retail & Service Incentives

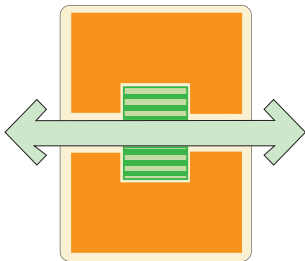
RESIDENTIAL OPEN SPACE STRATEGIES

These recommendations suggest how a variety of block configurations could best accommodate public, semi-private, and private open spaces. A few common principles apply: when developments use mid-block connectors or alleys for open space, they should not turn their backs to surrounding streets. When townhomes are used to help activate street-level open spaces, they should be slightly elevated for privacy and to provide better security for the open space (eyes on the street). Finally, private open spaces typically shouldn't include play equipment, in order to encourage neighborhood interaction and use of public parks where this equipment is already provided.



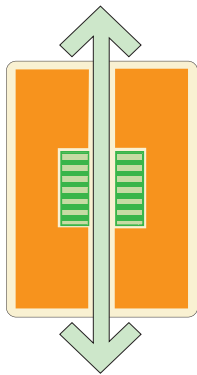
Mid-block Connector

Use mid-block connections to link streets and provide public pedestrian areas. These spaces should provide spaces for larger family gatherings, allow minor recreational activity (throwing a ball, learning to ride a bike, etc.), provide a mix of hardscape and landscape elements, and provide pedestrian-scale lighting. Semi-private townhome stoops can activate the open space while buffering residences.



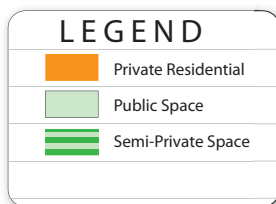
Mid-block Connector (Large Developments)

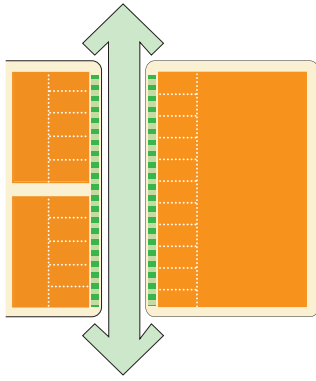
Same as above, but in larger residential developments, create semi-private courtyards that support and help activate the public open space. These courts could include community gardens for the residents, landscaped sitting spaces looking out onto the public open space, or other attractive uses.



Green Alleys

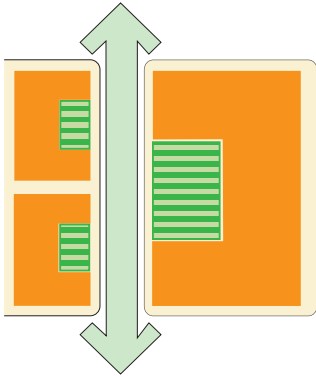
Repurpose alleys as active spaces and use public and semi-private open spaces to support this strategy, similar to the Alley 24 development. This approach may be especially appropriate where building sites abut busier streets. Where possible, provide courtyards along the alleys to support more active uses like sports courts or children's play areas, as well as passive activities like gardens or other landscaping.





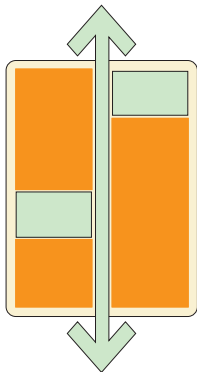
Street as Open Space

On streets that can tightly limit vehicular traffic, use the entire right-of-way for public open space. When possible, eliminate curbs to maintain continuity between street and sidewalk, use pavers or similar materials in the street, allow for minor recreational activity, provide landscaping and pedestrian-scale lighting. Townhome stoops can activate the open space while buffering private residences. It may be appropriate to allow stoops and landscaping to project into the right-of-way, provided that appropriate sidewalk width is maintained.



Street as Open Space (Large Developments)

Same as above, but in larger residential developments, create semi-private courtyards that support and help activate the public open space. These courts could include community gardens for residents or landscaped seating areas looking out onto public open space.



Pocket Parks

Encourage private developers to create public pocket parks that provide amenities close to residential developments. These spaces should provide public refuge, not semi-private or private use. Incentive zoning may be one appropriate tool to encourage this strategy.





PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK

Public spaces offer the greatest benefits when they form a network relating to three key elements: parks/open spaces, major pedestrian and bicycle routes, and residential focus areas.

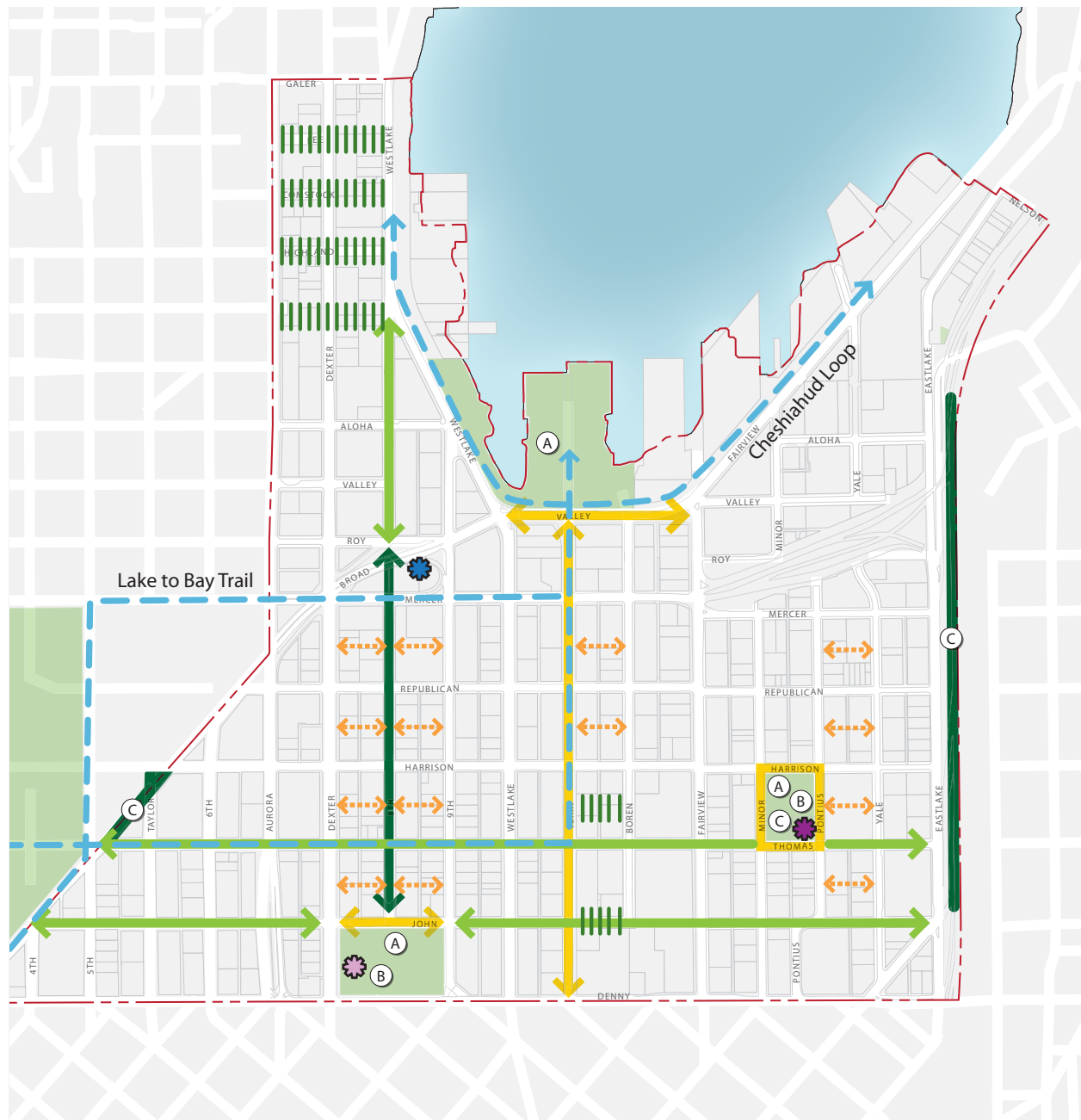
The figure to the right incorporates public space concepts from other recommendations, showing how recommended green streets, festival streets, urban trails, and parks connect or overlap. In addition, it shows a proposal for new east-west pedestrian alleys similar to Alley 24. These mid-block connections should be encouraged throughout SLU as a way to break up long north-south blocks, but this would be especially beneficial in concentrated residential areas.



A new community center is proposed for Denny Park. In workshops and neighborhood meetings, stakeholders have expressed interest in renovating the historic 100 Dexter building, currently office space for the Department of Parks and Recreation, as a community, arts, and culture center.



PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK



LEGEND			
	Hill Climb		Potential Site for Civic Use
	Mid-Block Ped Connections		Community Center
	Urban Trail		Proposed Community Center
	Festival Street (Mixed Use)		Playground
	Green Street		Active Recreation
	Road Diet / Woonerf		Other Recreation: Dog Runs, Gardens



VIEWS

While South Lake Union is relatively flat for a Seattle neighborhood, it presents notable views to Lake Union, the Space Needle, and Experience Music Project.

The City uses a variety of tools to protect notable public views. The Land Use Code designates particularly significant views for protection under the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) -- these projects undergo special review on a project-by-project basis to minimize view impacts. For more general protection of a view corridor, building setbacks (especially for upper levels) are established in the Land Use Code to protect view corridors. A third strategy is to step down building heights toward a protected view, such as the central waterfront.

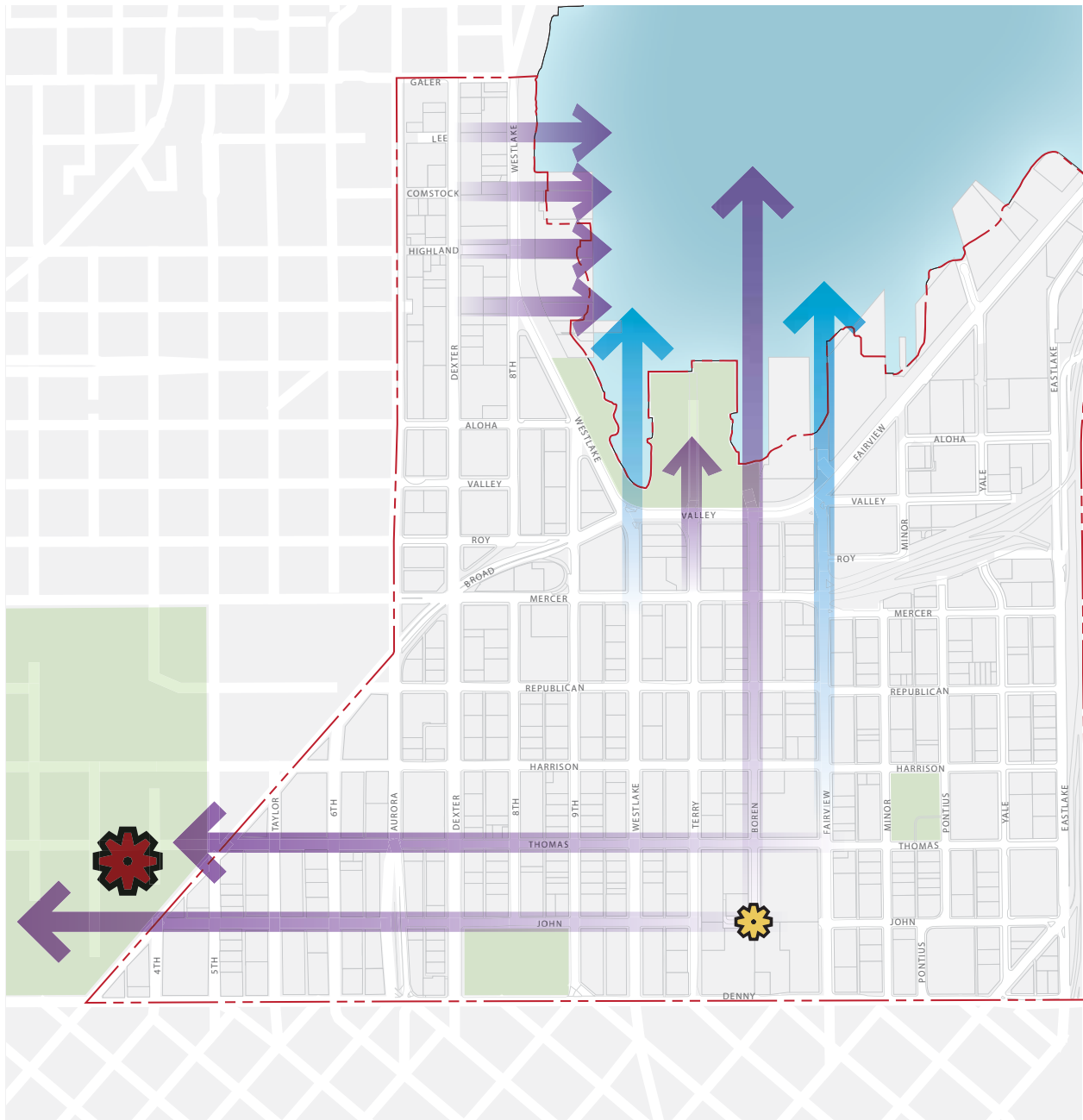


South Lake Union already has several SEPA-protected public viewpoints and landmarks, including two SEPA-designated scenic route view corridors to the lake, one on Westlake and one on Fairview. In the upcoming SLU rezone, this designation should continue.





Several other view corridors have been identified as priorities for the community, including the viewpoint at John and Boren. Additionally, capital improvements at John and Boren could provide a small scenic overlook, preferably related to a pedestrian hill climb connecting John from Boren to Terry.



VIEWS



LEGEND

-  SEPA-Designated Views
-  Other View Corridors
-  Space Needle
-  Potential Boren Overlook



Looking west on Thomas from Fairview with no tower setbacks. Brown buildings are existing or under construction.



The same view with recommended tower setbacks.



Aerial view of Valley blocks from the southwest. Note that the model represents zoning envelopes with no architectural detailing.

UPPER-LEVEL SETBACKS

EIS alternatives currently under consideration for SLU assume that most buildings will have 4 to 8 story podiums meeting the sidewalk, with towers typically set back some distance. Specifics will depend on policy decisions during the SLU rezone, and on characteristics of individual sites. Accordingly, the recommendations in this document only apply if towers are permitted, and if EIS analysis suggests that upper-level setbacks would be an effective tool for achieving urban design goals.

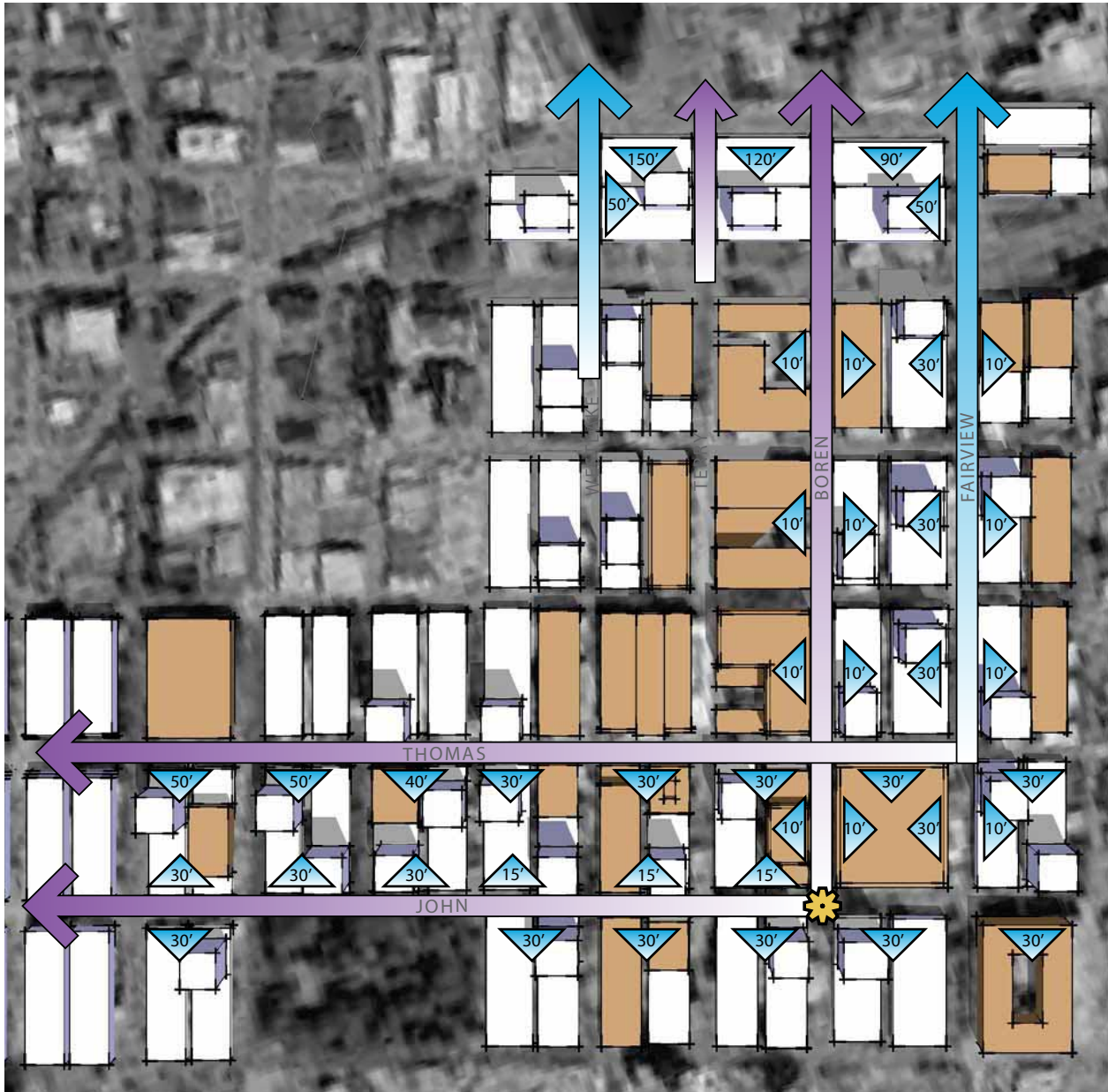
Setbacks are recommended along the south side of Thomas to maintain views to the Space Needle and to maximize sunlight for streetscape amenities. Smaller setbacks are proposed on the north side of John - views to the Space Needle are not as clear as on Thomas, and large setbacks from the north and south sides of the blocks would force towers too close together. Setbacks on the south side of the street would maintain light for streetscape plantings. In order to fully realize the view benefits of the proposed John/Thomas setbacks, similar setbacks will be needed in the Uptown Triangle.

Boren and Fairview were called out by the working group as major north/south views - of these two, Fairview is already a SEPA-designated view corridor. Modeling these views suggests that the benefit of tower setbacks will be maintaining light and air at the street level, not an expanded view of Lake Union. The low existing buildings already frame the views, and tower placement isn't likely to affect this. Wide parcels on the west side of Fairview allow a 30' setback, otherwise 10' setbacks are recommended.

Recommended setbacks surrounding the Valley blocks play several roles. Most importantly, they keep towers back from Lake Union Park, reducing shading. Second, they help open views as pedestrians and drivers approach the lake. Finally, they respond to the scale of Mercer, enhancing the street's width by moving back the upper portions of the street wall.

These recommendations, vetted by architects experienced in highrise residential and commercial buildings, are designed to accommodate typical tower floor plates, and allow flexibility for architectural detailing. They allow enough space for towers to set back an additional 5-10 feet for shaping and maintain the full allowed floor plate. The model used to evaluate view impacts assumed a maximum height of 240', and a typical floor plate of 10,500 square feet.

UPPER-LEVEL SETBACKS



LEGEND	
	SEPA-Designated Views
	Other View Corridors
	Upper-Level Setbacks
	Recently Developed (or Unlikely for Redevelopment)



URBAN FORM

Building height and bulk are among the most contentious topics in SLU planning. While these topics will not be settled until the planned rezone is done, this document considers building forms concepts insofar as they will shape the neighborhood experience. Recommendations address two aspects of building form: spacing of towers (buildings over 85' tall) and height of podiums (portions of buildings below 85').

While not all members of the working group agreed that towers should be allowed at the lakefront, the consensus among those who do support lakefront towers was that they should be limited to no more than one per block. Further, they recommended a limit of two towers per block for the rest of SLU. It was agreed that this general spacing would be an appropriate way to meet growth goals, keep light and air at the street level, and maintain views at the lakefront. Note that Shoreline Master Program regulations limit structures on waterfront parcels to no more than 35' height, so any towers in the shoreline jurisdiction would be on upland lots.



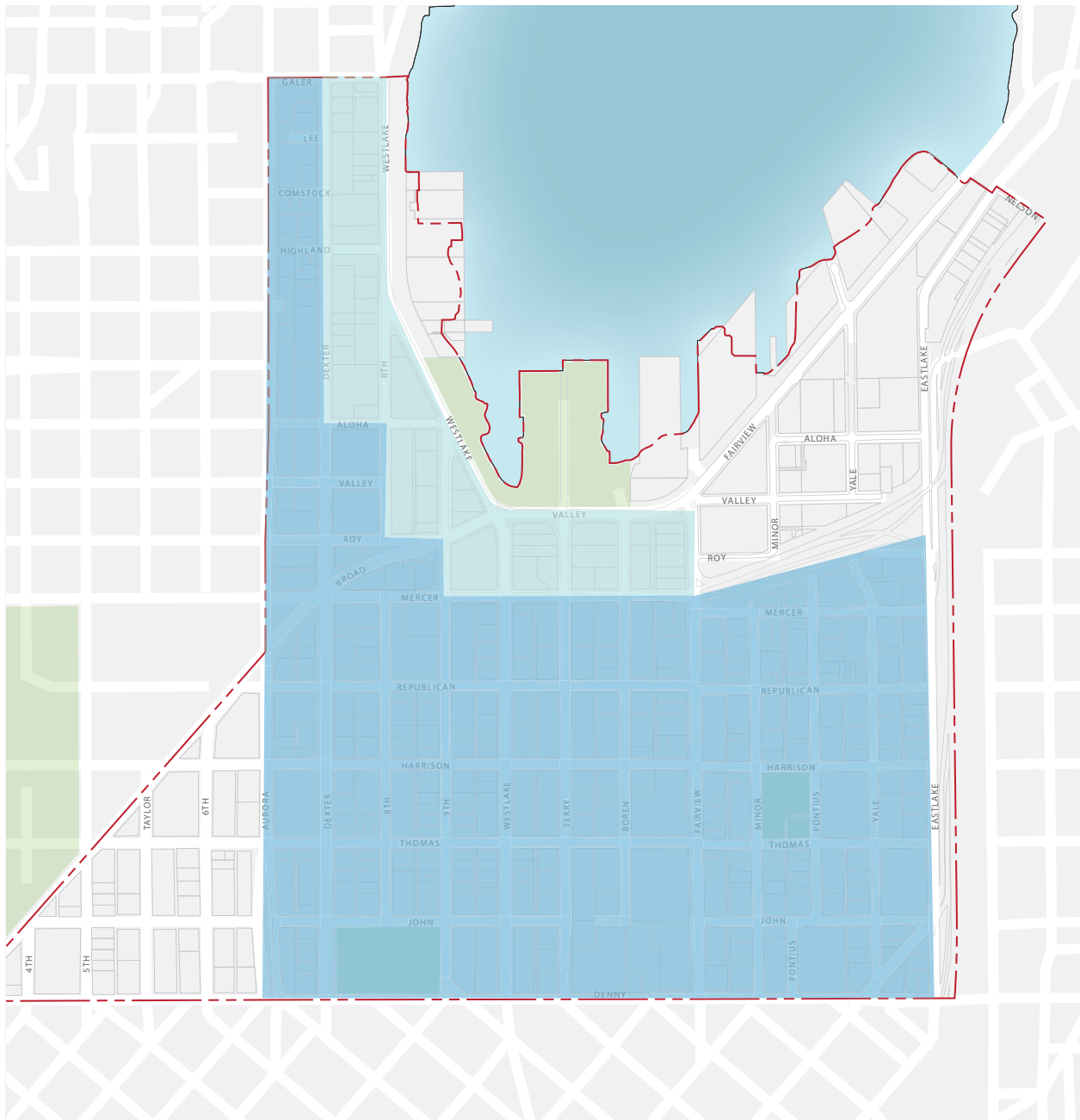
While towers are typically the focus of height limit discussions, building podiums often have a greater influence on how a neighborhood is experienced at the street level, and their bulk often impacts sun access and views more than towers. Podium height should relate to street width - on narrower streets, podiums should be shorter to maintain light and openness. Conversely, for wider rights-of-way, taller podiums can help balance the vastness of the street.

Podium height limits will be established in the SLU rezone process. In addition to these development standards, Neighborhood Design Guidelines should address how individual projects influence the "urban room" - this will help the Design Review Board prevent a homogenous facade created by uniform podium heights.





One additional point to consider is how podiums affect the appearance of towers. In general, shorter bases create a desirable emphasis on the height and slenderness of towers.

URBAN FORM



LEGEND

	No more than two towers per block
	No more than one tower per block



LAKEFRONT

Smart urban design at the lakefront is a key to realizing the South Lake Union's potential. Recommendations address the pedestrian environment, street-related uses, building form, and public space expansion.

Pedestrian environment

Development and streetscape improvements along Terry should be designed to create a grand entrance to Lake Union Park and the waterfront. An excellent streetscape, starting at Mercer or further south, should create a clear sequence of arrival as pedestrians move through a gateway that opens to reveal the park.

While Terry is a logical main entrance to the lakefront, surrounding streets should also contribute to an improved pedestrian environment. In particular, the proposed hill climbs between Dexter and Westlake, sidewalk improvements along west side of Westlake, and more pedestrian-friendly design of Aloha and Roy would help.



Street-related uses

Uses such as cafes and retail stores will help provide year-round activation along Valley. To help reinforce this activation, Land Use Code standards and Design Guidelines should encourage public open space facing the park and inside/outside connections between businesses and the street. These connections could be made through outdoor dining areas, large windows, and facades that roll up or swing open to the street wherever possible.

Building form

As discussed in the Urban Form recommendations, blocks surrounding the lakeshore should have greater spacing between towers. This will create a more open feel at the water, and will allow more views to the water.

Public space expansion

While the Cheshiahud Loop has established a viable non-motorized route around Lake Union, much of this route has bikes sharing space with pedestrians. A higher level of investment in pedestrian and bike facilities will increase the loop's recreational value, and could ultimately lead to green open space extending from Lake Union Park well up the east and west sides of the lake. In particular, there are opportunities to better use publicly owned land along Westlake if existing parking could be reduced, consolidated, or moved away from the water.



LAKEFRONT



LEGEND			
	Building/Pedestal Outline		Street-facing retail and services
	Plaza/Widened Sidewalk		Grand Entry to Park
	One Tower per Block		Inside-Outside Commercial
	Parking		Extended Park, Bike, and Ped Facilities
	Vertical Garden / Hill Climb		Mercer

NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS



Barriers between SLU and surrounding neighborhoods have been identified as an important issue in public planning processes. Connectivity can and should be substantially improved in the following ways:

Safer and more legible crossings at Denny. Denny's high traffic volume, combined with the change in grid pattern, create an inhospitable environment for pedestrian and bike crossings between SLU and downtown. More crossing points and improvements to existing crossings should be incorporated in streetscape improvements along Denny.

More crossings at Aurora will reconnect SLU with the Uptown neighborhood and Seattle Center. Planned improvements to Aurora and Mercer will create new crossings at John, Thomas, and Harrison, and will make the below-grade crossing at Mercer much safer and more pleasant.

Three hill climbs would create new connections between Westlake and the residential communities along Dexter. As envisioned in the SLU Urban Design workshops, these stairways would be lined with active commercial uses, similar to Harbor Steps downtown. The hill climb at Highland could connect to a pedestrian overpass up to Queen Anne, similar to the existing overpass at Galer.



Two urban trails in various stage of development should create popular pedestrian connections from SLU to Eastlake, Westlake, Fremont, Wallingford, the U District, Uptown, and Elliott Bay. Circling Lake Union, the Cheshiahud Loop was designated in 2008. A viable route already exists for pedestrians, and will likely become more recognized as improvements are made over time. The Lake to Bay trail runs in a figure 8 from South Lake Union Park to Myrtle Edwards Park. While still a proposal, planned improvements along Thomas and a Thomas pedestrian overpass at Elliott make this trail concept a likely success.

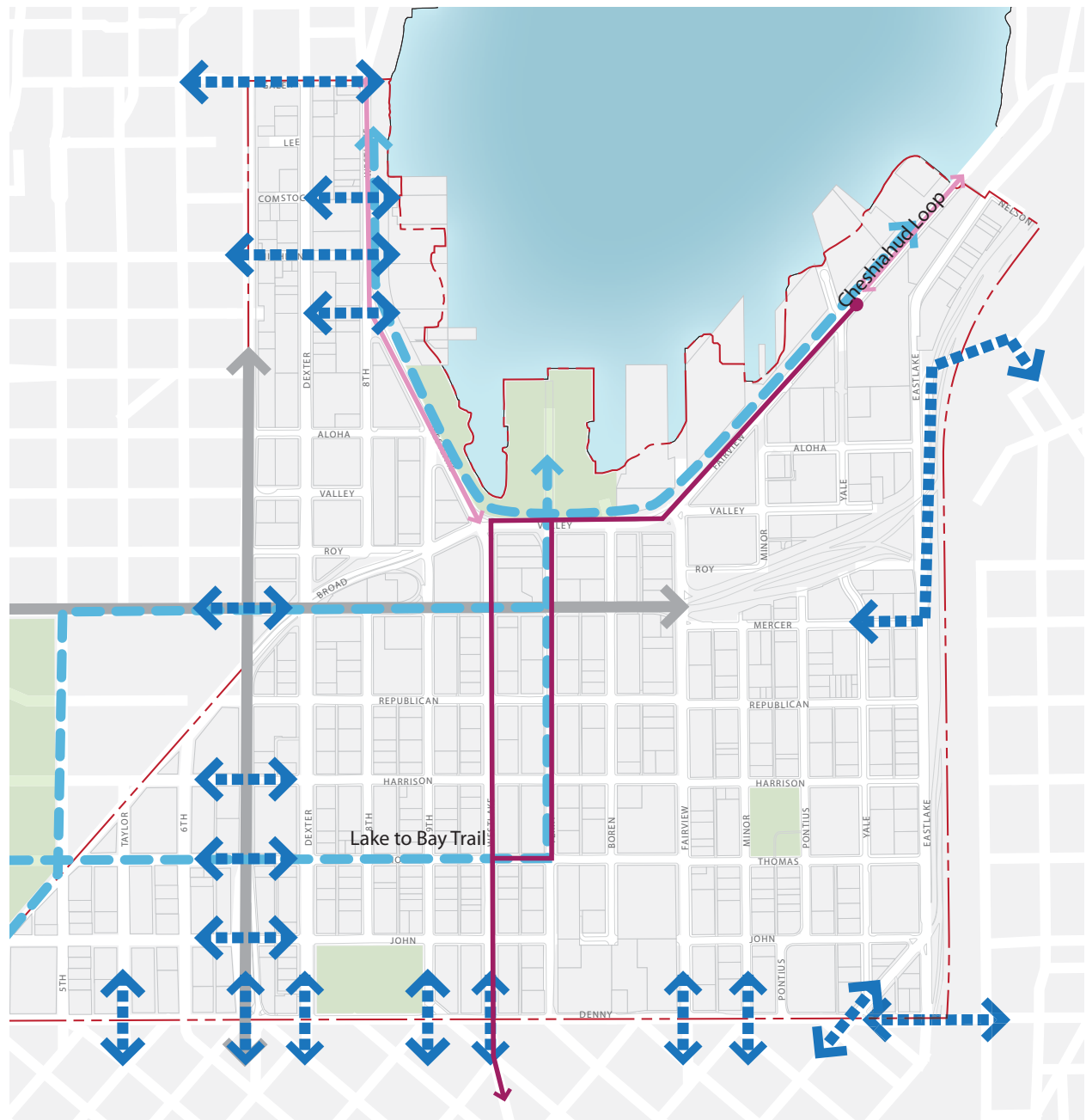


The existing South Lake Union Streetcar provides a reliable connection between downtown and SLU. Proposed extensions would run north to Fremont and the U District.

Pedestrian overpasses between SLU and Capitol Hill can be improved at Denny and Lakeview bridges. Safety, aesthetics, and legibility all have room for improvement.

The reconfiguration of roads surrounding the North Portal opens one more opportunity; as SDOT abandons or vacates much of Broad St., part of that road alignment could become a pedestrian route cutting across the street grid.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS



LEGEND

- Improved Pedestrian Connections
- Urban Trail
- Existing Streetcar
- Proposed Streetcar
- Major Infrastructure Improvements



GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) refers to a suite of low impact development practices for stormwater including bioretention plantings, permeable paving, green roofs, and rainwater harvesting. These practices help keep urban runoff out of storm drains and overloaded combined sewers, and can help improve water quality and aquatic habitat in Lake Union. In addition to their functional role, green stormwater infrastructure facilities can add interest and beauty to streets and public spaces.

The 2007 neighborhood plan promotes the use of low impact development to test new stormwater management concepts, reduce pollutants to Lake Union, and reveal the aesthetic uses of rainwater.



Some green stormwater infrastructure practices, like trees, green roofs, rainwater harvesting, biofiltration swales, and lined bioretention planters, can be used on almost any site. But techniques like rain gardens that concentrate stormwater infiltration into the ground can only be used where soil and slope conditions are appropriate.

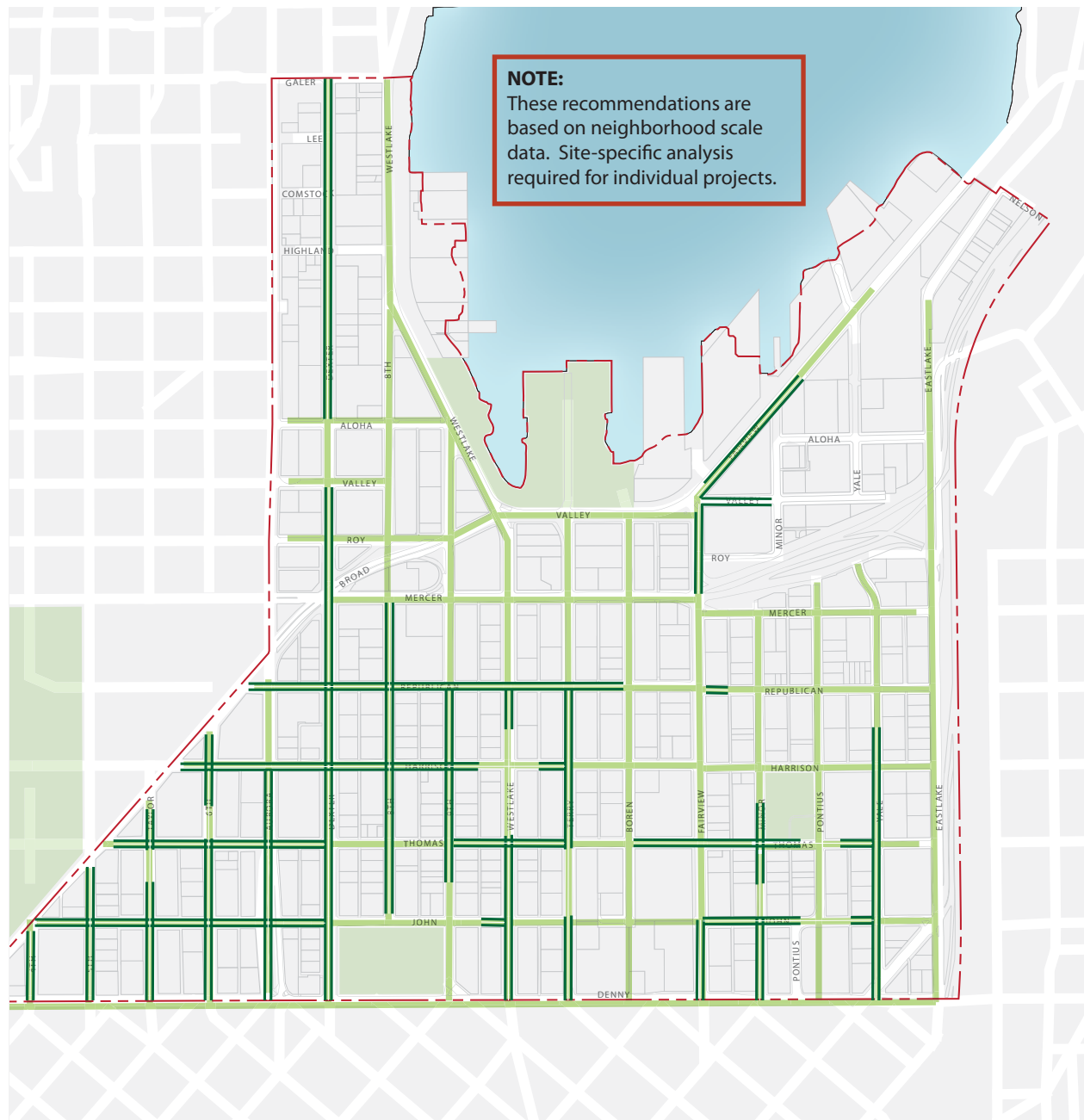
The figure to the right shows a concept level analysis of infiltration suitability in SLU. At a broad scale, it identifies blocks that meet Stormwater Manual standards for infiltration based on slopes, percolation rates, and absence of soil contamination. While further soil testing and engineering analysis is necessary for any specific project, the dark green rights-of-way are the ones most likely to accommodate some infiltration. This information can be used to help guide project-specific street improvements as well as streetscape concept plans.



Two important caveats apply to GSI in SLU. First, on streets classified as arterials, infiltration in the right-of-way is generally limited to sidewalk runoff. Special approval from SPU and SDOT is needed if arterial swales are to receive street runoff.

Second, to prevent mobilization of soil contaminants into groundwater, the Stormwater Manual prohibits infiltration of areas 5,000 square feet or greater in proximity to contaminated areas. Because of widespread residual contamination in SLU, this limitation applies to almost the entire neighborhood. This means that bioretention facilities for a given project should be designed to receive runoff from less than 5,000 square feet.

GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE



LEGEND

- Streets appropriate for non-infiltrating GSI
- Streets appropriate for infiltration facilities



INCENTIVE ZONING PRIORITIES

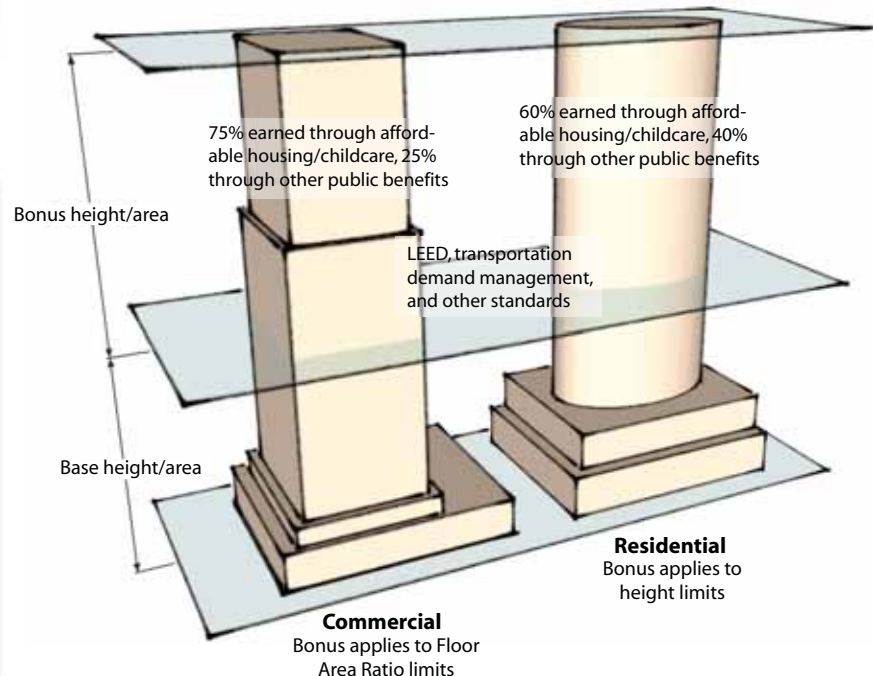
Incentive zoning is a planning tool that encourages density while contributing to livable and sustainable neighborhoods. It allows increased building height or area and establishes mitigation measures to offset development impacts. By managing growth strategically, this approach helps provide adequate infrastructure to support the growth projected in the Comprehensive Plan.

In 2008, the City passed an incentive zoning ordinance that authorized use of incentive zoning in certain areas, including SLU. Incentive zoning is one way to protect and create affordable housing, and to achieve other priorities identified in the urban design workshops.



In incentive zoning programs, the City sets a baseline height or Floor Area Ratio limit and allows additional height through appropriate mitigation. To access bonus height, all applicants must meet LEED certification, a measure of green building practices. For commercial buildings, 75% of bonus area must be mitigated through affordable housing and childcare programs, while the remaining 25% can be mitigated through other public amenities. For residential buildings, 60% of bonus area must be mitigated through affordable housing and childcare programs, and the remaining 40% can be mitigated through other public amenities.

Amenities provided for incentive zoning may be provided on site or through payment-in-lieu. Wherever possible, resources from incentive zoning should be used within South Lake Union. If a developer chooses not to access bonus height, the underlying zoning applies.



Other public amenities counting toward bonus area can include open space, transfers of development rights (local and/or regional), the arts, and historic preservation. This approach is currently used in Downtown Seattle and midrise/highrise residential zones. Drawing from public process and the SLU Neighborhood Plan, the working group identified the following priority areas to count toward incentive zoning in SLU:

Renovation of 100 Dexter. Convert the Parks office facility into a new center for community, arts, and culture. Currently used as offices for the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, this historic building would be renovated as a community center with childcare programs, arts facilities, and room for cultural events.

Public space and streetscapes. Developers contribute pocket plazas, play areas, or streetscape improvements consistent with the Urban Design Framework recommendations. Improvements could be provided as part of new development or through payment-in-lieu programs, and should focus on pedestrian corridors such as Thomas, Terry, and 8th Ave. Streetscape improvements could include construction and maintenance of green stormwater infrastructure facilities exceeding Stormwater Code requirements.

Landmark preservation. Working from an updated inventory of South Lake Union landmark buildings, developers would purchase development rights or development potential to preserve landmarks.

Housing preservation. Use transfers of development rights to protect existing structures providing affordable housing, including the red brick buildings at Carolina Ct., Grandview, Carlton Apts., 502 Minor N., Carolyn Manor Apts., Brewster, and Jensen.

Reduced overwater coverage. Transfer development rights to remove overwater buildings along the west shore of Lake Union. These buildings are predominantly occupied by non-water-dependent uses, have negative impacts on sensitive nearshore habitat, and block public views and access to the water. Marinas and floating home moorage would stay, but other structures would be reduced or removed to open the shoreline, consistent with the goals of the Shoreline Master Program and Cheshiahud Loop.

While the working group did not unanimously support regional TDR, it was identified as another potential opportunity for incentive zoning. This approach would preserve rural farm land in King County, and could provide a way to fund up-front improvements in SLU.

An excellent public realm in South Lake Union can't be realized through incentive zoning alone. These private investments must be leveraged with public dollars spent on parks, streets, and other capital projects.



SLU Urban Design Framework Work Plan

Implementation of the Urban Design Framework recommendations will depend on a variety of actions carried out by different stakeholders over time. This work plan summarizes necessary changes to the Land Use Code and other City policies, as well as other efforts to be realized through private/public collaboration and capital projects. While these actions focus on zoning changes and other ways the City can lay the groundwork for good urban design, realization of the physical changes in the neighborhood will depend largely on private development.

NAME	DESCRIPTION
Principle 1. Set a clear vision for South Lake Union’s future development	
1. SLU Urban Design Framework Work Plan	<p>Adopt the “SLU Urban Design Framework Work Plan” as an implementing action of the 2007 South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan, including recommendations for zoning, the SLU Neighborhood Plan, design guidelines, and the Right-Of-Way Improvement Manual (ROWIM). The Work Plan will also contain recommendations on capital improvement projects and a timeline for key actions.</p> <p>Implementation: Council Resolution Schedule: 2011 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
Principle 2. Integrate SLU with adjacent neighborhoods	
2. Aurora North Portal opportunities	<p>Capitalize on urban design opportunities presented by north portal, building better pedestrian, bike, and vehicular connections across John, Thomas, and Harrison, and providing high quality streetscapes.</p> <p>Implementation: Streetscape concept plans (ROWIM), North Portal design, related construction projects Schedule: 2010-2017 Responsible Parties: SDOT, DPD, WSDOT, Design Commission</p>
3. Uptown connections	<p>Extend proposed street hierarchy and green street connections into the Uptown Triangle in collaboration with QA Community Council and Uptown Alliance.</p> <p>Implementation: Streetscape concept plans (ROWIM), North Portal design Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: SDOT, DPD, Design Commission</p>
4. South/east connections	<p>Improve pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods. In particular, evaluate crossing improvements to Capitol Hill at Denny, Denny/Stewart, and Lakeview.</p> <p>Implementation: ROWIM, Ped Plan, Capital improvement projects, Design Guidelines Schedule: 2010-2015 Responsible Parties: SDOT, DPD</p>
5. Hill climbs	<p>Repurpose portions of dead-end streets between Westlake and Dexter, to promote privately developed hill climbs abutting commercial and residential uses.</p> <p>Implementation: Pedestrian Plan, SDOT agreements Schedule: 2011-2020 Responsible Parties: SDOT, developers, DPD</p>

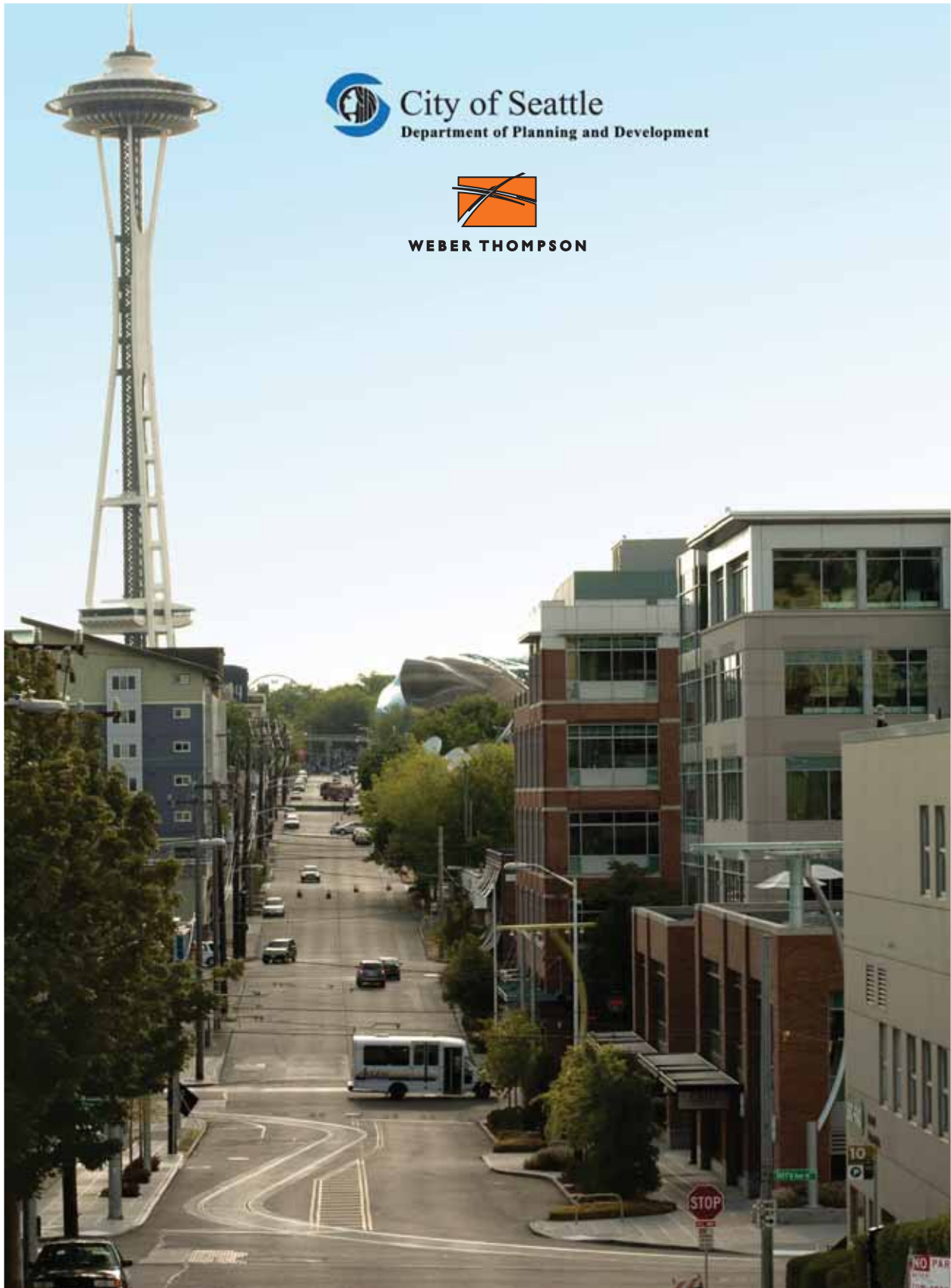
NAME	DESCRIPTION
Principle 3. Create a network of great streets	
6. Street hierarchy	<p>Adopt a street character hierarchy into SLU Neighborhood Plan that accommodates all modes of transportation, improves public safety, and responds to neighborhood context</p> <p>Implementation: Neighborhood Plan, neighborhood green street designations (ROWIM) Schedule: 2011-2013 Responsible Parties: SDOT, DPD, Council</p>
7. Streetscape improvements	<p>Pursue funding for improved crossings and streetscapes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mercer corridor -Denny Way from I-5 to Aurora -Dexter Avenue from Mercer to Denny Way -Fairview Avenue from Valley St to Denny Way -Highland Drive across Westlake <p>Implementation: Capital improvement projects Schedule: 2010-2020 Responsible Parties: SDOT, DPD, Council</p>
8. Streetscape concept plans	<p>Develop Streetscape Concept Plans for designated green streets and key pedestrian streets. This action is likely to include Thomas St. from I-5 to Seattle Center, 8th Avenue from John to Aloha, John Street from Fairview to 5th, and Boren Ave from Denny to Valley. Include consideration of green stormwater infrastructure.</p> <p>Implementation: ROWIM Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, SDOT, developers</p>
9. Mid-block connectors	<p>Provide incentives for east/west mid-block connections, with standards and a streamlined permitting process.</p> <p>Implementation: Neighborhood Design Guidelines, Land Use Code, ROWIM Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, SDOT</p>
10. Lake to Bay Trail	<p>Coordinate closely with planning and design efforts for the "Lake To Bay" Trail between Lake Union Park and Myrtle Edwards Park. Link development to trail through development standards, incentive zoning, etc.</p> <p>Implementation: Capital improvement projects, trail planning, Thomas St Concept Plan Schedule: 2010-2017 Responsible Parties: SDOT, Seattle Center, Parks Foundation, DPD</p>
11. Voluntary Traffic Mitigation Payment Plan	<p>Update Voluntary Traffic Mitigation Payment Plan (VTMPP) to incorporate proposed crossing and other transportation improvements with a clear nexus to development impacts.</p> <p>Implementation: VTMPP Schedule: 2011-2012 Responsible Parties: SDOT, DPD</p>

NAME	DESCRIPTION
Principle 4. Develop a diverse system of open spaces and community services	
12. Street vacations	<p>Identify best uses for Broad Street and other vacated rights-of-way, incorporating mixed uses whenever possible to take full advantage of development potential and accomplish multiple objectives.</p> <p>Implementation: Neighborhood Plan, street vacation policies, Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2015 Responsible Parties: SDOT, DPD, Parks, OH</p>
13. Festival streets	<p>Develop appropriate design and management practices for “festival streets” at John, Valley and the streets abutting Cascade Park. Neighborhood groups will be responsible for activating these streets through regular events.</p> <p>Implementation: Neighborhood Plan, ROWIM, MOAs Schedule: 2011-2013 Responsible Parties: SDOT, Parks, DPD, neighborhood groups</p>
14. Surplus land policies	<p>Establish policies encouraging civic uses, affordable housing and arts and cultural space through joint development on surplus city-owned land for sites including: the “teardrop site” at Mercer and Broad; City Light property at Pontius; the City Light Roy Street shops; and the SDOT Streetcar Maintenance Base. Consider possibilities for siting a public school.</p> <p>Implementation: Neighborhood Plan Schedule: 2011-2013 Responsible Parties: DPD, SCL, SDOT, OH, Council</p>
15. Dexter Community Center	<p>Determine feasibility of relocating Parks staff from the 100 Dexter building and redeveloping the site as a community center. Pursue funding if project appears feasible and appropriate.</p> <p>Implementation: Capital improvement projects, incentive zoning in LU Code Schedule: 2010-2015 Responsible Parties: Parks, DPD, Council</p>
5. Revise zoning and design guidelines	
16. Seattle Mixed zoning	<p>Implement Comp Plan’s future land use map by incorporating all of SLU into Seattle Mixed (“SM”) zoning.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
17. Pedestrian-oriented retail and services	<p>Require pedestrian-oriented retail and services along at the ground level along key corridors (Westlake, Valley blocks).</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>

NAME	DESCRIPTION
18. Form-based code	<p>Emphasize “form-based” controls in SM zones. Strengthen development standards for active street fronts, retail and residential at key locations; require that above grade parking be wrapped with an active use (retail, office, residential) on key streets.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code, Neighborhood Design Guidelines Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
19. View corridors	<p>Establish upper-level setbacks for towers, consistent with EIS findings.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
20. Building preservation	<p>Update inventory of buildings eligible for preservation through transfers of development rights, including historic landmarks, other neighborhood character buildings, and affordable housing.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code, landmark designations Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, DON, Council</p>
21. Podium height	<p>Establish design guidelines for podium height based on street width.</p> <p>Implementation: Neighborhood Design Guidelines Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
22. Tower height	<p>If additional building height is allowed through incentive zoning, apply standards for tower location and spacing, generally limited to two towers per block throughout the neighborhood and one per block on the lakefront. Reduce allowed podium development where projects opt to use incentive zoning to go above current heights.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
23. Additional height incentives	<p>If additional building height is allowed, establish a clear and consistent incentive system with agreed-upon goals for the amenities to be provided in addition to affordable housing.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>

NAME	DESCRIPTION
<p>24. Public amenity priorities</p>	<p>Use the following list of public amenity priorities to guide new development. Future rezoning proposals should incorporate detailed funding strategies for these priorities, including incentive zoning and direct public funding. Conduct nexus and economic feasibility studies as needed.</p> <div data-bbox="492 415 1403 527" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>A New Center for Community, Arts, and Culture at 100 Dexter. Repurpose and renovate existing Parks Dept. building as a community center. Funding through capital improvements, childcare bonus proceeds, TDR.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="492 537 1403 716" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Public Space and Streetscapes. Build or contribute to pocket parks, play areas, green street or boulevard improvements; bike and transit improvements consistent with SLU Voluntary Transportation Mitigation Payment Plan (VTMPP). Eligible improvements may include green stormwater infrastructure retrofits exceeding Stormwater Code requirements. On or off-site, or via in-lieu payment.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="492 726 1403 804" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Building preservation. Use TDR program to preserve eligible buildings designated in the preservation inventory.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="492 814 1403 926" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Housing preservation. Include red brick buildings as potential housing TDR sending sites (Carolina Ct., Grandview, Carlton Apts., 502 Minor N., Carolyn Manor Apts., Brewster, Jensen)</p> </div> <div data-bbox="492 936 1403 1052" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Reduced overwater coverage. TDR from sites that reduce overwater coverage, providing shoreline habitat and public access improvements consistent with the Shoreline Master Program and Cheshiahud Loop.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="492 1062 1403 1140" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Arts FAR Bonus. Evaluate options for an FAR Bonus incentive for dedicated on-site arts and cultural spaces.</p> </div> <p>In addition, regional TDR programs may be appropriate. Explore mechanisms to allow transfers of development rights to preserve rural farm land in King County, provided that resulting local improvement dollars substantially contribute to the priorities listed above.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council, King County</p>
<p>25. Seattle Green Factor</p>	<p>Apply new landscaping standards throughout South Lake Union, including the Seattle Green Factor.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
<p>26. Landscaping design guidelines</p>	<p>Update landscape provisions in design guidelines.</p> <p>Implementation: Neighborhood Design Guidelines Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD</p>

NAME	DESCRIPTION
27. Green building requirements	<p>Incorporate green building requirements in any incentive zoning programs, including LEED Gold and transportation/energy demand management plans; consider FAR bonuses for LEED Platinum or AIA 2030 Challenge.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
28. Green building incentives	<p>Provide incentives and partnerships for more efficient building forms and systems, including district energy.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code, public/private partnerships Schedule: 2010-2015 Responsible Parties: DPD, Seattle City Light, private interests, Council</p>
6. Create focused opportunities for families	
29. Residential 8th Ave	<p>Use zoning to focus on residential uses along 8th Avenue from John to Republican, including ground-related units.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
30. Housing around parks	<p>Provide incentives for ground-related housing with good access to streets and open space at key locations around Denny Park and Cascade Park.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: DPD, Council</p>
7. Guide new affordable housing investments	
31. Housing incentive zoning (see "public amenity priorities above)	<p>Use incentive zoning programs to help preserve existing and build new affordable housing options for moderate wage workers through TDR and other provisions. Units may be provided on site or through payment-in-lieu, and should be marketed to Center City employees.</p> <p>Implementation: Land Use Code Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: Office of Housing, DPD, Council</p>
32. Affordable housing on City property	<p>Provide affordable housing with ground-level community uses on surplus city property, as feasible (streetcar maintenance base, SCL properties, vacated ROWs).</p> <p>Implementation: Housing Strategic Action Agenda, Neighborhood Plan Schedule: 2010-2012 Responsible Parties: Office of Housing, City Light, SDOT, DPD, Arts and Cultural Affairs</p>
33. Affordable Housing partnerships	<p>Encourage public / private partnerships to develop affordable housing for families.</p> <p>Implementation: Ongoing Schedule: Ongoing Responsible Parties: Office of Housing, DPD, non-profit housing organizations</p>



South Lake Union Urban Design Framework 12/31/2010
Seattle Department of Planning and Development