



# **Uptown Neighborhood Design Guidelines Update**

**Summary of Public Comments on the April 2018 DRAFT**

In January 2018 OPCD began working with the Uptown Alliance Land Use Review Committee to update the Uptown Neighborhood Design Guidelines. The guidelines are used by volunteer Design Review Boards to assess new development projects.

On April 16, 2018 we released a DRAFT. We held a series of meetings, events, and an online survey to gather feedback. This feedback will be used to create a FINAL DRAFT for City Council review and adoption.

**For more information about this project, or to sign up for updates, visit the project website.**

<http://www.seattle.gov/opcd/ongoing-initiatives/uptown-framework-for-the-future>

## Meetings and Events

### What Next in North Downtown Community Open House 4/25/18

- 47 People signed in at this event.
- Most people who stopped by the display picked up a handout and planned to read the guidelines at home and send comments.
- A few people left sticky notes on display boards:
  - More color on painted surfaces
  - When plant materials is brought in at the end, think about: native plants, more different kinds of plants, cheerful flowers. There are some nice examples in SLU
  - And trees! Eps in Seattle the walking experience more than any other investment.
- Several people had questions about the upzone.

### Uptown Alliance Meeting 5/8/18

- 24 people signed in.
- Staff gave a brief update (~3 minutes) about the project.
- Audience was encouraged to review document online, respond to the online survey or send more detailed comments via email.
- Handouts were distributed.
- No comments were received at this meeting.

### Uptown Alliance LURC Meeting 5/15/18

- Six people attended.
- Discussed Michael Davis' comments (received 4/15)
  - Formatting and numbering in the Draft are consistent with other DGs, so cross references to the citywide guidelines were not added.
  - Subareas were de-emphasized as the whole urban center will be more and more mixed use. Decided not to revisit.
  - Include a general reference to Mercer Corridor, but not a "theater district."
  - Not clear where alley activation might make sense. Class 1, 2 and 3 streets, NC zones encourage/require parking access and service uses in alley.
- Artificial turf. Did not add guidance encouraging the use of artificial turf where landscapes will be impacted by dog walking. There maybe some areas where its appropriate, but leave that to design team. Noted that many new buildings are including larger dog amenity areas within the private amenity areas which may reduce some pressure on public realm.
- Lots of suggestions re: photos:
  - new photos for cover- SIFF with parklet, entrance to SC, better photo of Expo Plaza
  - reshoots of photos taken earlier this year so that landscapes are greener, more people are on the streets

- add photo from triangle area, playground at Seattle Center, Met Market corner
- note building name or address if possible
- replace several photos in the tall building section
- crop photos to highlight specific features – signs, entrance, setback, etc.
- avoid including corporate signs if possible
- Suggested adding more about the balance of people and jobs, reflect affordability in the list of design priorities

### **Uptown Arts and Cultural Coalition Meeting 5/16/18**

- 12 people attended.
- What kind of arts district branding might be appropriate to encourage in new development?
  - Don't have a specific brand yet but will in future. Not sure yet how it might be incorporated in new development.
- What design features help make a new development “arts friendly” for occasional or future arts and cultural use?
  - should be flexible, durable, high ceiling, lots of electrical outlets, etc.—basically a big empty space, a blank slate
  - same features that make a good “gathering spaces”
  - 2NU project in downtown has a large plaza with some features to encourage art to pop up in the space – e.g. a large cross beam that art could be hung from.
- How can the Uptown Arts and Cultural Coalition get more involved in design review?
  - Volunteer for Design Review Board when there are openings
  - Work with Uptown Alliance LURC on reviewing and providing input on development projects

### **Office Hours at KEXP Gathering Space (5/15 and 5/22)**

- Three people attended.
- They asked questions about design review and upzones. They picked up a handout. No specific comments about the DRAFT comments were received.

## Email

- Spell out acronyms.
- Note that Heart of Uptown is also a source of goods and services.
- Figure 2 – Do we need this map, the boundary is on the other map.
- CS1.1 It would be helpful to have a series of illustrations to illustrate “stepping down”
- CS1.1.b Clarify what "safe visual transition" means - clear sightlines?
- CS2.1 Re-word: "At gateway locations, use site identity features...open space to reinforce a sense of place."
- CS2.2 Add "create synergistic relationships"
- CS2.3.b Add "or locations with high pedestrian activity within the Heart of Uptown"
- CS3.1.b Add "near theaters and other cultural venues"
- PL1.1 Reword "clear definition between the sidewalk and adjacent plazas"
- PL1.3.b Add "and along the Queen Anne Ave. and 1st Ave N corridors"
- PL3.2.a Reword "visible lobbies or public-facing retail spaces"? lobbies aren't always the most activating use, and projects might use this as an excuse to take up the street-level frontage with lobbies instead of retail.
- PL3.2.b.2 potential conflict with CS1 1.a?
- PL3.2.b.2 I have a concern. For example, the residential entries on 2nd (at Center Step) do not allow for a 3 ft. elevation AND also have an accessible interior access. Saying minimum 3 ft. may be too prescriptive. Can we say elevating the ground floor is highly desirable?
- PL4.2.a Add "Placement of interior bicycle storage spaces should consider cyclist safety and ease of access."
- PL4.3 Delete the untitled paragraph labeled #3 and starting with “Public Transit...” on page 17. It lacks design guidance and feels repetitive from other sentiments found elsewhere.
- DC4.1.c Replace “build with” with "clad with" or "faced with."
- DC4.2.a Add “incorporate elements of color and light”
- DC4.3.b Add “while not disturbing any adjacent residential properties.”

## Online Survey

- Survey was open from April 16 to May 25, 2018
- 31 responses
- Promoted through OPCD listserv, OPCD Newsletter, OPCD social media, Uptown Alliance Facebook Page, What's Up in North Downtown Community Open House, Office Hours at KEXP.

### Q1 What is your age?

Age Range	#
18-30	5
31-40	8
41-50	5
51-60	3
60 or older	10

### Q2 What is your gender?

	#
Female	19
Male	12

### Q3 What is your race/ethnicity?

	#
African American	1
Caucasian/ white	20
Latina Latinx	2
Middle east	1
Mixed	3
None of your business	1
What ever	1
Why	1

### Q4 What is your zipcode

	#
98102	1
98103	1
98109	12
98118	1
98119	12
98122	2
98124	1

### Q5 Priority Design Issues

We identified some priority design issues:

- *A safe, attractive, inviting pedestrian environment.*
- *A strong and vibrant Heart of Uptown.*
- *Welcoming edges surrounding the Seattle Center.*
- *New Uptown Arts and Cultural Coalition.*
- *Introducing taller buildings into the Uptown.*

How well does this list capture the priority design issues? **(Avg. score 56 of 100)**

**Q6** *Is there another design issue in Uptown that should be listed? (Optional)*

- more native plants and preserve unique seattle identity and style
- no
- Protect the view is Seattle's iconic Space Needle from encroachment by taller buildings. Protect our Space Needle like the Parisians protect their view of the Eiffel Tower
- Prioritize active groundplane for buildings, both commercial and residential.
- minimize taller buildings and/or limiting to appropriate places
- Traffic and mobility
- Transportation connections to surrounding neighborhoods, including Downtown.
- Access to green / recreation
- design diversity
- Lower scale for enjoying view corridors
- More emphasis on greenery. Areas for large, mature trees to thrive and be a focal point
- shorter buildings to retain a sense of openness
- Maintaining cultural icons
- Let designers have more freedom
- Not excessively urban
- transportation modes designed for mobility & access
- recognition of the few remaining red brick buildings. See the "new" Safeway on 1st ave west for use of "red brick". Also see the use of pedestrian scale Seattle City Light recommended light fixtures IN ADDITION to the "cobra" fixtures that are not at all ped friendly.
- Long-term vacant properties
- Bike lanes, sidewalk widths and streetlight timing
- Priority for travelers on transit, on bike and on foot
- Transportation
- Sustainable building materials and building plans;
- High level of greenery and use of natural building materials like wood, stone, and brick;
- Historic preservation of existing buildings;
- Rain protection and good lighting at bus stops
- Better redevelopment planning - buildings do not have enough set backs, new buildings shade the streets and have more of "canyon" feel to what should be a welcoming pedestrian environment
- Quality buildings with human scale and proportions.
- Affordability, both residential and commercial
- war on cars, old people with no car on crime
- ST3 station
- Increases transit frequency to support planned increase in density; replacing ugly useless parking lots with beautiful useful buildings
- Yes. High building design standards
- what about current business? Will they receive mitigation funds available to arts centers who will lose business during construction

**Q7 Clarity** *You shouldn't have to be an architect or a planner to understand the Design Guidelines. How well do you understand it? (Avg. score 71 of 100)*

**Q8** *Are there any guidelines that you don't understand? (Optional)*

- I am not sure whether the gateway 'design responses are to be considered from a vehicular or a pedestrian perspective. I would support the latter taking precedence both from a distance and from close in.
- pace of development. Distinguishing between serious, likely plans and wishful thinking.
- Most of the guidelines include jargon and terms of art that are not familiar to people without urban planning or design education or experience. This seems intentional and calculated to mislead.
- I don't understand why buildings should "meet the corner" what advantage is this?
- Page 18 Bus Layover facilities are a new feature in Uptown and I would like to see an example illustrating. This is very important because I understand that the OakView plan uses bus layovers to accommodate increased bus use in and out of Uptown for "games".
- Commercial signage
- how tall buildings, lack of parking make a better neighborhood
- There are a lot of shoulds vs. a strong statement of what is wanted
- memorial stadium is owned by the school district - you can't reimagine what to do with it - it is misleading to the readers. Guidelines haven't taken into consideration who will be negatively impacted

**Q9 Photos** *Photos of great development help communicate what the community wants. How well do the photos in the guidelines communicate future development you would like to see in Uptown? (Avg. score 53 of 100)*

**Q10** *Is there a photo of a recent development project in Uptown or a similar neighborhood that might be good to include? (Optional)*

- Roy Vue (older building on Capitol Hill)
- VIA\_19 W Harrison
- Counterbalance Park

**Q11** *Is there a name or address of a recent development project in Uptown or a similar neighborhood that might be good to include? (Optional)*

- 19 W Harrison
- Queen Anne Beerhall



- KEXP did a good job retaining original structure and working within historic context
- I don't know of any development in Uptown or Seattle that ultimately ends up being a good fit for the neighborhood. The retail storefronts on the street level are poorly planned, the buildings do not incorporate enough green space. Redevelopment is a part of Seattle, but other cities are doing a much better job than Seattle is. Even redevelopment in Portland is better - take Division Street between 25th and 35th and note the differences between the 2 styles of development.
- Look to include vintage construction, which integrates greenery through entryway gardens, pedestrian-scale buildings, and use of natural building materials.

**Q12 Brevity** *The Design Review Board has limited time to review each development project. They need to focus on the important topics pretty quickly. How well do the guidelines point to the most important issues clearly and quickly? (Avg. score 55 of 100)*

**Q13** *If pressed for time, are there any guidelines the Design Review Board could skip? (Optional)*

- all of it except the upzone; the rest is filler
- Art and cultural center
- no, don't rush big changes
- All of them! Who cares about colors and materials! It's so arbitrary
- No. We should not be in a hurry to review these buildings. It is insulting to those who live and work there to say we are in too much of a hurry now to take time to do this right. Take the time we need for proper review!!
- no, take your time for evaluations
- In this, my first read through, and with short time to respond, I don't think there is much about PARKING and car use. I'll re-read this doc, but for now, be sure there is a general guideline about how much parking is recommended per resident unit or whatever measure you use. With multiple bus routes, proximity to downtown and south lake union, Uptown projects don't need as much parking as other neighborhoods. Our flat, level elevation also benefits bikes nicely.
- Painting
- Uptown Neighborhood Supplemental Guidance
- Aesthetic considerations like building facades and signage. Focus first on functional considerations of livability like big wide sidewalks (with ramp cut outs!) and frequent transit.

**Q14 Redundancy** *The Neighborhood Design Guidelines should not repeat what's already included in the citywide Seattle Design Guidelines. How well do the guidelines avoid redundancy with the Seattle Design Guidelines? (Avg. score 57 of 100)*

**Q15** *Which guidelines might be redundant? (Optional)*

- pandering to create the impression that this is something other than just an upzone
- Gateway discussion not redundant as much unclear

- Guidelines are not redundant as much as they are too vague and non-binding
- N/A
- Pedestrian experience
- All of them
- pedestrian friendly environment
- Not sure
- make them redundant until people know exactly what is going on. Why look through multiple documents to find one answer. Repeat, repeat, repeat until everyone involved and impacted knows what is going on

**Q16** *Any other feedback you would like to share about this project? (Optional)*

- it is a bad idea to upzone this urban neighborhood. just say no.
- great job...much better and more representative of Uptown than earlier guidelines.
- Disappointing that this survey was more about the structure and clarity of the written guidelines than about the contents and important topics within them.
- The Uptown Alliance does not represent the interests of people in Uptown and the surrounding areas. It represents developers, landowners and architects with a vested interest in maximizing development in the area. The guidelines reflect this in multiple ways
- no comment
- Sloped density to improve water views for all existing residents
- mercer/qa intersection should be walk all-ways. even if we don't want to encourage residents to drive, retail should have free parking available. cvs and expo apts don't meet some of these guidelines, i'm sure there must be others in "violation". how to enforce these for future? uptown is getting to be yet another unaffordable neighborhood. so frustrating.
- More neighborhood input. The city moves ahead with "their goals " no matter what we make comments on either through email or meetings.
- Faster is best! And in the future who cares if there are multiple heights, colors
- A vibrant arts center is important, so is pedestrian safety and transportation to and from this neighborhood. Cars will be an important part of keeping this area vibrant in future.
- Eliminate the assumption that "taller is better" for uptown. It will actually destroy its character
- Because I was very involved in the original Uptown Design guidelines, I note absence of reference to what suitable street trees are suggested and how "streescapes" could be more uniform and therefore, create a rhythm and pattern of each block as redevelopment occurs. At the present, it seems each developer gets to design and create what they want, not what is most durable and suitable for Uptown. Example, on the West Mercer Street sidewalk of CVS pharmacy, some struggling saxifrage plants plus some other transient abused plant materials are looking very shabby. I don't expect uniformity, but surely urban landscape architects can urge better results IF the Uptown guidelines expect it.
- We already have issues with small businesses being priced out and nothing taking their place, or new buildings being built and nothing moving into the bottom floors. So need guidelines that welcome business and investment rather than make it too restrictive.

- I fully support increasing density in the Uptown neighborhood and want to see a focus on reducing car traffic and increasing pedestrian and bicyclist comfort on the streets. I would support incentivizing new development that would reduce or eliminate parking spaces for cars.
- Design boards should be approving 100% of projects that fit the guidelines. Instead, we have nitpicking that results in projects being stalled for years while a homelessness crisis implodes around us.
- More brick buildings please, and less corrugated siding.
- it is all about developers and money...not the people who live here....
- Build build build. And let's get rid of more street parking in favor of bike lanes, bus lanes, parklets, etc. Anything to reduce the number of cars staying in and passing through neighborhood. Cars bad. Other modes good.
- It is not clear which guidelines will actually be followed, due to wishy-washy language. 2. There should be a stronger statement about the need for small plazas/public gathering places.
- Looks beautiful, but I think misses the point. It is not about what you're adding, but what could be lost and how you plan to mitigate or help people recoup - good luck!