

Central Area Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Assessing Essential Elements of Neighborhood Character

Two-Day Public Workshop Summary

Seattle, Washington
February 25 and 27, 2017

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With support from:
Congress for New Urbanism
Schemata Workshop
Mimar Studio
Central Area Design Guideline Coalition
City of Seattle



Research 1



Project Background and Community Context

The following report summarizes research, community engagement, and recommendations from a two-day workshop designed to aid the creation of Neighborhood Design Guidelines for Seattle's Central Area. The project was sponsored by the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) as a Legacy Project integral to the annual congress in Seattle in May 2017.

The Central Area has a complex history dating from its early settlement in the 1850's. It has been home to strong Jewish, Japanese-American, and African-American communities.

The Central Area has a celebrated history of vibrant arts and culture. It developed renown for its jazz scene and was a center of activity during the Civil Rights Movement.

Since the 1960's, the demographic makeup of the Central Area has dramatically changed. Gentrification has accompanied an influx of new residents. Rapid displacement of longtime residents, many of them African-American, has threatened some of the area's unique cultural resources.

Central Area residents assembled nearly two decades ago to address the transformations they witnessed in their neighborhoods. Through a number of strong community organizations, citizens have engaged in crafting several planning documents beginning with a 1998 Central Area Action Plan that called for the creation of design guidelines. Several planning efforts later, adopted design guidelines for the Central Area still do not exist and are needed more than ever, as

the Central Area's corridors and neighborhoods have continued to transform.

Recent initiatives are adding even more pressure to the district. The citywide Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) agrees to grant upzoning in the city's commercial and multifamily areas and in some single-family areas near nodes and transit lines. In return, the agreement calls for developers building in these zones to contribute to the production of low-income housing. Since a developer can pay in lieu of constructing units, this investment can occur elsewhere in the city with fees paid by developers.

In response to the loss of community character and the growing threat of rapid transformation without democratic input from current residents, the Central Area Design Guideline Coalition initiated a partnership with the City and CNU, carrying on the Central Area's tradition of community-led planning efforts.

The project established a process that strengthened the democratic nature of the design guidelines through community engagement and encouraged a strong product by facilitating discussion of neighborhood form and character. The process was a useful tool to identify essential elements of community character that are worthy of preservation and emulation in new projects. Along the way, engagement with community members also raised questions about the degree of change and intensity that should be considered for the neighborhood.

Summary of Prior Planning Documents

1998 Central Area Action Plan II

- Establishes Urban Villages and Neighborhood Anchors
- Focuses on improvements to nodes, corridors, and gateways
- Recommends design guidelines to ensure compatible development

1998 Central Area Design Guidelines (never adopted)

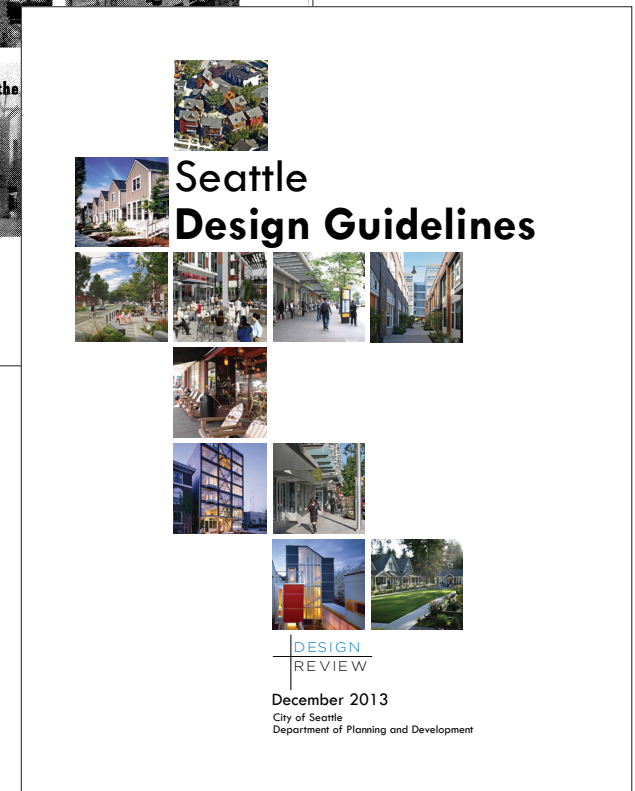
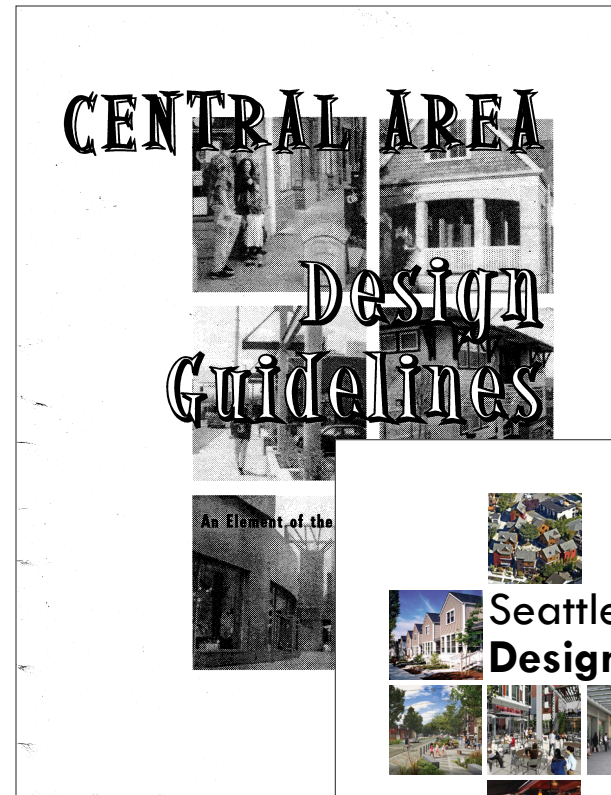
- Addresses character, setbacks, mass, scale, and parking for residential development
- Addresses character, urban village environment, open space, building design, and parking for commercial and mixed-use development

2013 Citywide Design Guidelines

- Establishes guidelines for context and site design
- Considers public life through connectivity, walkability, street-level interaction, and transportation
- Considers design concepts including architectural concept, open space concept, and exterior elements and finishes

2015 23rd Avenue Action Plan & Urban Design Framework

- Sets goals for continued development at three urban villages (Jackson, Union, and Cherry)
- Envisions vibrant commerce, public gathering spaces, complete streets, affordable housing, and recognition of historic fabric



Regulatory Framework



The diagram to the left depicts the regulatory framework within the neighborhood. Ultimately, the base zoning supersedes both the Neighborhood Design Guidelines and the Citywide Design Guidelines. When in conflict, the Neighborhood Design Guidelines supersede the Citywide Design Guidelines. Based on this structure, the Neighborhood Design Guidelines can only go so far to address issues rooted in zoning. It is important to distinguish goals best addressed at the zoning level from goals within the purview of design guidelines.

The Seattle Citywide Design Guidelines provide a structure for elements that could be covered in Neighborhood Design Guidelines. Being Central Area specific, guidelines at the neighborhood level are able to achieve a greater level of sensitivity and specificity. They override the guidelines in the citywide document.

It is also important to note that there is currently a minimum size threshold where Design Review applies. This threshold may increase, which would eliminate Design Review authority for smaller projects previously subject to this review.

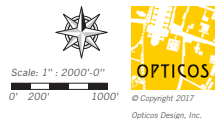
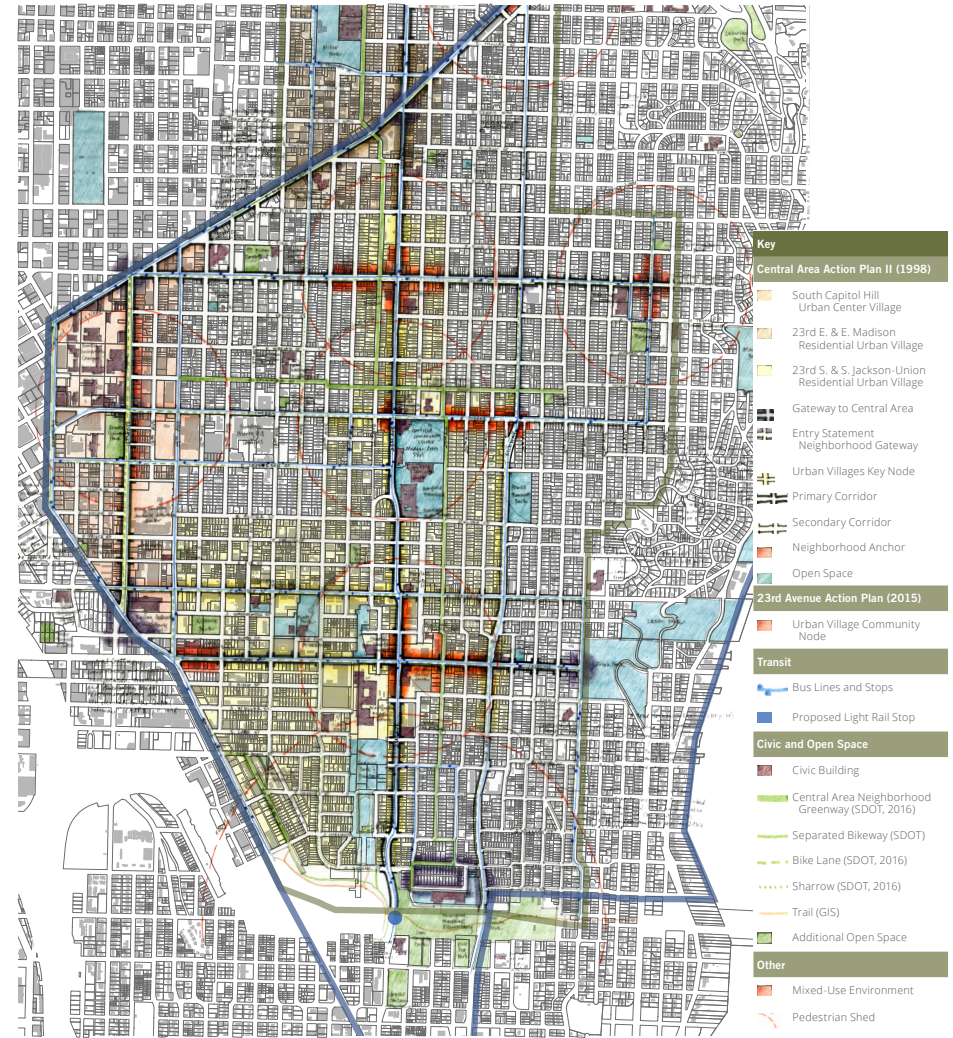
Synthesis **2**



Nodes, Districts, and Corridors

Urban Structure Diagram

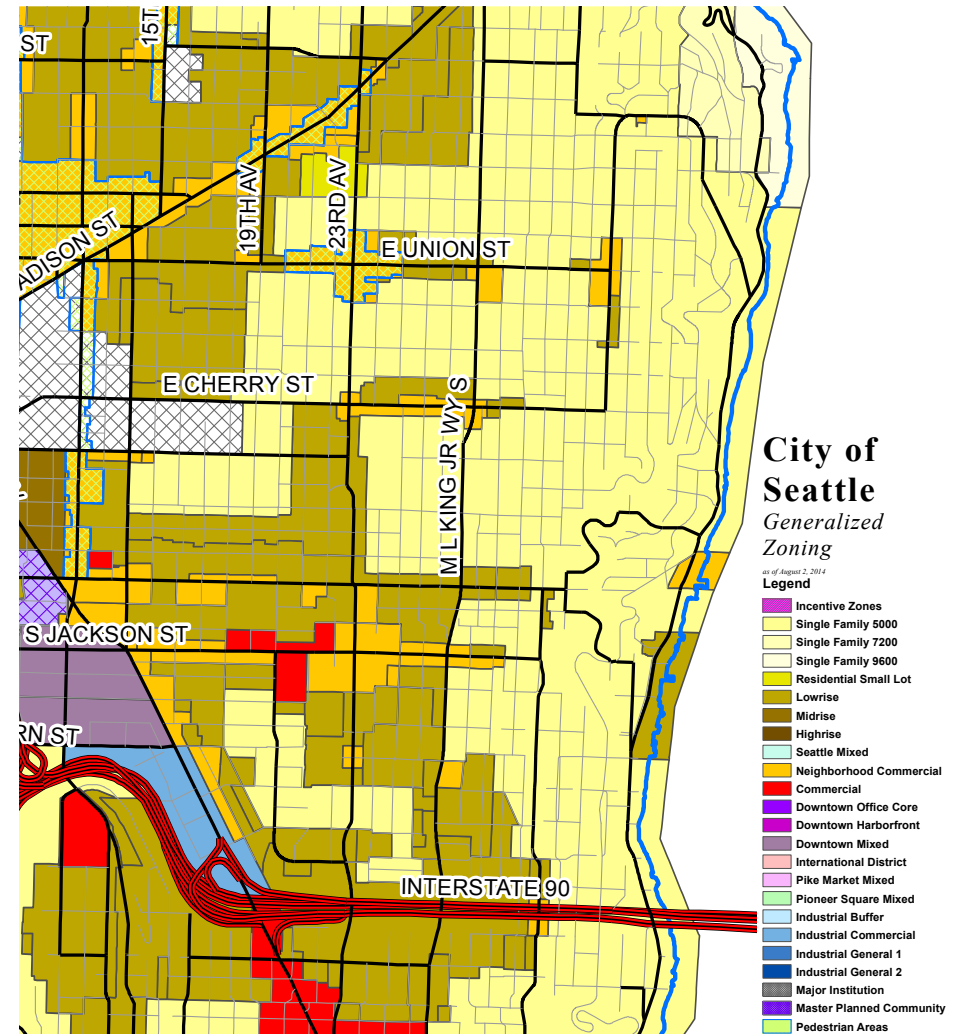
The Urban Structure Diagram graphically presents the team's analysis of neighborhood character concepts that had been agreed upon in previous planning efforts, including, but not limited to, nodes, districts, and corridors. Physical form and character aspects of the following documents are represented: Central Area Action Plan II (1998), 23rd Avenue Action Plan (2013), and 23rd Avenue Urban Design Framework (2015). Other city sources were used to capture transit, civic and open space, as well as additional mixed-use environments. Civic and Open Space information shows civic buildings, bike routes, trails, and additional open space beyond the Central Area Action Plan II (1998). A network of ground-level, publicly accessible open spaces was presented as an action item in both the Central Area Action Plan and the 23rd Avenue Action Plan.



Current Zoning

The Role of Zoning in the Transformation of the Central Area

In relation to the Urban Structure Diagram, it is clear that there are disconnects in the base zoning allocation. At times, the zoning map does not align with the desired vision and may not be an effective tool to create and preserve the variety of character areas that occur in the Central Area. For example, clear urban village nodes have been depicted at 23rd and Jackson, 23rd and Cherry, and 23rd and Union; primary north-south and east-west corridors have been identified; and large portions of single-family residential fabric has a Lowrise multifamily base zoning. Design guidelines and strategic zoning amendments can potentially add a layer of place-specific sensitivity.



Engagement 3



Central Area Design Guidelines Process

The Legacy Project served as a resource during one part of a longer, community-driven process to draft and adopt the design guidelines. The Project plugged into this timeline as a two-day public workshop and the second of five community meetings.

First Community Meeting (January 28, 2017)

- Present background research and analysis to community
- Introduce framework for neighborhood design guidelines
- Discuss community's current design goals

Second Community Meeting: Two-Day CNU Legacy Workshop (February 25 and 27, 2017)

- Summarize Central Area Design Guidelines process and community feedback
- Present research and analysis with Urban Structure Diagram and Neighborhoods Diagram
- Facilitate walking tours to identify character-defining elements throughout the Central Area

Third Community Meeting (Early May 2017)

- Present findings and draft guidelines
- Receive community feedback and discuss changes/improvements

Final Community Meeting (September/October 2017)

- Present final Design Guidelines document

Document Completion (December 2017)

- Central Area Design Guidelines adopted by City

Second Community Meeting: Two-Day Public Workshop

The workshop convened stakeholders to identify essential components of community character through walking tours led by the charrette team.

Observe:

- Building form, scale, and character
- Building placement and frontage
- Network of public open spaces and buildings
- Connectivity
- Walkability
- Degree of change

Document:

- Write, draw, and photograph
- What's working? What's not working?

Understand:

- Identify components of urban form that demonstrate patterns that are essential to the Central Area's character
- Evaluate the significance of these patterns and consider ways in which they can be preserved and/or interpreted in new development

Considering Desired Degree of Change

Central Area neighborhoods are experiencing considerable change. The workshop allowed community members to better understand the anticipated nature of change in certain areas and discuss ways in which essential character might be preserved.

Change in the built environment comes in many forms. Participants were asked to consider the desired "degree of change" when determining essential components of community character:

1. **Preserve:** Elements that should be reinforced, protected and maintained, such as a historic buildings and details
2. **Preserve and Enhance:** Elements that should be maintained and strengthened, such as civic spaces and public frontages
3. **Evolve and Transform:** Elements and amenities that should be introduced and encouraged as the community changes, such as public art and semi-public open space

Source: *Form-Based Codes: A Guide for Planners, Urban Designers, Municipalities, and Developers*, Parolek, Parolek, and Crawford.

Workbooks

The CADGC represents a diverse set of neighborhood stakeholders with equally diverse, and at times competing, concerns and issues with regards to form and change in the district.

The walking tour process and workbooks were designed to apply to multiple neighborhoods within the Central Area in order to extract character elements that define each place. This process could then be used to develop design guidelines that respond to distinct environments within the district.

Central Area Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Assessing Essential Elements of Neighborhood Character: Intro and Walking Tours



Walking tour workbooks helped to focus stakeholders' observations on elements of neighborhood character that could be emulated in future development. In addition to serving as a teaching and documentation tool, the workbook is a lasting resource that the community can use as they conduct additional walking tours to complete the assessment of the Central Area.

The workbook contains:

- Questions and prompts to help participants observe a range of character elements
- "Food for thought" images and captions to further support what to be on the lookout for
- Areas for observation to write, sketch and photograph what participants felt was working and not working

Workbooks

Essential Elements of Character

How can the community help define essential elements of character in the Central Area?



How do buildings relate to the street and contribute to social interaction?



How does development in nodes transition to the neighborhood fabric?



How do building details contribute to the character and architectural heritage of the neighborhood?



How are the qualities of public open spaces and buildings defined? How is arts and culture displayed?



How are community facilities being used? How are community facilities, historic landmarks, and public open spaces connected?

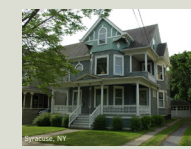
Assessing Building Form and Public Life

How do buildings relate to the street and contribute to social interaction?

Food for Thought...



A high percentage of transparent windows, direct access to the street, and outdoor seating activate the public realm.



A projecting porch of a functional depth provides an inviting transition between sidewalk and a set back building, enabling neighbors to socialize.



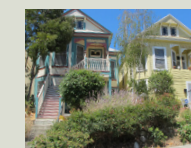
Limited street wall gaps, buildings placed near the sidewalk, and a shallow planted dooryard within the setback reflect a medium-intensity character.



A terrace with space to sit and visit, projecting signage, awnings, entries, and transparent windows activates the public realm.



Medium-intensity character formed by a continuous street wall, vertical transparent openings, and stoops within the setback for privacy and direct street access.



Greater street wall gaps, steep sloping setbacks, and colorful, inviting stairs that lead from the sidewalk to a functional porch reflect a low-intensity character.

Assessing Building Form and Public Life

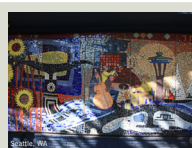
How do buildings relate to the street and contribute to social interaction?

Observations: Document locations of essential elements to emulate. Identify specific examples of what you like and what's not working. Use the space below to sketch and interpret what you see or to take notes. If you would prefer to take photos, share them with #CADGC.

Assessing Community Gathering Places

How are the qualities of public open spaces and buildings defined? How is arts and culture displayed?

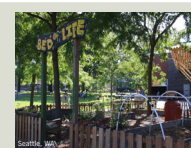
Food for Thought...



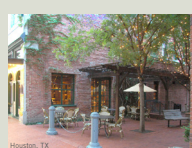
Wall murals can enliven the public realm and give an opportunity for a community to express its identity.



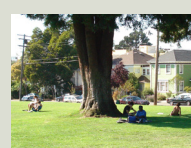
Small, pocket green provides an intimate destination and opportunity for expression in a neighborhood.



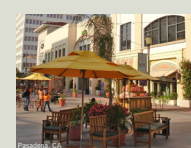
Community gardens, like Seattle's P-Patches, turn empty lots into collaborative and fruitful agricultural sites.



Small, handicapped pocket plazas next to the sidewalk in a main street environment that fits either into an empty lot or within a larger lot.



Public green physically defined by residential fabric and community-focused elements is a spacious gathering place for neighbors.



Handicapped public plaza with visiting opportunities, physically defined by mixed-use buildings and active frontages in a high-intensity environment.

Above, sample pages from the walking tour workbooks pose questions about the built environment, give examples of what to look for, and provide space for documentation.

Workshop Opening Presentation

Margaret Knight of Schemata Workshop presented community feedback from the January 28 kick-off meeting, explained the timeline for the creation of the Central Area neighborhood design guidelines, and showed the stakeholders how the CNU Legacy Workshop fit into the extended process.

It was important for the Legacy Project that the CADGC maintained a leadership role in the process. It was also essential that the Legacy Project was sensitive to the larger cultural and political environment of the community while remaining focused on the neighborhood design guidelines.



Workshop Ground Rules for Collaboration (from the CA LURC)

Establishing ground rules helped set the tone for a constructive workshop.

Civility:

- Share airtime
- Assume that together we know more
- Reject the culture of blame
- Put yourself in someone else's shoes

Inquiry:

- Open your ears & your mind
- Do your homework
- Look for common solutions
- Seek the community's highest good

Creativity:

- Forge multiple victories
- Explore unconventional approaches
- Turn opposition into proposition
- Respect those with whom you disagree
- Listen willingly to new information

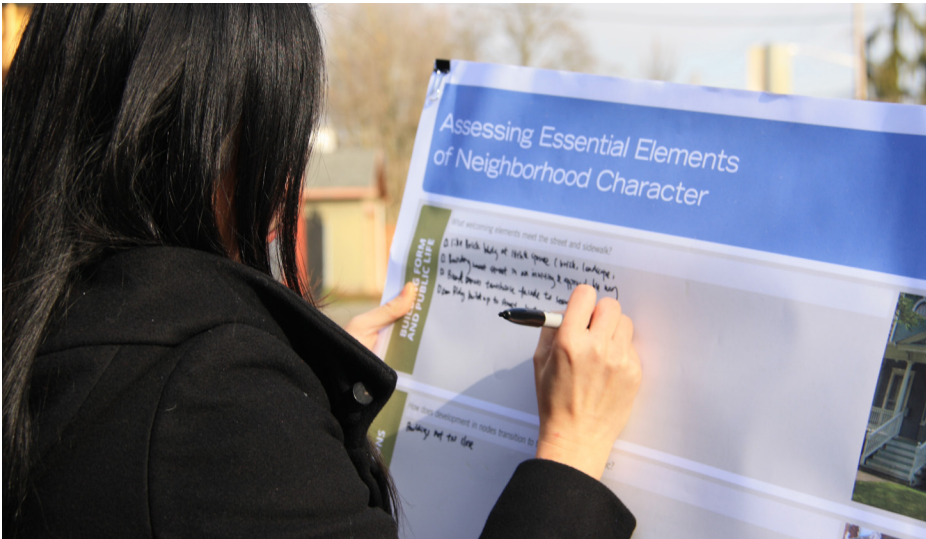
Walking Tours Documentation and Analysis



Stefan Pellegrini, Opticos Design, Inc., co-facilitates a walking tour with Donald King, Mimar Studio.



Sharon Khosla, CADGC, helps measure the width of the amenity zone in front of mixed-use fabric during a walking tour.



Quanlin Xu, City of Seattle, documents stakeholders' comments during a walking tour.



Tours covered a variety of building and context types, such as this bungalow court.

Reporting Back Key Observations



Clockwise from top left:
(1) A tour group evaluates this row of townhouses, noting its response to topography and its shallow stoop frontages.
(2) Community members share observations during a walking tour.
(3) The tour group evaluates unacceptable ground floor-to-ceiling heights and overhang clearances.
(4) At the end of the day, Donald King shares key observations from the tour group he co-facilitated.



What We Heard: Yesler and Jackson Walking Tour

BUILDING FORM AND PUBLIC LIFE

What welcoming elements meet the street and sidewalk?

1. Use of appropriately-scaled stone, stairs, and landscaping to transition between sidewalk and building facade in keeping with local topographic conditions
2. Buildings set back (at least at ground floor) sufficiently to accommodate usable stoops and porches
3. Appropriately-scaled buildings that relate to the scale and form of the public realm adjacent (e.g. the width of streets and/or affronting open spaces)
4. Minimize parking accessed from the street



TRANSITIONS

How does development in nodes transition to the neighborhood fabric?

1. Buildings set back at upper floors to minimize shadows cast on public realm adjacent (e.g. sidewalks and open spaces)
2. Building massing reads in multiples that relate to house-scaled buildings nearby
3. Building mass reduced of roofline and use of half-story forms
4. Use and application of house-scaled elements—bay windows, balconies, etc.



ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

How do building details contribute to the character and architectural heritage of the neighborhood?

1. Appropriately designed ground floor frontage in commercial/mixed-use areas (dooryards with transparency)
2. Set stoops, setbacks, and porches, at sufficient height to separate uses from activities on sidewalk
3. Simple color palettes that use a limited variety of colors (horizontal siding, brick, stucco)
4. Fences of consistent height and/or transparency

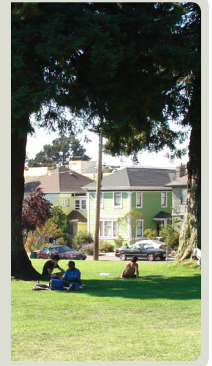


What We Heard: Yesler and Jackson Walking Tour

COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACES

How are the qualities of public open spaces and buildings defined? How is arts and culture displayed?

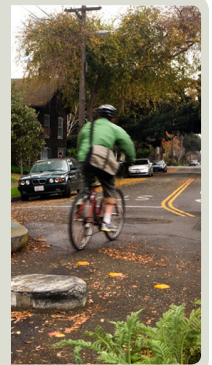
1. Buildings set back sufficiently to accommodate gathering places and encourage human scale
2. Use of blank walls and surfaces for murals and public art
3. Active frontage extending to front public open spaces and activities



PUBLIC AMENITIES AND CONNECTIVITY

How are community facilities being used? How are community facilities, historic landmarks, and public open spaces connected?

1. Expand common open space requirement to envisage semi-public courtyards and yards as extensions of the public realm
2. Maintain transparency and openness of community facilities
3. Central District “river” swale as a unifying element and an address for new development



What We Heard: Union and Cherry Walking Tour

BUILDING FORM AND PUBLIC LIFE

What welcoming elements meet the street and sidewalk?

1. Walkable urban places can be achieved with one-story main street buildings that have visual texture—storefront frontage, pedestrian scale signage, tile details, etc.
2. Encourage active uses along the street and sidewalk with spaces scaled to users, typically 50'-75' wide
3. Preserve/encourage transitional areas in between pockets of main street fabric as an amenity
4. Encourage a safe, comfortable environment for pedestrians with components of complete streets—wide amenity zone, wide sidewalks, building setback to allow for usable porches, stoops, and outdoor seating



TRANSITIONS

How does development in nodes transition to the neighborhood fabric?

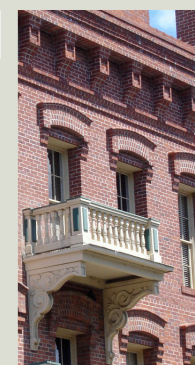
1. Enable range of building types offered within the neighborhood to add density where appropriate while being sensitive to the scale of the fabric (duplex, fourplex, multiplex, 50'-75' wide main street and apartment buildings)
2. Use elements other than height to transition to single-family fabric—setback, building footprint, building width, etc.



ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

How do building details contribute to the character and architectural heritage of the neighborhood?

1. Encourage the use of durable materials that stand the test of time
2. Break down the massing of buildings into a base, middle, and top utilizing good details that typically show up in the single-family fabric
3. Incorporate attached elements such as bay windows, columns, and deep awnings
4. Encourage a modular system for large buildings that keeps the building simple, inviting, and respectful of the finer-grain fabric (50'-75')

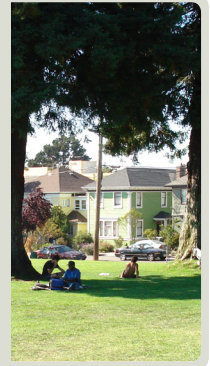


What We Heard: Union and Cherry Walking Tour

COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACES

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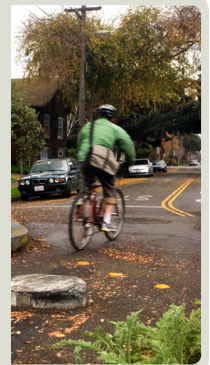
1. Encourage activation of the amenity zone to include community gardens as well as street trees and pedestrian furniture
2. Public buildings such as Garfield High School, Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, Cherry Hill Baptist Church, Islamic School, etc., are composed of brick and stone details signifying their civic importance within the community
3. Arts and culture is displayed through tile mosaics within brick buildings and stoops as well as murals along the side of main street building facades
4. Encourage pocket parks and other publicly accessible open spaces (e.g. P-Patches) to provide highly-sought-after amenities



PUBLIC AMENITIES AND CONNECTIVITY

How are community facilities being used? How are community facilities, historic landmarks, and public open spaces connected?

1. Encourage semi-public courtyard spaces that are publicly visible and accessible
2. Provide safe, comfortable routes for pedestrians that change based on the character of the building fabric



Empowerment

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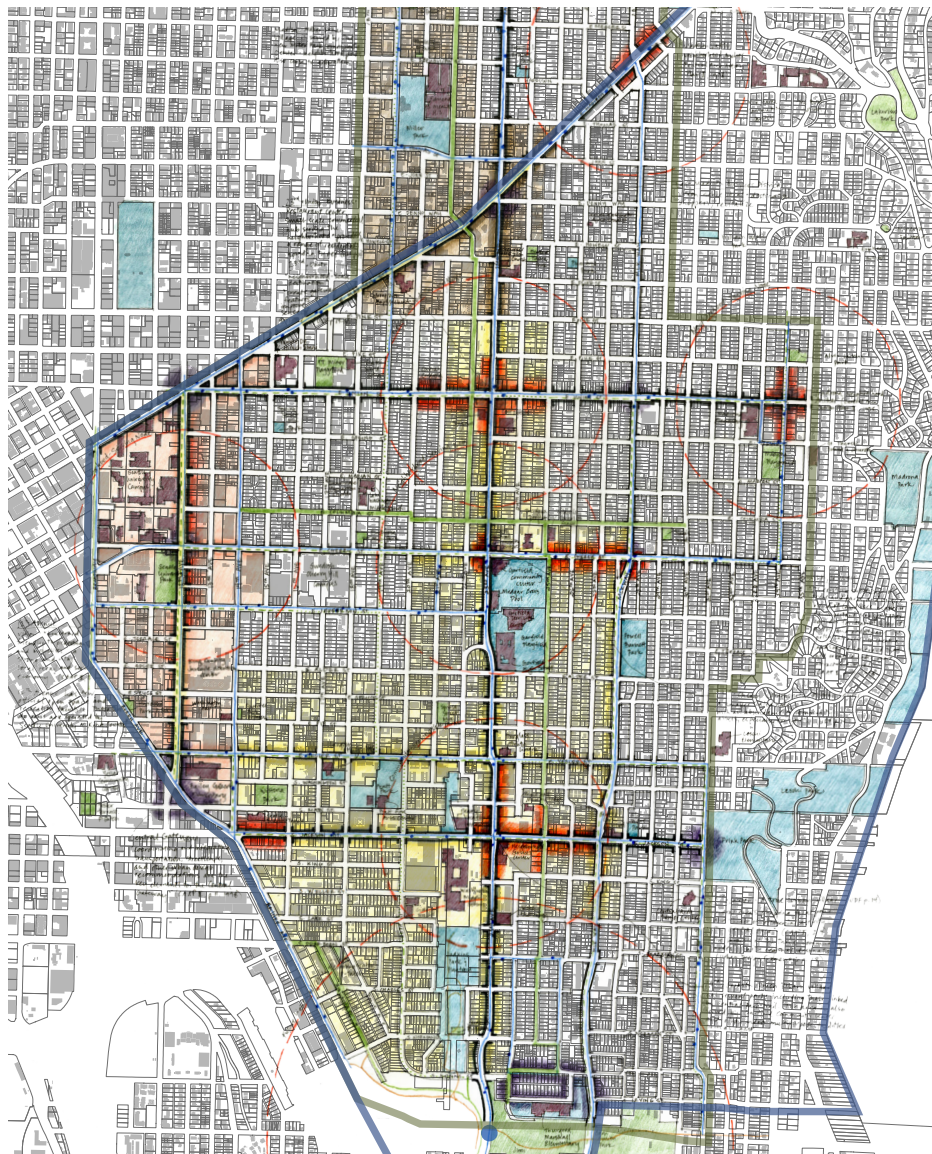


Urban Pattern and Form

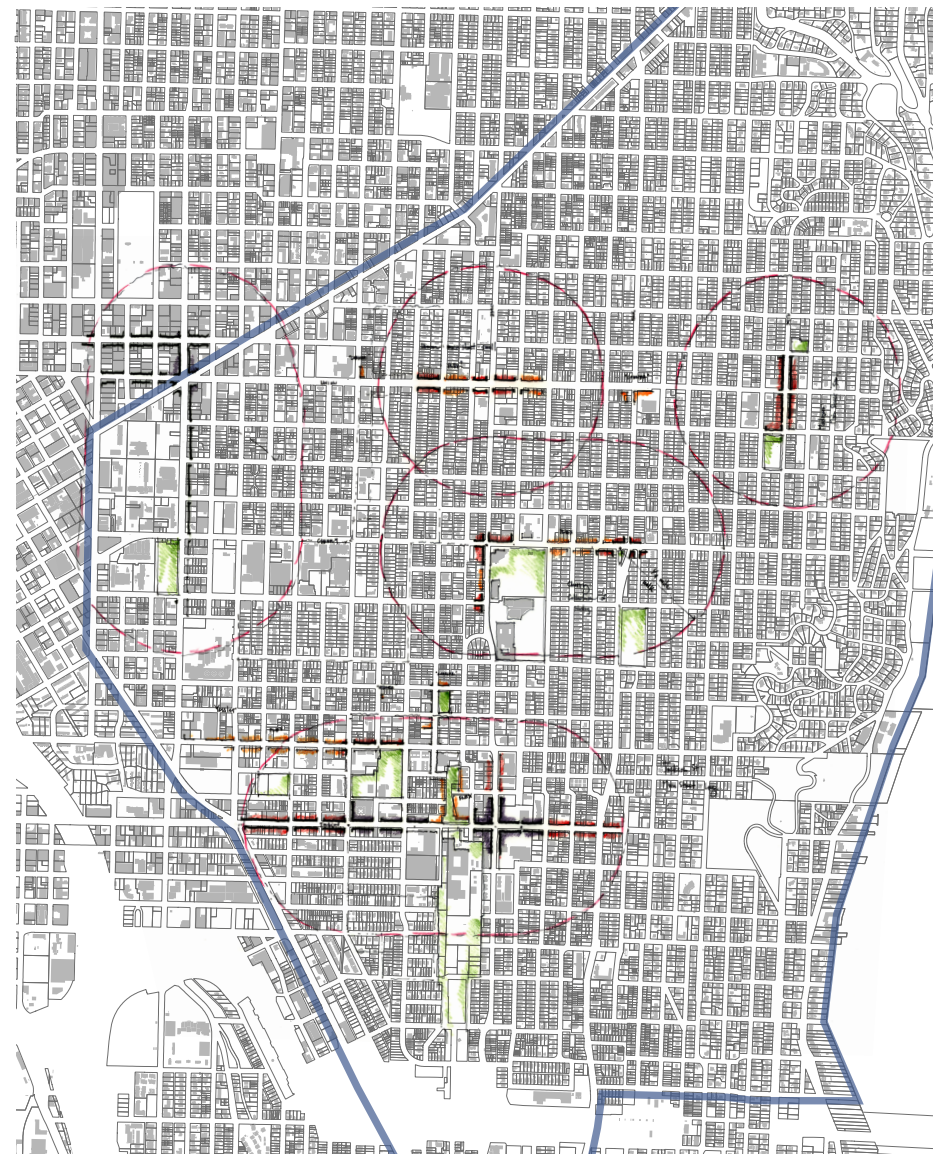
The results of the walking tours raised questions regarding community form and character and how much could reasonably be protected by the proposed design guidelines. Elements of form and character present in existing buildings are not currently protected by existing zoning and are particularly difficult to maintain in areas that have been upzoned. How can the form and character of existing buildings be best reflected in new construction?

Mixed-use and residential areas observed within the Central Area have a range of addresses and conditions that contribute to a diverse urban environment. These areas may be at risk of becoming more uniform as new growth and development continue. To what extent can growth and change be directed to preserve the Central Area's existing diversity of character?

Urban Pattern and Form

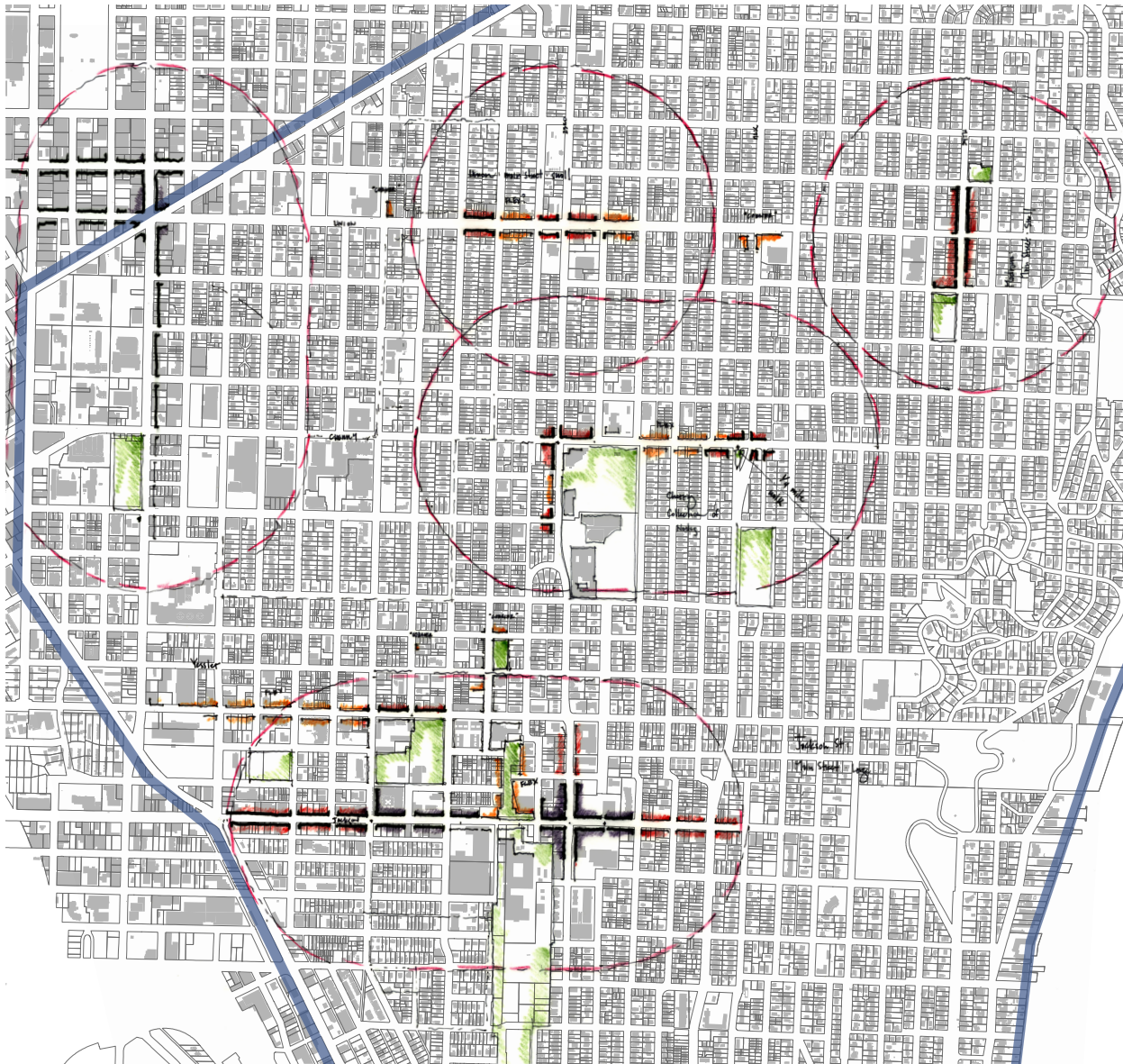


Urban Structure Diagram



Character Designation Diagram

Character Designation



Character Designation Diagram

The community identified that they liked the diverse range of physical environments within the Central Area. In order to better preserve and enhance them, the following recommendations would be applicable:

Map character areas within the design guidelines, and correlate character designations to a zoning overlay specific to the Central Area that focuses on built form.

Create standards and guidelines that can differentiate between the following addresses to the extent possible:

Mixed-Use Environments






- Urban Village main streets
- Neighborhood main streets
- Neighborhood "mini-centers" and "corners"

Residential Neighborhoods

- Primarily single-family residences
- Mix of single and multifamily, zoned low-rise residential

See legend on next page for additional information on these character areas. Additional addresses will likely present themselves as the CADGC conducts more walking tours.

Character Designation

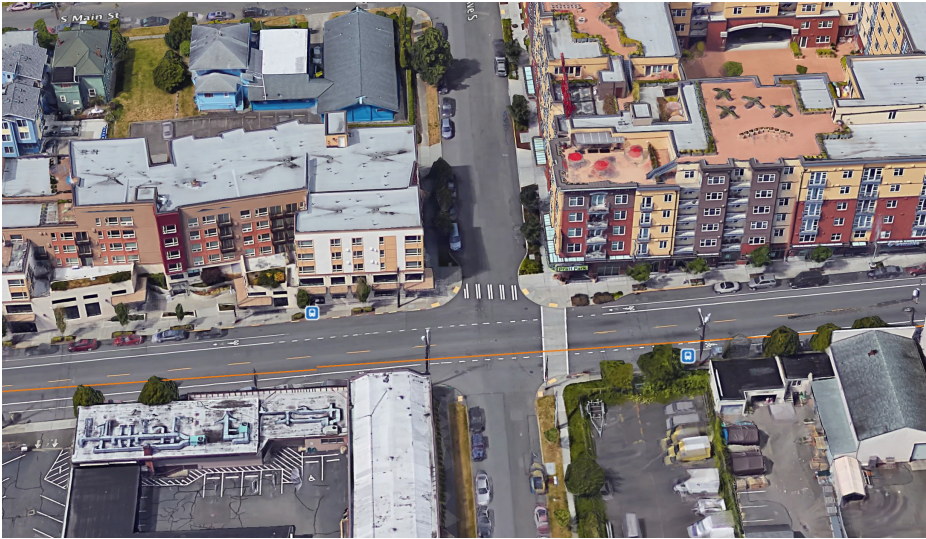
Character Designation Diagram Legend: Thoughts on Commercial Mixed-Use Addresses/Strategies								
	Address	(Intended) Land Use at Ground Floor	Footprint	Frontage	Front Yard Setback	Building Types	Building Height	Notes
	Main Street – 1	Retail	Large/Medium	Shopfront	0'-min.	Commercial Block/ Mixed-Use	High/Moderate	Buildings 1/2 block or longer (block-scale)
	Main Street – 2	Retail	Medium/Small	Shopfront	0'-min.	Commercial Block/ Mixed-Use	Moderate	50'-75' max. width (big house-scale/ block-scale)
	Main Street – Flex	Retail, Service, Live/Work, or Residential	Medium/Small	Shopfront, Dooryard, Porch/Stoop	Moderate	Commercial Block/ Mixed-Use, Live/Work, Residential	Moderate/Low	Predominantly detached, house-scale; transitions to Lowrise along corridors
	"Neighborhood Corner"	Retail or Service	Medium/Small	Shopfront, Dooryard	Moderate	Commercial Block/ Mixed-Use, Live/Work	Moderate/Low	Predominantly block- or house-scale
	"Neighborhood Corner" – Flex	Retail, Service, Live/Work, or Residential	Medium/Small	Dooryard, Porch/ Stoop	Moderate	Live/Work, Residential	Moderate/Low	House-scale

Key Terms

1. *House-Scale:* The term refers to buildings that are the size of houses. Depending upon their context, they may be occupied by one to several families and with uses depending on the designation (house, duplex, triplex, quadplex, villa/mansion apartment, bungalow court, courtyard building up to 3 stories).

2. *Block-Scale:* The term refers to buildings that individually are as large as a block or collectively are arranged along the sidewalk to form a continuous facade as long as a block.

Character Designation: Urban Village Main Street 1



At the intersections of 23rd and Jackson and 18th and Jackson, recently developed, commercial block and mixed-use buildings have introduced a new scale to the neighborhood. New half-block- and block-scaled buildings that create a consistent street wall were observed.

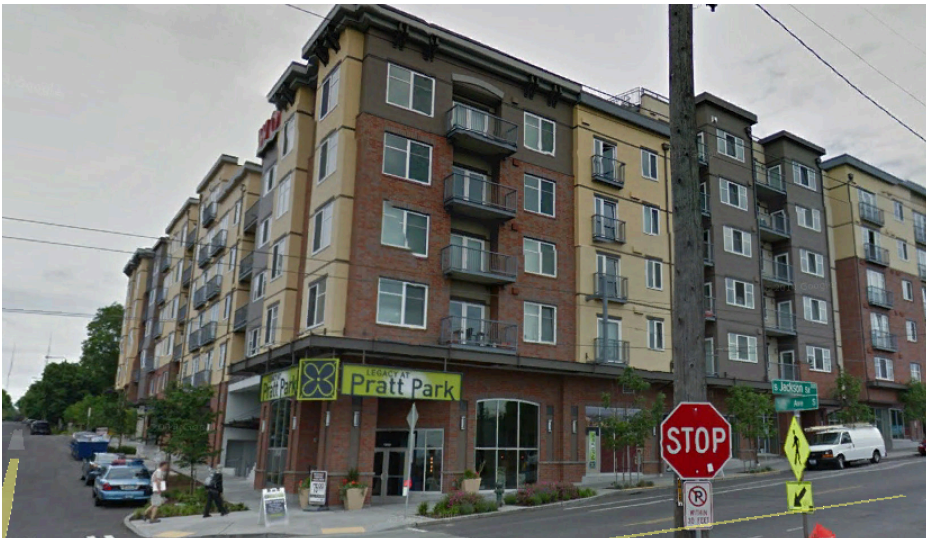
Key Takeaways

Urban Village Main Street 1 may be the most appropriate location within the Central Area to encourage continued transformation by new buildings with a similar scale and form. Since this area may see height limits increase to 75', stepped profiles above the 4th floor could be established to encourage compatibility with the scale of Jackson Street.

Recommendations within the neighborhood design guidelines should focus on translating observed character elements from the finer grain fabric to large-to-medium footprint buildings. Large buildings designed to appear as individual buildings 50-75' wide may be more compatible with nearby, lower-intensity Main Street areas.

Buildings are at or near the sidewalk and should have shopfront frontage with retail uses on the ground floor.

Sensitivity to the surrounding neighborhoods could happen within transitional areas using a range of observed building types.



Character Designation: Neighborhood Main Street 2



This is the observed character at the intersections of 23rd and Union, 23rd and Cherry, MLK and Union, and 23rd and Jefferson; and along Union between 20th and 21st, along 23rd between Yesler and S. Main Street, along Jackson between 25th and 28th, along Jackson between 18th and Rainier, and along Yesler between 18th and 20th. Commercial block and mixed-use buildings with a maximum lot width of 50'-75' typify this character designation. Fine-grain buildings are block and big-house scale.

Key Takeaways

Neighborhood Main Street 2 is the most identifiable main street character of the Central Area.

Within this designation, the building width should be controlled to 50'-75' maximum.

Buildings are at or near the sidewalk to accommodate ground floor retail uses and shopfront frontages. The network of ground level open spaces should be expanded by using forecourts and paseos perpendicular to the street.

Buildings are at a medium building height. Does it make sense to accommodate buildings that are taller than 50'? If so, consider stepping back the bulk of the building to align the street facing facade to adjacent buildings along a block and to increase solar access at the public way.



Character Designation: Neighborhood Main Street "Flex"



This designation was typically observed at the edges of the Main Street 1 and 2 areas where flex buildings transition to residential fabric. Locations include along Yesler between 20th and 14th, along 23rd between Cherry and Jefferson, along Cherry between 25th and 27th, along Union between 21st and 22nd, and along Union between 24th and 25th.

Key Takeaways

Predominantly detached, medium-to-small footprint, house-scale buildings are a key component of these areas. The frontage types are eclectic with shopfronts, dooryards, porches, and stoops that accommodate a range of ground floor uses including retail, service, live-work, and residential.

In addition to commercial block and mixed-use buildings, live-work and residential building types are also represented. These buildings are house-scale and have a variable setback that accommodates semi-public open space as a transition between the public and private realm. Building heights are medium-to-low with residential roof forms.

Character Designation: Neighborhood "Corner"



The Central Area includes some very fine-grain mixed-use addresses, including at 18th and Union and MLK and Union. Here, low-rise, block and house-scale commercial block, mixed-use, and live-work buildings quickly transition to residential fabric.

Key Takeways

Even through there are few instances where this environment occurs, this fine-grain pattern contributes to the Central Area's character.

The observed frontage types were shopfront and dooryard with retail and services uses at the ground floor. Frontages are accommodated within variable setbacks near the sidewalk.

Buildings are medium-to-small footprint with a medium-to-low building height.

Character Designation: Neighborhood "Corner" – Flex

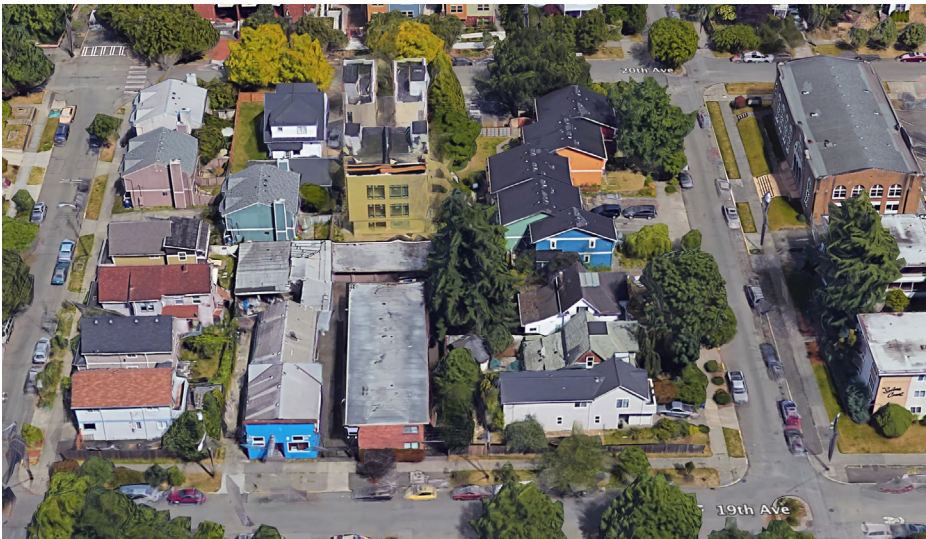


At the smallest scale, the Central Area includes individual house-scale live-work and residential buildings with shopfront and live-work frontages. These include small neighborhood groceries and restaurants at Spruce and 18th and Spruce and 21st, interestingly at the middle of blocks rather than at the street corner.

Key Takeaways

The observed frontage types were dooryard, porch, and stoop with retail, service, live-work, and residential uses at the ground floor. Frontages are accommodated within variable setbacks near the sidewalk.

Buildings are small footprint with a medium-to-low building height.



Low-Rise Zoning Residential Outcomes



In certain instances within the Central Area, the Lowrise (LR) multifamily zoning designation has allowed for more intense residential infill in neighborhoods that historically had been predominantly single-family. This has resulted in an eclectic mix of housing with some good outcomes and others that could be more compatible with the neighborhood. The tour groups observed massing, color, materials, setbacks, and other character elements to compare them to the adjacent fabric.

Not all projects within the Lowrise multifamily zoning designation are currently subject to Design Review or the purview of Design Guidelines, perhaps increasing the need for better zoning regulations to ensure compatibility.

What Current Low-Rise Zoning Standards Incentivize



Current Lowrise zoning standards appear to incentivize townhouse and rowhouse types over cottage courts and apartments. This is due to the fact that the townhouse and rowhouse building types allow for the greatest intensity that can be constructed in a "fee-simple" configuration. Existing house-scaled and one-story courtyard and bungalow types in the Central Area are currently being replaced with these new infill types.

New rowhouse buildings present at times jarring transitions to the existing residential fabric, with main body widths, heights, and massing that do not proportionally relate to existing residential fabric. While some participants liked the eclectic streetscapes that resulted, others were concerned that the small-scaled residential character would be vulnerable to continued loss.

The standards also do not require a high percentage of ground level common open space, which could contribute to the network of open spaces within the Central Area.

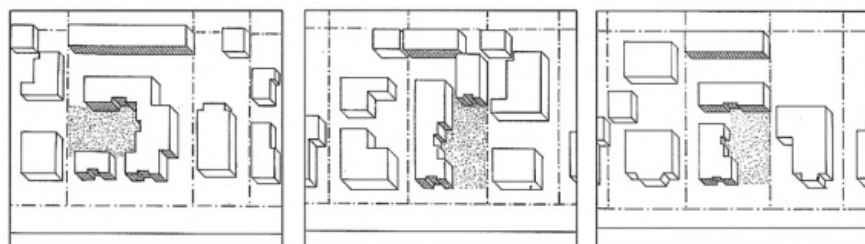
The building fabric prompted walking tour groups to discuss different ways of delivering mixed-use and housing through types that are appropriate in scale to the patterns of the neighborhood. These included house forms and transitional forms such as small apartment houses. The stakeholder consensus was that the townhouse and rowhouse are the most incompatible types and that more could be done to require ground level open space.

Semi-Public Courtyard Types as an Open Space Strategy



In order to encourage residential courtyards and different configurations for units being delivered within the low-rise designation, the Central Area could consider more courtyard types that regulate off-street common open space. A good precedent would be the Pasadena 1989 City of Gardens ordinance that requires buildings be placed around courtyards that are visible from the public right-of-way.

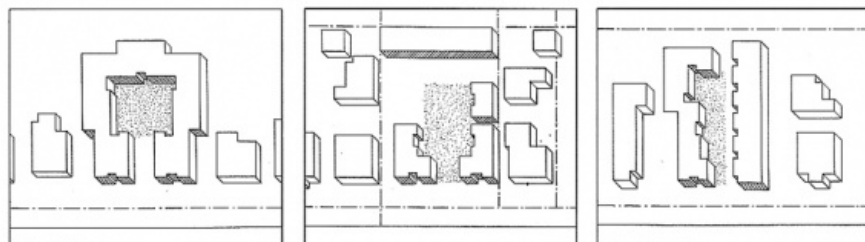
In Pasadena, this standard has been applied with varied success particularly on lots 60' or greater in width. For narrower lots, different configurations that are more compatible with adjacent house-form buildings can be considered, such as small apartment houses.



Adjacent gardens

Garden on street

Adjacent house



Courtyard

Mature tree

Adjacent entrances

Porch Frontage



Engaged porches, sometimes adjacent to or integrating bay windows, provide a sense of enclosure and a transition between the public realm (streets and opens spaces) and the private realm. They are common features of existing house-scale buildings in the Central Area that can also be applied to new buildings.

Common Form Characteristics

- The width and depth of clear space on the porch itself is large enough for a usable furniture zone.
- Porches provide sheltered views both perpendicular and parallel to the street.
- A stair connects the porch to the sidewalk and can be either parallel or perpendicular to the building facade.
- The yard can be defined by a fence or hedge, as in the photo at left, to spatially maintain the edge of the street.
- Sufficient height above grade contributes to privacy.

Low-Intensity Form Characteristics

- The main facade of the building has a medium setback from the property line.

Medium- and High-Intensity Form Characteristics

- The main facade of the building has a small setback from the property line. Multifamily buildings may share multiple entrances under one porch.

Stoop Frontage



Stoops are used in coordination with stairs and landscape to create transitions between the public realm (streets and open spaces) and the private realm.

Common Form Characteristics

- Stoops are sufficiently elevated above the sidewalk to provide a sense of privacy. This spatial separation from the public realm also provides privacy to the sidewalk-facing rooms.
- Stoops are protected from the elements by an overhead covering. In the top image this takes the form of an overhang; in the bottom image it is engaged into the house form.
- The elevated stoop engages the sidewalk with stair access. Stairs are typically perpendicular or parallel to the building facade.

Low-Intensity Form Characteristics

- The main facade of the building has a medium setback the property line.

Medium- and High-Intensity Form Characteristics

- The main facade of the building has a small setback from the property line.

Shopfront and Live/Work Frontages



Shopfront and live-work frontages appear in different character designations and meet streets and open spaces in different ways.

Low-Intensity Form Characteristics

- The top image shows a live-work on a residential street. This frontage relates to its residential context with a less transparent facade.
- The transition between the sidewalk and interior space occurs in a simple inset entry, which enables the facade to directly abut the sidewalk for higher pedestrian engagement.
- A pedestrian-scale projecting sign indicates the non-residential use.

Medium- and High-Intensity Form Characteristics

- In the bottom image, the building is set back from the lot line to provide additional pedestrian space to accommodate foot traffic at 23rd and Jackson.
- A high glazing-to-wall ratio visually connects the interior space to the public realm.
- Shopfronts should be a minimum of 16' at the ground floor.
- The recessed entry is sheltered by an awning and provides a transition from the street.

Main Street Amenity Zones



Components of complete streets appear between the street curb and building and vary based on the character designation. Common components are the amenity, sidewalk, and frontage zones.

Medium-Intensity Form Characteristics

- The top image shows a 6'-8' sidewalk zone suitable for pedestrian traffic generated by adjacent 1-2 story commercial block and mixed use buildings.
- The 8'-10' amenity zone has street trees, lighting, and pedestrian furniture within a wide planting strip that provides a soft buffer from the travel lanes.

High-Intensity Form Characteristics

- The bottom image shows the extension of the ~8' sidewalk to the building that is set back to enable outdoor seating within the ~8' frontage zone. This may be suitable at intersections and adjacent to taller buildings to accommodate increased pedestrian traffic.
- The building has a deep awning to provide overhead cover. The awning also reduces the impact of the larger building mass for nearby pedestrians.
- The amenity zone has street trees within tree grates and lighting with minimal landscaping adjacent to the shopfront indicating a higher-intensity urban environment.

Frontage Gaps



Low-Intensity Form Characteristics

- The top image shows low-intensity house-scale buildings near 21st and Union. Here, gaps between buildings are typically narrow and front yard setbacks are consistently large.
- Parking is on-street, with one car garages at or near the sidewalk and driveways accessing the back of the lot.

Medium- and High-Intensity Form Characteristics

- Commercial block and mixed-use buildings with little to no gaps between them are 50'-75' in width and collectively complete a continuous block face.
- Projecting elements consist of human-scale lighting, awnings, and signage.
- New buildings should evaluate the wall-to-opening ratio of older buildings as the glazing percentage is lower.
- Buildings are pulled up to the street.

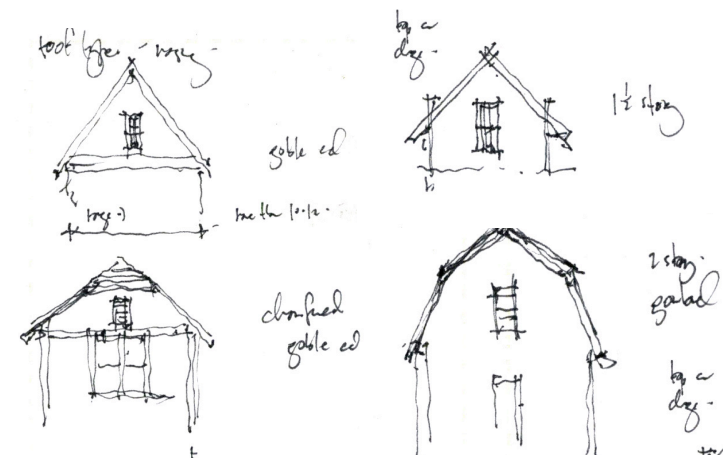
Massing Patterns: Roof Lines



Roof lines enable house-scale, multi-unit buildings to relate to their surrounding neighborhood context.

Low-Intensity Form Characteristics

- Gables or chamfered gables punctuate massing of long facades in multi-unit buildings.
- Two-story homes often limit their perceived height and scale through half-story roof forms. Utilizing half-story roof forms in large-to-medium footprint buildings could be translated to break down massing.
- Small-to-medium footprint buildings can break up massing with roof forms and projecting elements like bay windows and covered entries.



Massing Patterns: Bay Modules



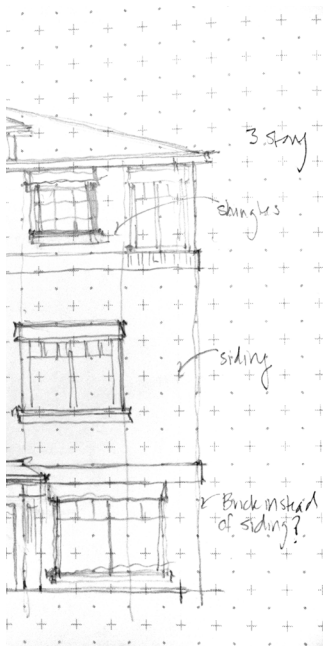
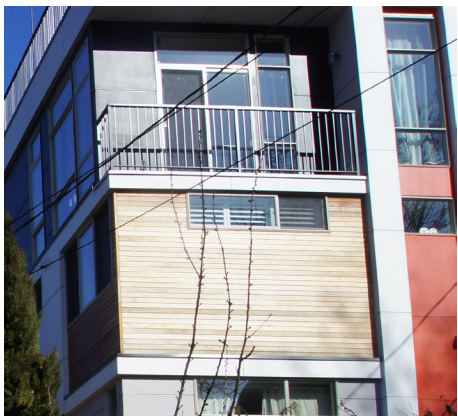
Medium-to-large footprint buildings can relate to surrounding house-scaled buildings by breaking up their massing using forecourts, paseos, and projecting elements.

High-Intensity Form Characteristics

- The building at left shows a medium-footprint residential building broken down into modules that relate to the 50' wide lotting pattern surrounding it, preventing its bulk from overwhelming its neighbors.
- Bay windows are elements that provide a secondary horizontal rhythm on the facade. The building is capped with a continuous cornice and grounded by a continuous base.



Materials



Low-Intensity Form Characteristics

- Lap siding and shingles are two of the predominant cladding materials in the Central Area for house-scale buildings. New construction has overwhelmingly used fiber-cement panels. Many recently constructed examples have cladding materials that seem visually inharmonious with the existing buildings surrounding them, should this continue to be allowed?
- Often similar earth town colors present themselves and when two tone, should have a horizontal division. Bright colors. Bright colors also appear in some instances.

Medium- and High-Intensity Form Characteristics

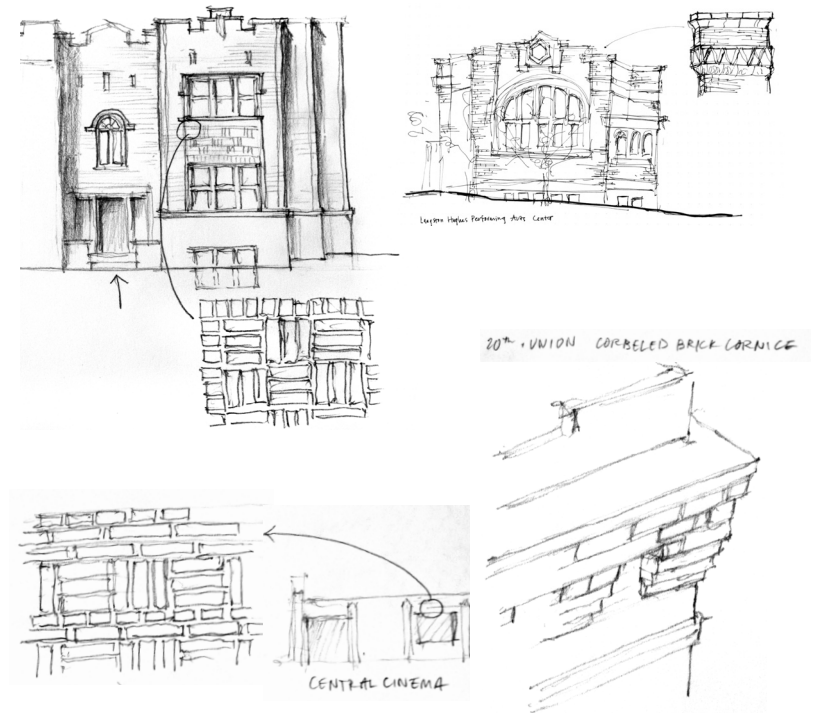
- Small-to-large footprint buildings are often brick, stone, and stucco with mosaic tile as a secondary material.
- Color palettes should be simple emphasizing durable, human-scale materials.



Materials Spotlight: Brick in Fabric and Landmark Buildings



Brick appears throughout the fabric in main street environments, apartment buildings (image at top left), and community buildings such as Garfield High School, Islamic School (image at bottom left), and Cherry Hill Baptist Church. The use of brick, stone, and tile signifies the public importance of the building within the community. Small-to-medium footprint buildings could follow these patterns within main street and neighborhood environments. When along a civic address, such as public open space, infill buildings could draw upon these patterns.



Materials Spotlight: Mosaic Expression



Within the Central Area, the incorporation of public art was observed in multiple ways. Metalwork, painted murals, and tile mosaics enhance main street environments. In neighborhood environments, mosaic tile is present along stoop frontages, and murals and public art are present along blank surfaces such as low retaining walls.



Exterior Elements & Finishes: Walls and Fences

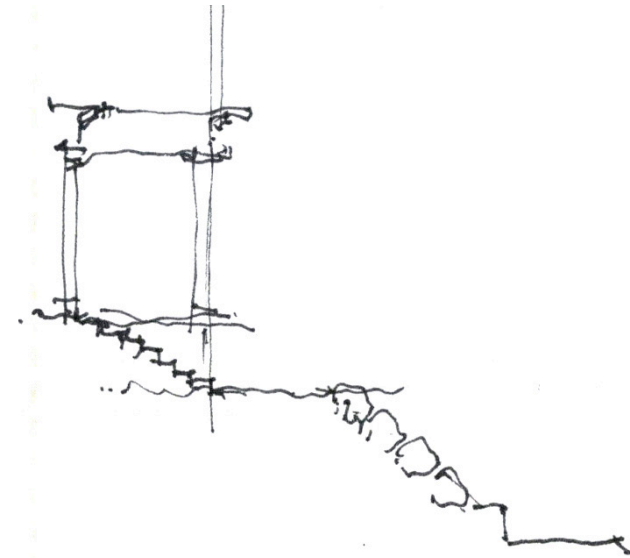


Low-Intensity Form Characteristics

Rough stone walls near the sidewalk are often utilized to transition the grade between sidewalk and building, providing a front yard several feet above the sidewalk level. Entire blocks in some locations within the Central Area are defined in this way. Porous fences set above masonry walls provide privacy without feeling imposing from the street.

Medium- and High-Intensity Form Characteristics

Rough stone and natural landscaping should be used to transition from the sidewalk to the building where appropriate to accommodate topographic conditions and existing neighborhood patterns. Porous fences are typically metal rather than wood.



Observed Building Types

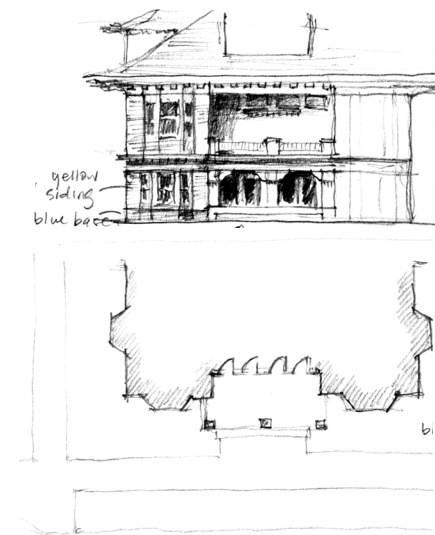
Cottage House



Duplex



Fourplex



Multiplex



Apartment



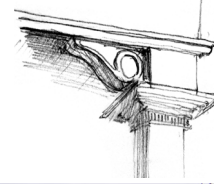
Mid-Rise



Consider the use of small-and-big house scale, multi-unit building types to gradually transition from main street environments with mid-rise buildings to low-intensity neighborhood environments with cottage homes.

Architectural Style

In the historic fabric of the Central Area, diverse styles, including Victorian, Arts and Crafts, Colonial, Main Street Traditional, and Art Deco share massing elements like bay rhythm; a clearly defined top, middle, and base; and projecting elements like awnings, canopies, and bay windows that contribute to neighborhood character. Detail and materials express the same style in differently-scaled buildings. The uniform use of some materials, such as brick masonry for historic multifamily and civic buildings, also relates to cultural heritage. All of these demonstrate patterns that can be interpreted in new construction to help ensure compatible form and character.



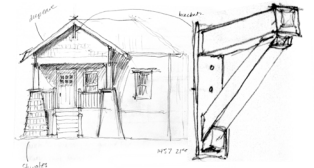
Victorian



Main Street



Colonial



Arts and Crafts



Art Deco



Central Area Design Guidelines Document Structure

Introduction

Context and Site

Natural Systems and Site Features

Responding to local topography with terraces, steep stoops, stepping facades, etc.

Natural systems as an amenity

Urban Pattern and Form

Character designation

Envisioned degree of change

Building and parking placement

Lot dimensions (small, medium and large)

Building footprint

Building height

Lot coverage

Frontage types

Encroachments

Building types

Architectural Context and Character

Overarching concepts applicable to all styles

Styles based on local history and culture (see Design Concept)

Public Life

Open Space Connectivity

Publicly accessible, ground level open space

Front with active uses and frontages

Accessible with streets bounding space

Form and programming of space

Components of complete streets

Walkability

Frontages (see Urban Pattern and Form)

Street-Level Interaction

Frequency of entrances

Permeable transparency (not reflective glass)

Active Transportation

Design Concept

Project Uses and Activities

Appropriate treatment of live-work frontage with an interior flexible space

Architectural Concept

Application with small, medium and large footprint buildings

Massing module based on lot dimensions of small and medium footprint buildings (50'-75') for large footprint buildings

Main Street Traditional (tile details)

Art Deco

Victorian

Arts and Crafts

Colonial

Open Space Concept

Semi-public spaces with paseos and courtyards

Exterior Elements & Finishes

Pedestrian scale signage

Landscaping and terrace materials

Fencing height, porosity and materials

The Central Area Design Guidelines can address design components articulated in the City of Seattle's Citywide Design Guidelines. In areas where more robust protection might be needed, changes and improvements to zoning standards should be considered where possible.

Such changes could be highly graphic with supporting diagrams and photographs to ensure predictability and help support the City's goals for streamlining the review process.