

# MOUNT BAKER TOWN CENTER

## Urban Design Framework



**October 2011**



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Concept from 1999  
Neighborhood Plan.

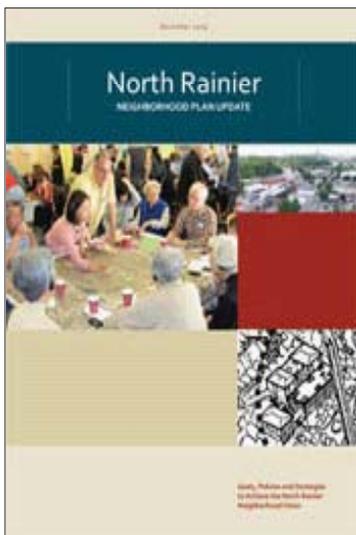
## INTRODUCTION

Since 1999, many members of the North Rainier community worked together to create the vision for the Mount Baker Town Center through a series of planning processes beginning with the *North Rainier Neighborhood Plan* (February 1999). A recent update to the plan (January 2010) identified a need to look more closely at the Town Center. The purpose of this Urban Design Framework is to guide the future work and investment of the community, developers and the City to make that vision a reality. It identifies the existing conditions and specific planning and design strategies necessary to achieve the community's vision.



Community members at a North  
Rainier planning workshop.

The Urban Design Framework focuses on the area referred to in previous plans as the North Rainier Town Center, the North Rainier Town Center and the McClellan Station Area Overlay District, a special zone to encourage the development of a diverse, mixed-use community with a pedestrian orientation close to transit. The City intends to change the name of the zoning district surrounding the Mount Baker station to the Mount Baker Station Area Overlay District. For the purposes of this Urban Design Framework, the Town Center and the Mount Baker Station Area Overlay District are considered the same area.



2010 Neighborhood Plan Update.

## Mount Baker Town Center – The Vision

The *North Rainier Neighborhood Plan*, adopted by City Council through ordinance number 119671, envisions “an interweaving of people of various backgrounds who live and work in a culturally and economically diverse area... The retail core is strong and still maintains its ethnic roots. Business, light industrial, and high-tech job opportunities provide welcome employment for the entire Puget Sound region.” It goes on to say:

*“The Town Center is envisioned as the heart of the neighborhood, the place where people will gather, shop, stroll and enjoy community life. It will be the location where the greatest commercial and mixed-use density will occur, where transit connects people to the region, and where public places and open spaces help create a sense of identity and welcome. The increased density will support a safe environment from the volume of people engaged in a mix of activities.*

*To create a thriving, safe, attractive, pedestrian- and transit-friendly residential/commercial center which serves as a gateway to Southeast Seattle; supports the residents and businesses currently in Southeast Seattle; and reflects/ supports the cultural and economic diversity of Rainier Valley.*

*“A Town Center that concentrates housing, commercial uses, services and living-wage employment opportunities; that is well served by transit and non-motorized travel options; and that is well designed and attractive to pedestrians.*

*A vibrant business district that serves North Rainier residents and is a destination shopping area with stores that serve the greater Rainier Valley.”*



A Vibrant Walkable Town Center.



Claremont apartments on Rainier Avenue S.



LINK Light Rail Station. © liltnevo via Flickr.



Mount Baker Park Beach.  
© Seattle.roamer via Flickr.



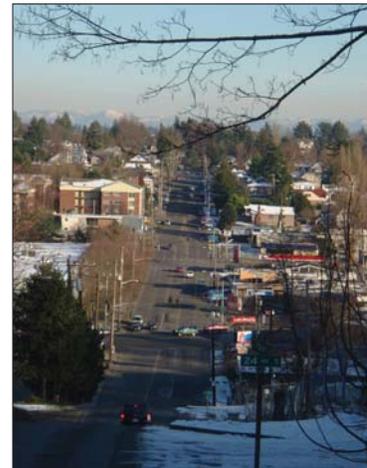
## Mount Baker Town Center - Today

The Mount Baker Town Center lies at the north end of the floor of the Rainier Valley, south of I-90 and just three miles south of downtown Seattle. It is surrounded by the primarily single family neighborhoods of Beacon Hill and Mount Baker. LINK Light Rail Station lies at the confluence of two major roadways, Rainier Avenue S. and Martin Luther King Jr. Way S. (MLK Jr. Way S.). Each of these arterials carries over 30,000 average vehicle trips per day. Two historic Olmsted boulevards, Cheasty Boulevard S. and Mount Baker Boulevard S., converge but do not connect at this location, but link the Town Center to significant open spaces and recreational resources.

Historically, the area has been a hub of commercial activity. The commercial core of the neighborhood is currently characterized by a number of auto-oriented businesses and older strip development. It is surrounded by more sparsely developed residential and open space areas, and is bounded to the west by the steeply-sloped Cheasty Greenbelt.



Existing “auto-oriented” pattern of streets and buildings.



View of the Cascades from McClellan and 24th.



View north towards downtown Seattle.



Franklin High School.



Town Center Action Team.

## Achieving the Vision

In May 2010, North Rainier community members formed a Town Center Action Team to assist in the implementation of goals, strategies and actions identified in the *North Rainier Neighborhood Plan*. In September 2010, this team met to further define the details and generate ideas on how to change the physical form of the neighborhood to make the Town Center more vital, walkable and economically successful. This document, the result of those discussions, is a blueprint for cementing community goals, coordinating private and public action, and prioritizing capital investment decisions.

Some of the “big moves” or opportunities to create a vibrant, mixed-use Town Center are highlighted in Figure 1 and listed below. Many of these opportunities are supported by the existing zoning, but some will require changes. (see Figure 1)



An example of new development with greenspace amenity.

**Create a “main street” shopping district** on Rainier Avenue S. and S. McClellan Street (Figure 1 - yellow area).

**Create a walkable, bikable Town Center** with a complete network of sidewalks and bicycle infrastructure.

**Reinforce the identity of the Town Center** with gateways and landmarks.

**Catalyze change** with the redevelopment of opportunity sites, especially those fronting the prime retail corner (Figure 1 - orange circle).

**Leverage light rail** to create a transit accessible shopping destination for the greater Rainier Valley.



LINK Light Rail has improved access to and from the Town Center. © Oran Viriyincy via Flickr.

**Connect the Town Center to neighborhoods and open spaces** with complete streets, historic boulevards and uphill pedestrian connections.



**Figure 1 — Opportunities**



**Figure 2 – Concept Plan for the Town Center**

The transformation of the Town Center will occur incrementally over a long period of time. Figure 2 represents one illustration of how these ideas might play out through public and private investment. It shows how large building footprints and surface parking can be replaced with a more human-scaled development and public realm improvements. The Urban Design Framework recommendations that follow will elaborate on these big ideas and set the stage for new development over time. More detailed “design guidelines,” still to be developed, will guide future private development proposals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The community’s ideas for a vibrant Town Center are captured in the *North Rainier Neighborhood Plan*. The following Urban Design Framework recommendations reflect a refinement of those ideas. The community’s vision for the Town Center incorporates many of the fundamental urban design principles used to make good streets and vibrant urban places—an interesting mix of retail uses along the street, multiple options for getting around, human-scaled buildings, streets and sidewalks, well designed streetscapes and public space, and a strong local identity. A good urban place is where you want to stop, get out of your car and walk around because it’s attractive, interesting and buzzing with activity.

The Urban Design Framework recommendations are organized as follows:

- Land Use and Built Form
- Circulation
- Streetscapes
- Open Space and Gateways
- Sustainable Strategies

The final section, Implementation, includes a summary of how Urban Design Framework recommendations can be implemented through zoning changes and other tools.



Retail with weather protection for pedestrians.



A sharrow—a lane shared by car and bikes.



Bio-swale in the High Point neighborhood.



Lowe's is the largest opportunity site.



A supermarket designed for a pedestrian-oriented urban street.



Open space as part of new commercial development.

## Land Use and Built Form

### Existing

The current pattern of land use and built form of the Town Center exhibits a suburban character—auto-oriented, single-story commercial buildings set on large blocks with deep setbacks and parking between buildings and the sidewalk. As a retail and service destination, it draws people who patronize both independent, culturally diverse businesses, as well as chain stores. Service retail and light industrial uses, an important source of local jobs, are scattered among the retail stores. Institutional and public uses, such as LINK Light Rail Station, the Transit Center and Franklin High School, generate pedestrian traffic. Existing open space within the Town Center is limited the steeply-sloped Cheasty Greenbelt and LINK Light Rail Station plaza.

### Recommendations

Creating a vibrant Town Center will require a significant change in land use and urban form. Proposed zoning, over time will allow auto-oriented commercial will give way to a richer mix of uses while retaining existing light industrial uses. Built form will become more urban—continuous street walls, taller buildings built to the sidewalk. These changes will bring more people and urban vitality to the Town Center.

- **Main Street Retail** — Focus pedestrian-oriented “main street” retail on Rainier Avenue S. and S. McClellan Street to create a place for shopping and eating, and meeting friends and neighbors.
- **Single Family** — Transition selected parcels of existing single-family residential uses adjacent to the Town Center to multifamily residential or mixed-use development.
- **Opportunity Sites** — Encourage redevelopment of “opportunity sites” (e.g. Lowe's and QFC) to mixed-use development that includes a high quality pedestrian environment, retains existing retail uses, but also includes some affordable places to live and run a business.

- **Outdoor Retail** — Develop an open air, multicultural market at the station or in new open space, to provide affordable commercial space and enliven public space. The market could be designed with stalls or mobile carts that are driven away at the end of each day.
- **Building Height** — In general, increase allowable height from 65 feet to 125 feet on sites fronting Rainier Avenue S. where the community has determined additional height is acceptable. (See Zoning p.22 for more detail.)
- **Building Setbacks and Massing** — In general, establish upper level setbacks along Rainier Avenue S. and S. McClellan Street to preserve the views to Mount Rainier and provide more light and air. Larger setbacks may be desired in some locations to maximize sun in new open space.



Example of a mixed-use building with Upper Level setback.



A unique bike rack as part of the streetscape.

*Use mobile vending units (vending carts and delivery vans) to provide goods and services for which there might not be enough demand to support a freestanding business and to augment in-store sales.*

*—Retail Development Strategy for Rainier Valley, December 2009*



Mobile Street Vending

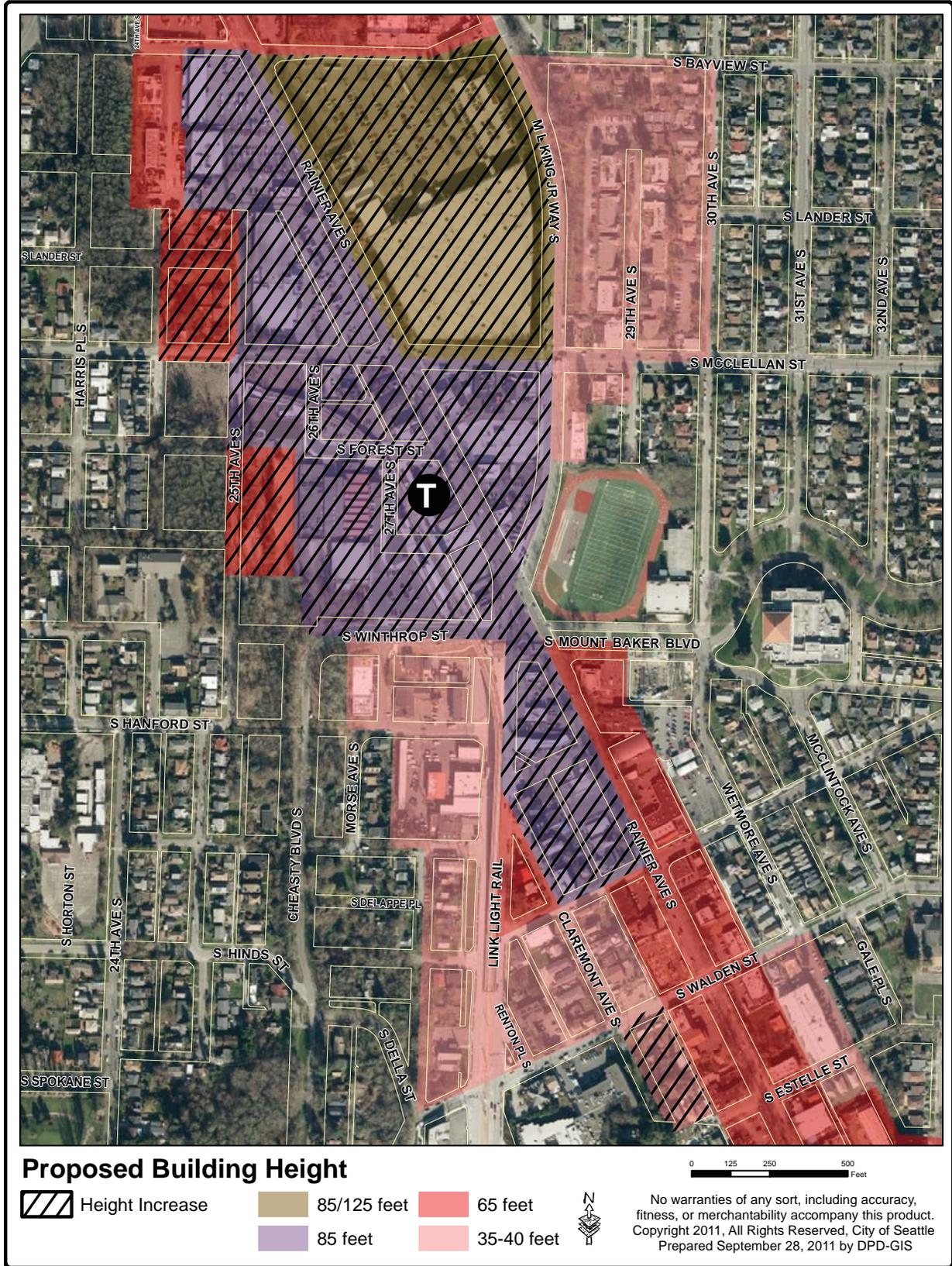


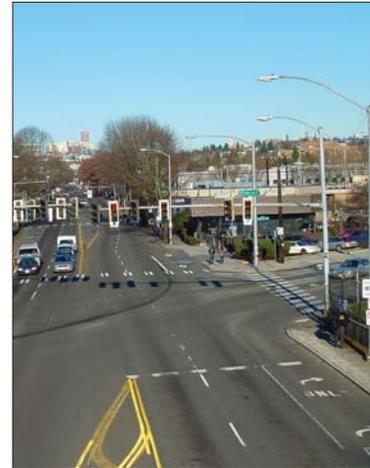
Figure 3 – Proposed Building Height

## Circulation

### Existing

The Town Center is intersected by three arterials (Rainier Avenue S., MLK Jr. Way S. and S. McClellan Street) that carry high volumes of traffic. Rainier Avenue S., also State Road 167, carries the largest volume of traffic. The designated “major truck street” to transport freight through the area includes portions of Rainier Avenue S. and MLK Jr. Way S. These two arterials intersect at an odd angle making it difficult for pedestrians to cross safely, and providing a poor level of service for vehicles. Two historic Olmsted boulevards—Cheasty Boulevard S. and Mount Baker Boulevard S.—were designed to connect, but are interrupted by this intersection.

In general, many elements that support a good walking or biking environment are lacking— things like wide sidewalks, short pedestrian crossings, street trees, buffers, bike lanes or sharrows. A pedestrian bridge, constructed to improve safety, is only lightly used. Connectivity between Beacon Hill and the Town Center is constrained by the steep topography—only S. McClellan Street connects down the slope. Ample transit in the Town Center—light rail and buses—connects residents and businesses to other Rainier Valley communities and downtown Seattle. The Town Center is also a transit transfer point, and many commuters must cross busy Rainier Avenue S. to make connections. However, pedestrian crossings along Rainier Avenue S. are too far apart, especially near the Light Rail Station and the Transit Center.



The intersection of Rainier Avenue S. and MLK Jr. Way S. is challenging for pedestrians.



Pedestrian bridge at the intersection of MLK Jr. Way S. and Rainier Avenue S.



LINK Light Rail has improved access to and from the Town Center. © Oran Viriyincy via Flickr.



Example of an improved pedestrian connection uphill.



A traffic calming curb bulb narrows the right-of-way at intersections.



Green bike lane and bike box make intersections safer.

## Recommendations

Creating a vibrant, walkable Town Center requires retrofitting the auto-focused arterials into streets that accommodate all users — complete streets. One promising option, the “Bowtie Traffic Concept”, would change Rainier Ave S. and MLK Way Jr. Way S. (between S. Bayview Street and S. Bryon Street) from two-way streets to one-way streets, a move that would make room for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

**Accommodate all travel modes on arterials.** Continue to evaluate the “Bowtie Traffic Concept” —a one-way street couplet that accommodates bikes and pedestrians, eliminates the skewed intersection, and allows Cheasty Boulevard S. and Mount Baker Boulevard S. to connect. Pedestrian crossings along Rainier Avenue S. become easier, especially near the station. This concept will require additional analysis, comparison with other options in discussion with the community, businesses and property owners.

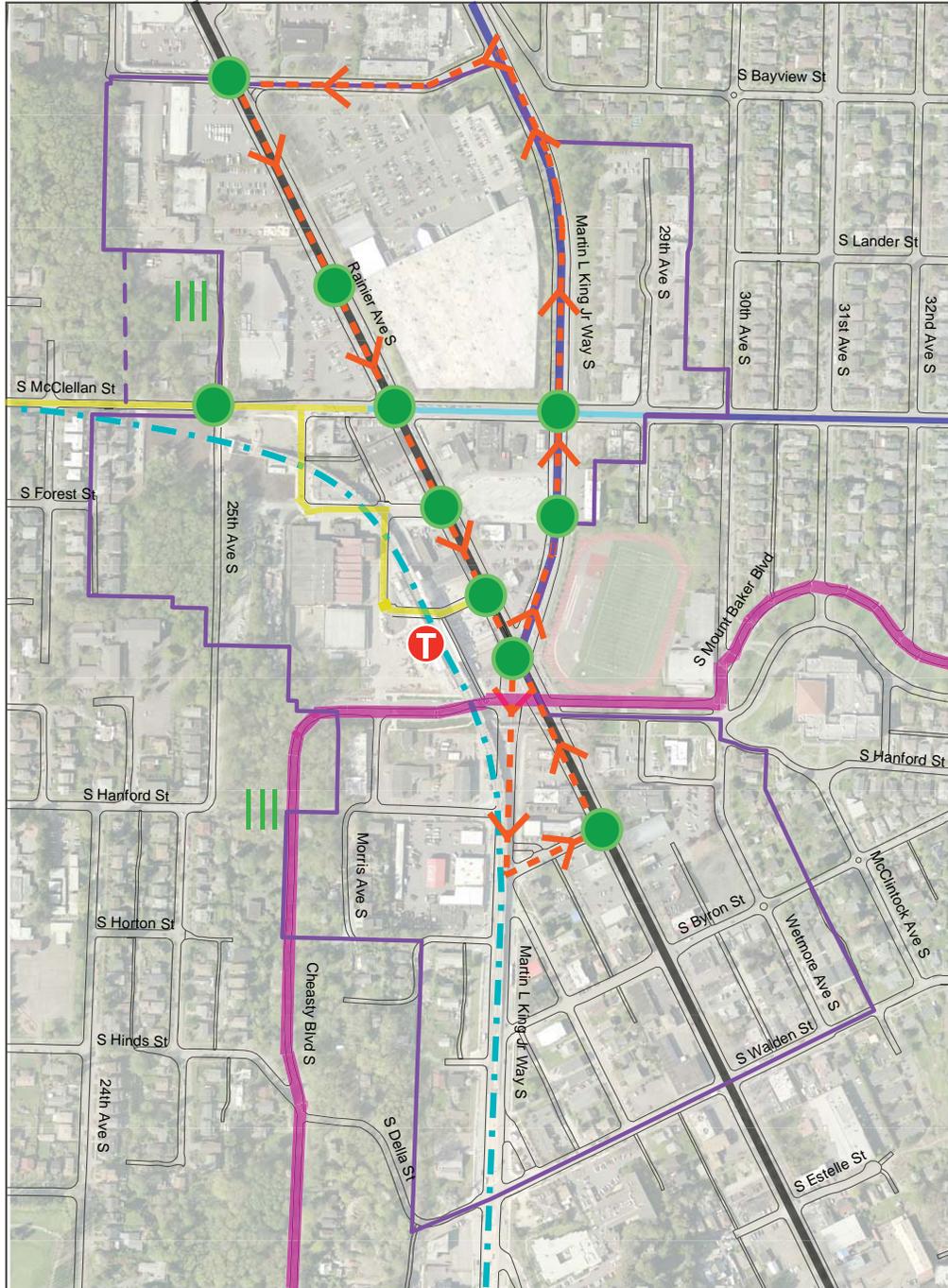
**Provide bicycle infrastructure.** Implement the recommendations of the *Seattle Bicycle Master Plan* to add new bicycle infrastructure (lanes, sharrows, signage) within the Town Center that is part of the citywide bicycle route system.

**Make the sidewalk network complete and safe.** Widen sidewalks on the three major arterials to 9 to 12 feet. Implement the recommendations of the *Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan* and the *Southeast Seattle Transportation Study*—fill gaps, widen, add buffers, remove obstructions, use curb bulbs, medians, pavement markings to allow pedestrians to move along and across arterials safely.

**Analyze the feasibility of installing mid-block pedestrian crossings where blocks are long.** Use mid-block crossings to connect LINK Light Rail Station and the Transit Center, and break down the scale of large blocks. Insert mid-block pathways as large blocks are redeveloped.

**Increase pedestrian connections uphill.** Give adjacent communities increased access to local businesses and transit in the Town Center. New or improved steps or pathways are recommended for the street ends at S. Lander Street and S. Hanford Street.

*See the following section, Streetscape Concepts, for additional and complementary recommendations related to the design of streets.*



Station Area	Bicycle	Vehicle	Pedestrian
— Existing SAOD Boundary	— Shared Roadway	—> —> One Way Traffic	● New/improved Crossing
- - - Proposed addition to SAOD Boundary	— Sharrow		Pedestrian Connection Uphill
Ⓣ LINK Light Rail Station	— Bike Lane or Cycle Track		
- - - LINK Light Rail Line	— Signed Bicycle Route		
	— Future Study Needed		

**Figure 4 – Proposed Circulation Concept**



This streetscape is designed with pervious paving, street trees and other planting—types of green stormwater infrastructure.



Streetscapes that include wide sidewalks, small retail bays, awnings, and street trees encourage walking.

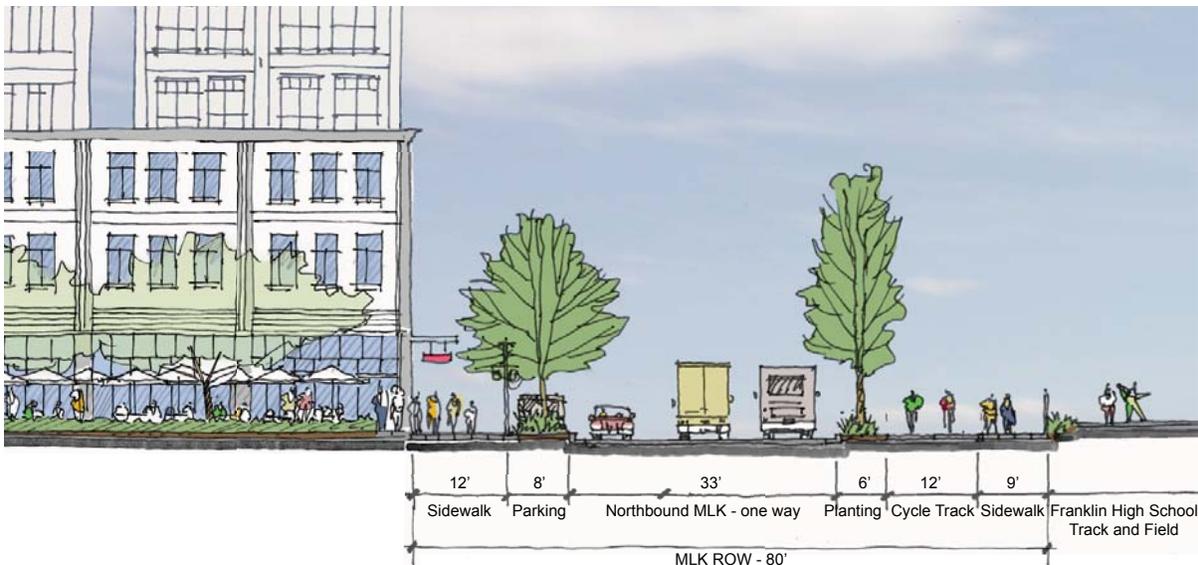
## Streetscape Concepts for the Town Center

### Existing

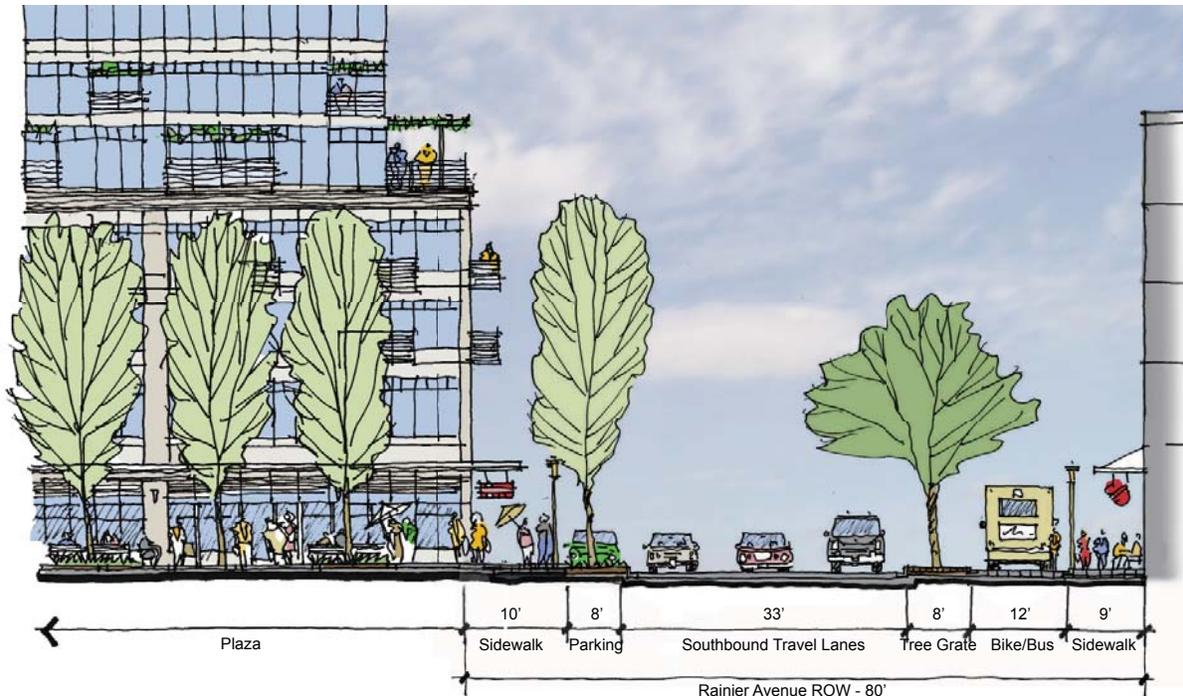
Streetscape refers to the physical design of the public realm – the space between buildings. It includes not only the road, but also the adjacent sidewalk areas. The current streetscape of arterial roads lacks some elements that support a good pedestrian environment—things like continuous and comfortably-wide sidewalks, short and safe crossings, buffers between sidewalks and traffic.

### Recommendations

Streetscape recommendations focus on the three arterial streets—Rainier Avenue S., MLK Jr. Way S. and S. McClellan Street. The streetscape concepts illustrated below align with the “Bowtie Traffic Concept” (see page 14). Elements emphasize pedestrian comfort and safety such as pedestrian lighting, directional signage, landscaping, overhead weather protection, and improved crosswalks with curb bulbs for safer and shorter crossings. On-street parking helps buffer pedestrians from traffic. Audible signals and special paving could be integrated into the streetscape design to assist members of the Lighthouse community and mobility impaired pedestrians.



**MLK Jr. Way S.** (from S. Bayview Street to S. Walden Street) is reconfigured with three one-way travel lanes, parking lane, wider sidewalks, landscaped curb bulbs, street trees, and bicycle infrastructure (bike lanes or two-way cycle track).



**Rainier Avenue S.** (from S. Bayview Street to S. Walden Street) is reconfigured with three one-way travel lanes, one parking lane, wider sidewalks, street trees, landscaped curb bulbs, a shared roadway for bicyclists and a dedicated northbound bus lane, but further study of these concepts is required. Should the Transit Center relocate, the bus lane could be converted to accommodate a separated two-way cycle track.

*Walking conditions along and across streets with high traffic volumes and high speeds are uncomfortable, especially locations that have long blocks and auto-oriented development.*

*—Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan*

**S. McClellan Street** (from MLK Jr. Way S. to S. 25th Street) is reconfigured with two travel lanes with sharrows, two parking lanes, wider sidewalks, and street trees. A central lane would be designed to include left turning pockets and potentially a landscaped median or other gateway feature.

**S. Winthrop Street**, a connector between Mount Baker Boulevard S. and Cheasty Boulevard S., is enhanced to have the distinctive lushly landscaped character of a historic Olmsted boulevard. Bicycles are accommodated within shared roadways with special signage as part of the citywide bicycle route.

*See the following section Open Space and Gateways for additional recommendations related to the public realm.*



Cheasty Boulevard S.

## Open Space and Gateways

### Existing

The current open space system is described as a “ring of green” surrounding the Town Center—the Cheasty Greenbelt, the Olmsted Boulevards and the slopes along the east side of MLK Jr. Way S. The LINK Light Rail Station includes a large plaza that leads to Rainier Avenue S. Other larger community and regional open spaces, such as MLK Jr. Park and Mount Baker Park, lie beyond the Town Center.

*Of the Southeast Sector’s five urban villages, the North Rainier Hub Urban Village has the largest gaps in Usable Open Space with over half of the urban village located farther than 1/8 mile from park sites.*

—Open Space Gap Report



Public art can be a neighborhood landmark.

### Recommendations (See Figure 5)

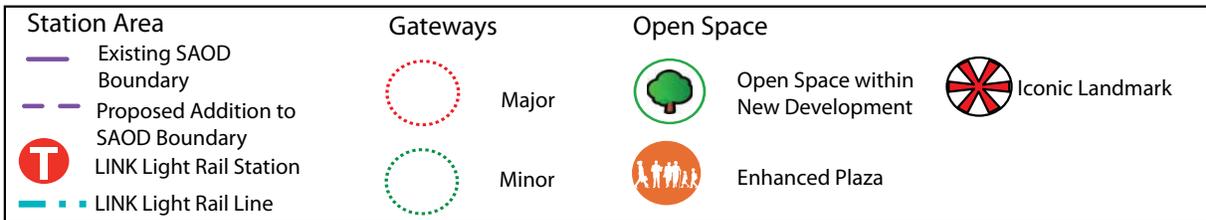
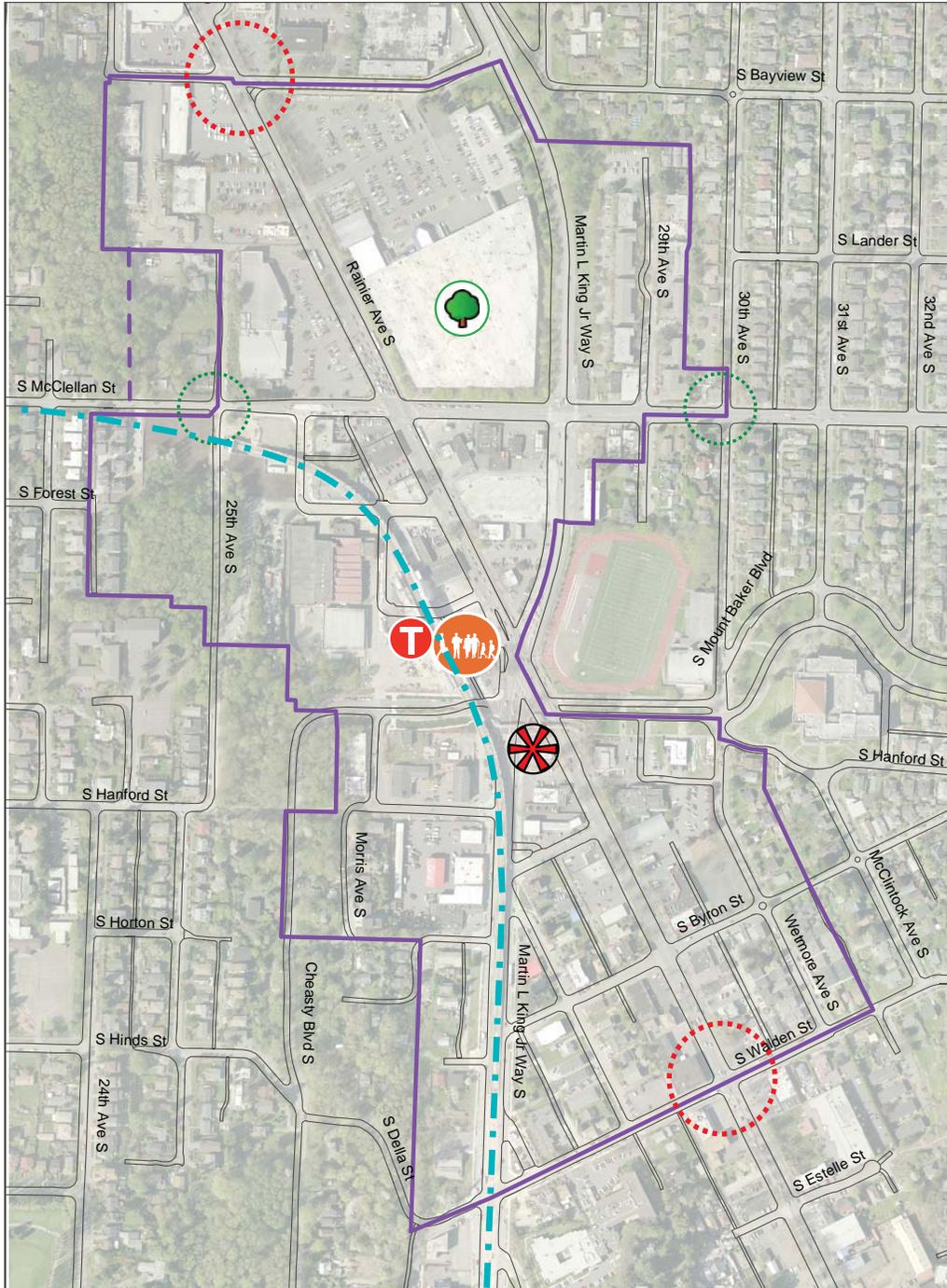
The community desires open spaces that invite people to gather and encourage physical activity. Future development and infrastructure improvements can improve access to open space and bring new greenspace to the core. Access to the Cheasty Greenbelt and other parks can be improved through new pathways, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Gateways and landmarks—highly visible landscape or structural features—can enhance the identity and express civic pride of the Town



Mobile vendors could animate the station plaza.



A mid-block open space is part of new development.



**Figure 5 – Proposed Open Space and Gateways**



A civic space for informal gatherings.



Example of gateway within a road right-of-way.



New pathways that are part of redevelopment can break down large and long blocks to a pedestrian friendly scale.

Center by announcing arrival in a distinct special place. Signage, structures, lighting, landscaping, banners and even buildings can create gateways or landmarks.

- **Create new open space in the core.** Use new developments and public improvements to increase greenspace within the Town Center. Redevelopment of the 13-acre Lowe's site, the largest opportunity site, should include an open space and pathways system that can break down this large block into a more pedestrian friendly form.
- **Animate and enhance the station plaza.** The station plaza is an underutilized open space. Furnishings (e.g. movable tables and chairs), and active uses (mobile vending) could transform this space into a community gathering place. Mobile vending would not only enliven the space, but could help existing businesses expand, or provide an affordable way to launch a new business.
- **Establish gateways.** Major gateways are recommended for Rainier Avenue S. near S. Bayview Street and S. Walden Street. Minor gateways are recommended for S. McClellan Street near S. 25th Street and S. 30th Street.
- **Establish an iconic landmark.** The prominent intersection Rainier Avenue S. and MLK Jr. Way S. calls for an iconic civic landmark to strengthen the identity of the not only the Town Center, but the entire Rainier Valley community. The design will benefit from broad community input to ensure the landmark is memorable, meaningful and a source of civic pride.



An example of a civic gathering space.

## Sustainable Strategies

The *North Rainier Neighborhood Plan* affirmed a commitment to creating a community that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Environmental sustainability is implicit in the previous recommendations for urban form, land use, circulation, streetscapes, and open space. With ample opportunity to walk, bike, and take transit current and future residents of the Town Center will live a more sustainable life. Research by the US Environmental Protection agency found that residents of compact walkable neighborhoods consume half the energy of those who live in conventional suburbs. Additional sustainable strategies can help build an even more sustainable Town Center by integrating green stormwater infrastructure and green building technology to the extent feasible.

**Green Stormwater Infrastructure** refers to landscapes that are designed specifically to absorb and manage stormwater—bioretention plantings, permeable paving, green roofs, and rainwater harvesting. These practices keep urban runoff out of storm drains and overloaded combined sewers, and help improve Seattle’s water quality and aquatic habitat. In addition to their functional role, green stormwater infrastructure can be designed as an open space amenity adding interest and beauty to streets and public spaces. The new Stormwater Code requires Green Stormwater Infrastructure to the “maximum extent feasible” for new projects throughout the city including the Mount Baker Town Center.

Green stormwater infrastructure should be integrated into the design of future streetscapes (medians, curb bulbs, curbside planting strips, pavement, historic boulevard landscapes) and open space (parks, plazas, pedestrian connections). These practices should be considered on a site-by-site basis in all new development— buildings, streets, trails and open space. More information at [www.seattle.gov/util/About\\_SPU/Drainage\\_&\\_Sewer\\_System/GreenStormwaterInfrastructure/index.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/util/About_SPU/Drainage_&_Sewer_System/GreenStormwaterInfrastructure/index.htm)

**Green Building Technology** refers to an array of strategies that result in a building that uses sustainable materials and is highly energy and water efficient. The City has a several incentive programs to encourage green building technology (see Sustainable Development, page 24).



Plantings on a roof deck absorb stormwater and enhance a shared open space. © William Wright Photography



A green roof tops the new Ballard Library.



Green stormwater infrastructure can be designed to provide informal seating.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation refers to the next steps—the policies, regulations, programs and resources that the City can use to act on recommendations. The Urban Design Framework considered a number of implementation tools to require or encourage the desired physical form and land uses within the Town Center.

### Zoning

#### Existing

The Town Center currently includes a mix of commercial, neighborhood commercial, lowrise residential and two special districts (Station Area Overlay District, Pedestrian Designation) that affect land use, building types, street-level uses and design, and parking location and access. See Appendix A for a brief description of these zones and districts.

#### Recommendations

The *North Rainier Neighborhood Plan* recommends “rezoning key opportunity sites to encourage the redevelopment of parcels surrounding the light rail station in a manner that incorporates housing, commercial services (such as a grocery store and small businesses) and amenities.” The community acknowledged commercial zoning was not appropriate, and considered zones and building heights that would help transition the current auto-oriented commercial corridor to a walkable, vital mixed-use Town Center. A detailed description and analysis of rezone recommendations are contained in the *Director’s Analysis and Recommendation on the Mount Baker Rezone Proposal*.

**Use Seattle Mixed Zoning** – The initial strategy, included in the Draft Urban Design Framework, recommended a shift to mostly Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3) zone with building heights as high as 125 feet. Subsequent discussion and analyses led to a different recommendation, the use of the more flexible Seattle Mixed (SM) zone, and heights of 85 and 125 for key parcels fronting Rainier Avenue S.

Both NC3 and SM encourage street activating retail uses and transparent facades, and discourage auto-oriented retail and services. Both zones allow building heights of 125 feet. The maximum floor area ratio (FAR) for SM 125 is 4.5 versus 6.0 for NC3 125. SM is a better fit for North Rainier due to its flexibility to accommodate some manufacturing. This will encourage some existing businesses to remain and potentially expand, and will position North Rainier to attract cutting edge businesses whose space needs are still evolving. Also, SM prohibits surface parking lots as a primary use. This ensures that valuable land in the Town Center will never be converted to commuter parking.

**Increase Height** — Increase the allowable heights in the NC and SM zones as shown in Figure 3. These changes will allow more dense mixed-use and residential development. The resulting development could activate the street with street-level retail and house a critical mass of people to live, work or shop in the Town Center.

**Rezone Select Parcels to Be Consistent with Adjacent Zones and Properties** — Two areas have been identified for zoning changes



supported by existing property owners.

- Single family parcels located between 24th Avenue S. and 25th Avenue S. to SM/R with a 65 foot height limit. The proposed designation is more consistent with the surrounding LR2 and proposed SM zones. The boundary of the Station Area Overlay District should be changed to include this area.
- Single family parcels west of Rainier Avenue S. and south of S. Walden Street to LR3. These parcels are surrounded by commercial or low rise residential uses on three sides.

**Rezone Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial Parcels to Seattle Mixed** — This zone allows flexibility for existing businesses to thrive and potentially bring new types of businesses to the area over the next 20 years. It can accommodate a broader range of businesses and mixed-use building forms in the Town Center, but still includes development standards to activate streets with retail use and transparent building facades.

## **Sustainable Development**

Much of the desired physical character and sustainability of the Town Center will be determined by decisions of private property owners. In Seattle, certain sustainable development practices are required by the Land Use, Building, and Stormwater codes. In addition, the City has introduced several programs to require or promote sustainable building and design in new development projects:

### **Green Factor**

The Green Factor is a landscape requirement

designed to increase the quantity and quality of planted areas in Seattle while allowing flexibility for developers and designers to meet development standards. It currently applies to new development in commercial and neighborhood commercial zones outside of downtown, and multifamily residential zones. The requirement is designed to encourage larger plants, permeable paving, green roofs, vegetated walls, preservation of existing trees, and layering of vegetation along streets and other areas visible to the public. Bonuses are provided for food cultivation, native and drought-tolerant plants, and rainwater harvesting.

### **Priority Green**

Priority Green is a suite of green permitting incentives to assist projects that use smart approaches to design and construction and innovative practices.

- Priority Green EXPEDITED shortens review times for projects that meet typical green building standards and have less code complexity.
- Priority Green FACILITATED assists all innovative project types that will serve as visible models of high performance and sustainability.
- Priority Green TOOLS provides additional code incentives to assist applicants developing green projects.
- The Living Building Pilot Program assists projects attempting to meet the requirements of the Living Building Challenge—a green building rating system to recognize buildings meeting the highest level of sustainability. The Pilot Program allows flexibility in development standards to accommodate innovative technologies or design approaches that might otherwise be discouraged or prohibited.

## Analyses Requested by City Council

City Council Resolution 31204 requested that the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) study and analyze some specific implementation tools as part of the Urban Design Framework. Complete analyses, discussions and recommendations regarding these items are included in the *Director's Analysis and Recommendation on Mount Baker Rezone Proposal*. Findings are summarized below:

- **Development capacity under existing and proposed zoning.** The proposed rezones are anticipated to add 362 housing units over the next 20 years.
- **Proposed incentive structures for public benefits.** The recommended maximum building heights of 125 feet allows the use of incentive zoning provisions where a minimum of 60 percent of the bonus floor area must be used to provide affordable housing. Other public benefits (open space, public realm improvements) could be provided in exchange for the remaining 40 percent of bonus floor area.
- **Transfer of development rights.** Participation in a transferable development rights program is not recommended due to potential conflicts with City policy and community priorities, as well as the high transactions costs that would be incurred.
- **Minimum density.** The use of minimum densities is not recommended because under current market conditions, this requirement may be a disincentive to new development and the expansion of existing businesses.

## Other Implementation Resources

### Multi-Family Tax Exemption Program

The Multifamily Property Tax Exemption (MFTE) Program provides a tax exemption on the residential improvements on multifamily projects in exchange for the provision of affordable housing. The current rules allow a tax exemption for 12 years if 20 percent of the units are set aside for moderate-wage workers to rent or buy. Rental units are income restricted based on the average household median income (AMI). The 2011 income limits for rental units are 65 percent of the AMI for a studio (\$39,520 for an individual, \$45,175 for a couple), 75 percent of the AMI for a one-bedroom (\$45,600 for an individual, \$52,125 for a couple), and 85 percent of the AMI for a two-bedroom or larger (\$51,680 for an individual, \$59,075 for a couple). The 2011 Income limits for sale units are 100 percent of the AMI for a studio or one bedroom (\$60,800 for an individual, \$69,500 for a couple), and 120 percent of the AMI for a two-bedroom or larger (\$72,960 for an individual, \$83,400 for a couple).

### Funding and Implementation Toolkit for Transit Communities

The Seattle Planning Commission created this online toolkit to provide decision makers, private partners and community groups with information about funding programs, implementation and planning tools commonly used to develop the essential components that create vibrant lively transit communities. The toolkit focuses on three broad categories of "livability elements": infrastructure, community development and parks/open space. The toolkit includes local,

state and federal sources from small programs like the Opportunity Fund for community initiative park development to larger sources like federal Community Block Grants that fund affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, community facilities and services and economic development. The toolkit can be viewed on the Commission's website at <http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/projects/transit.htm>.

### **Public Investments in Streetscape Improvements**

Many of the recommendations for streetscape improvements could be implemented by SDOT as part of the *Pedestrian Master Plan* and *Bicycle Master Plan*, although when funding would be available is uncertain. A key next step in the streetscape improvement process would be the development of a Street Design Concept Plan that would become part of the *Seattle Right-of-Way Improvement Manual*. Streetscape improvements can be helpful in attracting private investment to the Town Center.

## Summary of Actions

Building a successful Town Center requires the coordinated effort of the community, the City, private development and a range of other public and private entities. The following matrix describes the likely time frame for completion and the responsible parties for Urban Design Framework recommendations.

<b>PROPOSED ACTIONS</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● = 1 to 3 years</li> <li>◐ = 3 to 5 years</li> <li>○ = more than five years</li> </ul>	City of Seattle	Community	King County Metro	Washington DOT	Private Development	Sound Transit
<b>Land Use + Built Form</b>						
Focus "main street" retail on S. McClellan Street and Rainier Avenue S.	○	○			○	
Rezone selected single family parcels where appropriate.	●					
Encourage the redevelopment of opportunity sites (e.g. Lowe's, QFC, Transit Center).	○		○		○	○
Develop an open air, multi-cultural market.	●				●	●
Increase allowable heights.	●					
Encourage setbacks on pedestrian-oriented retail streets.	●					
<b>Circulation</b>						
Accommodate all travel modes on arterials and boulevards where feasible.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reconnect Cheasty Boulevard S. and Mount Baker Boulevard S.	○			○		
Improve bicycle infrastructure.	○					
Make the pedestrian network complete and safe.	○				○	○

<b>PROPOSED ACTIONS</b>	City of Seattle	Community	King County Metro	Washington DOT	Private Development	Sound Transit
● = 1 to 3 years ○ = 3 to 5 years ○ = more than five years						
<b>Circulation Continued</b>						
Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to Mount Baker Station.	○				○	○
Analyze the feasibility of providing mid-block crossings on long blocks.	○	○			○	
Provide pedestrian connections uphill.	○	○				
<b>Streetscapes</b>						
Redesign Rainier Avenue S., MLK Jr. Way S. and S. McClellan Street as complete streets.	○	○		○	○	
Restore the natural and designed landscapes of Cheasty Boulevard S. and Mount Baker Boulevard S.	○	○				
<b>Open Space and Gateways</b>						
Establish new open space in the core of the Town Center.	○	○			○	
Animate and enhance the station plaza.	●	●				●
Establish gateways and landmarks.	○	○			○	
<b>Sustainable Strategies</b>						
Integrate green stormwater infrastructure into design of streetscapes, open space and boulevards.	●				●	
Promote green building technology in new development.	●				●	
<b>Zoning</b>						
Implement proposed zoning changes to increase flexibility and allow more density.	●					

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Seattle Planning Commission

Seattle Design Commission

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Great City

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Thank you to all the community members who  
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since 1999 to plan the future of North Rainier.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A - Zones and Districts

Below are descriptions of zones and districts that are existing and/or proposed within or adjacent to the Town Center.

**Single Family 5000 (SF5000)** — This zone provides for a detached house with a single dwelling unit, or one principal unit and one accessory unit. The minimum lot area for this zone is 5000 square feet.

**Lowrise 2 (LR2)** — This zone provides a variety of multifamily housing types in existing multifamily neighborhoods and along arterial streets. A mix of small to moderate scale multifamily housing is encouraged including apartments, townhouses and rowhouses.

**Lowrise 2 Residential Commercial (LR2 RC)** — This zone serves as a transitional zone between commercial zones and single family residential zones. It provides a variety of multifamily housing types and small commercial uses at street level in existing multifamily neighborhoods and along arterial streets. A mix of small to moderate scale multifamily housing is encouraged including apartments, townhouses and rowhouses.

**Lowrise 3 (LR3)** — This zone provides a variety of multifamily housing types in existing multifamily neighborhoods of moderate scale. LR3 accommodates residential growth within growth areas (urban centers, urban villages and Station Area Overlay District). A mix of small to moderate scale multifamily housing is encouraged including apartments, townhouses and rowhouses.

**Lowrise 3 Residential Commercial (LR3 RC)** — This zone serves as a transitional zone between commercial zones and single family residential zones. It provides a variety of multifamily housing types and small

commercial uses at street level in existing multifamily neighborhoods of moderate scale. LR3 accommodates residential growth within growth areas (urban centers, urban villages and the Station Area Overlay District). A mix of small to moderate scale multifamily housing is encouraged including apartments, townhouses and rowhouses.

**Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3)** — This zone provides a larger pedestrian-oriented shopping district serving the surrounding neighborhood and a larger community, citywide or regional clientele. This type of retail district allows comparison shopping among a range of businesses. Typical land uses include supermarkets, restaurants, offices, hotels, clothing shops, business support services, and residences that are compatible with the area's mixed-use character.

**Commercial 1 (C1)** — This zone provides an auto-oriented, primarily retail/service commercial area that serves the surrounding neighborhood as well as a citywide or regional clientele. Typical land uses include large supermarkets, building supplies and household goods, auto sales and repairs and apartments.

**Commercial 2 (C2)** — This zone provides auto-oriented, primarily non-retail commercial area characterized by larger lots, parking and a wide range of commercial uses serving community, citywide or regional markets. Typical land uses include warehouses, wholesale, research and development, and manufacturing uses. Residential use is generally not allowed, but exceptions meeting specific criteria may be considered through a conditional use process.

**Seattle Mixed (SM)** — This zone is applied to achieve the goal of a diverse, mixed-use community with a strong pedestrian

orientation. The zone permits a wide range of uses and promotes density to encourage a mixed-use neighborhood. This zoning designation balances the need for flexibility and a variety of activities with the need to provide adequate direction to ensure the presence of housing and commercial activities critical to the success of an urban neighborhood.

**Station Area Overlay District (SAOD)** – The SAOD designation is intended to discourage auto-oriented development and increase opportunities for housing and mixed-use development near light rail stations. All existing legal businesses and uses are allowed to remain and maintain existing structures and sites. New development of certain commercial and industrial businesses—such as drive through businesses, warehouses, manufacturing, etc.—are prohibited.

**Pedestrian Designation (P)** — The P designation preserves and encourages an intensely retail and pedestrian-oriented shopping district where non-auto modes of transportation are strongly favored. The P designation restricts street level use to pedestrian-friendly commercial uses that enliven the sidewalk environment. A pedestrian designation can be applied to any neighborhood commercial zone along principal pedestrian designated streets. The P designation preserves and encourages a pedestrian-oriented shopping district by limiting building setbacks, reducing retail parking requirements, and controlling the location of parking lots and access to behind or under buildings fronting on a principal pedestrian street.

# **Appendix B**

## **Council Resolution Number 31204**

# **Appendix C**

## ***North Rainier Neighborhood Plan***

