

# West Seattle Junction Design Guidelines 2013

# Introduction

## ***What are Neighborhood Design Guidelines?***

Design guidelines are the primary tool used by Design Review Boards. The West Seattle Junction Design Guidelines apply to development that is subject to design review as set forth at SMC 23.41.004 if it is located in the West Seattle Urban Village as reflected in Map 1 (page 1). Guidelines define the qualities of architecture, urban design, and public space that make for successful projects and communities. There are two types of guidelines used in the Design Review Program:

- Seattle Design Guidelines—applying to all areas of the city except for downtown; and
- Neighborhood design guidelines—applying to a specific geographically-defined area, usually within a neighborhood urban village or center.

Once a set of neighborhood guidelines is adopted by City Council, they are used in tandem with citywide guidelines for the review of all projects within that neighborhood that fall within the scope of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) section 23.41.004. Not all neighborhoods within the city have neighborhood-specific guidelines, but for those that do, both sets of guidelines—citywide and neighborhood—are consulted by the Boards, with the neighborhood guidelines superseding the citywide ones in the event of a conflict between the two. Neighborhood guidelines are very helpful to all involved in the design review process for the guidance they offer that is specific to the features and character of a specific neighborhood.

As of November 2013, there were nineteen sets of neighborhood design guidelines, each following the same organization and numbering system of the City's original citywide guidelines entitled Design Review: Guidelines for Multi-family and Commercial Development that were adopted in 1993.

The West Seattle Junction Design Guidelines reveal the character of the West Seattle Junction as known to its residents and business owners. The guidelines help to reinforce existing character and protect the qualities that the neighborhood values most in the face of change. Thus, a neighborhood's guidelines, in conjunction with the Citywide Design Guidelines, can increase overall awareness of design priorities and encourage involvement in the design review process.

## ***Revised Neighborhood Design Guidelines***

The West Seattle Junction Design Guidelines were developed by community members and design consultants, and adopted in 2001. In 2013, the City adopted new, updated guidelines entitled Seattle Design Guidelines to replace the citywide guidelines that had been in effect since the inception of the Design Review Program in 1993.

Because the Seattle Design Guidelines uses a different organizational and numbering system than the original guidelines, DPD has revised each set of neighborhood guidelines to match the Seattle Design Guidelines in format, organization, and numbering system. The revised neighborhood design guidelines will help Board members, applicants, staff, and the public better correlate neighborhood guidelines with the updated Seattle Design Guidelines.

# Guidelines at a Glance

The West Seattle Junction design guidelines apply to development that is subject to design review as set forth at SMC 23.41.004 if it is located in the West Seattle Urban Village as reflected in Map 1 (page 1). These guidelines augment the Seattle Design Guidelines adopted in 2013. The list below correlates the guidelines by subject matter and shows which Seattle Design Guidelines are augmented by West Seattle Junction Design Guidelines. A “yes” indicates supplemental guidance is provided; a “no” indicates that the citywide guideline is sufficient. Note that the numbering system of the Seattle Design Guidelines is different from the original numbering applied to the West Seattle Junction Design Guidelines in 2001.

## Context and Site

**CS1. Natural Systems and Site Features** .....no

**CS2. Urban Pattern and Form** .....yes

- Streetscape Compatibility (former A-2)
- Corner Lots (former A-10)
- Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility (former B-1)

**CS3. Architectural Context and Character** .....yes

- Architectural Context (former C-1)

## Public Life

**PL1. Connectivity** .....yes

- Human Activity (former A-4)

**PL2. Walkability** .....yes

- Human Scale (former C-3)
- Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances (former D-1)

**PL3. Street-Level Interaction** .....no

**PL4. Active Transportation** .....no

## Design Concept

**DC1. Project Uses and Activities** .....yes

- Visual Impacts of Parking Structure (former D-5)

**DC2. Architectural Concept** .....yes

- Architectural Concept and Consistency (former C-2)
- Human Scale (former C-3)

**DC3. Open Space Concept** .....no

**DC4. Exterior Elements and Finishes** .....yes

- Human Scale (former C-3)

# Context and Priority Issues: West Seattle Junction

The overriding objective of the citywide design guidelines is to ensure that new development fits in well with its surroundings. The following West Seattle Junction Design Guidelines share this objective, and with an emphasis on siting and design conditions and priorities supported by the community, aim to guide the design of new development in a manner that strengthens the Junction’s mixed-use commercial core (see map 1, page 1 or the diagram below).

Through the neighborhood planning process, the community clearly stated its desire to maintain the small town atmosphere and qualities that have historically characterized the West Seattle Junction. However, it was also recognized that new development provides the opportunity for a broader mix of businesses and services, residential units and employment. As the Junction prepared its neighborhood plan, the citywide design guidelines were evaluated to determine whether the guidelines adequately supported the community’s vision.

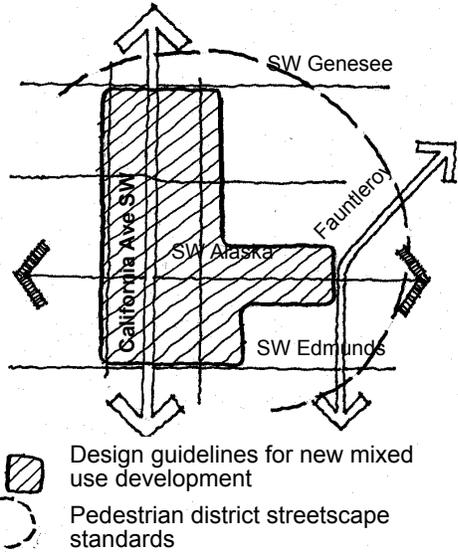
The Neighborhood Plan (1999) recommended the development of design guidelines to ensure that new development creates a compact, mixed-use commercial core that is pedestrian oriented in scale, character and function. A neighborhood design guidelines committee comprised of residential and business representatives was formed to address the Neighborhood Plan urban design-related recommendations. Several design issues and related priorities were identified and have been incorporated into the West Seattle Junction Design Guidelines.

- 1. **Pedestrian Environment:** In general, the pedestrian environment (sidewalks, pathways, entries and crossings) should be safe, accessible to all, connect to places people want to go, and provide good places to be used for many things. New development should reflect these principles by enhancing commercial district streetscapes with development that makes pedestrian activity at the street level a priority (see Map 2, page 3).

The overall goal of these guidelines is to aid in creating a district in which new development supports a mix of uses and engages the public realm (i.e. sidewalk) in a pedestrian-oriented manner. The commercial core is considered to include California Avenue SW from SW Edmunds Street to SW Genesee Street, SW Alaska from 44th Avenue SW to 39th Avenue SW, and SW Genesee, Oregon and Edmunds Streets from 44th Avenue SW to 42nd Avenue SW. California Avenue SW is recognized as the area’s current pedestrian-oriented business district, however the neighborhood envisions SW Alaska Street from California Avenue SW to Fautleroy Way SW to become an extension of this mixed use district with a continuous pedestrian scale and high level of comfort at the street level.

The neighborhood recognizes that a successful pedestrian environment is really a pedestrian “network”, extending beyond sidewalks to include paths, crossings and building entries. Mid-block pedestrian connections are encouraged to be incorporated into larger new development to link parking and surrounding streets to the commercial core.

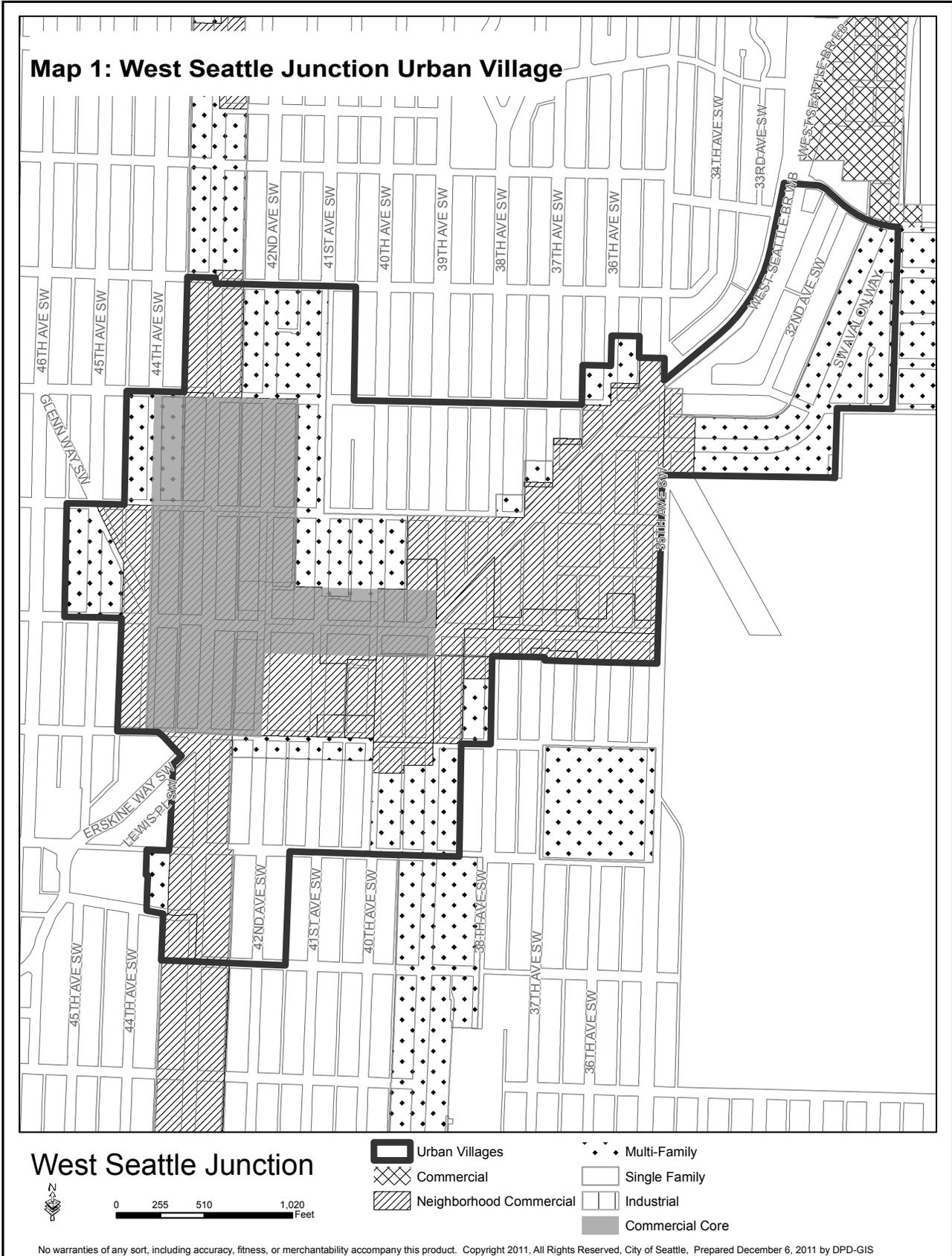
- 2. **Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility:** A pervading quality of the Junction’s small town “feel” is expressed in the existing architecture. One way to preserve and continue the small town quality in new development is through the siting, massing and design of new buildings. However, Neighborhood Commercial zones with 85- and 65-foot height limits (NC-85’ and NC-65’) are the predominant zoning designations in the commercial core on California Avenue SW and SW Alaska Street, causing potential conflicts in height, bulk and scale compat-



ibility between new development and existing one- to two-story commercial buildings occupying small parcels of land. Furthermore, current zoning in the Junction has created abrupt edges between NC-65' and 85' zones and less intensive, multifamily development.

The City of Seattle's Land Use Code prescribes setback requirements for new development on zone edges between higher and lesser intensive zones. New development in the Junction must carry this treatment further as more refined transitions in height, bulk and scale - in terms of the relationship to surrounding context and within the proposed structure itself - must be considered.

3. **Architectural Character:** Elements and materials that respect and strengthen the commercial core are encouraged in new building design. The quality of the Junction's built environment can be characterized as mixed - good buildings mixed with more mundane construction - and therefore a selective approach to contextual design is warranted. New development should respond to the Junction's context by providing enough visual linkages between the existing stock of good buildings and the proposed structure so as to create a cohesive overall effect. Appropriate visual linkages are simple, basic features such as window proportions, entryway placements, decorative elements and materials. For example, many of the area's most successful commercial buildings exhibit human scale window proportions and bold cornices. Repeating such elements in new development would continue an appropriate pattern.



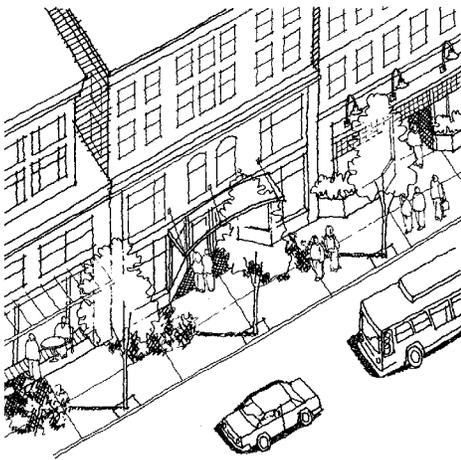
Note: Design Review does not apply to all zones. See the Seattle Municipal Code, section 23.41.004 for more details. Additionally, zoning areas shown on this map are for general reference only. For confirmation of a specific property's zoning, contact the Department of Planning and Development.

# CS2

## Urban Pattern and Form

### *Citywide Guideline:*

Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.



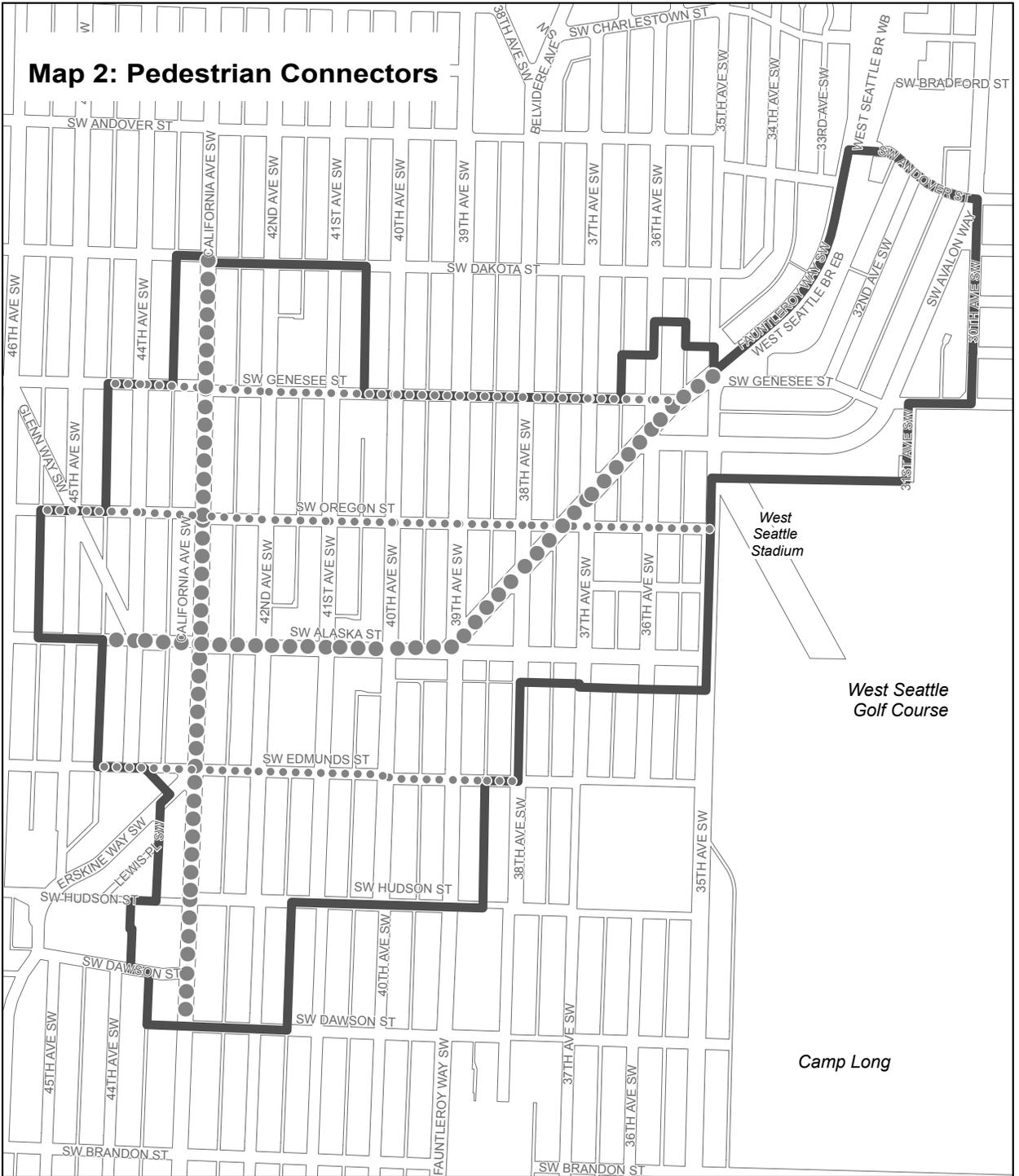
### ***West Seattle Junction Supplemental Guidance***

#### **I. Streetscape Compatibility**

A pedestrian-oriented streetscape is perhaps the most important characteristic to be achieved in new development in the Junction's mixed use areas (as previously defined). New development—particularly on SW Alaska, Genesee, Oregon and Edmunds Streets—will set the precedent in establishing desirable siting and design characteristics in the right-of-way.

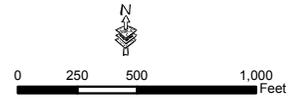
- i. Reduce the scale of the street wall with well organized commercial and residential bays and entries, and reinforce this with placement of street trees, drop lighting on buildings, benches and planters.
- ii. Provide recessed entries and ground-related, small open spaces as appropriate breaks in the street wall.
- iii. Outdoor power and water sources are encouraged to be provided in order to facilitate building maintenance and exterior decorative lighting needs. Conveniently located sources could also be taken advantage of for special community events.

### Map 2: Pedestrian Connectors

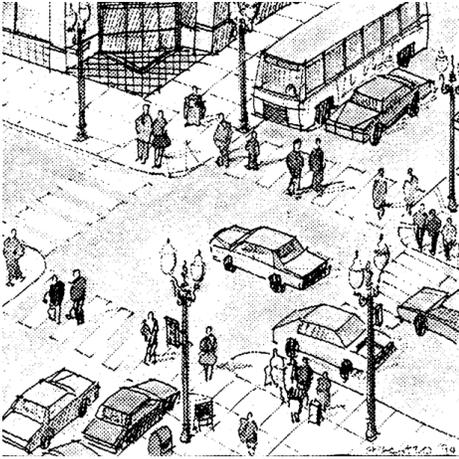


### West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village Pedestrian Connectors

-  Hub Urban Village Boundary
-  Major Pedestrian Street
-  Important Pedestrian Connectors



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## II. Corner Lots

Pedestrian activities are concentrated at street corners. These are places of convergence, where people wait to cross and are most likely to converse with others. New development on corner lots should take advantage of this condition, adding interest to the street while providing clear space for movement.

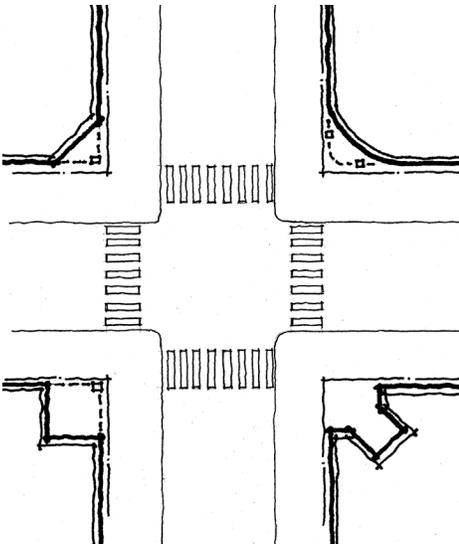
- i. New buildings should reinforce street corners, while enhancing the pedestrian environment.
- ii. Public space at the corner, whether open or enclosed, should be scaled in a manner that allows for pedestrian flow and encourages social interaction. To achieve a human scale, these spaces should be well defined and integrated into the overall design of the building. Consider:
  - a. providing seating;
  - b. incorporating art that engages people; and
  - c. setting back corner entries to facilitate pedestrian flow and allow for good visibility at the intersection.

The Seattle design guidelines encourage buildings on corner lots to orient to the corner and adjacent street fronts. Within the Junction there are several intersections that serve as “gateways” to the neighborhood.

- iii. Building forms and design elements and features at the corner of key intersections should create gateways for the neighborhood. These buildings should announce the block through the inclusion of features that grab one’s interest and mark entry.

### Gateways:

- a. California Avenue SW and SW Alaska Street
- b. California Avenue SW and SW Oregon Street
- c. SW Alaska Street and Fautleroy Way SW
- d. California Avenue SW and SW Edmunds Street
- e. SW Alaska Street and 44th Avenue SW
- f. Fautleroy Way SW and 35th Avenue SW



Building mass should reinforce the street corner while providing space for movement and activity.

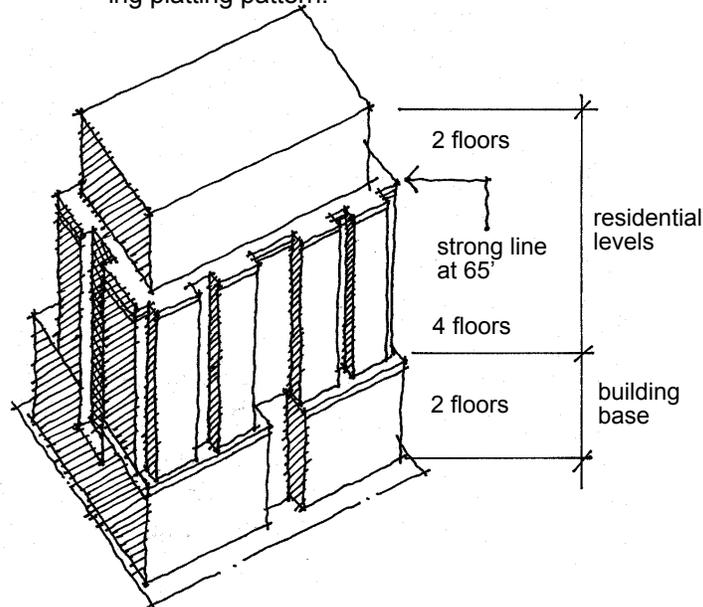


Building form and elements are oriented to the corner.

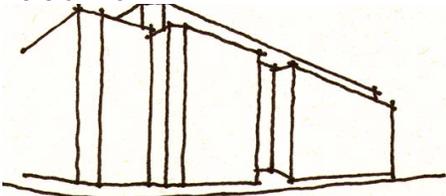
### III. Height, Bulk and Scale

Current zoning in the Junction has created abrupt edges in some areas between intensive, mixed-use development potential and less-intensive, multifamily development potential. In addition, the Code-complying building envelope of NC-65' (and higher) zoning designations permitted within the commercial core (see Map 1, page 1) would result in development that exceeds the scale of existing commercial/mixed-use development. More refined transitions in height, bulk and scale—in terms of relationship to surrounding context and within the proposed structure itself—must be considered.

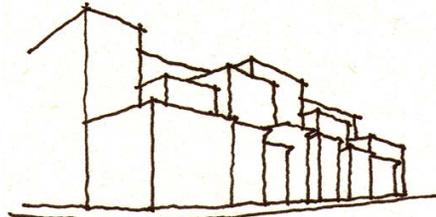
- i. Applicant must analyze the site in relationship to its surroundings. This should include:
  - a. Distance from less intensive zone; and
  - b. Separation between lots in different zones (property line only, alley, grade changes).
- ii. The massing prescribed by Neighborhood Commercial development standards does not result in mixed-use development that is compatible with the existing context. Among recent development in NC-65' zones and higher, the base (ground level commercial area) often appears truncated by the upper residential levels within a mixed-use building. The 13-foot, lot line – to – lot line commercial ground floor is an inadequate base for buildings of this size in terms of overall proportion. Moreover, surrounding commercial structures along California Avenue tend to have a building mass of 20 to 30 feet at the front property line. Therefore, for new development in Neighborhood Commercial zones 65' or higher:
  - a. Patterns of urban form in existing built environment, such as setbacks and massing compositions.
  - b. Size of Code-allowable building envelope in relation to underlying platting pattern.



**Note: Massing concept for an NC-85' structure. Not preferred architectural concept.**



A

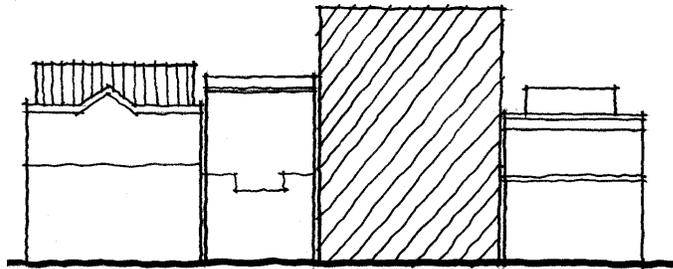


B

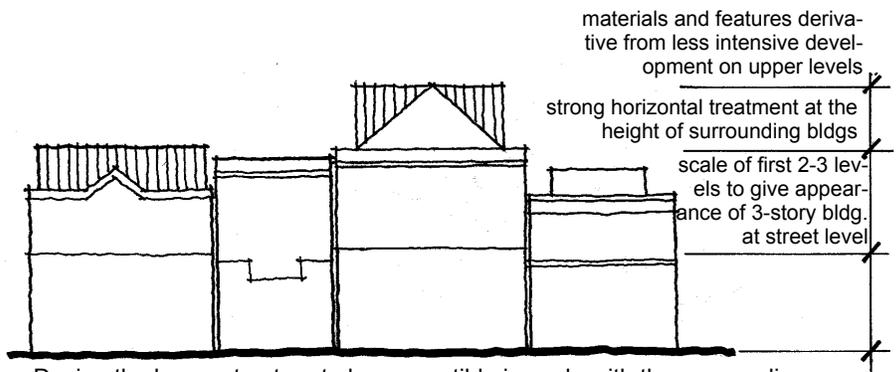
The bulk of the top building (“A”) is at odds with the rhythm of the small buildings along California Avenue SW. Consider breaking the mass of large structures into form elements similar to the scale and character of the surrounding street frontage (Building “B”).

iii. New buildings should use architectural methods including modulation, color, texture, entries, materials and detailing to break up the façade— particularly important for long buildings—into sections and character consistent with traditional, multi-bay commercial buildings prevalent in the neighborhood’s commercial core (see map 1, page 1).

iv. The arrangement of architectural elements, materials and colors should aid in mitigating height, bulk and scale impacts of Neighborhood Commercial development, particularly at the upper levels. For development greater than 65 feet in height, a strong horizontal treatment (e.g. cornice line) should occur at 65 ft. Consider a change of materials, as well as a progressively lighter color application to reduce the appearance of upper levels from the street and adjacent properties. The use of architectural style, details (e.g. rooflines, cornice lines, fenestration patterns), and materials found in less intensive surrounding buildings should be considered.



A larger potential building envelope (shaded) within the context of existing structures.



Design the larger structure to be compatible in scale with the surrounding buildings.

# CS3

## Architectural Context and Character

### *Citywide Guideline:*

Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

### **West Seattle Junction Supplemental Guidance**

#### **I. Architectural Context**

- i. **Facade Articulation:** To make new, larger development compatible with the surrounding architectural context, facade articulation and architectural embellishment are important considerations in mixed-use and multifamily residential buildings. When larger buildings replace several small buildings, facade articulation should reflect the original platting pattern and reinforce the architectural rhythm established in the commercial core (see map 1, page 1).
- ii. **Architectural Cues:** New mixed-use development should respond to several architectural features common in the Junction's best storefront buildings to preserve and enhance pedestrian orientation and maintain an acceptable level of consistency with the existing architecture. To create cohesiveness in the Junction, identifiable and exemplary architectural patterns should be reinforced. New elements can be introduced - provided they are accompanied by strong design linkages.

Preferred elements can be found in the examples of commercial and mixed-use buildings in the Junction included on this page.



A variety of architectural details including street-level display windows, a sign band, recessed entry, transoms, and facade kick-plates lend human scale and interest to these commercial buildings.

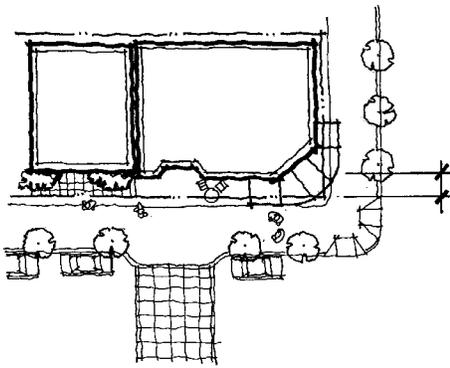
interesting parapets and cornices



# PL1 Connectivity

## Citywide Guideline:

Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.



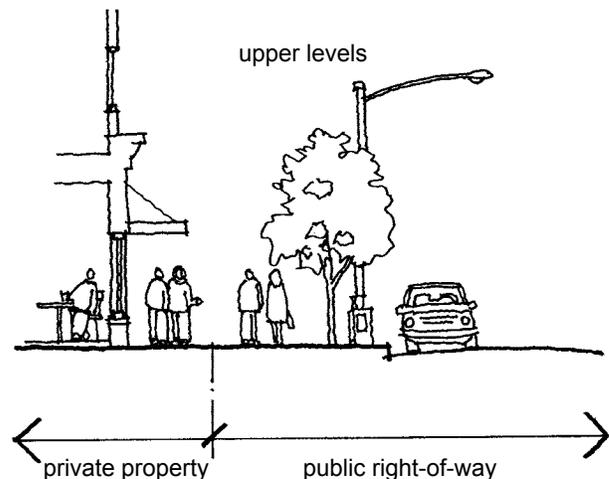
Consider setting the building back from the front property line to create an effective transition between the private and public realm.

## West Seattle Junction Supplemental Guidance

### I. Human Activity

An active and interesting sidewalk engages pedestrians through effective transitions between the public and private realms.

- i. Particularly in the California Avenue Commercial Core (see map 1, page 1), proposed development is encouraged to set back from the front property line to allow for more public space that enhances the pedestrian environment. Building facades should give shape to the space of the street through arrangement and scale of elements. Display windows should be large and open at the street level to provide interest and encourage activity along the sidewalk. At night, these windows should provide a secondary source of lighting.
- ii. In exchange for a loss of development potential at the ground floor, the Design Review Board is encouraged to entertain requests for departures to exceed the lot coverage requirement for mixed-use projects.
- iii. *When a setback is not appropriate or feasible, consider maximizing street level open space with recessed entries and commercial display windows that are open and inviting.*



Attachment 19 to the DPD Design Guidelines Ordinance

# PL2 Walkability

## *Citywide Guideline:*

Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.



Example of overhead weather protection that is coherently integrated into the building's modern style.

## ***West Seattle Junction Supplemental Guidance***

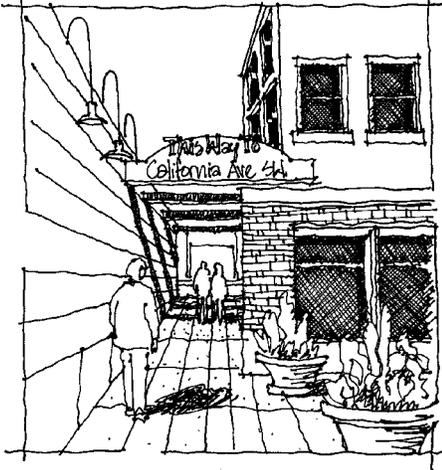
### **I. Human Scale**

Facades should contain elements that enhance pedestrian comfort and orientation while presenting features with visual interest that invite activity.

- i. Overhead weather protection should be functional and appropriately scaled, as defined by the height and depth of the weather protection. It should be viewed as an architectural amenity, and therefore contribute positively to the design of the building with appropriate proportions and character.

Overhead weather protection should be designed with consideration given to:

- a. Continuity with weather protection on nearby buildings.
- b. When opaque material is used, the underside should be illuminated.
- c. The height and depth of the weather protection should provide a comfortable scalae for pedestrians.



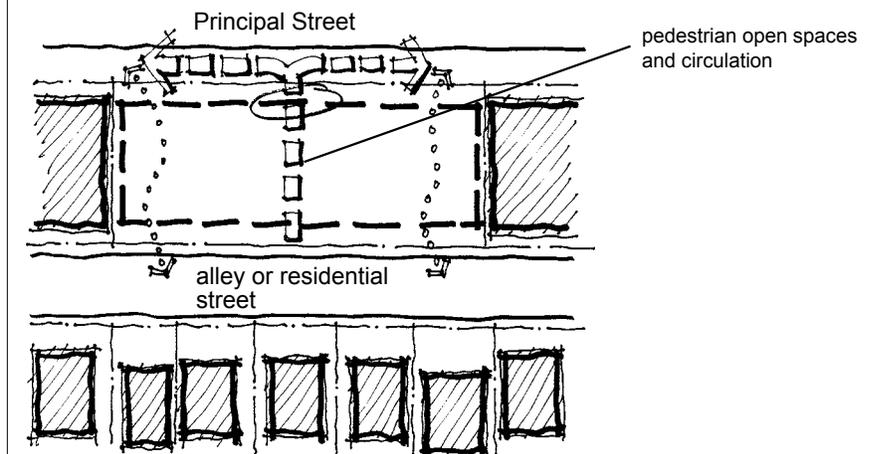
A passageway can extend the pedestrian environment of the commercial core through a large development site and into the surrounding neighborhood.

## II. Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

Design projects to attract pedestrians to the commercial corridors (California, Alaska). Larger sites are encouraged to incorporate pedestrian walkways and open spaces to create breaks in the street wall and encourage movement through the site and to the surrounding area. The Design Review Board would be willing to entertain a request for departures from development standards (e.g. an increase in the 64% upper level lot coverage in NC zones and a reduction in open space) to recover development potential lost at the ground level.

- i. **Street Amenities:** Streetscape amenities mark the entry and serve as way finding devices in announcing to visitors their arrival in the commercial district. Consider incorporating the following treatments to accomplish this goal:
  - a. pedestrian scale sidewalk lighting;
  - b. accent pavers at corners and midblock crossings;
  - c. planters;
  - d. seating.
- ii. Pedestrian enhancements should especially be considered in the street frontage where a building sets back from the sidewalk.

Note: The recently completed California Avenue SW street improvement project offers good examples of street amenities that could be repeated in portions of new developments that extend into the public realm. Details of these streetscape elements can be obtained from the West Seattle Junction Association.



# DC1

## Project Uses and Activities

### *Citywide Guideline:*

Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.



The parking in this structure has been integrated into the overall building design in a cohesive manner and is further concealed through decorative metal grille work.

### ***West Seattle Junction Supplemental Guidance***

#### **I. Visual Impacts of Parking Structures**

- i. Parking structures should be designed and sited in a manner that enhances pedestrian access and circulation from the parking area to retail uses.
- ii. The design of parking structures/areas adjacent to the public realm (sidewalks, alley) should improve the safety and appearance of parking uses in relation to the pedestrian environment.
- iii. There should be no auto access from the principal street (California Way. And Alaska St.) unless no feasible alternative exists. Located at the rear property line, the design of the parking façade could potentially be neglected. The City would like to see its alleys improved as a result of new development. The rear portion of a new building should not turn its back to the alley or residential street, but rather embrace it as potentially active and vibrant environment. The parking portion of a structure should be compatible with the rest of the building and the surrounding streetscape. Where appropriate, consider the following treatments:
  - a. Integrate the parking structure with building's overall design.
  - b. Provide a cornice, frieze, canopy, overhang, trellis or other device to "cap" the parking portion of the structure.
  - c. Incorporate architectural elements into the facade.
  - d. Recess portions of the structure facing the alley to provide adequate space to shield trash and recycling receptacles from public view.

# DC2

## Architectural Concept

### *Citywide Guideline:*

Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

### ***West Seattle Junction Supplemental Guidance***

#### **I. Architectural Concept and Consistency**

- i. New multi-story developments are encouraged to consider methods to integrate a building's upper and lower levels. This is especially critical in areas zoned NC-65' and greater, where more recent buildings in the Junction lack coherency and exhibit a disconnect between the commercial base and upper residential levels as a result of disparate proportions, features and materials. The base of new mixed-use buildings – especially those zoned 65 ft. in height and higher - should reflect the scale of the overall building. New mixed-use buildings are encouraged to build the commercial level, as well as one to two levels above, out to the front and side property lines to create a more substantial base.
- ii. The use and repetition of architectural features and building materials, textures and colors can help create unity in a structure. Consider how the following can contribute to a building that exhibits a cohesive architectural concept:
  - a. facade modulation and articulation;
  - b. windows and fenestration patterns;
  - c. trim and moldings;
  - d. grilles and railings;
  - e. lighting and signage.

#### **II. Human Scale**

Facades should contain elements that enhance pedestrian comfort and orientation while presenting features with visual interest that invite activity.

# DC4

## Exterior Elements and Finishes

### *Citywide Guideline:*

Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.



Blade signs add to the character of the streetscape and help orient pedestrians.



Example of signage at the street level for a broader range of visibility. Street level signs should be integrated with the overall design of the building when attached to the façade.

### **West Seattle Supplemental Guidance**

#### **I. Human Scale**

- i. **Signage:** Signs should add interest to the street level environment. They can unify the overall architectural concept of the building, or provide unique identity for a commercial space within a larger mixed-use structure. Design signage that is appropriate for the scale, character and use of the project and surrounding area. Signs should be oriented and scaled for both pedestrians on sidewalks and vehicles on streets.

The following sign types are encouraged:

- a. pedestrian-oriented blade and window signs;
- b. marquee signs and signs on overhead weather protection;
- c. appropriately sized neon signs.