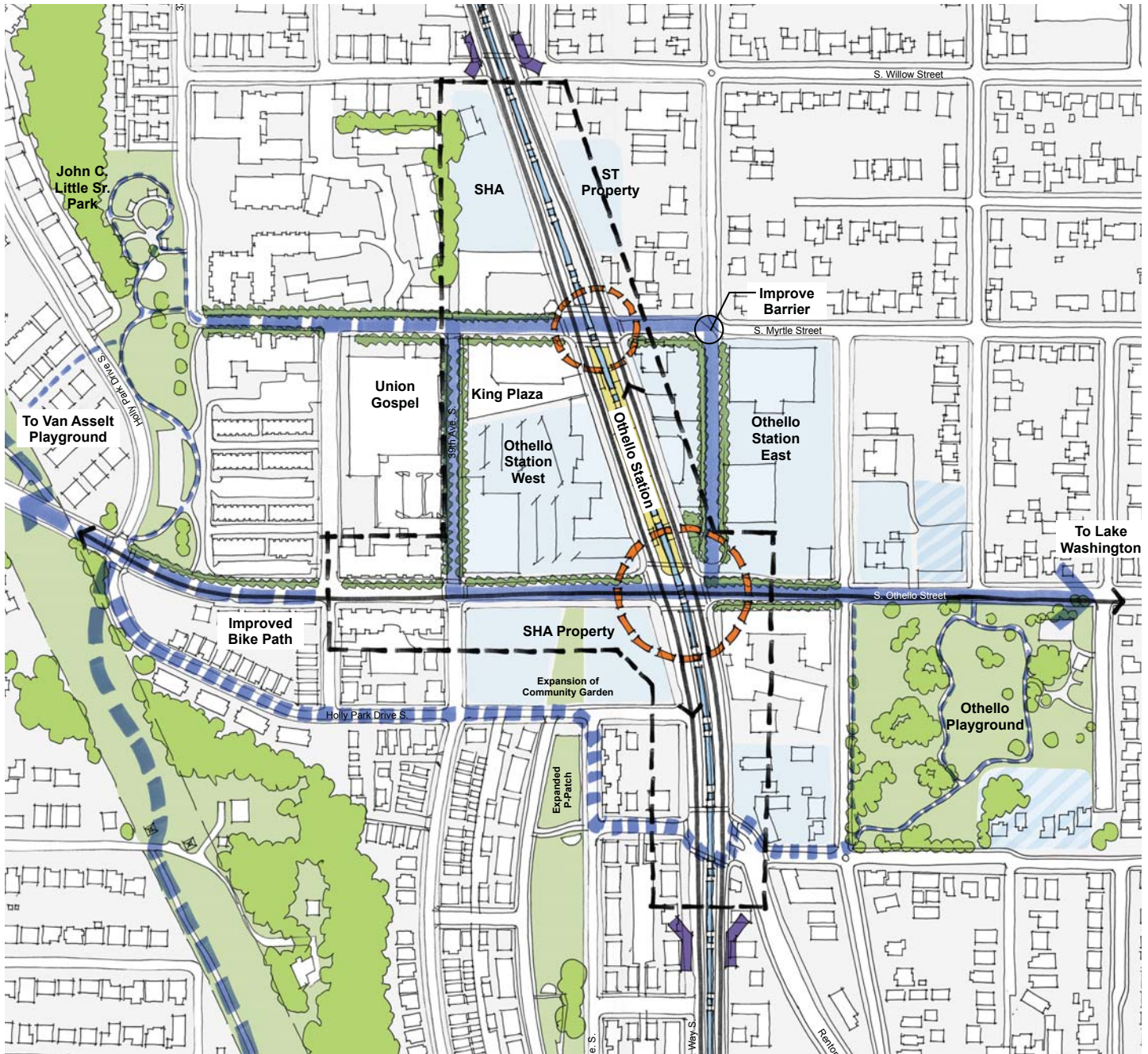


OTHELLO TOWN CENTER

Urban Design Framework



Othello Town Center Urban Design Framework

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Othello urban design framework has three primary objectives:

To provide a blueprint for enhancing and strengthening the neighborhood's town center—a center that is more vital, walkable and has all the essential components for livability, including a range of housing options; attractive and engaging parks, plazas and open spaces; and comfortable and convenient transportation choices.

To further develop and refine key actions identified by the community during the recent update of the Othello neighborhood plan, including defining strategies for implementing these actions.

To assist and inform the Seattle City Council in their decisions related to land use and the built environment, giving specific focus to the following elements described in Council Resolution number 31204:

- Structure height and bulk concepts (page 14)
- Right of way improvement concepts (page 10)
- Preferred use locations (pages 16,17)
- Incentive structures for public benefits (page 22)
- Open space concepts (pages 11-13)
- Pedestrian connections (pages 9, 10)
- An analysis of transferable development rights as an appropriate development tool (page 24)
- An analysis of proposed and existing employment and residential growth capacity (page 19)
- An assessment of the value and applicability of minimum densities or similar tools (page 25)

Implementation

Creating the successful town center described by this urban design framework will require the coordinated efforts of public and private initiative. In some cases implementation will need to be opportunistic—occurring as individual private development takes place. In other cases the improvements will be iterative. For example, some transportation improvements can first be achieved through simple restriping of the roadway, and later by more costly and permanent solutions. On page 27 find a description of how all the implementation pieces can work together.

INTRODUCTION

What is an Urban Design Framework

An Urban Design Framework is a tool for envisioning a desired outcome for the physical design of an area. These frameworks are not standardized documents but rather “vehicles of opportunity” that allow a broad consideration of issues that could be implemented by the City as well as private property owners. The Design Framework is essential in addressing how the physical development of the area under study will affect quality of life and the role that place-making and urban design play in creating a successful neighborhood.

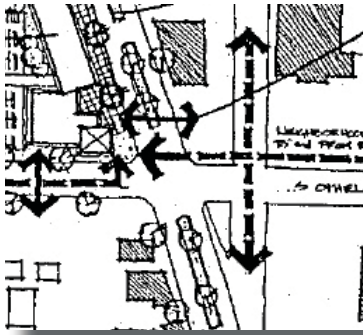
Elements included in this Urban Design Framework

- Massing (Heights, transitions)
- Land Uses (mix of uses, pedestrian orientation)
- Building design (Relationship to streets)
- Streetscape design (layout, on-street parking, bus infrastructure, trees, paving, art)
- Sustainability (Conditions, challenges & opportunities)

Other products this Urban Design Framework will inform

- New or Updated Neighborhood Design Guidelines
- Street Design Concept Plans
- Zoning Proposal (Land use, heights, incentives)
- Pedestrian, Green, and Festival Street Designations





VISION

The 1998 the MLK @ Holly Street (Othello) Residential Urban Village Plan called for the establishment of a Town Center at intersection of Othello and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Then as now, the community placed a high value on creating “a pedestrian oriented shopping environment,” including physical improvements that support transit use and create a high activity pedestrian environment.

This framework describes specific strategies and design solutions for implementing this vision.

BACKGROUND



Neighborhood Planning History

In the early 1990s Seattle began a substantial and unprecedented neighborhood planning process. This effort involved over 20,000 residents and created plans for 38 Seattle neighborhoods. These plans provided direction on a broad range of categories including land use, transportation, economic development, parks and open space, resulting in over 4,200 recommended specific actions. The MLK @ Holly Street (Othello) Urban Village plan was completed in 1999.

Neighborhood Planning Update

A decade later unanticipated changes and new opportunities prompted the need for a plan update. Beginning in March of 2009 a diverse group of community stakeholders began meeting to articulate and define their new priorities for the future of the Othello Urban Village. The result of this work was summarized in January 2010 in the Othello Neighborhood Plan Update. Creating a vital, pedestrian friendly, transit-oriented Town Center, a central theme of the initial neighborhood plan, continues to be a neighborhood priority. Specific goals include developing a vibrant neighborhood core that concentrates housing, commercial uses, services and living-wage employment opportunities— a hub that is well served by transit and non-motorized travel options. This Urban Design Framework is a blueprint for how the physical elements of the neighborhood plan update can be realized.



Othello Town Center Action Team

In May of 2010 Othello community members and the City of Seattle formed a Town Center action team to assist in the implementation of goals, strategies and action items identified in the recent neighborhood plan update. In October this team met to further define the vision and make specific recommendations on how to change the physical form of the neighborhood to make the Othello Town Center more vital, walkable and economically successful.

OTHELLO TOWN CENTER URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Key action items from the Othello plan update.

- Modify station area overlay zoning to retain or add affordable commercial space.
- Encourage more pedestrian traffic and “eyes on the street” in both the commercial and residential portions of new developments by encouraging dense development in the Town Center.
- Within mixed-use zones in the Station Area Overlay District, consider minimum residential densities (related to the zoning designations)
- Seek sites that are appropriate for green business opportunities
- Using neighborhood design guidelines, an urban design framework plan, and street design plans, establish the context for, and characteristics of a dense, pedestrian-friendly Town Center with a vibrant commercial core that addresses Town Center growth.
- Through processes that engage community members, consider and evaluate the application of zoning designations and related development regulations that are most likely to achieve the urban design framework plan. Include evaluation of new regulatory and programmatic tools as they become available.
- Rezone key opportunity sites to encourage redevelopment of parcels around the light rail station in a manner that incorporates housing, commercial services (such as a grocery store and small businesses) and amenities.
- Evaluate proposed height and land use changes within the Town Center.
- Explore rezone of block between MLK Jr Way S and 43rd Ave S from S Othello to S Webster to 65’ height, especially along S Othello to create consistent frontage along Othello Park.
- Maintain ongoing collaboration with Sound Transit, property owners, and community members to pursue re-development opportunities in the station area.
- Assess/confirm utility capacity issues (wastewater, storm water, drinking water) related to expected growth and proposed zoning. Develop strategy to address any capacity constraints identified.
- Promote retail, restaurant and entertainment uses that are pedestrian-oriented and provide a high level of street activity.
- Encourage well-designed residential infill development to increase the housing supply and strengthen the vitality of the Town Center
- Explore on-street parking alternatives such as off-peak parking on MLK Jr Way S, and parking on one side of the street.
- Work with community to identify measures for residential streets, such as traffic circles, on-street parking, and street trees to mitigate impacts from nearby arterials.

URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Othello Station West (Safeway block)

- Grocery store
- Bank
- Restaurants
- Create opportunities for ethnic retail businesses (affordable)
- Create Civic Plaza – flexible community outdoor open space
- Enhance streetscape along MLK and Othello
- Investigate potential strategies to break up “large” block
- Refer to Options 1-4 above

Othello Station East

- Enhance and expand existing plaza
- Activate perimeter with retail and ground related housing
- Improve pedestrian conditions along MLK
- Investigate potential strategies to break up “large” block

Street Typologies:

39th Avenue South – “Neighborhood Green Street”

- Slow vehicle speed
- Pedestrian oriented
- Provide on-street parking

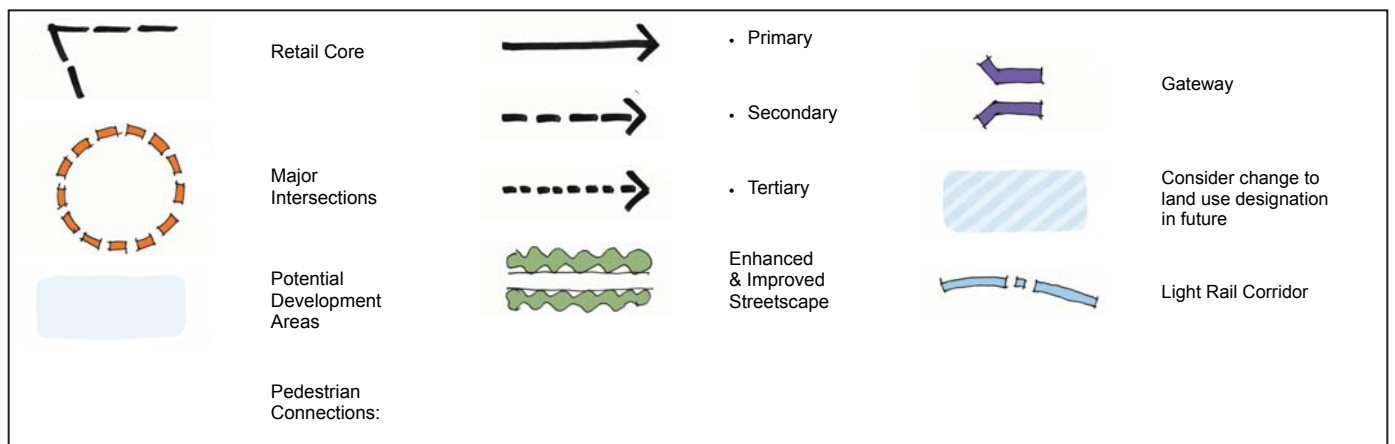
- Provide generous streetscape/landscape amenities
- Opportunity to block off street for a Farmers Market or other events

Myrtle Street – “Complete Street”

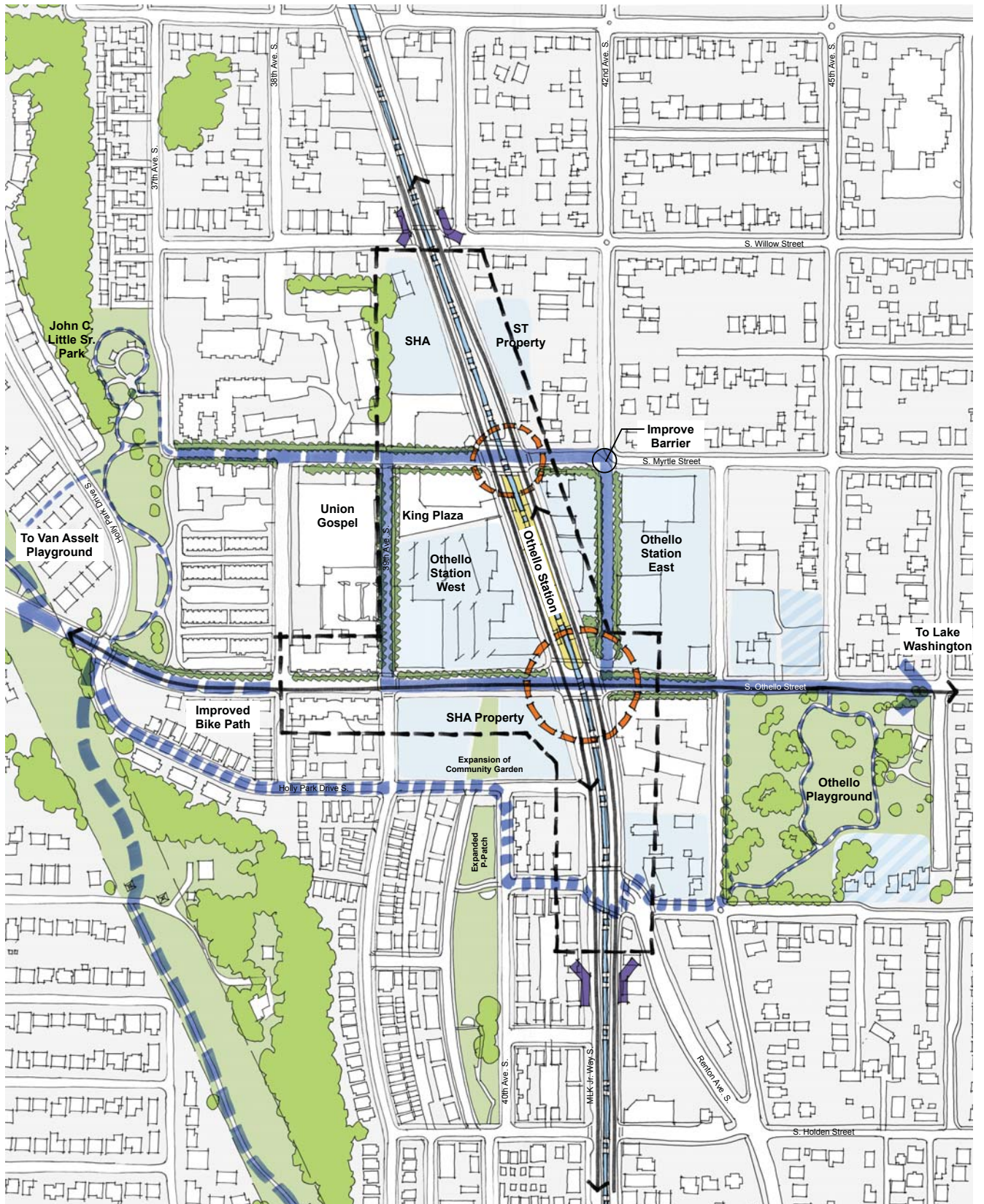
- Street section to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles comfortably and safely
- Provide generous streetscape/landscape amenities; pedestrian lighting and tree lined street
- Designated as a major east/west connector

Othello Street – “Major Landscaped Pedestrian Street”

- Accommodate significant amount of traffic, both cars and transit movement, while providing a safe walking and biking connection and environment
- Provide generous streetscape/landscape amenities
- Promote safety and clarity at the major intersection of MLK and Othello - south entry to the light rail station



OTHELLO TOWN CENTER URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK



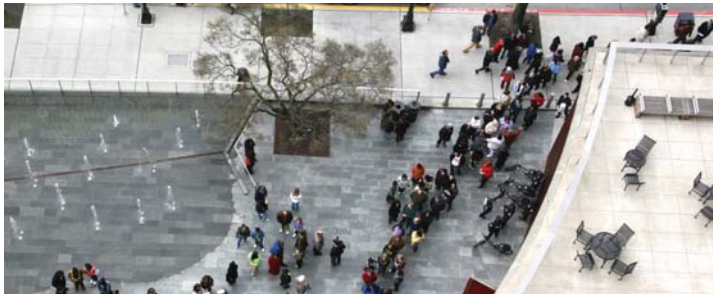
IMPROVING STREETS AND PUBLIC SPACES



Right of way improvements

The current auto-oriented nature of the Town Center is particularly inhospitable to pedestrians, cyclists and transit patrons. The Othello Update proposes a variety of street improvements.

EXAMPLES OF CIVIC PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE



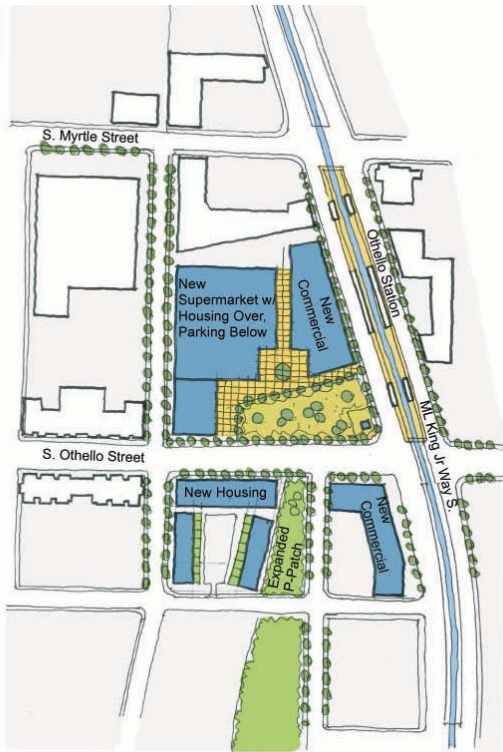
IMPROVING PUBLIC SPACES



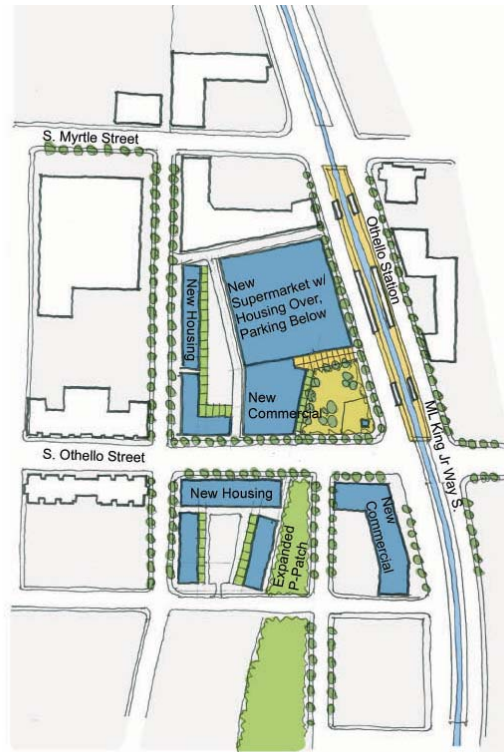
Othello Station West: Option 1



Othello Station West: Option 2



Othello Station West: Option 3



Othello Station West: Option 4

Civic Plaza options.

GATEWAYS

The Othello community emphasized the importance of establishing gateway elements to better define the neighborhood's emerging town center. Gateways of this kind are an urban design tool that can transform utilitarian transportation corridors into memorable points of arrival. By definition gateway elements are in highly visible, heavily traveled locations. Their design should benefit from broad community input and represent the highest level of design excellence. The following types of gateways options would be appropriate for the Othello Town Center.



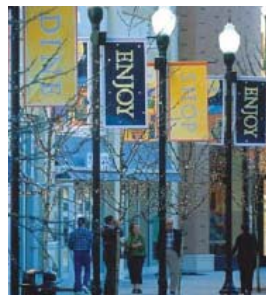
Signage

Signs whether simple or ornate are an effective way to clearly mark the town center boundary. The City of Seattle can assist communities in developing neighborhood specific welcoming signs.



Physical structures

Structures such as pylons and sculptures can signify entrance.



Unique Streetscape Elements

Elements such as pedestrian scaled lighting, distinctive tree species, directional signs and seasonal banners and plantings can define the distinctive quality of the Town Center.

LAND USE AND BUILDING TYPES

Structure Height and Bulk

A necessary component to achieving a vital Town Center is greater pedestrian activity and residential density. To achieve this goal the Plan Update recommends increased building heights at the core, see page 13.

Many members of the Othello community supported additional building height at the core of the town center but wished to see appropriate transitions to adjacent lower densities.

Lowrise 3 Description

The Lowrise 3 zone provides for a variety of housing types in existing multifamily neighborhoods of moderate scale. LR-3 accommodates residential growth within designated urban villages and station area overlay districts. A mix of small to moderate scale multifamily housing is encouraged including apartments, townhouses and rowhouses.



Neighborhood Commercial 2 Description

The Neighborhood Commercial 2 zone is designed to encourage a moderately sized, pedestrian-oriented shopping area that provides a full range of shops and services for the surrounding neighborhood. Typically buildings in this zone have four or five levels of residences above a level of shops at the ground floor.



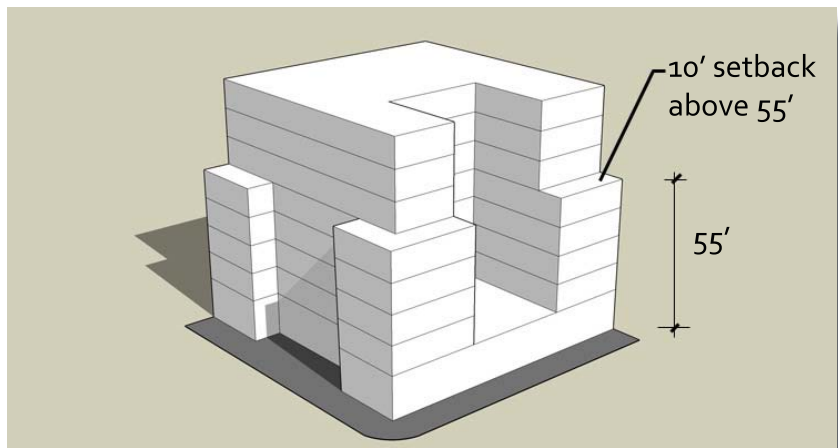
The NC3-85' project to the right demonstrates how upper level setbacks and building modulation can effectively reduce building bulk



Upper level set-back

Specific recommendations

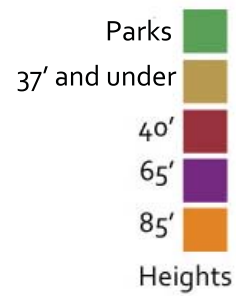
An upper-level setback of ten feet from all street property lines shall be required for buildings over 55 feet in height.



STRUCTURE HEIGHT AND BULK



The core of the Urban Village offers the greatest opportunity for infill development.



LAND USE AND BUILT FORM

Enhancing the Public Realm

To ensure a walkable Town Center this plan recommends that pedestrian oriented retail and amenity be concentrated, (see 'Core street activator/storefront character' zone page 9). This area should be rich with amenities including, seating, pedestrian scaled lighting, directional signage, on-street parking, overhead weather protection, and improved crosswalks.

The Othello Town Center is constrained by steep topography to the west, medium density residential the north and south and single family residential to the east. Increasing residential and commercial intensity and density at the Town Center core is a key recommendation of this framework.



The Othello Town Center today.

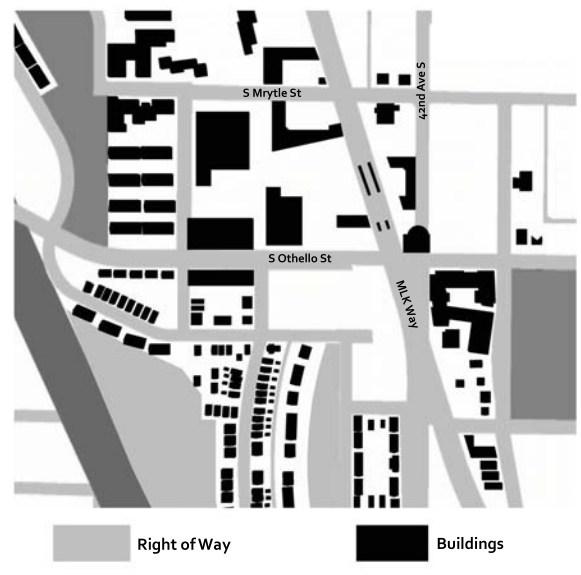


Othello Park Slide



Physical Context

The center of the Othello Urban Village is relatively flat with steep slopes to the west and more moderate slopes to the east.



The core of the Othello Town Center is currently underdeveloped.

Accessing Growth Capacity

The Department of Planning and Development utilizes and maintains a development capacity model. This model estimates the amount of new development that could be built in the City by comparing existing land uses, housing units and commercial square feet to what could be built under current or proposed zoning. The difference between potential and existing development yields the capacity for new development. This capacity is measured as the number of housing units, the amount of commercial square feet and the number of potential jobs that could be added.

Development capacity is not a prediction that a certain amount of development will occur in some fixed time period. The capacity estimates do not include a time dimension because they do not incorporate any direct measurement of demand, which would help determine when parcels would be developed. Many parcels in the city today have zoning that allows for more development than currently exists on them, but not all of them are available or have a demand for development. Consider a single-family house in a commercial zone that is occupied by an owner who has no plans to sell. Some day that land will change hands and the new owner may be more willing to develop the parcel to its full development potential.

For the purposes of determining development capacity it is assumed within the model that development will eventually occur regardless of market forces. Therefore, development capacity is not a forecast and has no planning horizon. It is simply an estimate of the additional development that could occur under the current zoning regulations. This additional development could happen all in one year or not at all depending on the economy, attractiveness to development, or other market conditions. Capacity represents the amount of new growth that could be accommodated. The amount of growth that is expected to occur and that City policy intends to accommodate is established as the 20-year growth targets in the Comprehensive Plan.

Development Capacity Analysis

The actual level of development activity that occurs is controlled by a variety of future factors, many of which are beyond our ability to predict or influence. These factors include such things as the future demand for a particular type of development (such as for townhouses, high-amenity multifamily or small-unit multifamily), whether the owner of any particular land is willing to sell or redevelop it, the financial feasibility of developing the land, and the intensity of development when it does occur. Other factors, such as the relative attractiveness of certain areas for living and commerce, and the relative densities allowed by the existing zoning, can cause some areas to be developed earlier or later than others. No one can predict with certainty the total effect of all these factors on the choices made by land developers.

Othello Town Center

20 Year Growth Targets			
	Existing	Proposed	Increase
Residential	1013 units	1118 units	105 units
Employment	138 jobs	242 jobs	104 jobs

