



photo by City of Bellingham

# City of Bellingham

## Design Guidelines

June 2022



# Acknowledgements

*We would like to honor and acknowledge that these are the ancestral, unceded homelands of the Coast Salish Peoples past and present.*

*We express our deepest respect and gratitude to our indigenous neighbors the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe.*



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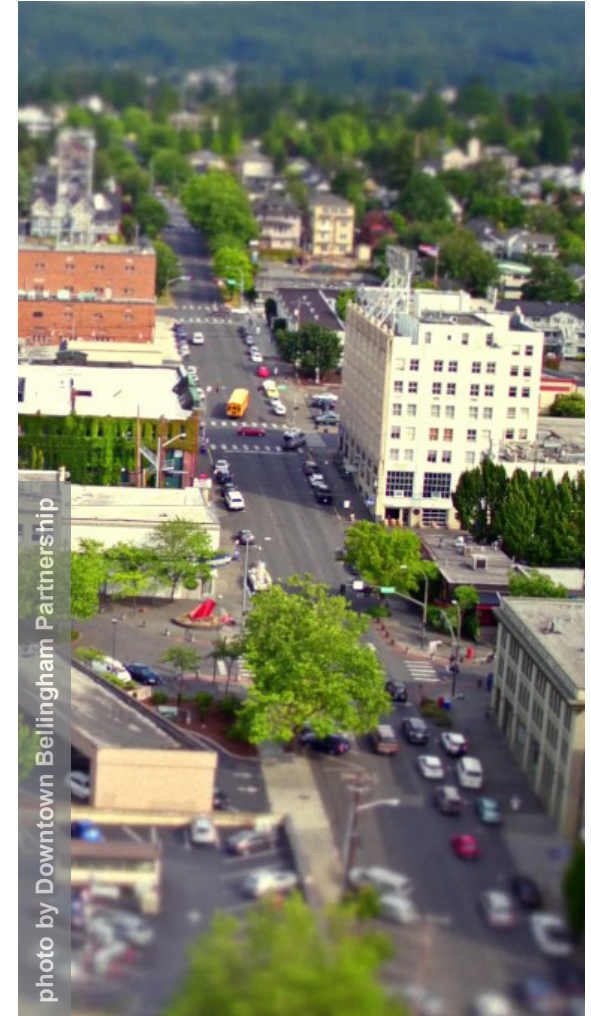
# Introduction

**PURPOSE** | The purpose of the Bellingham Design Review Process is to shape the design of the built environment to enhance Bellingham's sense of place, reflect the community's values, and contribute to the vitality of the City.

The Bellingham Urban Village Design Guidelines establish a set of intents by which projects - including new construction, and additions or alterations to existing and historic buildings - are evaluated during the Design Review process. The Guidelines are a flexible tool for guiding property owners, developers, and design professionals through the design process, from project inception through completion. Historically significant buildings exist in most Bellingham urban villages, and Downtown and Fairhaven have National Register Historic Districts at their core. The Design Guidelines provide a basis for making decisions about the appropriate treatment of existing and historic buildings, the design of compatible new construction and the preservation of Bellingham's broader historic landscape.

The Bellingham Urban Village Design Guidelines form a framework to guide project teams in developing innovative design solutions for context-sensitive urban developments. It is a supplement to the specific land use standards of the Bellingham Municipal Code, Title 20 Land Use Development.

**APPLICABILITY** | The Bellingham Urban Village Design Guidelines apply to projects within the City's Urban Villages as defined in Bellingham Municipal Code 20.25. (see Appendix A for list of current urban villages and locations).



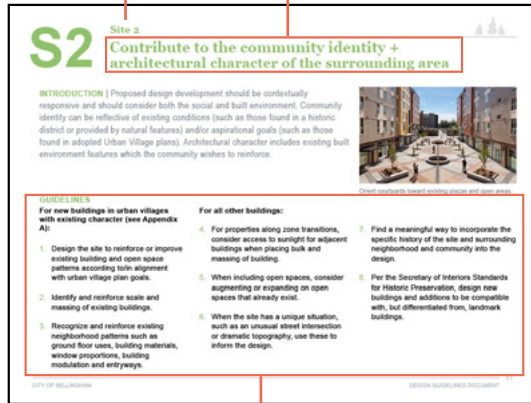




# How to Use This Document

## Category

## Intent



## Guideline



## Images

**Category |** This document is organized into three categories. Site, Public Realm, and Building Design. The Site category addresses the relationship between building massing and location to natural systems and the overall Urban Village. The Public Realm category addresses the relationship between buildings and adjacent sidewalks, streets, open spaces to support the public experience. The Building Design category addresses the overall architectural concept and materiality. Each category is represented by a letter and includes three or four intents.

**Intent |** Intents are desired outcomes for the project and surrounding Urban Village. Project teams are encouraged to work with City of Bellingham Planners to identify intents relevant to their project early in the design process. The statement of intent is located at the top of the page and is supported by an introductory paragraph, which gives the rationale for the intent. Each intent is followed by a series of guidelines.

**Guideline |** Guidelines are suggested approaches for a project to meet the intent. Not all guidelines will be relevant for every project. Projects teams may implement a combination of the guidelines and/or propose alternate approaches unique to the project that together meet the intent. Projects will be evaluated holistically.

**Images |** Images and diagrams provide visual examples of approaches for projects to meet the intent. Unless otherwise noted, all images are courtesy of Schemata Workshop.



# Glossary

**Abut** | When two spaces share a border or are directly adjacent

**Accessible** | Space or feature meets universal design or ADA standards for ease of use; space that is publicly approachable or usable

**Adaptive Plants** | Species of plants originally native to other regions that have become acclimated and established in a new area without being harmful to existing native plants or wildlife, and are able to thrive without human intervention

**Arcade** | Covered passageway (often arched) usually at ground level and lined with retail spaces (on one or both sides)

**Architectural Character** | Defining attributes of a building or neighborhood style

**Architectural Features** | Details, elements, and components of a building's design

**Architectural Design Concept** | A clear idea, notion or intention that serves as the backbone of a design process

**Articulation** | Method of styling the joints of a design to reveal how the parts fit into the whole by emphasizing each part separately

**Awning** | Overhead covering (often fabric covering a metal frame) shielding entries and building openings

**Building Elevation** | The side or façade of a building

**Building Features** | *See architectural features*

**Building Environment** | Man-made structures and elements viewed collectively as an environment

**Canopy** | Overhead building projection at street level to shade or shelter from weather conditions. Often metal structure over which a fabric or metal covering is attached

**Cladding** | Exterior finish material that provides protection to the building envelope

**Community Identity** | The combination of architectural character, building styles, and intangible features of a neighborhood

**CPTED Principles** | Acronym stands for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. These are design principles that increase public safety and security

**Cross-Ventilation** | The circulation of fresh air through open windows, doors, or other openings – generally located on opposite sides of the space being ventilated

**Datum Line** | A horizontal line used as a point of reference in design

**Facade** | a building face, or side of building

**Fenestration** | The arrangement of windows and doors on the building



# Glossary

**Gateway Key Intersection** | An intersection that defines the arrival to an Urban Village

**Glazing** | Glass windows

**Historic Building** | A building or structure that is significant in the history, architecture, or culture of the area

**Human Scale** | Proportioning of the environment for the physical and sensory capabilities of people

**Loggia** | A covered exterior gallery or corridor usually on an upper level, but sometimes at ground level. The outer wall is open and usually supported by a series of columns

**Marquee** | Horizontal building projection above street level to shade or shelter pedestrians from weather conditions. Rigid and non-retractable, may hold signage at street face or visible from sidewalk

**Mid-Block Connections** | A pedestrian pathway inside or between buildings connecting two sides of a city block

**Modulation** | Portions of building a facade that step back or project forward

**Natural** | Organically occurring; not human-made

**Natural Features** | Organic preexisting site elements and qualities

**Natural Systems** | Processes, environmental conditions, or organically occurring cycles that impact a potential site

**Pedestrian Key Intersection** | An intersection with high pedestrian activity and that should be designed/improved to be responsive to the needs of pedestrians

**Pedestrian Realm** | Public space designated for pedestrians, often the space between the curb and building frontage

**Permeability** | The ability to physically pass through a building façade, space, or material

**Porosity** | Permeability or the ability to let water pass through

**Public Realm** | Space which is open and accessible to the general public

**Regionally Appropriate** | Elements or materials well suited to the climate or local character of the site

**Scale (Pedestrian/Neighborhood)** | The relative size or extent of something

**Social Environment** | The combination of social and intangible elements viewed collectively as an environment

**Solar Gain** | The increase in temperature of a space that is caused by solar radiation

**Surrounding Area** | Areas that are nearby, around, or directly adjacent to a site, neighborhood

**Terminus** | The end of a street or path

**Transom** | High window located above a door or at top of wall





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# Glossary

**View Terminus** | The quality of grabbing a viewer's attention

**Visual Interest** | The end point of a view corridor

**Wayfinding** | Signage or other visual way of guiding people through the physical environment

**Weather Protection** | Overhead canopy, marquee, awning or other building overhang to protect pedestrians from weather

# S1

## Site 1

# INTENT | Preserve and use natural systems and features



**INTRODUCTION** | Successful site planning is responsive to natural systems and features and uses native materials and landscaping. On urban sites which have seen prior development, many natural systems and features have been previously altered. Care should be taken to both consider the effect of natural systems and incorporate existing natural features where possible and practicable.

## GUIDELINES

1. Organize the site to frame visual connections to surrounding landscape and natural features.
2. Organize the building and exterior spaces based on solar orientation, wind, and other natural systems.
3. Integrate natural and regionally appropriate materials.
4. Model new landscaping after native/ adaptive habitats from the surrounding region. Plan for low maintenance, durability, and longevity.
5. Plan the site and mass of buildings to reinforce and celebrate existing natural features and systems.
6. Preserve and incorporate regionally appropriate vegetation for wildlife habitats.
7. Incorporate Green Stormwater Infrastructure as outlined in City Center Street Design Standards or other green infrastructure techniques.



Orient exterior walkways and courtyards to the south.





Stagger building heights with slope.



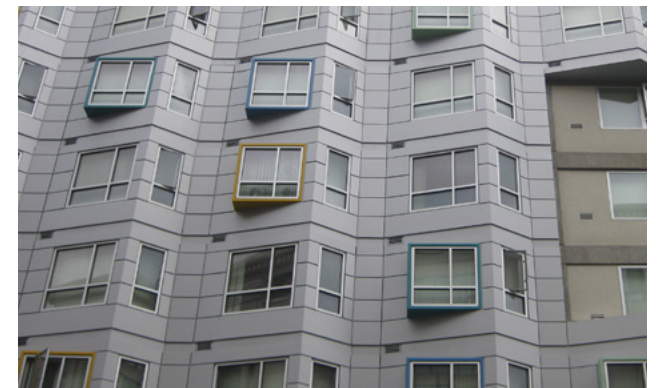
Use local vegetation for climate appropriate landscaping.



Integrate natural systems into landscaping.



Use continuous horizontal bands and varying storefronts to accommodate slope.



Orient windows towards sunlight and views.



# S2

## Site 2

# INTENT | Contribute to the community identity + architectural character of the surrounding area

**INTRODUCTION** | Proposed design development should be contextually responsive and should consider both the social and built environment. Community identity can be reflective of existing conditions (such as those found in a historic district or provided by natural features) and/or aspirational goals (such as those found in adopted Urban Village plans). Architectural character includes existing built environment features which the community wishes to reinforce.

## GUIDELINES

### For new buildings in urban villages with existing character (see Appendix A):

1. Design the site to reinforce or improve existing building and open space patterns according to/in alignment with urban village plan goals.
2. Identify and reinforce scale and massing of existing buildings.
3. Recognize and reinforce existing neighborhood patterns such as ground floor uses, building materials, window proportions, building modulation and entryways.

### For all other buildings:

4. For properties along zone transitions, consider access to sunlight for adjacent buildings when placing bulk and massing of building.
5. When including open spaces, consider augmenting or expanding on open spaces that already exist.
6. When the site has a unique situation, such as an unusual street intersection or dramatic topography, use these to inform the design.
7. Find a meaningful way to incorporate the specific history of the site and surrounding neighborhood and community into the design.
8. Per the Secretary of Interiors Standards for Historic Preservation, design new buildings and additions to be compatible with, but differentiated from, landmark buildings.



Orient courtyards toward existing plazas and open areas.



Use site conditions to create shared common spaces accessible to residents and the public.



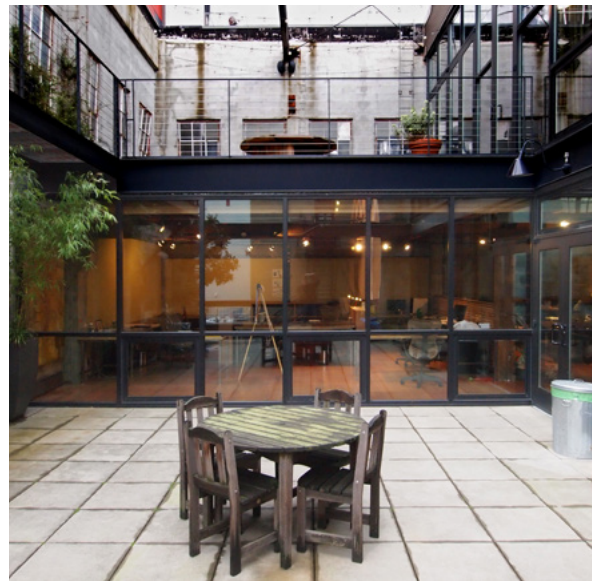
Orient balconies and courtyards towards existing plazas and open areas.



Use changes in materiality to emphasize a unique moment.



Create layers of privacy by using landscaping as screening.



Promote connections between floor levels by creating gathering spaces with shared views.



Emphasize throughways and mid-block connections with wide walkways.



# S3

## Site 3

# INTENT | Organize the site to prioritize the public realm



**INTRODUCTION** | Strengthen the most desirable aspects of the surrounding area and design the proposed development in a way that supports the public realm. Building edges and open space should support and enhance the vibrancy of public life.

## GUIDELINES

1. Make a strong physical connection with the adjacent street. Consider topography and streetscape form as well as function.
2. To accommodate an inviting and activated pedestrian environment of sidewalk cafes and other outdoor space, incorporate setbacks, loggia, arcades, or insets at ground level.
3. When private interior courtyards abut the street edge, architectural elements can be used to continue the urban street wall and delineate private space.
4. To support a vibrant pedestrian realm, entrances to retail and commercial uses should be prioritized along the main streets, and entrances to private uses such as residential entries should be located along quieter, less public, zones.
5. To provide visual interest for passersby, prioritize, differentiate, and activate ground floor spaces along the public realm.
6. Locate common spaces within the building to overlook the public realm.
7. Locate driveways, garbage collection, and utility spaces out of view from the pedestrian realm.
8. To promote visual connectivity and pedestrian sense of safety, locate features such as entries, windows, decks, and patios on the building elevations fronting the public realm.
9. Coordinate the location of building entries with adjacent circulation paths.

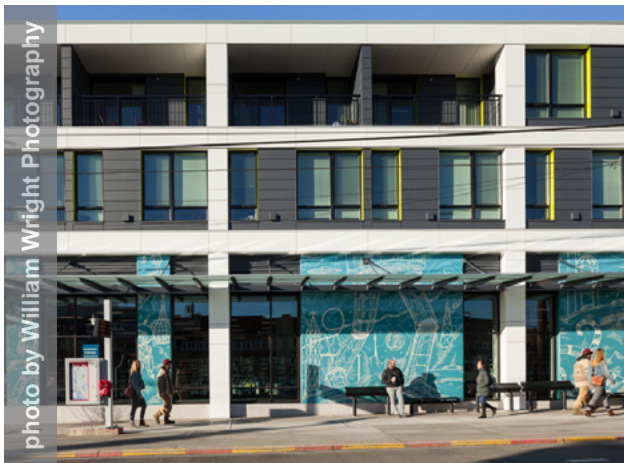


Create mid-block connections to provide more opportunities for public engagement.





Use vegetation to screen private spaces and activate otherwise blank walls.



Provide visual interest through transparent retail storefronts and art. Integrate transit stops into architecture.



Locate gathering spaces and balconies at building entrances and public facing facades.



Use landscaping to indicate private entries.



Use a variety of planter sizes and heights to integrate buildings into their sites.

# P1

## Public Realm 1

# INTENT | Create an attractive, safe, lively, and inviting community-oriented pedestrian environment

**INTRODUCTION** | The public street should be a significant focus for site and building design as a true community space. When designed with care the public street becomes more than just a throughway – it becomes a destination. A key design consideration should be to create connectivity between ground-floor uses and the streetscape, with particular respect paid to differentiating between public and private spaces. Proposed street-level commercial spaces should invite and encourage the public to stop, browse, engage with the use, and linger.

## GUIDELINES

1. To encourage the development of a successful retail environment, vary the expression of the storefront and provide a change in rhythm to maintain pedestrian visual interest.
2. To create a predictable and comfortable place to walk and window shop, provide continuous weather protection.
3. To bring interior activity into the public realm, incorporate exterior program elements that support interior uses.
4. Use a combination of lighting, glazing and textures to provide visual depth and interest to the storefront.
5. Setback the building at ground level to create a more generous pedestrian zone. Create an inviting environment with seating, landscaping, and interesting textures and materials.
6. Locate building entries adjacent to public open space.
7. Locate signage at a visible height and near retail and commercial entries.
8. Provide opportunities for dynamic and visually appealing displays along retail or commercial windows. Consider low-reflective glazing to increase visibility of activity.
9. Create inviting seating areas near building entrances and open spaces.
10. Incorporate artwork at the pedestrian and neighborhood scale that reflects the history and character of the surrounding area.



Dedicate ground level space to sidewalk activation and public seating.





Use openings to create indoor/outdoor connections.



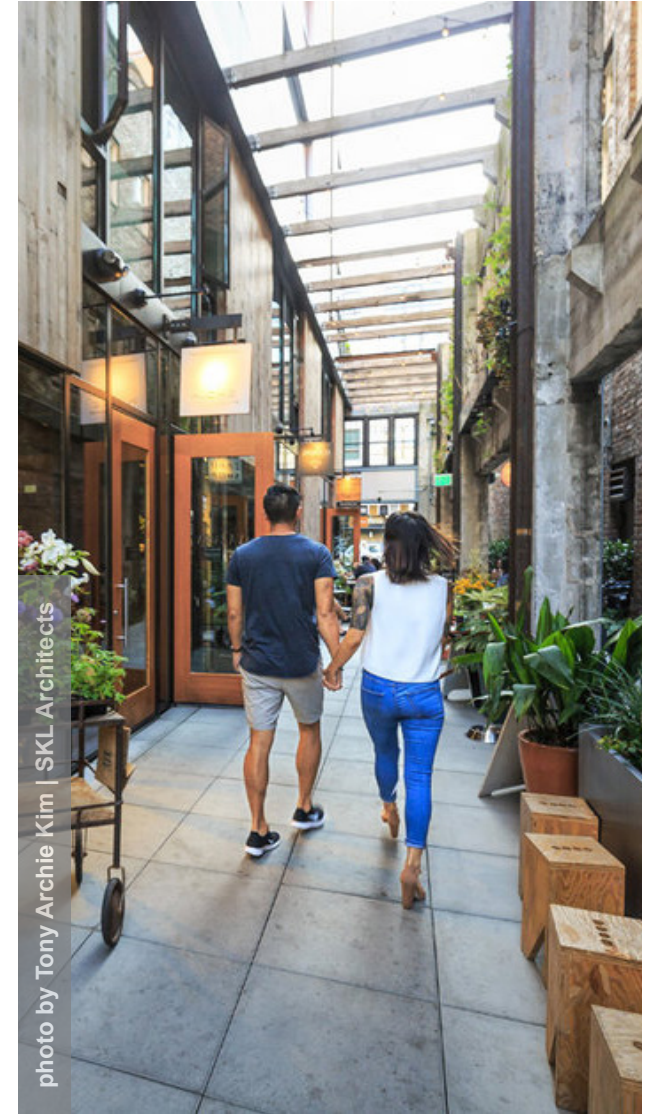
Include benches and other public programming.



Terrace green space to invite casual public gatherings.



Create safe spaces for pedestrians to engage with commercial and public amenities.



Consider human scale when creating commercial avenues.





**INTRODUCTION** | Buildings will be enjoyed from a variety of different perspectives and locations. Consider a variety of key vantage points and design visual interest cues appropriately scaled to each view. Small-scale detail creates interest at the pedestrian level, while large-scale detail and massing modulation provides interest at higher points or longer viewing distances.

### GUIDELINES

1. Differentiate the primary entrance with size, materials, insets, and/or lighting.
2. Highlight special architectural features with downlit lighting fixtures that are cohesive with the overall building design.
3. Create visual and tactile interest at the ground level of buildings by incorporating elements such as lighting, pedestrian-scale signs, container plants, or other vegetation.
4. Recognize that the first vertical 30 feet of the building is within the pedestrian field of vision, and carefully consider the materials and fenestration.
5. To frame views of the street and buildings beyond, incorporate arcades or loggia at the base of the building.
6. If large blank walls cannot be avoided, provide visual interest with artwork, landscaping, or architectural detailing.
7. Provide visual interest by incorporating a combination of color, texture, pattern, and transparency.
8. Provide visibility to activities by keeping glazing free of signs, shelving, obscuring film, or shades. If incorporating reflective or patterned glazing in the storefront, limit to areas outside of the pedestrian eye level.



Add articulation or art to largely blank facades.



Set buildings back from the property line to allow for more pedestrian level outdoor space.



Create gathering spaces along circulation routes to invite activation and integrate the building into the site.



Place planters along sidewalks to add color and delineate areas of use.



Place public seating along pedestrian boulevards by dedicating ample sidewalk space to gathering nodes.



Use plantings and other furnishings to add visual interest and privacy screening.



# P3

## Public Realm 3

# INTENT | Create a network of safe, convenient, and attractive off-street linkages for pedestrians

**INTRODUCTION** | Opportunities to provide pedestrian connections through a project site should be considered. Such linkages may reflect pre-development connections or facilitate neighborhood access to commercial areas or public uses such as schools. These linkages should be designed consistent with CPTED principles.

### GUIDELINES

1. If there are on-site pedestrian walkways, provide a connection to the street.
2. Locate walkways in active areas visible from adjoining spaces.
3. Consider pedestrian access through the site to connect streets, alleys, and existing public spaces.
4. Consider active retail passageways to provide safe mid-block connections.
5. Identify and connect points of interest in the surrounding area. Use design elements such as signage, changes in paving material, and lighting to create a wayfinding system.
6. Provide weather protection for pedestrian comfort.
7. Consider how access, lighting, visual connections, and signage contribute to pedestrian safety.
8. Provide a physical separation between vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian pathways.
9. Provide visual connections to and through publicly accessible space to encourage use.
10. Consider a variety of scales of public open space.



Design atriums to create transition spaces that bridge indoor and outdoor activity.





Add overhead vegetation for seasonal shading.



Use circulation space as commercial frontage and introduce a range of materials and products to add visual interest.



Make plazas wide and flexible enough to accommodate markets and special events.



Engage a wide array of people by adding features at a range of scales and with a variety of intended uses.



# P4

## Public Realm 4

# INTENT | Enhance the overall visual cohesiveness of the surrounding area

**INTRODUCTION** | Buildings exist within the context of the neighborhood fabric; they do not exist in isolation. The surrounding buildings are part of the site, and buildings should be site-specific. Buildings should enhance the surrounding area by continuing a commercial or residential street wall, referencing the detail and articulation of the ground floor, and upper story scale and patterning/modulation. Acknowledging that historic construction materials and installation techniques may be impractical for modern construction, new buildings should not aesthetically mimic or replicate historic buildings. Recognizing proposed buildings will become references for future development, care and attention should be paid to unprecedented architectural expressions.

## GUIDELINES

1. Draw inspiration from, but do not replicate, surrounding buildings. Proportion, scale, modulation, repetition, window insets, and building materials are existing patterns to consider.
2. Reference horizontal elements from adjacent buildings and continue the datum lines, especially those visible to pedestrians.
3. Consider historic building patterns of lot width or modulation which might inform design.
4. For full city block development, provide richness and variety at the pedestrian level. Reduce the scale of development by incorporating open space, change of building modularity, materials, storefront expression, and different types of overhead protection.
5. Consider repeating elements, such as balconies, exterior shading, and bay windows, to add variety, depth, and rhythm to the façade.
6. Emphasize a corner site at a key neighborhood intersection with prominent architectural elements. See Appendix A for locations of key intersections.
7. Design a building at the terminus of a street or view corridor to visually highlight its prominent location.
8. If no preexisting buildings are consistent with the vision for the area, as described in the Urban Village Plan, consider how the proposed project will be referenced in future development.



Complement the surrounding buildings and open spaces.



photo by Tony Archie Kim | SKL Architects

Design facades that relate to and reinforce the proportion and materiality of surrounding buildings.



Highlight public spaces with architectural details.



photo by Timothy McDorland Onion Flats

Use textures, patterns, and elements from local buildings to inform facade design.



# B1

## Building Design 1

### INTENT | Express a clear architectural design concept appropriate for the proposed structures and contextually compatible with the surrounding area

**INTRODUCTION** | A well-designed building positively contributes to its streetscape, supporting commercial and pedestrian activity at ground level and offering visual interest at upper levels. The composition and architectural detailing of building elevations has a major impact on the perceived scale of buildings and their interaction with the public realm. Building elevations should be well-resolved, with a size and proportion appropriate to the streetscape and an emphasis on human scale.

#### GUIDELINES

1. Using diagrams and visuals, create a clear concept for the building, supported by design choices.
2. Design architectural features that are an integral part of the building.
3. Develop the massing of the building to respect any retained historic elements.
4. Consider the proportion, rhythm, scale, and composition of all building facades.
5. Design fencing to be an integral part of the architectural concept, with consistent use of detailing, material, or color.
6. Incorporate features that create a visually distinct roof form.
7. Incorporate human-scaled details at ground level that emphasize the building base and pedestrian realm.
8. Match adjacent building ground floor to ceiling heights in historic districts.
9. Provide transom windows over marquees and canopies to maximize daylight into storefronts, where appropriate.
10. When working within a neighborhood with existing architectural character, continue fenestration rhythms and patterning from adjacent buildings.
11. Design storefronts for a variety of uses at the outset and anticipate adaptation over time.

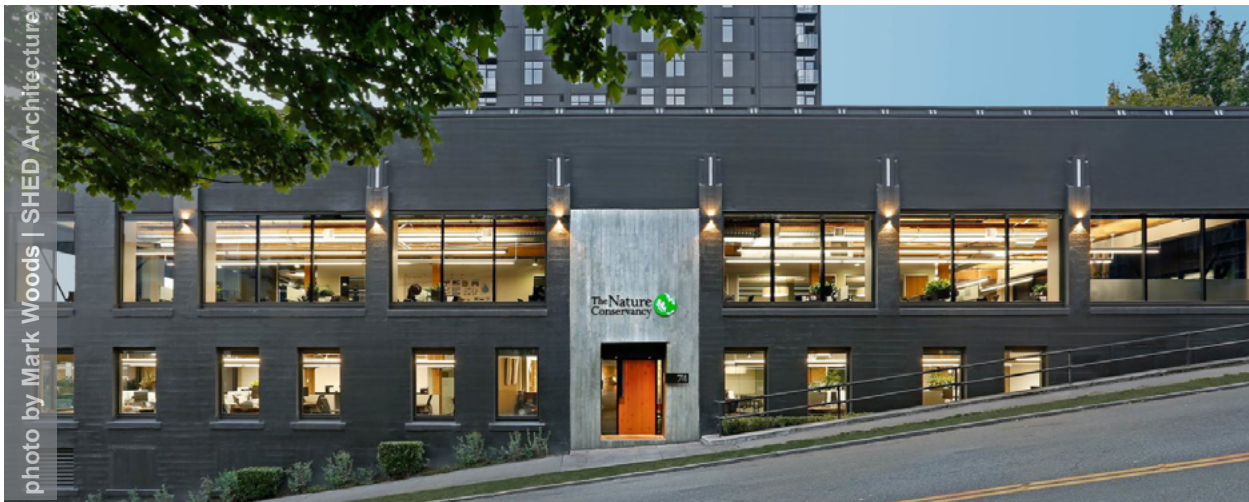


Use a different materiality at the ground level to indicate a difference in privacy and programming.





Differentiate the roof plane and other parts of the building.



Respect existing historic building features, as well as the surrounding context.



Design storefronts to adapt to future changes.

# B2

## Building Design 2



# INTENT | Create high quality, durable, and interesting buildings that have texture and depth

**INTRODUCTION** | High quality buildings should provide a balanced composition of architectural elements, textures, materials, and color selections that respond to the character of the local area. Use varied materials, details, and contrasting colors to highlight feature elements, delineate breaks or reduce the impact of other building elements.

## GUIDELINES

1. Create depth and shadow lines within the building façade.
2. Create porosity and permeability by incorporating operable storefronts.
3. Select high quality materials, particularly at street level, such as stone, brick, tile, concrete, metal, or transparent glass.
4. Use materials appropriate to the scale and use of building.
5. Reinforce the pedestrian scale with repeating vertical elements.
6. Thoughtfully detail joints, attachments, and patterns of exterior cladding materials to create human-scaled depth and texture.
7. Incorporate a varied and durable palette of landscape materials to provide year round interest.
8. Employ a variety of types of weather protection appropriate to the scale of the building.
9. If no preexisting buildings are consistent with the vision for the area, as described in the Urban Village Plan, consider how the proposed building will be referenced in future development.



Engage the pedestrian realm with choice of materiality.





Use high quality materials on weather protection.



Use materials that create surface porosity on the facade.



Create opportunities for engagement with permeable, tactile pedestrian frontages.



Vary materiality according to building use and scale.



# B3

## Building Design 3

### INTENT | Reduce the overall impact on the environment and human health during and after construction

**INTRODUCTION** | The growth and development of our community has a large impact on the natural environment. The design, construction, and operations of the buildings in which we live and work are responsible for the consumption and depletion of many natural resources. Design choices such as materials and building systems impact the health and wellness of the people who use the spaces. Building design also influences transportation habits and other choices that impact human behavior.

#### GUIDELINES

1. Reuse existing structures or salvage materials from existing structures on site.
2. Locate windows and shading to benefit from passive design strategies such as promoting solar gain during cool months and cross ventilation during warm months.
3. Create community oriented spaces to increase resident support and interaction.
4. Use materials and systems that are locally-sourced and appropriate for the climate of the Pacific Northwest.
5. Use long-lasting durable materials.
6. When possible, manage site stormwater by directing it into landscaping and other non-potable applications.
7. Take advantage of the natural topography to minimize impacts of grading activities on the environment and water quality.
8. Coordinate the location of entrances and walkways with bus stops and other transportation facilities as appropriate to encourage bus travel. Where appropriate, provide convenient and attractive amenities in the immediate vicinity of bus stops.



photo by Cecile Septet | KDZ Architects

Create gathering nodes and community spaces with engaging, multi-dimensional facades.





photo by Lara Swimmer | Weinstein A+U

Use existing salvaged materials from the site in new ways.



Make space for community gathering.



Encourage biking with related amenities and storage.



photo by Sally Painter Photography

Include deep recessed balconies on west face to provide solar shading.



Find ways to incorporate hydrology into landscaping, using runnels and site water features.



# Appendix A | Urban Villages: Specific Design Character, Guidelines, and Maps

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# A1

## Barkley Urban Village



**INTRODUCTION** | Barkley Urban Village is a roughly 255- acre area surrounding Barkley Boulevard, bounded to the south along E. Illinois St. west of Woburn Street and the Railroad Trail east of Woburn Street, to the north along E. Sunset Drive / Vining Street, to the west behind the Regal Imax Cinemas, and to the east by Sussex Drive. The boundaries are in large part determined by natural edges – greenbelt edges to the south against the Railroad trail and forested areas to the east against existing residential development. Preserved and enhanced wetlands will sit toward the south and east, against the Barkley Blvd. edge.

**DESIGN CHARACTER SUMMARY** | A largely greenfield site, the Barkley Urban Village is characterized by its significant open space, access to trails and greenbelts, and forested wetlands offering habitat for wildlife and recreational opportunities for residents, users and visitors. Barkley today is interspersed with vacant land and uncompleted streets, a large light industrial building, newer shopping, entertainment, dining and office venues, a growing residential population, and parcels of open space to be preserved for public benefit. Like the others, Barkley Village is envisioned as a community in which people can live, work, and play. It is designed to maintain important characteristics such as view corridors and vistas, natural features and small businesses while continuing to provide a diverse mix of quality housing and commercial opportunities.



The newest residential project, the Weatherby, integrates diverse architecture, sustainability through the largest solar array in the county, and a unique (woonerf) pedestrian friendly street.

# A1

## Barkley Urban Village



### URBAN VILLAGE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

#### **Public Realm 1: Create an attractive, safe, lively, and inviting community-oriented pedestrian environment**

1. Develop abundant natural open space, parks and public art.

#### **Public Realm 3: Create a network of safe, convenient, and attractive off-street linkages for pedestrians.**

1. Increase walkability with enhanced pedestrian corridors and trails.

#### **Building Design 3: Reduce the overall impact on the environment and human health during and after construction.**

1. Adopt environmentally responsible practices, incorporating innovation and sustainability in building design, construction and operations.
2. Integrate thoughtful quality architecture, landscape design, food cultivation and opportunities to connect with nature.



A new connector trail from Barkley Blvd to the Railroad Trail



# A1 Barkley Urban Village Map



## Key Intersections: Barkley Urban Village

### INTERSECTION TYPES

Gateway/District Entrance

Pedestrian

Main Corridor/  
Primary Intersection

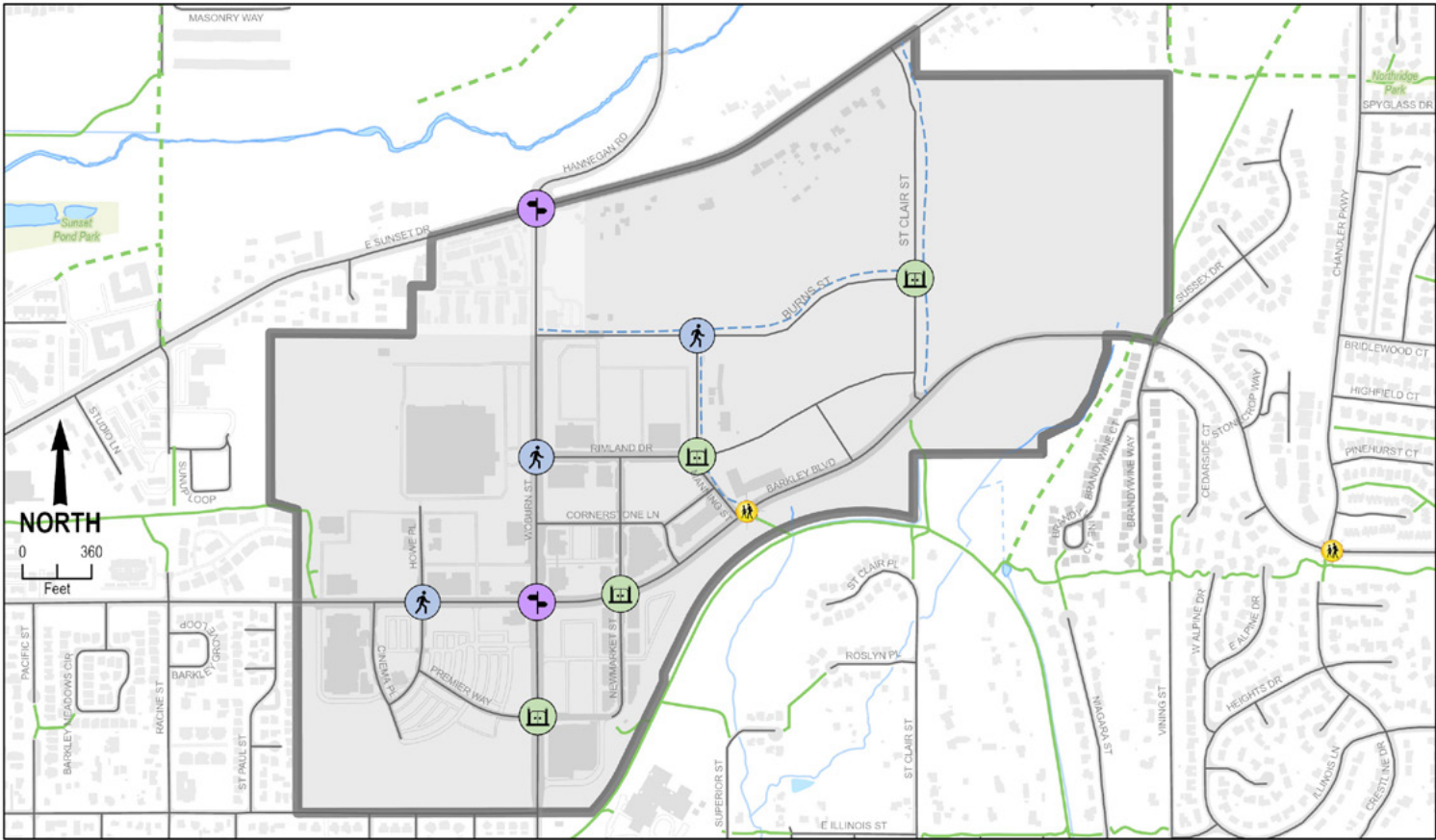
Urban Village Boundary

Flashing Crosswalk

Existing Trails

Proposed Trails - 2020 PRO Plan

Proposed Multimodal Trails



# A2

## Downtown District Urban Village



**INTRODUCTION** | Spanning 249 acres, Downtown Bellingham is the commercial, employment, civic and entertainment center for Whatcom County. Downtown has experienced building booms, retail exodus, and with concerted effort and support from the City has evolved into a multi-use neighborhood in the 21st century. The Downtown District provides jobs, housing, entertainment and services for a diverse and growing population and includes the Arts District and National Historic District which draw visitors and support tourism.

**DESIGN CHARACTER SUMMARY** | Historic buildings make up a key part of Downtown's character, although overall the Downtown District is an eclectic collection of new and old buildings. The Downtown land use areas are further defined as Commercial Core, Commercial Transition, Industrial Transition, and Residential Transition-1 and Residential Transition-2. Further descriptions of these areas can be found in the Downtown Plan.

**DOWNTOWN SUBAREA PLAN** | [link](#)

**CITY CENTER SUBAREA PLAN** | [link](#)



The intersection of Holly, Bay and Prospect Streets is a key area in the Arts District, as well as the Downtown National Historic District and greater urban village



The corner of W. Holly and Commercial Streets, with the historic Red Front Building in the foreground



# A2

## Downtown District Urban Village



### URBAN VILLAGE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

#### **Site 1: Preserve and use natural systems and features.**

1. Orient buildings adjacent to Whatcom Creek to promote activity and interaction along the creek. Provide visual interest to building elevations along the creek.

#### **Public Realm 1: Create an attractive, safe, lively, and inviting community-oriented pedestrian environment**

1. Maintain a clear definition of the street edge. Traditionally, the edge of the sidewalk was clearly defined as a “street wall,” which helps define the street as an urban space.

#### **Public Realm 2: Provide visual interest to and from buildings**

1. Along identified Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets, provide opportunities for visual or interactive links between businesses and pedestrians.
2. Provide features that are visually interesting and human scale, such as storefront windows, display cases, art and landscaping.

#### **Public Realm 4: Enhance the overall visual cohesiveness of the surrounding area**

1. Preserve the period of significance of historic buildings. Preservation of Bellingham’s heritage is important to its sense of community and its economic development.



Key Intersections:  
Downtown District Urban Village

INTERSECTION TYPES









Gateway/District Entrance

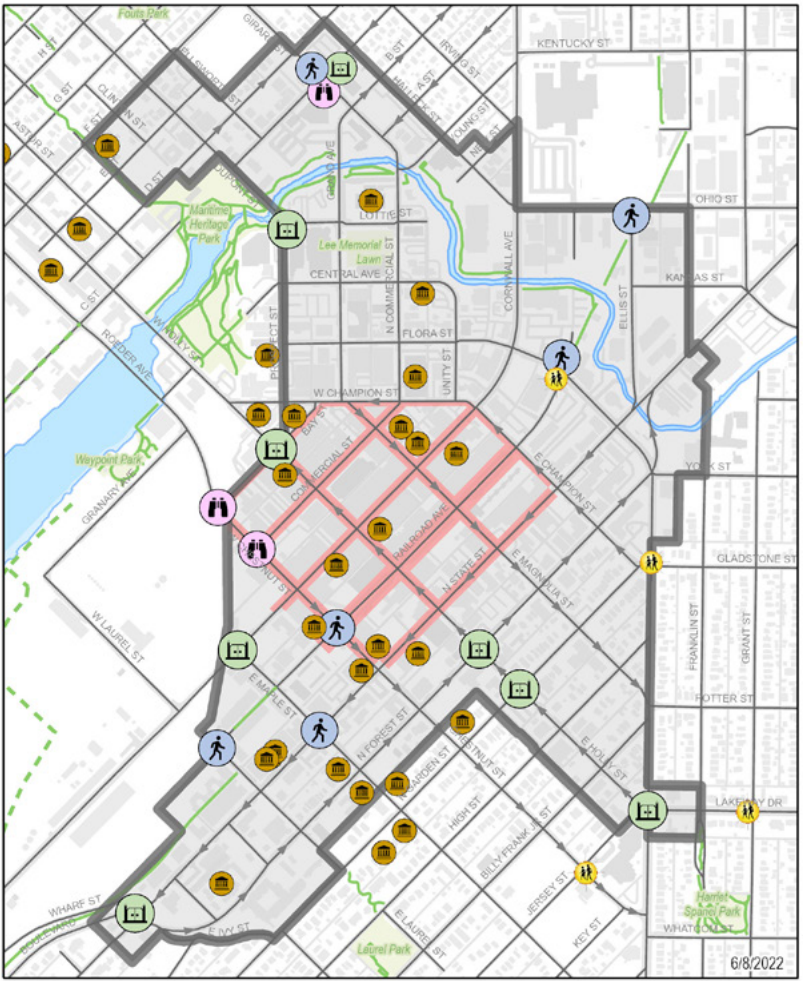


Terminal View



Pedestrian Connection

-  Urban Village Boundary
-  Historic Register Sites
-  Flashing Crosswalk
-  Existing Trails
-  Proposed Trails - 2020 PRO Plan
-  Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets (Ground Floor Commercial Use Required)





# A3 Fairhaven Urban Village



**INTRODUCTION** | Generally located in the southside of Bellingham on the southwest base of the South Hill neighborhood, west of the Happy Valley neighborhood, north of the Edgemoor neighborhood and borders Bellingham Bay to the west. Fairhaven contains some of Bellingham’s most historic structures and represents early commercial development with a high degree of maritime influence. The Fairhaven Urban Village includes the Fairhaven Historic District, a town site first platted in 1883 which encompasses an area of three and a quarter blocks and contains the village’s best preserved buildings. The Fairhaven Design Review District is divided into four individual Design Review Areas (DRAs), Historic District DRA, Historic Influence DRA, Industrial Influence DRA, Maritime Influence DRA.

Fairhaven National Historic District (FNHD, 1977)– The historically significant buildings in this area were built between 1888 and 1929, and since that time have provided a mix of retail and other commercial services to the surrounding residential areas. Collectively, buildings in the Fairhaven National Historic District are valued by the community for their architectural character, the history they convey, and as catalysts of economic development activity.

The Historic District’s period of significance spans Fairhaven’s early building booms and includes 15 buildings dating from 1888 to the First World War. Two additional buildings were constructed after the primary historic period.



“Mackenzie Alley” located on 11th Street between the historic Nelson Block to the left and contemporary H. Dale Young Building to the right. (Alley programmed for pedestrian access to internal shops and restaurants)

# A3 Fairhaven Urban Village



**DESIGN CHARACTER SUMMARY** | Historic District DRA - The buildings in the Historic District share a common architectural language. Most are built of brick and other masonry materials. Built in a variety of styles, an overall compatibility is expressed through common features typical to traditional storefronts such as cornices, recessed window and door openings, and vertically proportioned windows. Primary facades were generally designed in a vertical orientation, with an articulated base and a parapet cap, all of which are proportional to the design of the building.

Historic Influence DRA – Area surrounding the FNHD. This area is characterized by buildings constructed between the 1950's to the 1980's.

Industrial Influence DRA – East of the railroad. In the early 20th century, commercial and industrial buildings lined both sides of Harris and McKenzie Avenues. Most of these buildings have been demolished. Emphasize pedestrian-friendly design along Harris Avenue.

**SUBAREA PLAN** | [link](#)



Village Books Building (1200 11th Street) located on the corner of 11th Street and Mill Ave, looking south on 11th Street.



# A3 Fairhaven Urban Village



## URBAN VILLAGE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

**Site 2: Contribute to the community identity and architectural character of the surrounding area.**

1. Use parapets, cornices, transoms, and/or awnings to relate to the historic commercial building features of the neighborhood and create a human sense of scale.
2. Maintain the traditional storefront proportions as experienced at street level by designing the commercial ground floor to appear taller than upper floors. A historic storefront of 14' to 16' high is typical in Fairhaven.

**Public Realm 3: Create a network of safe, convenient, and attractive off-street linkages for pedestrians**

1. Provide pedestrian connections from the street to the ferry, boat launch, and other public areas along the waterfront.
2. Parking lot lights should generally be no more than 18' in height, and lower for pedestrian walkways.



Fairhaven Village Green public space, located on the corner of 10th Street and Mill Ave.



Fairhaven Gardens Building (1134 Finnegan Way), located on the corner of 11th Street and Mill Ave (first floor commercial, second floor residential), view looking northeast.

# A3 Fairhaven Urban Village



## **Building 1: Express a clear architectural design concept appropriate for the proposed structures and contextually compatible with the surrounding area.**

1. On a commercial building, set the primary entry door back an adequate amount from the front facade to establish a distinct threshold for pedestrians. Four feet is a typical recess.
2. New construction outside of the HD DRA may draw from a broader range of architectural styles. References to a more residential or contemporary style may be appropriate.
3. New interpretations of traditional building styles that express contemporary architectural trends are encouraged.
4. To maintain the distinction between new and old buildings, new construction that imitates or mimics historic features is discouraged.

5. Decorative elements and projecting or setback "articulations" should appear subordinate to the facade.
6. In the II and MI DRAs, draw upon traditional industrial forms and incorporate sloped roofs, canopies and loading docks. A mix of roof forms is appropriate, including sloped roofs.

## **Building 2: Create high quality, durable, and interesting buildings that have texture and depth.**

1. Contribute to the visual continuity of the area by using building materials traditionally used in Fairhaven, primarily brick, wood, and stone, or alternative materials with similar scale, proportion, texture and finish.
2. More diversity is allowed in the II and MI DRAs, where industrial-type materials are appropriate. Wood and metal were traditionally used for window, door and storefront surrounds and are encouraged in new construction.



Fairhaven Towers Building (1215 12th St, newly completed first floor commercial, second floor residential), located on the prominent corner of 12th Street and Harris Street. View looking northeast.



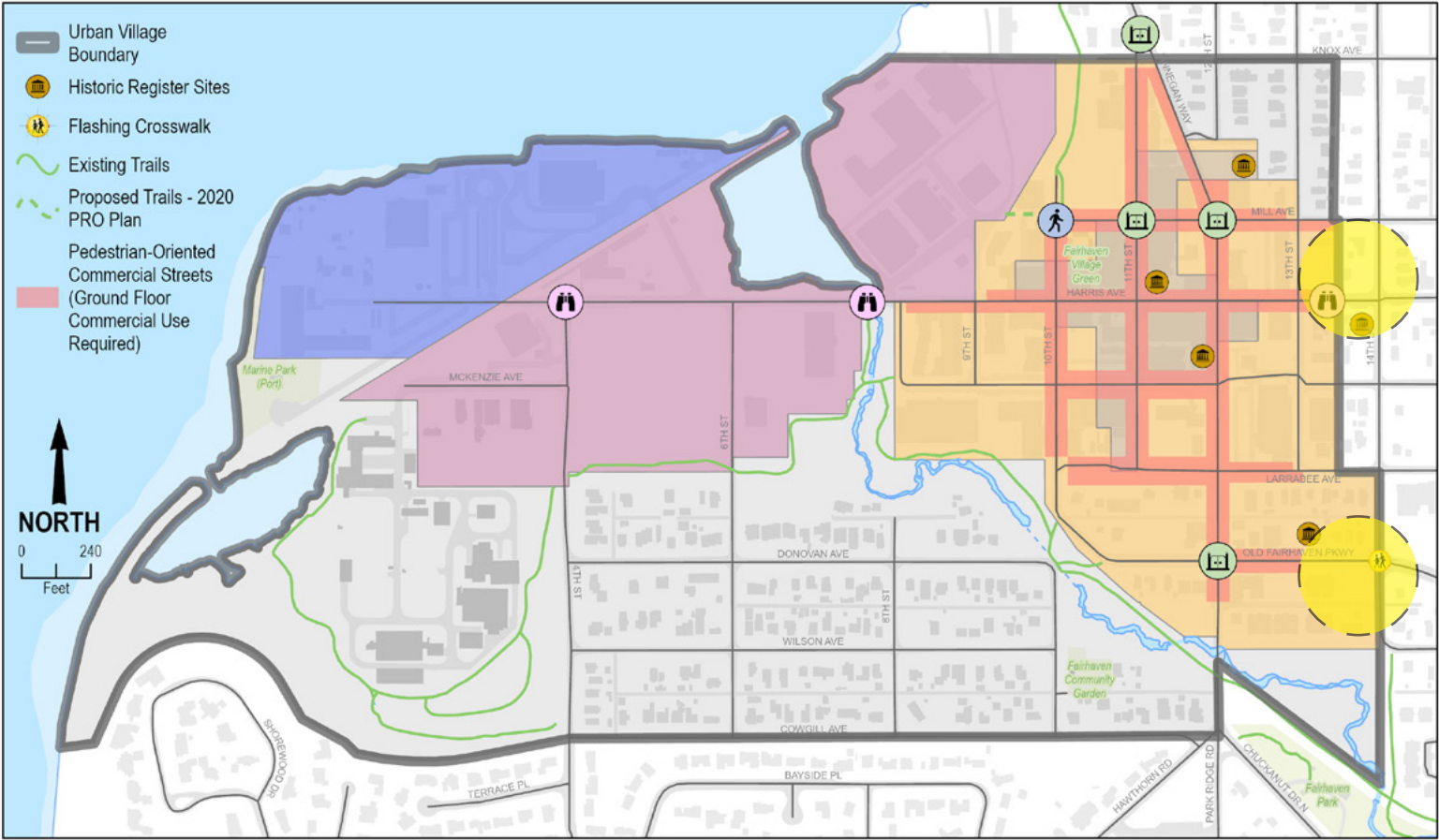


Key Intersections:  
Fairhaven Urban Village

INTERSECTION TYPES



Fairhaven Design Review Districts



# A4

## Fountain District Urban Village



**INTRODUCTION** | The Fountain District is a 90-acre area centered around the commercial core of Meridian Street and includes portions of the Columbia, Cornwall Park and Lettered Streets neighborhoods. The Fountain District evolved at the junction of the City’s most historically gracious boulevard, Broadway Avenue, and its most travelled route north, the “Guide Meridian.” A freshwater fountain under a shady tree at the base of Meridian and Broadway was deeded to the City in perpetuity to provide water for animals and livestock coming and going from Bellingham out into the county and on to Canada. This “watering hole” remains today as a designed fountain and has become a landmark of the district.

**DESIGN CHARACTER SUMMARY** | Meridian Street contains an eclectic mix of local businesses, many housed in one- and two-story buildings. Architectural styles range from traditional historic commercial buildings, single family houses adaptively reused for businesses and shops, and more contemporary construction from the early- to mid-20th century up to the present day. As a major arterial, Meridian has historically served auto-oriented uses resulting in sidewalk-facing parking lots, gas stations, supermarket and drive-through banking and food services. Since implementation of the Urban Village plan, larger multi-use development has caused the removal of single-family houses adapted for commercial uses.

Toward the east, the Elm Street corridor presents a more residential atmosphere and is lined with well-kept historic homes, some of which contribute to the Eldridge National Historic District and have been adapted for use as professional offices and businesses. Quiet residential areas lie immediately to the east and west, consisting of mostly single-family houses.

Underlying development character policies strive to preserve neighborhood character through adaptive use of existing and historic buildings; guide development to create a more comfortable and appropriately-scaled pedestrian environment; uphold quality design and materials standards for new development; and to improve the interface between commercial and residential areas.

**SUBAREA PLAN** | [link](#)



# A4

## Fountain District Urban Village



### URBAN VILLAGE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

#### Site 1: Preserve and use natural systems and features

1. On Meridian Street, new buildings are strongly encouraged to set back a minimum of two feet from the front property line to allow for a wider sidewalk and the planting of street trees.

#### Site 3: Organize the site to prioritize the public realm

1. Curb cuts on streets should be consolidated whenever possible.

#### Building 1: Express a clear architectural design concept appropriate for the proposed structures and contextually compatible with the surrounding area.

1. Whenever possible, retain the character of the district by adapting and sensitively adding on to existing historic buildings.

#### Building 1: Express a clear architectural design concept appropriate for the proposed structures and contextually compatible with the surrounding area.

The following are guidelines for additions and modifications to existing structures originally built for single-family residential use.

1. On Meridian Street, additions designed for the front of existing buildings are encouraged to set back a minimum of two feet from the front property line to allow for a wider sidewalk and the planting of street trees.
2. For commercial uses, landscaping should be integral with the site design and provide privacy for neighbors.
3. Fencing, especially when seen from the street, should be designed to integrate with the architecture of the building and add visual interest in its detail, materials or color.



“Fountain Plaza” public space, located at the intersection of Meridian, Broadway and Monroe which acts as the southern entrance to the district.



Key Intersections:  
Fountain District Urban Village

INTERSECTION TYPES



Gateway/District  
Entrance

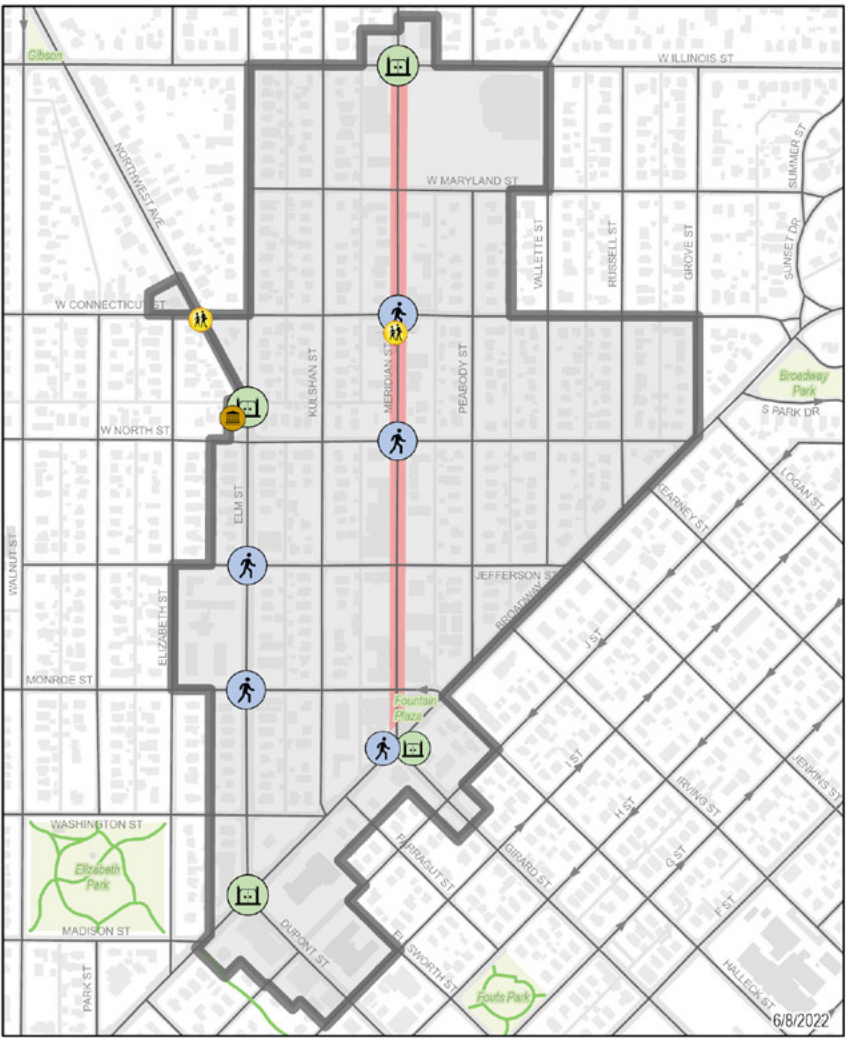


Terminal View



Pedestrian  
Connection

- Urban Village Boundary
- Historic Register Sites
- Flashing Crosswalk
- Existing Trails
- Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets (Ground Floor Commercial Use Required)





# A5 Old Town Urban Village



**INTRODUCTION** | Old Town is bordered by Bellingham's downtown to the south, the Lettered Streets and Columbia neighborhoods to the east and north, and the waterfront and Bellingham Bay to the west. The boundaries are for the most part determined by natural edges - edges between land and water and between uplands and lowlands. The district largely fits within a half bowl landform that rises from the course of Whatcom Creek on all but the west side, where it is open to Bellingham Bay. Whatcom Creek has for centuries been the most attractive area for human presence on Bellingham Bay. Consequently, Old Town has a rich archaeological history in the city.

**DESIGN CHARACTER SUMMARY** | Today, the topographical contrast continues to create important views and visual perspectives, particularly in regard to the landmark Old City Hall building. Old Town today is interspersed with vacant land, large footprint industrial structures, parcels of public open space and a relatively low residential population. Little in the way of new uses, quality new construction or targeted adaptive reuse and preservation has occurred in Old Town compared to other areas in Bellingham. The Old Town area is envisioned as a community in which people can live, work, and play. It is designed to maintain important characteristics such as view corridors and vistas, natural features, historic resources, small businesses and yet provide for additional housing and business opportunities.

**SUBAREA PLAN** | [link](#)



View of Whatcom Creek which borders Maritime Heritage Park, looking northeast. Just southwest of here Whatcom Creek meets Bellingham Bay.

# A5 Old Town Urban Village



## URBAN VILLAGE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

**Site 2: Contribute to the community identity and architectural character of the surrounding area.**

1. Incorporate pedestrian-friendly interfaces within redevelopment properties along the Old Village Trail with features such as an entries and windows.

**Building 2: Create high quality, durable, and interesting buildings that have texture and depth.**

1. Merge modern materials of the present with traditional building forms from the past to reference the historic Old Town.

**Site 3: Organize the site to prioritize the public realm.**

1. Create an active edge along Old Village Trail, Maritime Heritage Park and public plazas by incorporating access, activity areas and interesting design features into new and redeveloped buildings.
2. Along Holly Street, consider building setbacks to accommodate outdoor spaces, street trees, and wider sidewalks.



Looking west on corner of W Holly Street and W Champion Street with Oakland Block (401 W Champion St) to the right.



Key Intersections:  
Old Town Urban Village

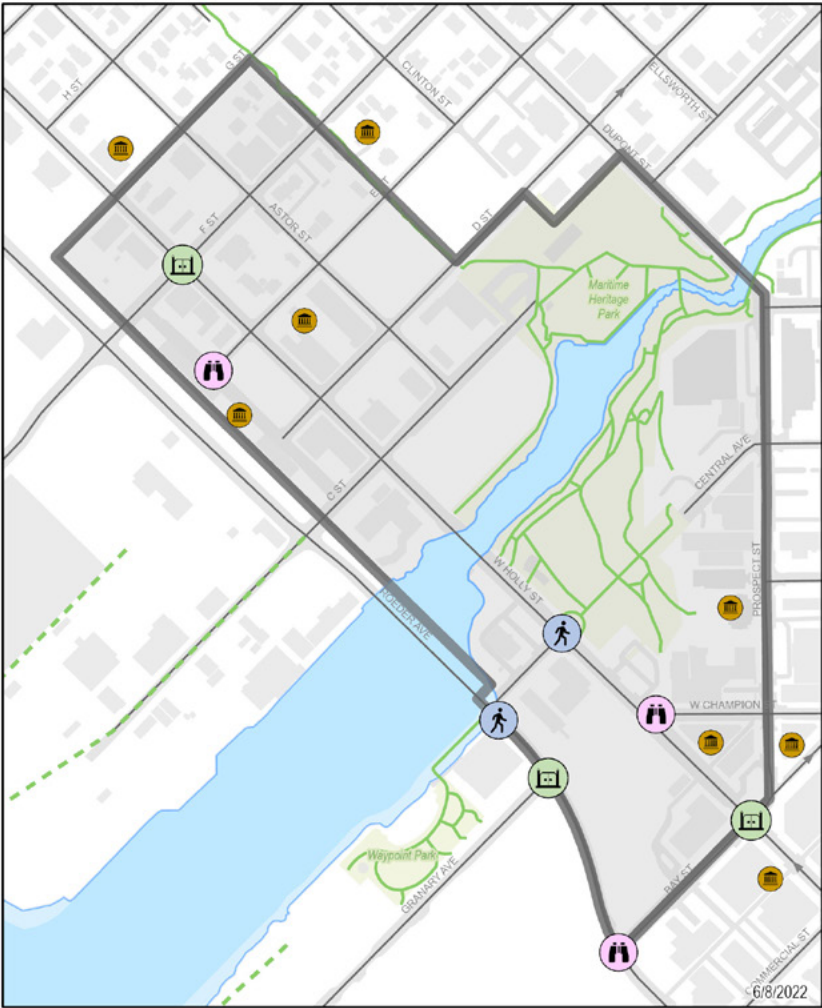
INTERSECTION TYPES

Gateway/District Entrance

Terminal View

Pedestrian Connection

- Urban Village Boundary
- Historic Register Sites
- Existing Trails
- Proposed Trails - 2020 PRO Plan





# A6 Samish Way Urban Village



**INTRODUCTION** | Samish Way Urban Village lies between the wooded backdrop of Sehome Hill Arboretum and the busy I-5 corridor and is a major connector to Western Washington University and Downtown Bellingham. Samish Way was originally part of Highway 99, which ran along the West Coast from Mexico to Canada, and has grown into a busy 4-lane arterial and forms the main commercial corridor of the Village. During the 1950s, motels, gas stations and other auto-oriented businesses developed along the corridor, augmented by the historic and quiet residential neighborhoods of Sehome and

**DESIGN CHARACTER SUMMARY** | A major goal for the village is to foster a core retail area along Samish Way between Abbott and Otis Streets. Tall buildings at the heart of the Village are envisioned (6-7 stories), stepping down to commercial and residential transition areas. Incorporation of augmented landscaping, pedestrian amenities and bicycle and transit infrastructure are also a goal for all projects, with the objective of creating a more compact street grid. Increased access management along Samish Way is also a major goal.

**SUBAREA PLAN** | [link](#)



Intersection of N Samish Way and Otis Street, looking southwest on the Samish Commons (1000 Otis St, newly completed affordable housing complex)

# A6 Samish Way Urban Village



## URBAN VILLAGE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

### Site 1: Preserve and use natural systems and features.

1. Encourage incorporation of smaller evergreens and other native vegetation found in the Sehome Hill Arboretum to strengthen the connection and help integrate this open space amenity with the urban village.

### Public Realm 1: Create an attractive, safe, lively, and inviting community-oriented pedestrian environment.

1. Curb cuts on streets should be consolidated whenever possible.
2. Provide covered bus shelters and other amenities at bus stops and orient development towards transit stops to create a comfortable and interesting environment for pedestrians and transit riders and promote transit use.
3. Design ground floor residential uses along Samish Way to allow for future retrofit to commercial use.

### Building 3: Reduce the overall impact on the environment and human health during and after construction.

1. Implement Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) noise mitigating measures in buildings adjacent to I-5 to buffer traffic noise.



Key Intersections:  
Samish Way Urban Village

**INTERSECTION TYPES**

Gateway/District Entrance

Terminal View

Pedestrian Connection

Urban Village Boundary

Flashing Crosswalk

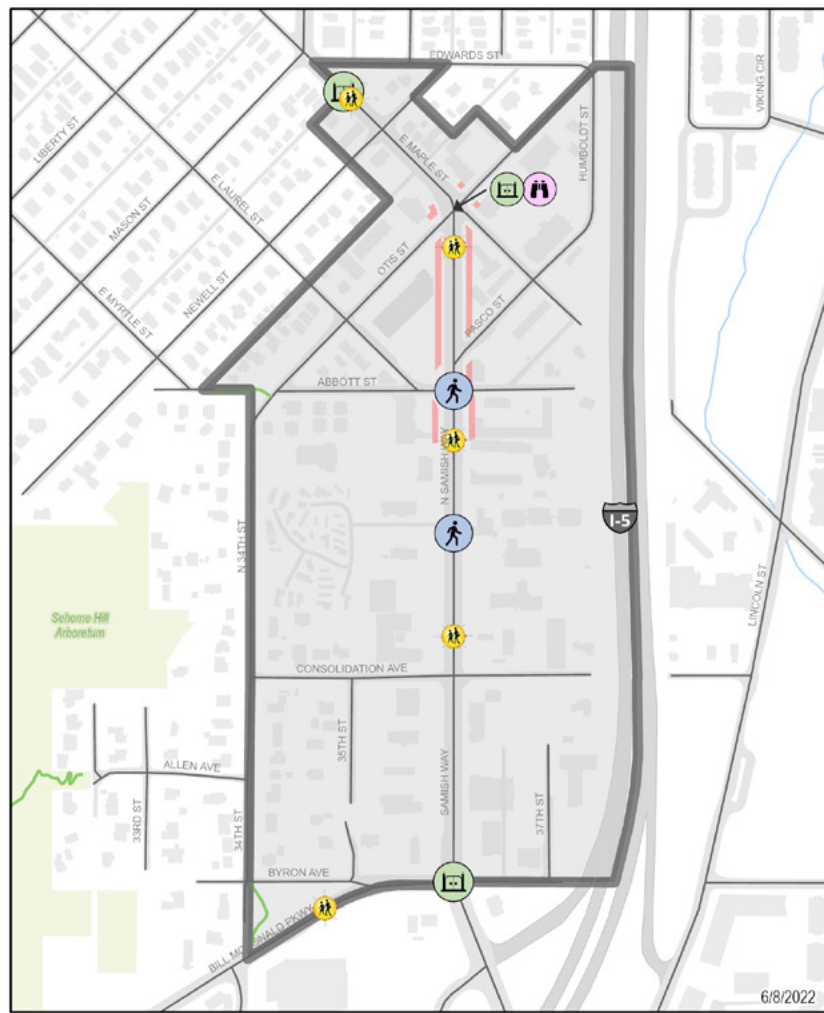
Existing Trails

Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets (Ground Floor Commercial Use Required)

**NORTH**

0 240  
Feet





# A7

## Waterfront District Urban Village



**INTRODUCTION** | The Waterfront District is defined within the boundaries of the Whatcom Waterway, Roeder Avenue / Chestnut Street, and Cornwall Avenue. Whatcom Waterway and Bellingham Bay creates the southwestern boundary of the district.

The Waterfront District is intended to implement the community vision for the Central Waterfront by converting a large, under-utilized brownfield industrial site into a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood that improves waterfront access and promotes a healthy and dynamic waterfront economy. By emphasizing outdoor recreation, cultural heritage, and environmental restoration, the Waterfront District is an urban village where people will ultimately live, work, shop, study and spend their leisure time, without relying solely on vehicular transportation.

**DESIGN CHARACTER SUMMARY** | The Waterfront District is divided into five separate planning areas. The vision for the waterfront includes a unique “sense of place” at different waterfront locations, and implementation of sustainable practices in all development reinforces the environmental remediation and connection to the water. Active interface with the abutting shoreline as well as public spaces are emphasized. Development standards relating to building height, setbacks, and design are proposed to preserve key view corridors to and from adjacent neighborhoods, limit building mass adjacent to parks and rights-of-way and encourage sustainable design features and amenities to support pedestrian-oriented commercial activity and public gathering space at ground level.

**SUBAREA PLAN** | [link](#)



Granary Ave entrance to Waypoint Park with the Granary Building (1211 Granary Ave) to the right.

# A7

## Waterfront District Urban Village



### URBAN VILLAGE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

#### Site 1: Preserve and use natural systems and features.

1. Preserve and integrate views along the connection from downtown to the interior of the site, tile tanks, digester, islands, and Olympic Mountains.

#### Site 3: Organize the site to prioritize the public realm.

1. Develop an open space concept in conjunction with the architectural concept to ensure that interior and exterior spaces relate to each other, and their functions are mutually supportive.
    - Ensure that buildings which directly front on parks and trails interact with facility users.
    - Activate parks and trails with a variety of uses that provide a continuity of experience with focused notes of activity and destinations that are linked together.
    - Provide interpretive opportunities that incorporate the cultural, historical, economic and environmental history of the site and community into the design of the park.
  2. Site and design open spaces to connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby public open space where appropriate.
  3. Support uses and activities on adjacent properties and/or the sidewalk
- Minimize conflicts with vehicular traffic.
  - Consider the localized effect of sun angles, shading and wind on proposed park facilities and spaces.



View of Sehome Hill in background and industrial relics of the former Georgia Pacific mill site



## URBAN VILLAGE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

### Public Realm 1: Create an attractive, safe, lively, and inviting community-oriented pedestrian environment

1. Within mixed-use commercial and residential areas, define pedestrian-scale blocks and building pads by developing a network of bicycle routes, pedestrian connections, and interior roads with a block size similar to or smaller than the existing blocks in Downtown and Fairhaven.

### Public Realm 2: Provide visual interest to and from buildings.

1. Provide visually evident variety when a development includes three or more buildings.
2. Design building roof tops and mechanical equipment with consideration for appearance from the adjacent bluff. Control glare with screening, vegetation, and use of materials.

### Public Realm 3: Organize the site to prioritize the public realm

1. In areas where development site abut the bluff, locate any parking below street grade, with building entrances at street level.

### Public Realm 4: Enhance the overall visual cohesiveness of the surrounding area

1. Preserve water views from public streets and designated view points within adjacent neighborhoods and establish visual connection with downtown.

### Building 2: Create high quality, durable, and interesting buildings that have texture and depth

1. When a development includes multiple buildings, use a range of forms, building footprints, or elevations to create visually evident variety.

### Building 3: Reduce the overall impact on the environment and human health during and after construction.


1. Site residential units closer to quieter and less traveled roadways, planned parks, and green spaces.
2. Implement acoustic strategies to reduce outdoor noise transmission and improve the acoustic quality of interior spaces. See Waterfront Subarea Plan for additional information.
3. Use landscaping, park design, and stormwater biotreatment facilities, such as bioswales, and use of native and/or drought tolerant plants which will not require permanent irrigation systems and will support clean stormwater goals.
4. Include space for community gardens to allow residents to grow produce and flowers.






Key Intersections:  
Waterfront District Urban Village


INTERSECTION TYPES




Gateway/District Entrance




Terminal View




Pedestrian Connection




Urban Village Boundary



Existing Trails



Proposed Trails - 2020 PRO Plan



Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets (Ground Floor Commercial Use Required)

