

City ponders new measure of traffic

Kirkland

A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

2013-2015

THE VISION FOR
**TOTEM
LAKE** PG 26

+

SMART GROWTH

Evidence of the planning theory
is everywhere in Kirkland? PG 18

**VISION. PLAN.
ZONE.**

To influence Kirkland's land-use,
offer your own vision PG. 12

Prelude to a Comp Plan

Later in 2015, we will be giving you a document called the Comprehensive Plan. It'll be a thick document. And in some places, it'll be fairly technical. It's purpose is to articulate the shared vision for our City—for our neighborhoods and our business districts; our open spaces and our parks—and to articulate the policy basis for our City's land use. The Comprehensive Plan is the source from which many of our land use policies stem.

To draft this it, we have studied Kirkland from an array of angles. We have analyzed each neighborhood's existing zoning and the way existing development is using it. We've scrutinized the City's business districts and engaged with both business and civic leaders. We've traveled from neighborhood to neighborhood to document residents' visions for their City.

The result will be a plan that will shape how Kirkland continues to grow into the future.

The document you are now reading, *About Growth*, examines many of the major issues covered in the Comprehensive Plan. Our hope is that *About Growth* will complement your understanding of zoning, population growth, and the Comprehensive Plan.

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If you could change anything ab

a Bellevue Square, lanes, home depot in Kirkland

shoreline path along

front a continuous

Totem Lake shopping center -



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The model of Kirkland's future will be ready for residents in 2015.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

In 1990, the state legislature passed a law that transformed Kirkland's Comprehensive Planning process. Today, the new process is engaging citizens in more ways to plan for the future of their community

Astronics, an aeronautics development and manufacturing firm, moved into this campus on Totem Lake early in 2013. As Kirkland's Urban Center, Totem Lake will assume much of the City's growth over the next two decades.

In 1959, Kirkland had 6,400 residents and three elementary schools. Its entire downtown offered less retail space than today's Parkplace. But Kirkland was about to change. The state, you see, was building a bridge that would connect Kirkland to Seattle at a time when Seattle was preparing for the 1962 World's Fair, and the 10 million people who'd be venturing there to experience it. And Kirkland's local leaders were still talking about a possible merger with the town of Houghton.

To prepare for the change, Kirkland's leaders wrote a manifesto of sorts—37 pages of maps, visions and recommendations that translated the community's values into a general plan. That document became Kirkland's first Comprehensive Plan. The author was a consultant—an ambitious architect from Michigan's Cranbrook College named Harry Cummings. Cummings would eventually design some of Kirkland's most iconic spaces, including Doris Cooper Houghton Beach Park.

And in the 1963 Comprehensive Plan, he recommended a variety of improvements that have helped define Kirkland's modern identity.

"I drive through town everyday and I can see the effects everywhere I look," he says.



Along the waterfront, for example, he saw a string of parks, and admonished the City to acquire as much lakefront land as possible. Around the downtown business district, he saw a ring road that would increase traffic flow. He wanted



Sixth Street to extend south, down the hill and to the floating bridge.

To such a small town, these were ambitious plans. Cummings knew it. Which is why, in a 1959 *Eastside Journal* article, however, he presented his argument:

“[We could] 1. Let the growth come and then attempt to solve the problems that come with the growth as they arise.”

Or “2. Anticipate the problems as well as the growth, and by study and long-range planning, prepare the way for orderly development of a nature that will benefit the greatest number of people over the longest period of time.”

Kirkland, today

Fifty years later, Kirkland is beginning its fifth significant iteration of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan will build on the ones that precede it. And it’ll look 20 years into the future, when leaders expect to add another 8,570 households and 20,850 new jobs.

“This is our blueprint for the future,” says Paul Stewart, Kirkland’s deputy planning director. “It tells us what we want to do, where we want to go and how we are going to get there.”

The Growth Management Act

To some extent, some of the direction for the Comprehensive Plan is provided by the Growth Management Act—passed by the state legisla-

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN KIRKLAND

1963

At 37 pages, Kirkland’s first Comprehensive Plan provides a “general design” for future growth. Neighborhood land-use is driven by the City’s three elementary schools. Transforming the industrial waterfront into



a shoreline of parks is a major focus.

1977

Kirkland adopts the Land Use Policies Plan. The 489-page document serves as the City’s first detailed long-range plan. It includes Kirkland’s first neighborhood plans.

1990 & 1991

Motivated by the environmental and

economic impacts of rural sprawl, the state legislature passes the Growth Management Act. The land-use law requires jurisdictions to create land-use comprehensive plans that confront issues, such as land-use, transportation, housing. Jurisdictions can update their plans annually, but must do so every eight years.

1995

After three years of

public involvement and study, Kirkland issues its first Comprehensive Plan required by the Growth Management Act. The plan details a 20-year vision of Kirkland, ending in 2012.

2004

Two years after beginning its second major Comprehensive Plan revision, Kirkland finishes its first major update of the Comprehensive Plan. This one articulates residents’

visions for the City through 2022.

2013

City leaders begin Kirkland’s third significant update of the Growth Management Act-influenced Comprehensive Plan, which will articulate the community’s vision for the City through 2035. One of the issues: How to grow by more than 8,500 households, and 20,500 jobs.

// *Green hillsides all of a sudden were stripped bare and covered with homes and roads. Forests were being mowed down, and there was a lot of clear cutting. And there were traffic jams where people had never before had traffic jams.*

—David Bricklin,
lead advocate for the
Growth Management Act



David Bricklin, 60, while hiking the Pollalie Ridge.

ture in 1990 and reinforced with three hearings boards in 1991.

What's in a Comp Plan?

- Community Vision
- Community Character
- Natural Environment
- Land Use
- Housing
- Econ. Development
- Transportation
- Parks/Rec/Open space
- Utilities
- Public Services
- Human Services
- Capital Facilities
- Implementation
- Neighborhoods
- Shorelines
- Methodologies

Woodinville, SeaTac, Shoreline, Kenmore and Sammamish, among them—and contributed to Kirkland's annexation of Finn Hill, Kingsgate and North Juanita. Above all, its purpose is to harness rural sprawl—that tendency for unplanned de-

velopment to devour farmlands and forestlands, while demanding huge public investments of infrastructure. Perhaps more than any other land use law in the state, the Growth Management Act is influencing where and how Puget Sounders live, work and play. It is helping to make downtowns denser, yet more attractive, and more livable, say several peer-reviewed journal articles.

By preventing developers from building up excessive stocks of homes, experts say it blunted the blow of the 2008 housing crisis to Puget Sound. It also helped create 10 new Puget Sound cities—

development to devour farmlands and forestlands, while demanding huge public investments of infrastructure.

It does this by requiring cities to create 20-year plans and to update them at least once every eight years.

Where did it come from?

In the decade before its passage, a Washington state population boom was encouraging sprawl. The state's population ballooned by nearly 600,000 people; King County's by nearly 200,000.

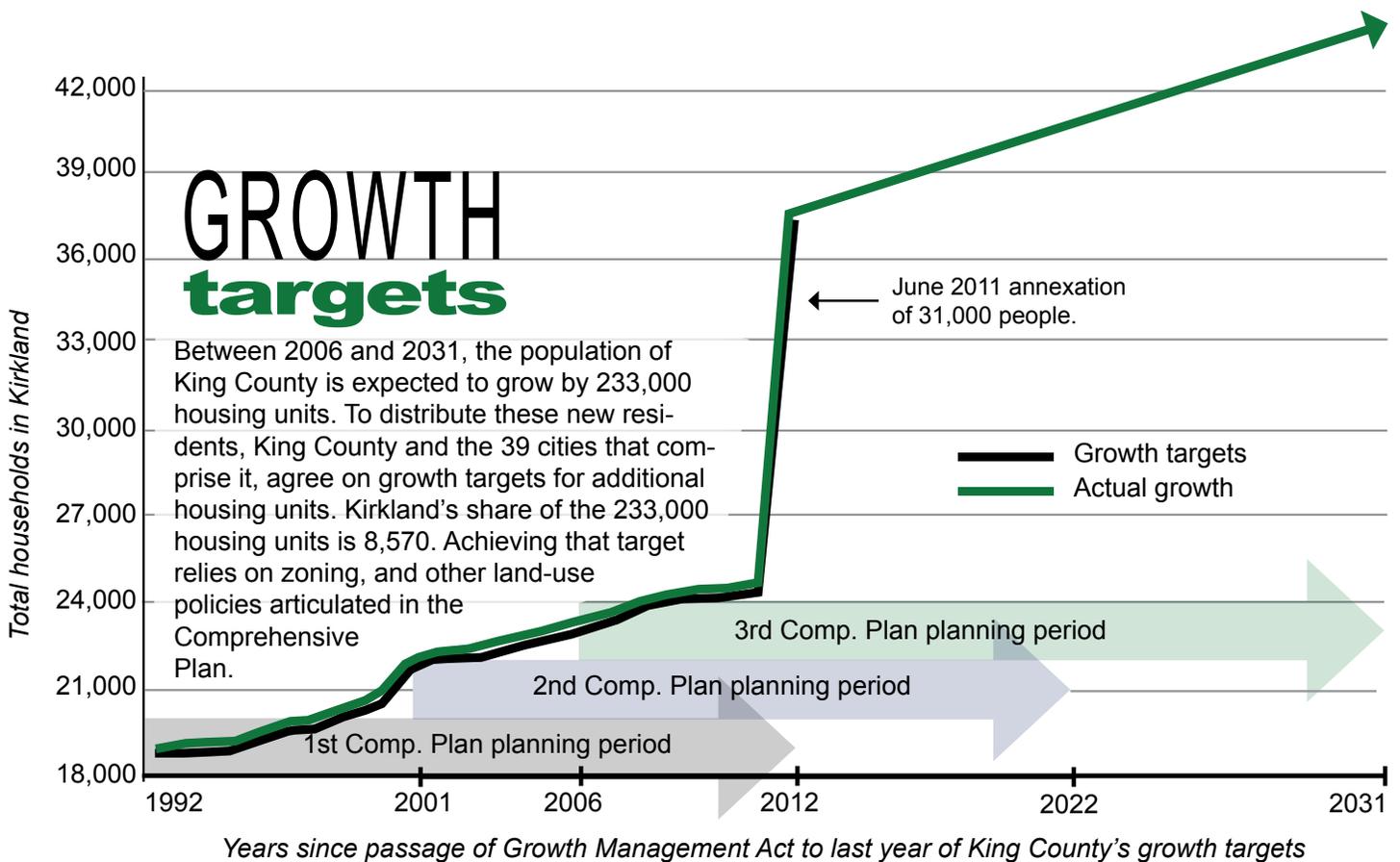
“And with that came a lot of new problems,” says David Bricklin, one of the state's most active advocates for managed land use, in a 2005 interview with Washington state archivist Diane Wiatr.

“There was a loss of lots of open space in communities all around the state. Green hillsides all of a sudden were stripped bare and covered with homes and roads. Forests were being mowed down, and there was a lot of clear cutting. And there were traffic jams where people had never before had traffic jams.”

In 1990, Bricklin and the Washington Environ-

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mental Council that he led lobbied the state legislature to pass a land-use law that would require cities and counties to plan for population growth.

“We threatened if they didn’t pass a strong law, we’d pursue an initiative,” Bricklin said.

Over the next two years, the legislature did pass a law it called the Growth Management Act. Oregon passed the nation’s first growth management legislation in 1973. Florida followed Oregon 12 years later.

Florida’s law served as the model for the one Washington state would adopt in 1990 and 1991.

How does it work?

Under Washington’s law, the state forecasts population growth for each of Washington’s 39

counties. The counties, then, distribute the population to their cities. And the cities become responsible for attracting and accommodating their share of those populations.

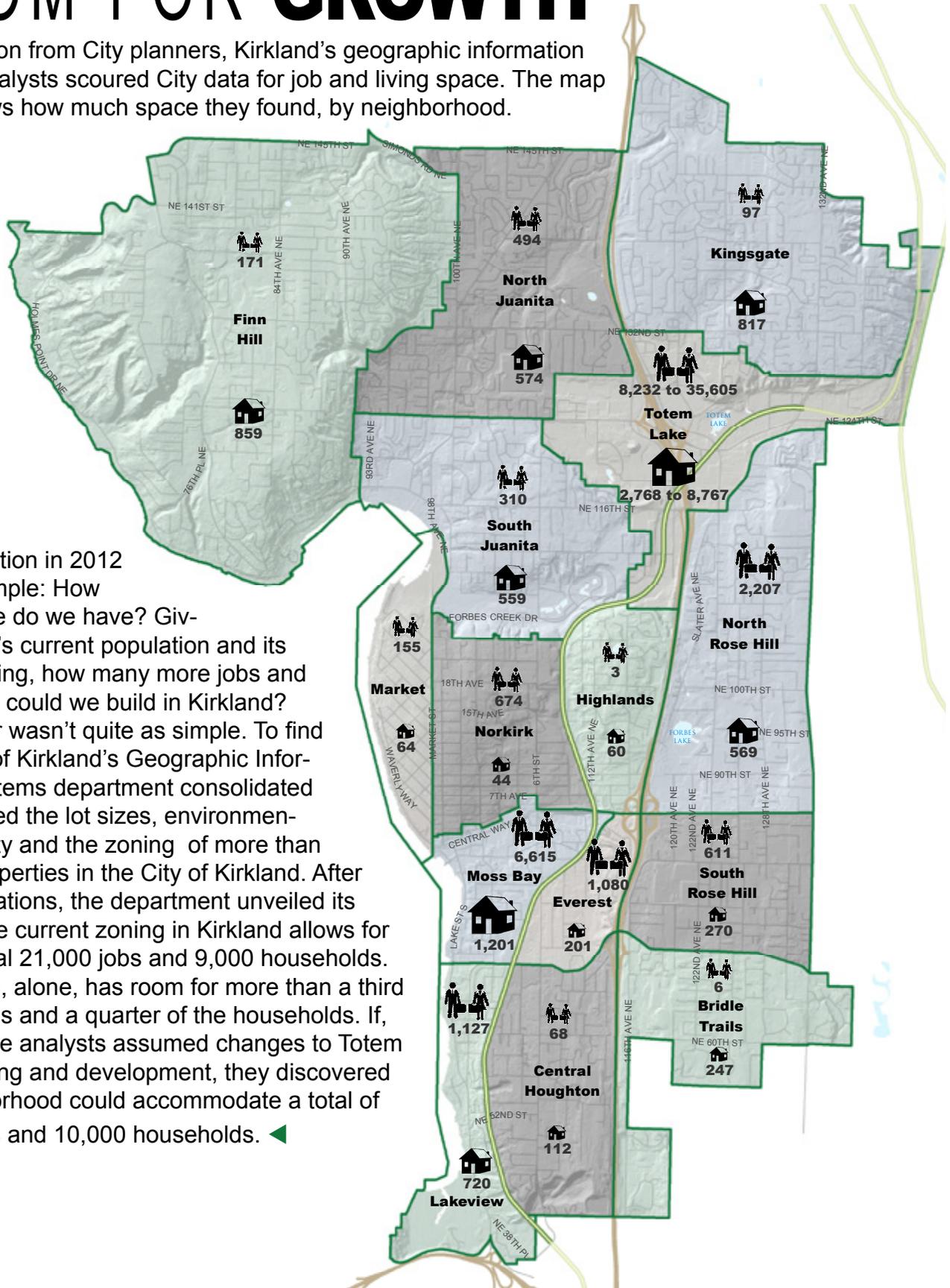
Kirkland’s share of the 1.3 million people and one million jobs forecasters expect for the central Puget Sound region by 2031 is 8,570 households and nearly 20,850 new jobs.

“That’s a hefty number,” says Chandler Felt, King County’s demographer, who specializes in growth management. “But it’s in line with the way Kirkland has been growing. Additional space will have to be found—either through rezoning ... or in this case, planning the city’s designated Urban Center. You can’t be passive. The City will have to act positively to make space for this growth that is coming.” ◀

ROOM FOR GROWTH

With direction from City planners, Kirkland's geographic information systems analysts scoured City data for job and living space. The map below shows how much space they found, by neighborhood.

The question in 2012 was simple: How much space do we have? Given Kirkland's current population and its current zoning, how many more jobs and households could we build in Kirkland? The answer wasn't quite as simple. To find it, the City of Kirkland's Geographic Information Systems department consolidated and analyzed the lot sizes, environmental sensitivity and the zoning of more than 20,000 properties in the City of Kirkland. After several iterations, the department unveiled its answer: The current zoning in Kirkland allows for an additional 21,000 jobs and 9,000 households. Totem Lake, alone, has room for more than a third of those jobs and a quarter of the households. If, however, the analysts assumed changes to Totem Lake's zoning and development, they discovered the neighborhood could accommodate a total of 52,000 jobs and 10,000 households. ◀





Vision. Plan. Zone.

Twenty-five years ago, Juanita Village was a concept—inspired by a community’s vision and zoning crafted to achieve it. Today it is a model for suburban redevelopment.

An early drawing of Juanita Village featured a plaza at the mixed-use development's northern entrance.



For years, the 11-acre block at 98th Avenue Northeast and Juanita Drive had been short-changing its neighbors. Littered amongst a dental office, barber shop and bank, were a vacant Chevron station, a vacant Market Place grocery, and weeds. Lots of weeds.

But the site had something its neighboring residents considered invaluable: Through the billboards and the wafting heaps of landscap-

ing bark, was a view of Juanita Bay.

Residents wanted to keep that view, scrap almost everything else and exchange it for a neighborhood center—a neighborhood living room—where, by walking, they could do business, do lunch or coffee. They sketched out this vision in their neighborhood plan. And when the City Council adopted it into Kirkland's Comprehensive Plan, it became the basis for a customized zone, tailored specifically to the topography and geography of those 11 acres.

he said in his July 23, 1958, oral opinion in the State of Washington vs. King County.

That decision spurred cities throughout King County to draft their own Comprehensive Plans, says Harry Cummings, the author of Kirkland's first Comprehensive Plan.

"Everyone was scrambling to get one," he says.

Private Amendment Requests

The spirit of Douglas' decision persists today in Kirkland. If a developer wants to shape land in a way that differs from the City's zoning and the Comprehensive Plan upon which that zoning is based, the developer must submit a Private Amendment Request. This is no small matter. Private Amendment Requests are proposals to amend some aspect of the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning code.

"Private Amendment Requests acknowledge that circumstances might change over the life of a Comprehensive Plan," says Marilynne Beard, deputy city manager for the City of Kirkland. "Maybe the community didn't think of something back when we were doing the Comprehensive Plan, that today, really would be a good thing for Kirkland. Private Amendment Requests create a process for those ideas to become reality."

For this reason, the Growth Management Act requires cities to consider them. It does not, however, guarantee their approval. To win approval, a Private Amendment Request must pass the scrutiny of City planners, the Planning Commission, and ultimately the City Council (see "*Staying Flexible*").

The City Council typically considers three to four every two years, says Joan Lieberman-Brill, the City of Kirk-

Staying flexible

All developments require building permits. Some, however, require zoning permits that rely on decision-makers to evaluate the development proposal against City codes. Depending on the type of permit, the decision-maker may be the planning director, hearing examiner, design review board, or City Council. Below are common examples of zoning permits:

VARIANCE

When it's used: When an applicant hopes to develop land in a way that is inconsistent with the zoning code, but compatible with the Comprehensive Plan. Usually applies to individual properties or small developments

An example: Resident wanting to decrease setbacks

Requires: Proof of hardship

Decision-maker: Planning Director

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

When it's used: When a developer wants to apply unique rules to an entire development

An example: Lake Washington Institute of Technology

Requires: Public benefits from the developer to off-set impacts

Decision-maker: City Council, after a public hearing administered by hearing examiner

DESIGN REVIEW

When it's used: Any time a developer wants to build in a commercial zone

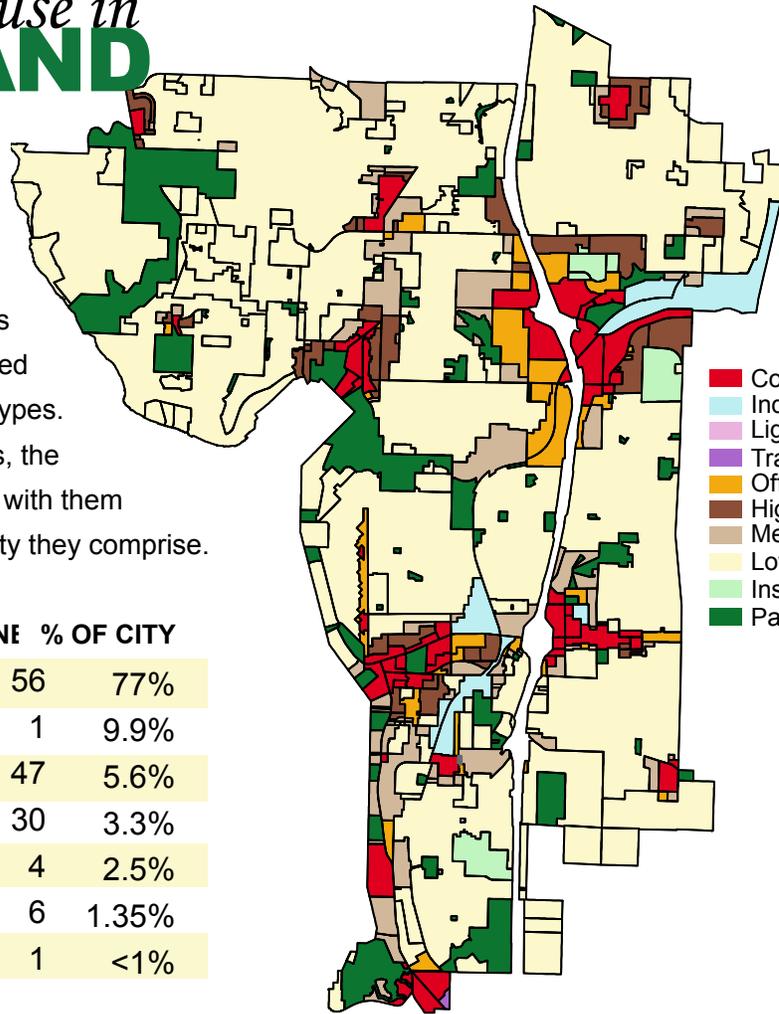
An example: Bank of America's mixed-use building on Kirkland Avenue and Lake Street

Requires: Consistency with the design guidelines adopted in the Municipal Code

Decision-maker: Design Review Board or a City planner

land-use in KIRKLAND

More than three-quarters of the City is zoned as some form of residential—high-, medium- or low-density. The rest of Kirkland’s 17.63 square-miles are divided amongst six other land-use types. Below is a list of those types, the number of zones associated with them and the percentage of the City they comprise.



CATEGORY	# OF ZONE	% OF CITY
Residential	56	77%
Park/Open Space	1	9.9%
Commercial	47	5.6%
Office	30	3.3%
High-tech/industry	4	2.5%
Institutions	6	1.35%
Transit-oriented	1	<1%

land planner who deals with Private Amendment Requests. On average, the City Council approves about half of them. This year, the City Council received three. Among them: Evergreen Health, which wants to rezone one of its properties from High-Density Residential to Institutional to match the zoning on the rest of its properties.

30 feet

The maximum building height allowed without a public hearing process under the Juanita Business District zones

“Pretty simple,” says Lieberman-Brill. “But it would amend the Comprehensive Plan. And that’s a big deal.”

Juanita Business District

Through the new zoning, the 11-acre block at 98th Avenue Northeast and Juanita Drive became the Juanita Business District. The zoning

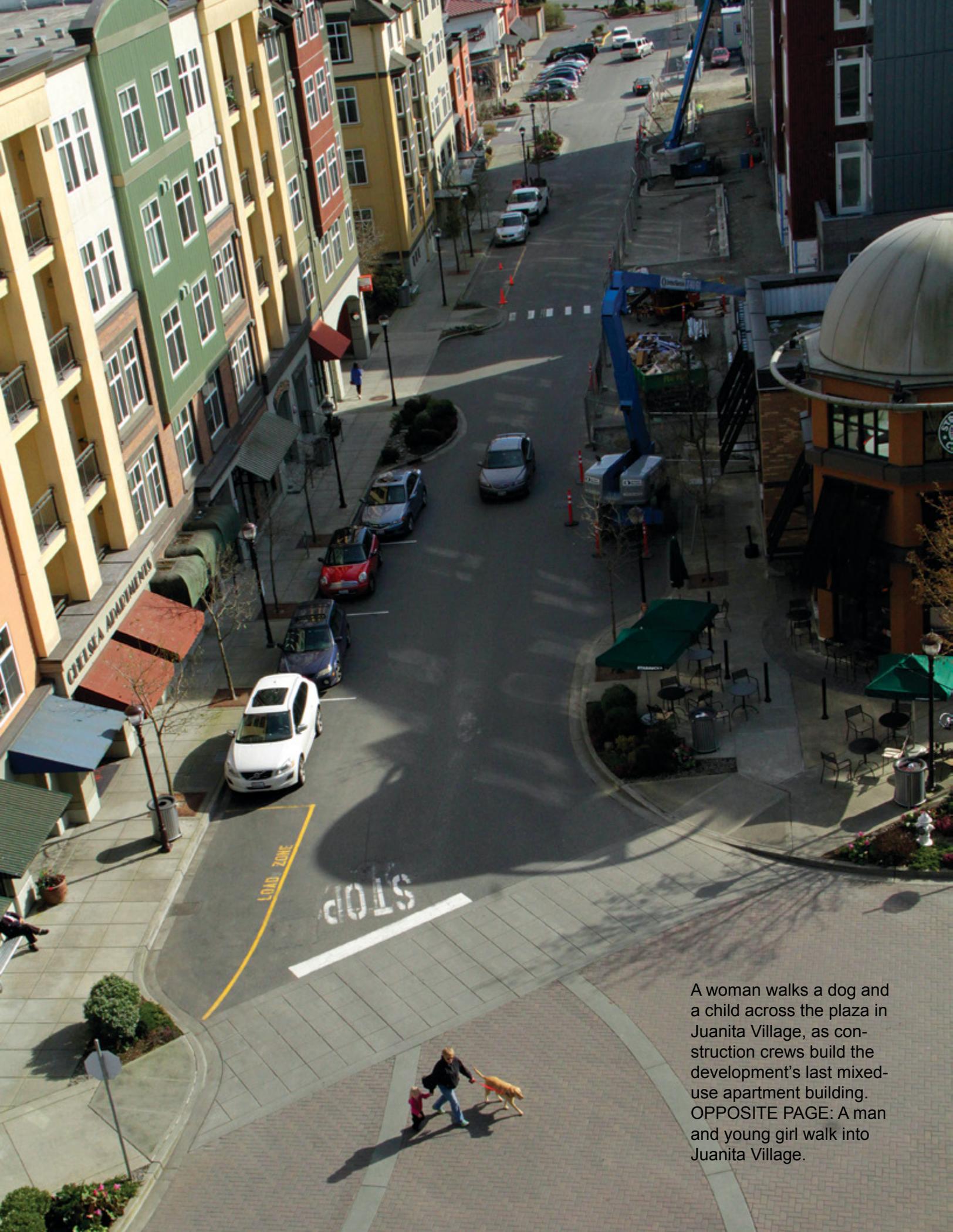
required three public paths that would break up the super-block, provide views of the lake and offer pedestrian access throughout the development and to Juanita Beach Park. To protect pedestrians from the rain, the zone required awnings. To reduce the development’s perceived size, the zoning said building-size and style should vary. Their roofs should be sloped. Their walls should offer walkers something to look at, such as windows and balconies.

“We were getting a lot of ‘Let’s put an AM/PM on the corner there’ from prospective developers,” says Angela

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A woman walks a dog and a child across the plaza in Juanita Village, as construction crews build the development's last mixed-use apartment building. OPPOSITE PAGE: A man and young girl walk into Juanita Village.

Ruggeri, the Kirkland planner who co-drafted the Juanita Business District zoning. “We saw it as a unique situation. We realized it could be the center of the neighborhood.”

Process IIA

The zone also had a stipulation built into it: “If the development exceeds 30 feet above average building elevation, then Process IIA,” the Juanita Business District zone says. In planning speak, Process IIA is a form of a conditional use permit, which requires a quasi-judicial public hearing process, complete with expert testimony, public comment and a hearing examiner.

“People expect 30 feet in height,” Ruggeri says. “But this was a much bigger project. We wanted people involved in the decision.”

The zoning created a paradox, of sorts—a neighborhood center that had to be walkable for residents, profitable for developers and supportive to the collective vision of neighborhood.

The zoning gets implemented

The solution—drafted by Alan Grainger’s Seattle-based GGLO architectural team—called for 459 homes, 70,000 square feet of commercial space, 900 parking stalls and two acres of landscaped plazas and courtyards. To break up the super block and protect the view, the design included a multi-purpose street, lined with small shops and culminating with a public plaza.

When taken together, the development would look and function like a village. Grainger knew, however, it could not function with 30-foot-high buildings. So he designed them to be taller—up to 78 feet tall.

The public hearing

That detail triggered Process IIA, a public hearing that, on July 31, 2000, was administered by the City’s hearing examiner. Residents

filled the City Council Chamber and spilled into the lobby. Kevin Hanefeld, the co-chair of Juanita Neighborhood Association, was one of them. “It was full and lively,” he says. “The public process drew people out—right, wrong or indifferent.”

They came to participate in a decision about their community’s vision and the zone crafted to



protect that vision. Residents wanted a neighborhood living room with a view. The developer wanted at least 400 apartments, 70,000 square feet of commercial space and 78 feet in height.

The hearing would determine whether the two were compatible with Kirkland’s comprehensive plan and the zoning code its residents, staff and leaders had drafted to manifest it.

Twenty-seven residents spoke that evening; 22 in favor of the village’s design. Those closest to the process spoke too: The planners. The architects. The developers. The traffic engineers. They talked about concurrency and scale; multi-mobility and storm water drainage.

In the end, all of that talk—from the residents and the experts—was intended to answer one question: Does the vision of the architect match the vision of the community? And it did. ◀

“Density is what makes transit feasible. It’s what makes bicycling and walking realistic choices.”

—ERIC SHIELDS, *City of Kirkland planning director*



Image courtesy of Weber Thompson Architects

The 185-unit market rate building features a decorative red ‘E,’ which was inspired by The Eastside drive-in’s logo. By 2015, the transformation of the South Kirkland Park and Ride to a transit- and pedestrian-focused neighborhood will be complete. It will feature 243 homes and 6,700 square feet of retail space.

DENSITY DONE RIGHT

The village now under construction at the South Kirkland Park and Ride will provide another example of how Kirkland will accommodate forecasted growth

Mindy Black and her team of Weber Thompson architects needed something to soften the concrete exterior of the South Kirkland Park and Ride’s yet-to-be-built parking garage.

Their first thought in the winter of 2012 was vegetation. Maybe ivy or vine maple. “But that posed a maintenance problem,” Black says. “Metro didn’t want it.”

They thought about trellises. “Other

garages have had them,” she says. “But they would have made the building appear taller. People didn’t want that.”

Brick wouldn’t work either. “Because of the ventilation,” she says. To solve the riddle, Black and her team stretched back four decades to the site’s previous purpose. From 1967 to 1973, the seven acres that construction crews are now transforming into a transit-focused neighborhood was The Eastside drive-in. A movie theatre. And that’s what

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inspired Black and her architects to start thinking about the silver panels of perforated aluminum that now help define the parking garage's exterior.

"They are our ode to the silver screen of the drive-in theatre," she says.

A different kind of place—

Softening the garage's exterior might be the simplest of the team's tasks. The most daunting, Black says, has been to usher this three-building project through a gauntlet of criteria stemming from a variety of collaborating stakeholders. Those stakeholders include three owners, two cities and two developers—not to mention three distinct sets of criteria for green building design, two separate architects and a plethora of funding sources, including private, non-profit, local, state and federal.

When it's complete next year, the seven acres that once provided entertainment to movie-goers will be a neighborhood, consisting of 243 residential units and 6,700 square feet of retail space. Kirkland's leaders believe that neighborhood can help transform the surrounding community into a place where automobiles aren't so essential. And it'll catalyze this change, leaders believe, by creating solutions for a problem with which most Puget Sounders start



The primary purpose of the perforated aluminum siding is to soften the concrete exterior of the new 538-stall parking garage at the South Kirkland Park and Ride. The artistic purpose is to connect with the site's past as a drive-in theatre. The siding emulates the silver screen.

and end their work days: traffic.

Transit—

One of the solutions is transit. The two residential buildings—one of which will contain 58 affordable apartments, the other will contain 185 market-rate apartments—currently under construction will share the South Kirkland Park and Ride's transit campus. From there, residents will be single bus rides away from Microsoft's Redmond campus, the University of Washington, Totem Lake, and the downtowns of Seattle, Bellevue, Kirkland.

"If you live here, you can walk out your front door and be on a bus," says the Paul Hanson, the SMR architect who is designing the 58-unit affordable housing building. "Think about it: You can sip your coffee and look for the bus out your window to the last second, and get on the bus and go."

Mixed-use—

Residents will also have the option—and plenty of reason—to stay. That's because the first floors of both buildings—approximately 6,700 square feet of floor space—will be devoted to retail: maybe a local coffee shop will move in; perhaps a pizzeria or a barber shop.

"We wanted to create a neighborhood down there," says Gary Prince, King County special project economist in charge of the development. "This is the countywide objective. It's growth management. Urban centers. Neighborhood communities. This was an opportunity to start the transformation of a suburban

what's so SMART about it?

Kirkland was one of the first suburban cities in the state to embrace the principles of smart growth. And today, evidence of that embrace is everywhere—in its 931-acre network of parks and protected open space. That's principle No. 6 of

smart growth. You can see it in Kirkland's downtown, where plazas abound—principle No. 5—and multi-story buildings feature retail stores in their first floors and residential spaces in their upper floors—Principle No. 1. You can see it in the transit centers at Totem Lake and downtown—principle No. 8. And, later next year, you'll be able to see it at the South Kirkland Park and Ride, which will feature 243 homes, 6,700 square feet of retail space and direct access to Kirkland and the region through the Cross Kirkland Corridor and seven transit routes.

HOUSING & RETAIL & TRANSIT

- 1** **Smart:** Mixes land uses (retail, residential)
Where else: Slater 116, Juanita Village, Bank of America and Merrill Gardens buildings

**243 HOMES, 6,700 SQUARE FEET OF RETAIL,
858 PARKING STALLS ON SEVEN ACRES**

- 2** **Smart:** Allows compact building design
Where else: Juanita Village, Downtown Kirkland, Slater 116



setting—lower density, auto-oriented, not a wide range of services in the area—to an urban setting. To transform this neighborhood is to provide good transit, the bike path along the [Cross Kirkland Corridor], and over time this Yarrow Bay Business District will have some other restaurants, groceries and local services.”

Smart Growth in Kirkland—

These features are examples of Smart Growth, a four-decade-old theory of urban planning and

transportation that aims to protect forests, farmlands and taxpayers by concentrating growth in urban areas. And it does so delicately, by ensuring aesthetic building design, by providing choices for walking and bicycling, by combining retail space with residential or office space and by providing public spaces for people to gather, play and think.

Kirkland has been incorporating these concepts into its long-range planning since at least 1968,



MARKET RATE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Smart: Offers variety of housing choices

3 **Where else:** Rose Hill Cottages in North Rose Hill neighborhood, Residential suites in downtown (*first project of its kind in permit review*), St. Francis Village, (in Totem Lake), Juanita Village.

PLAZAS, CROSS KIRKLAND CORRIDOR & SIDEWALKS

Smart: Creates walkable neighborhoods

4 **Where else:** Most of Kirkland, Slater 116, Juanita Village, Bank of America building (*downtown*)

PLAZAS, GREEN ROOFS, QUALITY DESIGN

Smart: Fosters distinctive communities with strong sense of place

5 **Where else:** Slater 116, Juanita Village, Bank of America building (*downtown*)

SOUTH KIRKLAND PARK & RIDE SITE

Smart: Directs development toward existing communities

7 **Where else:** Slater 116, Juanita Village, downtown

CROSS KIRKLAND CORRIDOR, TRANSIT CENTER, MIXED-USE

Smart: Provides transportation choices

8 **Where else:** Slater 116, Juanita Village, Downtown Kirkland

COLLABORATION WITH KING COUNTY, IMAGINE HOUSING AS WELL AS LEADERS, RESIDENTS & BUSINESSES FROM KIRKLAND, BELLEVUE, IMAGINE HOUSING

Smart: Create stakeholder collaboration in development

10 **Where else:** Comprehensive Plans, Neighborhood Plans, all development

when architect Harry Cummings designed the City's first Comprehensive Plan.

That plan was among the first to articulate Kirkland's intention of building a city with so much aesthetic and practical appeal that people want to live here, work here and play here. This is why in 2006 Kirkland passed the state's first complete streets ordinance, which guarantees that all new roads include sidewalks, bike lanes and street trees. It's why Kirkland requires all ground

floors of new downtown buildings to feature retail space that serves an immediate purpose while making walking more interesting. It's why the City worked with Sound Transit and King County Metro to build transit centers in the City's denser, more pedestrian-oriented activity centers—downtown and Totem Lake.

To make room for those who teach, serve and maintain, City leaders created zoning for a variety of homes, including residential suites—think

of them as hotel suites with shared kitchens. They've also made room—nearly 1,000 acres worth of parks and open space—for playing, gathering and thinking. And, they are giving residents more choice over how they move throughout the City, by building the Cross Kirkland Corridor and the transit-oriented neighborhood at the South Kirkland Park and Ride.

These features will be especially valuable as Kirkland grows denser to accommodate those 8,360 new households and 22,430 new jobs by 2035.

'Aha! Zoning!'—

Up until the middle of the 19th century, lots of American cities were built around many of these Smart Growth principles. Automobiles were still somewhat of a luxury. So people lived where they worked and played where they lived.

Two unrelated decisions, signed three decades apart, changed that. The first was in 1922. The decision resulted from an Ohio village's attempt to protect its rural character with a rarely used and untested tool called "zoning." The immediate subject of the Village of Euclid's ordinance was Ambler Realty, which intended to transform its 68 acres of open fields into an industrial complex. Ambler Realty sued the Village of Euclid, claiming its zoning attempts constituted a violation of due process. But the U.S. Supreme Court decided in favor of Euclid, and in the process, it established zoning, a mechanism through which cities and counties could determine how land in their jurisdictions

should be used—even if they did not own it.

"The effect of that decision was 'Aha: We can separate uses that are not the same,'" says Joe Tovar, a land-use expert, who served as Kirkland's planning director from 1982 to 1992.

Freeways—

Three decades later, the Eisenhower Administration began building freeways through American communities.

"The intent was to connect cities and to support moving missiles around," says Donald Miller, professor of planning and urban design at the University of Washington. "The unintended consequence was it made farm fields attractive for subdivisions."

In 1922, fewer than 20 percent of Americans lived in the suburbs. By the end of the freeway-building era, nearly 50 percent lived in suburbs.

With a burgeoning population driving 20, sometimes 30 miles to job

centers, these freeways acted like giant funnels, consolidating thousands, sometimes millions, of workers—all in automobiles—and squeezing them onto the same city streets. The result, of course, is congestion. And for two decades, the response was to build wider streets, more car lanes. To make room, sidewalks shrunk, or disappeared altogether.

Neighborhood streets morphed into busy arterials with 40-mile per hour speed limits. Window-dressed storefronts dressed-down into strip malls that were surrounded by oceans of asphalt. Big

10 principles of smart growth

- ① Mix commercial & residential uses
- ② Allow compact building design
- ③ Offer a variety of housing choices
- ④ Create walkable neighborhoods
- ⑤ Foster distinctive communities with strong senses of place
- ⑥ Preserve open space
- ⑦ Direct development toward communities
- ⑧ Provide transportation choices
- ⑨ Make development decisions fair, predictable, cost effective
- ⑩ Create stakeholder collaboration in development

boxes replaced mom-and-pops. Today in Kirkland, infrastructure intended for automobiles—roads, driveways and parking lots—consumes nearly a quarter of the City’s total land area.

“You build something and they come,” Professor Miller says. “You build freeways, and suddenly there is accessibility in areas where it was previously inaccessible. It created a drive-to-buy culture [based on real estate that becomes more affordable the further it is away from job centers]. That’s what happened here. We had this wave of suburban expansion.”

Near the end of the 25-year freeway-building era, the state of Washington began construction on I-405. One of the engineers assigned to it was Norm Storme, now the chair of the Kirkland Alliance of Neighborhoods. Storme also helped design Interstates 5, 90 and the Northeast 70th Street interchange with I-405.

“I-90 was going to be a 14-lane facility,” he says. “The old Lacy V. Murrow Bridge ... was going to be refurbished into a four-lane bridge just for Mercer Island and then 10 lanes to Bellevue.”

East of the I-405 corridor, Storme says, the state had planned for a third north-to-south freeway, which it would call “I-605.” Near Seattle’s Montlake Cut, the state built a portion of



The causeway near Juanita Bay Park is a prime attraction for residents seeking recreation and its preservation is a prime example of creating walkable communities and preserving open space.

bridge in anticipation of the R.H. Thompson Expressway.

“It was going to run beneath the bay through a submerged tunnel,” Storme says. “It got killed. [The public] loved us. Until we created the monster. And then they hated us. The vision for transportation in the 1950s dictates what we’re sitting in right now.”

Back to the basics—

The elixir for freeway-induced congestion, says Storme, is walking. Biking. Busing.

“If you want to reduce traffic,” Storme says. “You’ve got to encourage multi-modal transportation. And if you want to encourage multi-modal transportation, you’ve got to give people a reason to get out of their cars.”

Of course, people won’t get out of their cars if they have no place to go.

“Which is why,” says Eric Shields, Kirkland’s planning director, “you need density. Density is what makes transit feasible. It’s what makes walking and bicycling realistic choices.”

If you can do density right, planners believe traffic will ease—or at least not get much worse. Neighbors might chat more. Vast parking lots could shrink. And little by little, the experience of living in one of the nation’s best small cities will improve. ◀

22%
of Kirkland’s land is devoted to automobiles—in the form of roads, parking lots or driveways, accounting for the single largest use of land in the City.



OPEN *space*

The goal is for all Kirkland residents to have a park within a quarter-mile of their homes. And it became even more ambitious after June 1, 2011, when Kirkland annexed Finn Hill, North Juanita and Kingsgate.

Building parks and protecting open space in Kirkland, however, has been a 50-year ambition, which started with a group Kirkland businessmen, bureaucrats and homemakers attempted to bring as much open space into



public ownership as possible.

“We were on a land-buying binge,” says Bob Neir, author of “A City Comes of Age” and a 22-year member of Kirkland’s City Council. “We didn’t know what exactly we were going to do with the land. We just knew we had to get it into the public domain.” Today, Kirkland has 931 acres of parks and open space. ◀



the center *piece*

By enhancing Totem Lake Park and building the Cross Kirkland Corridor, land-use experts believe Kirkland can spur re-development in the City's designated Urban Center.



Totem Lake is a chatty place. More than 90 different species of birds hang out there, along with the bullfrogs, the turtles and the Long-Eared Owls. It's an inviting place, too. You could get there—and escape the oceans of asphalt that surround it—simply by strolling down one of two boardwalks.

Few, however, take that walk.

Bob Shultz, 57, is one of them. And he does it regularly—to document its wildlife and to test its water for phosphates, nitrates, acidity, turbidity and temperature.

“This is a [17]-acre gem ...” says Shultz, a self-described ‘citizen-scientist.’ “If I were king, I would try to feature the naturalness of it within an urban area. It’s a functional, natural wetlands, surrounded by an urban area. That’s rare.”

vision for the URBAN CENTER

The idea of Totem Lake as an Urban Center emerged as City policy in 2002, when the Totem Lake community collaborated on a vision statement for its neighborhood.

“The new plan envisions the area as the City’s ‘economic engine,’ wrote then-Mayor Larry Springer in an April 2002 letter to King County Executive Ron Sims that requested Urban Center designation. “[It will be] a focus for jobs and activity, providing the community and region with services, vehicle sales, major destination retail and health care.”

To manifest that vision, Kirkland’s leaders created an ambitious plan (see map at right) to transform Totem Lake into a dense, walkable village that offers its community open space, a nightlife and a variety of places to work and live. To be one of King County’s 18 Urban Centers, Totem Lake has to meet several criteria, chief among them, it has to:

- Be one and-a-half square miles or less
- Accommodate 15,000 jobs within half-mile of transit center
- Accommodate 50 employees & 15 households per acre

Shultz, of course, is talking about Totem Lake Park. The three-acre lake and its surrounding wetlands fulfill dozens of functions for its surrounding community—water purification, habitat, flood protection, among others.

Kirkland’s leaders are hoping it can perform one more: To help transform the Totem Lake

business district into the denser, more walkable, more inviting urban village the community had imagined in 2002 when it articulated its neighborhood plan.

Urban Centers

That plan became the basis for a designation

TOTEM LAKE WEST

THE PLAN: Redevelop to mixed-use with housing above retail

TOTEM LAKE MALLS

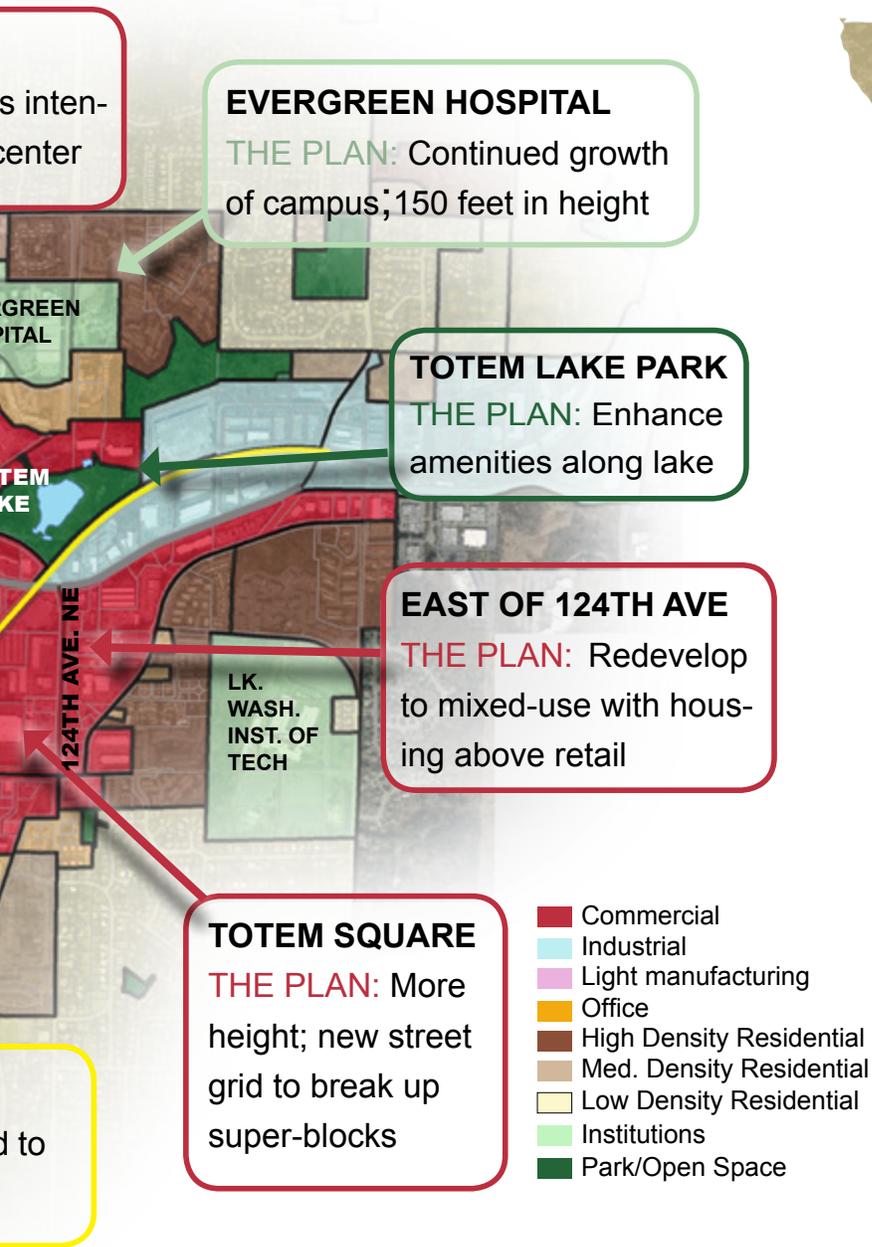
THE PLAN: Redevelop as a dense pedestrian-oriented center

PARMAC

THE PLAN: Redevelop to Office/business center with building heights up to 80 feet

CROSS KIRKLAND CORRIDOR

THE PLAN: Walking/cycling trail equipped to eventually accommodate mass transit



The purpose of these Urban Centers is to transform them into dense, pedestrian-oriented communities that can attract as much as one-half of the new jobs and one-quarter of the new residents forecasters expect to add in the coming decades.

Totem Lake's share of this could be as many as 10,000 jobs and 2,000 households.

To achieve those growth targets and to capitalize on the economic center that already produces nearly a third of the City's sales tax revenue, Kirkland has invested \$51 million into the Totem Lake neighborhood since 2009—with plans to invest more. Those investments run the gamut—from mitigating chronic floods on Totem Lake Boulevard, to improving traffic circulation on 124th Avenue Northeast. Kirkland has offered \$15 million worth of street improvements to help spur redevelopment of the Totem Lake Malls. It has revised its zoning to allow more residential density and building heights of up to 160 feet in some areas. In 2007, it teamed-up with Sound Transit and the Department of Transportation to build the \$80 million Totem Lake Freeway Station and the Northeast 128th Street bridge over Interstate 405, which

the Totem Lake business district earned in 2003: Urban Center. The Totem Lake business district is now one of 18 Urban Centers throughout King County. And because of its Urban Center status, it receives priority when applying for federal funding. Since 2009, in fact, Totem Lake has won more than \$6 million in federal funding—all intended to improve transportation.

the **ECONOMIC** engine

When it comes to jobs

and sales

tax revenue, no

other business

district in

Kirkland compares

to Totem Lake. A

third of the City's 37,378

jobs are located in Totem

Lake. And a third of the City's

sales tax revenue comes from

Totem Lake—60 percent of which

derives from auto sales. In percent

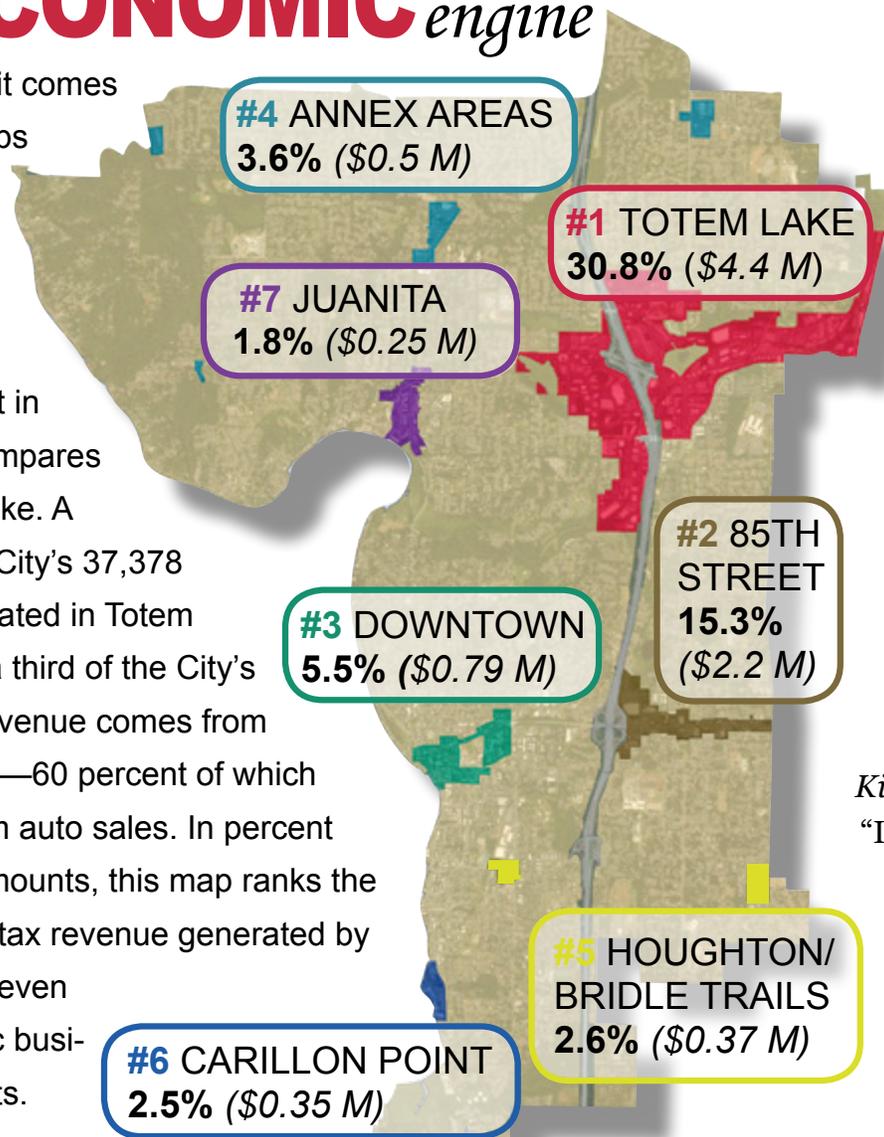
and total amounts, this map ranks the

2012 sales tax revenue generated by

Kirkland's seven

most prolific business

districts.



connects the east side of Totem Lake to the west side. In 2012, it worked with the Department of Transportation to make the freeway interchange at Northeast 116th Street safer and more efficient for people who drive, bike and walk. And this spring, the City retained the landscape architectural firm that designed Seattle's Magnuson Park—The Berger Partnership—to study Totem Lake Park and draft a master plan for it.

How Totem Lake developed

Other than its name,

the lake hasn't

changed all that

much since 1945,

when 23-year-old

Jerry Rutherford

and her husband

moved into a hilltop

farmhouse overlooking

a bog, then named

Lake Wittenmyer.

A few people would

go fishing on it," says

Rutherford, now 91, who

for nearly two decades

was a reporter for the

Kirkland Eastside Journal.

"It was pretty boggy to get

out there. You didn't

think of it as a lake.

You thought of it as a

muddy hole, with fish

and mountain beavers."

The area's pastoral

character began to

change on November 7,

1967—election night. On

that evening, residents

in Kirkland, Bothell and Redmond joined with

unincorporated residents in Kenmore, Wood-

inville and Juanita to form a hospital district.

They called it "King County Hospital District

No. 2." It was 108 square-miles. Totem Lake

was its geographic center.

Purchasing land for the hospital would be the

five district commissioners' first order of busi-

ness. They found it in Totem Lake; 35 acres—all

within a short walk of Puget Sound’s new four-lane interstate, I-405.

The Totem Lake Malls followed in 1973. And in the ensuing years, so did hotels, restaurants, apartments and other retail spaces—most of them positioned to attract freeway traffic. Warehouses and light-industrial factories emerged along the Eastside Rail Corridor. For more than a decade, the Malls were the center of it all.

“Totem Lake Center is a new concept,” said its owner, Puget Sound Land Company’s president John Stuart in a 1973 interview with the *Eastside Journal*. “We hope, eventually, one can bike or walk to all these facilities. They’ll all be in one place.”

A ‘sense of place’ starts here

But then began the Malls’ decline—hastened by roof collapses, flooding, tenant-abandonment and a lawsuit between the Malls’ two current owners.

“The thing that the Malls offered was a sense of place,” says Ellen Miller-Wolfe, Kirkland’s economic development manager. “That’s what this is all about. Place-making. And that’s what we want to put back. So we’ve been looking at what we have in Totem Lake that [local government] could effect. And what we



To test Totem Lake for phosphates, Bob Schultz compares a sample of Totem Lake water to a reference card. Schultz, a self-proclaimed citizen-scientist, thinks the City should turn Totem Lake Park into

have is a lake nobody sees and a rail corridor that’s been abandoned. And we’re thinking it starts there.”

The City of Kirkland tested this idea in 2011, when it hired a panel of land-use experts from the Urban Land Institute to scrutinize Totem Lake business district and the City’s plans for it. After extensive analysis, the panel proposed two public investments: Purchase the rail corridor and enhance and expand Totem Lake Park to the northwest.

Expanding the park to the northwest is the idea landscape architects from the Berger Partnership started with, as well. While performing their own analysis of the area, however, they had an epiphany: The Cross Kirkland Corridor forms the park’s southern boundary, its longest edge.

“You can’t separate the two,” says Guy Michaelson, a principal landscape architect at the Berger Partnership. “So now you can start to imagine that the lake can become the centerpiece, the visual centerpiece, of the neighborhood.”

“This is sort of [the community’s] chance to be aspirational,” Michaelson continues. “To look at the lake as not what it is now, but what it wants to be. ◀



Bikes, buses & automobiles

The Transportation Master Plan will map City's future in mobility

Five years ago, the City's transportation commissioners peered into the future of Kirkland's traffic. They saw climate change and population growth, dwindling supplies of land and money.

They realized the way Kirkland had thought about traffic in the previous seven decades wouldn't work for the next five decades. Kirkland, they concluded in their resulting 12-page vision-statement, *Transportation Conversations*, would have to plan more deliberately to move people, not just cars.



“For more than 70 years, Kirkland’s transportation system has been focused on moving cars. The principle of Moving People requires development of facilities and programs that support not only cars but travel by bicycle, transit and walking to move people where they want to go.” —Transportation Conversations, 2011

“Capital project spending is not currently balanced across modes,” the commission said in its report. “Only a small fraction directly benefits cyclists and pedestrians.”

15%

of Kirkland residents rely on carpools, buses, bikes or walking to commute to work.

The ‘small fraction’ of funding dedicated to cyclists and pedestrians might make sense for the Kirkland of 2013—a time when 85 percent of its residents use automobiles to get to work. For the Kirkland of 2035, however, it might not make as much sense. By then, Kirkland’s leaders expect the City to have grown by more than 20,850 jobs and 8,570 households.

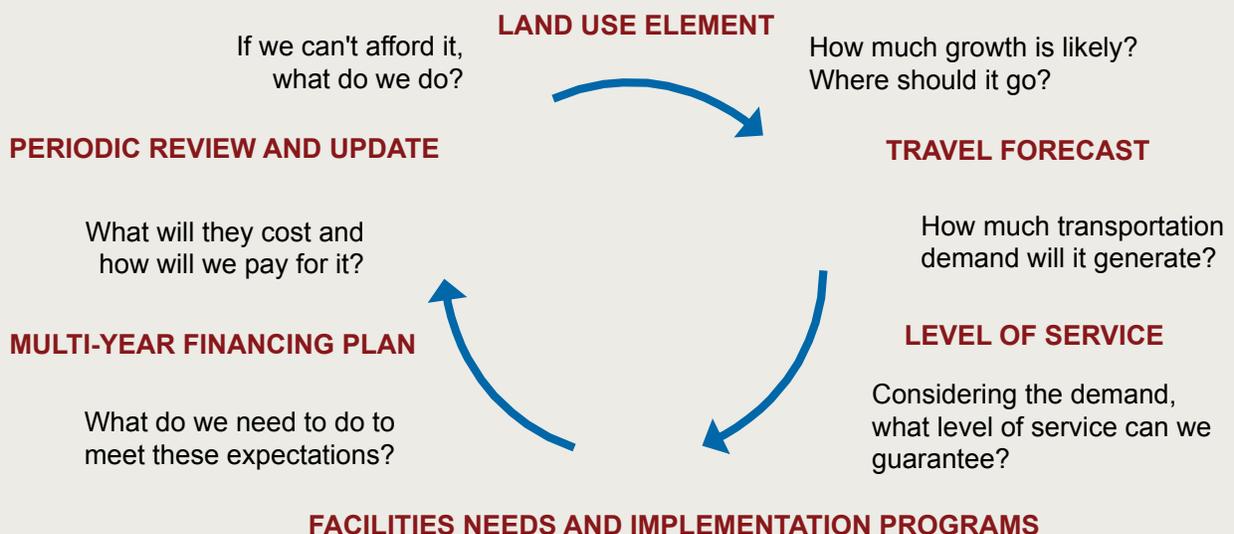
Development, by then, will have made the City more dense, and therefore more efficient to navigate by foot, bike and bus—yet more frustrating to navigate by automobile.

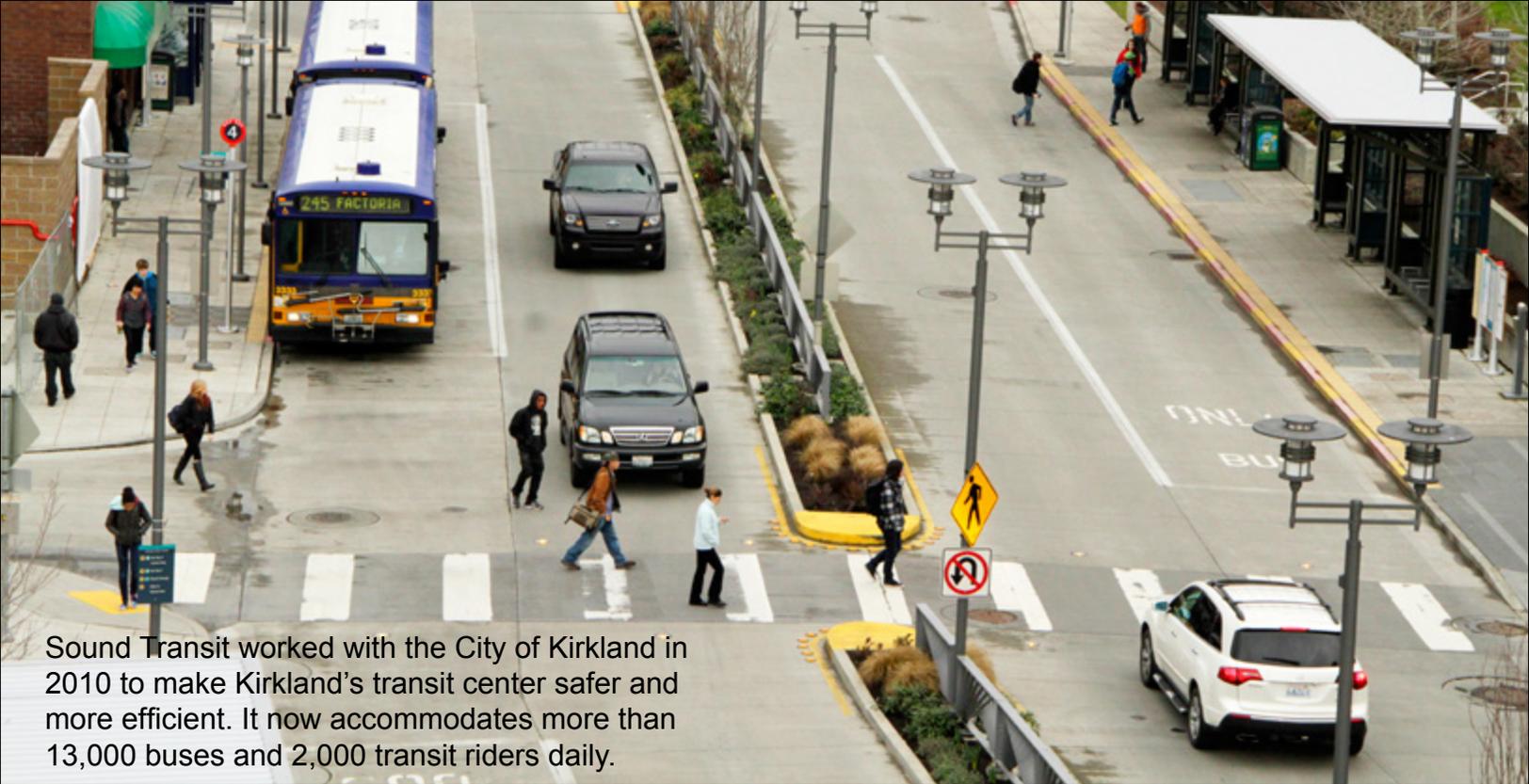
To prepare for that future, Kirkland’s leaders could continue to prioritize automotive travel by squeezing any remaining vehicular capacity out of the City’s shrinking land-supply. Or, they could go another route: They could steer more of the City’s transportation infrastructure to accommodate a blend of automotive, bike, pedestrian and bus travel.

TO LEARN MORE

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- Or David Godfrey, transportation engineering manager: 587-3865; dgodfrey@kirklandwa.gov

THE PLANNING CYCLE





Sound Transit worked with the City of Kirkland in 2010 to make Kirkland's transit center safer and more efficient. It now accommodates more than 13,000 buses and 2,000 transit riders daily.

The first option focuses on supply—the supply of roads. The second option focuses on demand—the public's demand for travel.

More than likely, says Joel Pfundt, chair of Kirkland's Transportation Commission, leaders will pursue both options—maximizing vehicular capacity where possible while continuing to build infrastructure that accommodates bus, bike and foot travel.

Doing that, however, is a complex exercise that requires leaders to consider a series of

variables and sometimes conflicting City goals, such as land use, funding, sustainability, concurrency, and the community's preferred level of service.

To make these kinds of decisions now, City leaders have relied on an array of guides: The

City's Active Transportation Plan, its safe school walk route plan, its Intelligent Transportation Systems Plan and the City Council's official goal of reducing motorists' reliance on single occupancy vehicles and improving connectivity and multi-mobility.

"What we don't have now is an integrated list of projects," says David Godfrey, Kirkland's manager of transportation engineering. "For every project, we need to be able to describe where it came from, what its purpose is and how it will benefit the City."

By 2015, Kirkland will have that unifying plan,

What's in a Transportation Master Plan?

- Financing plan
- Regional policies
- Use analysis
- Concurrency
- Level of Service (LOS)
- Multi-modal LOS
- Active Transportation
- Transit
- Pedestrian safety
- Bicycle Greenways
- Project Prioritization
- Etc.

its first-ever Transportation Master Plan. This plan will comprise one part of the City's Comprehensive Plan, which is due in 2015.

It will examine the ways people move throughout Kirkland and project the ways they'll move in the future. It'll consider school walk routes, bike lanes, medians and street lights. Park and rides and parking lots will come under its review. As will intelligent transportation systems and traffic signal timing.

And the Transportation Master Plan will identify the funding sources of each resulting project, whether they be state and federal grants or gas taxes and local levies.

To devise the plan, Kirkland's leaders will be collaborating with its public through a variety of forums, such as workshops, public hearings, and surveys.

"[The master plan and the public participation process] will give the community a clear vision," Pfundt says. "It will give us an opportunity to have a conversation with the public about what transportation will look like."

Those are fundamental questions. And their answers rely on several variables, such as the public's preferences, the resources available to the city and projections of population and development.

One of the most influential variables in this process is a law the state legislature passed in 1990 and reinforced in 1991: the Growth Management Act.

The Act requires cities to accommodate population growth by using space more efficiently within developed areas, rather than sprawling outward.

Using space, of course, requires some change. And change is not always popular or immediately understood—especially when the changes—at first glance—seem counter intuitive and counter-productive.

"Designating more bike lanes while traffic continues to worsen might not seem like a good investment," says Godfrey, Kirkland's transportation engineering manager. "But as we continue to grow, and grow more dense, those active transportation modes are going to become more efficient."

Collaborating with the public to plan for this



On her route to Alexander Graham Bell Elementary School during Walk to School week in October 2013, Hanna Ochoa, 8, navigates a crosswalk on Northeast 116th, which the City of Kirkland had enhanced with rapid flashing beacons. Kirkland installed 19 of these systems in 2013 and 2014 to improve crosswalk safety.

change is a goal of the Transportation Master Plan and the 20-year Comprehensive Plan of which it is a part.

"Growth is not something being imposed on Kirkland by itself," says King County demographer Chandler Felt. "Many other cities will have to stretch to accommodate this growth because King County continues to grow."

The role of the Transportation Management Plan is to determine how the City's transportation infrastructure will respond to the growth and the

“With limited resources, it becomes a question of how much can you tolerate and how much can you afford.”

—THANG NGUYEN, *City of Kirkland Transportation Engineer*

DO WE CONCUR?

Balancing development with transportation is tenuous. And Kirkland’s way of doing it might change.

An aerial view (looking northeast) of Kirkland shows the basics of the City: land-use and transportation. Concurrency is what defines and describes the relationship between these two basic responsibilities of the City of Kirkland.

Back in 2004, Kirkland’s Transportation Commission had to pick a number. The number they chose would define one of the City’s most fundamental relationships: The relationship between development and transportation infrastructure; between the places where people go—housing, shopping centers, work sites—and the infrastructure that helps get them there—roads, turn lanes, traffic signals.

The Growth Management Act has a word for that relationship: “concurrency.”

Maintaining concurrency is one of the Growth Management Act’s 13 goals.

Defining it, however, is up to the individual City. The way Kirkland defines it accounts almost exclusively for automobile traffic at signalized intersections. The number of people riding bikes or walking doesn’t figure in.

This, however, will likely change by 2015.

Kirkland’s Transportation Commission is currently devising a proposal for a concurrency metric that would include all of the City’s traffic—including bicycles, buses and pedestrians. This could influence the type of transportation projects Kirkland funds in the future. It could also

TO LEARN MORE

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■ Or David Godfrey, transportation engineering manager: 587-3865; dgodfrey@kirklandwa.gov

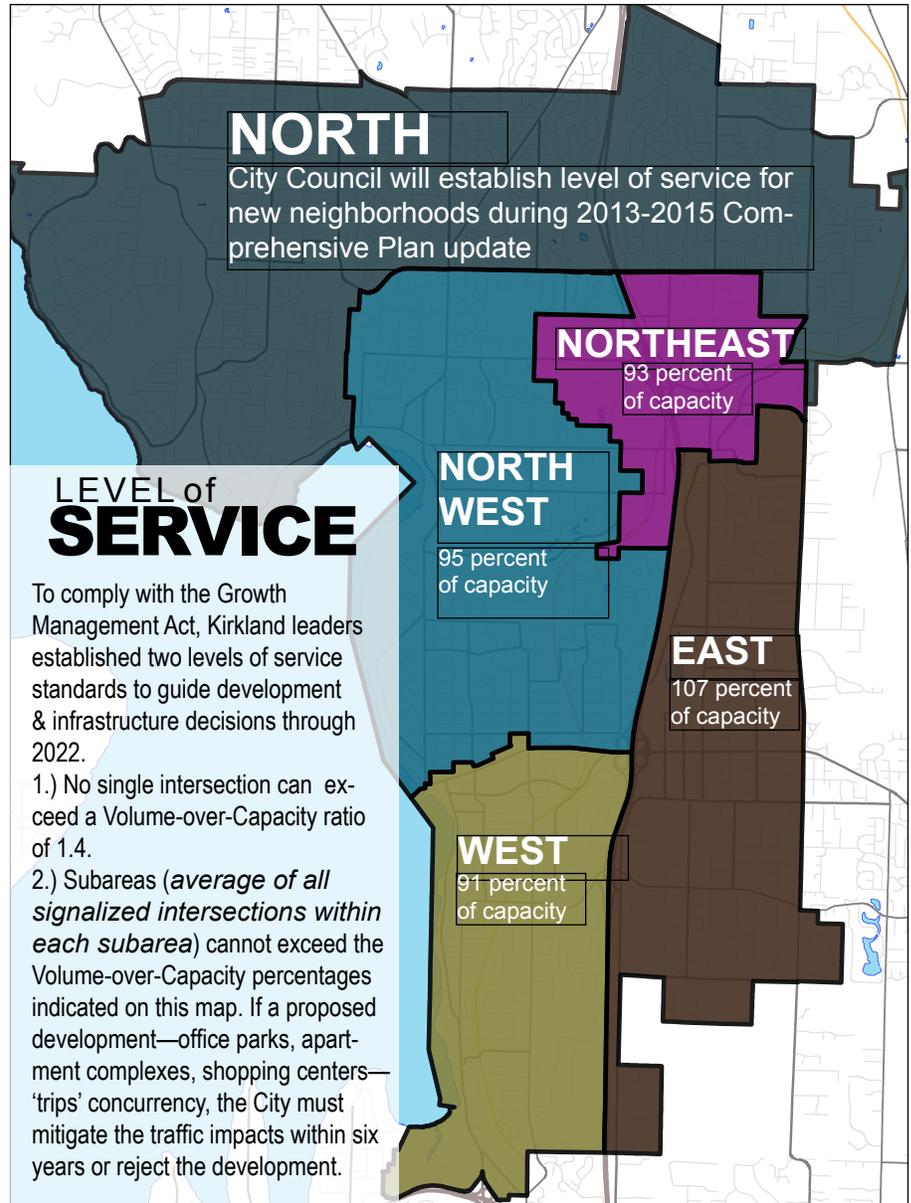
improve travel efficiency for bikes, buses and pedestrians, which is part of the City Council’s official goal for balancing Kirkland’s transportation choices.

Concurrency, the Kirkland way

Goals, of course, need measures. And in 1992, when the Growth Management Act required cities throughout the state to come up with their own goals for concurrency and the methods of measuring it, Kirkland’s leaders devised a rather simple metric: The number of automobiles intending to move through an intersection during rush hour—the volume—divided by the number of vehicles that intersection is designed to move—the capacity. Engineers refer to this as the Volume over Capacity ratio.

“An easy way to think about that is a glass filled with water,” says David Godfrey, Kirkland’s manager of transportation engineering. “The glass is the number of vehicles that can move through the intersection. And water is the cars. If the glass is partially full that’s good but if you pour so many cars through the intersection that they are spilling all over the place, that’s a V over C ratio greater than one.”

Things that increase the V over C ratio are things that increase traffic volume: shopping centers, apartment complexes, office parks. Things that reduce the ratio are things that increase the intersection’s capacity, such as additional



The City of Kirkland currently measures concurrency at signalized intersections with the following formula: The volume of automobiles intending to move through an intersection at rush hour, divided by the number of vehicles that intersection is designed to usher. To include other forms of travel, such as bike-commuting, transit ridership and walking, leaders are working on a new formula, which will be included in Kirkland’s first-ever Transportation Master Plan.

turn lanes or Intelligent Transportation System technology. Adding sidewalks, bike lanes and bus routes doesn’t help much since, remember, the City’s measurement accounts primarily for automobiles at signalized intersections.

Level of Service

The Growth Management Act also required Kirkland to establish

ceilings on how much congestion it will allow. This is the level of service component of concurrency.

Once a city has committed to a level of service, it must adhere to that service level until the city council officially changes it.

So, if a developer proposes an office park that would exceed the city's established ceiling on volume over capacity, state law requires that city to reject the proposal.

"... [U]nless transportation improvements and strategies are implemented to accommodate

GOAL #12

of the Growth Mgmt. Act

Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development are available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

that, however, they'd have to achieve one of two feats: Harness local and regional development, over which they had some, but not total control. Or continue to increase the vehicular capacity of its streets.

By 2002, researchers from the Washington State Transportation Center, found perils in all

the development within six years," says the 2005 Puget Sound Regional Council report, *Options for Making Concurrency More Multi-Modal*.

Two decades ago, Redmond, Bellevue and Issaquah all chose high levels of service—that is they chose to ensure efficient traffic flow through their streets. To achieve

three cities.

"Under this measurement system, Issaquah is currently out of compliance with concurrency requirements," their resulting November 2002 report *Eastside Transportation Concurrency Study* said. "In Redmond, two of seven zones are out of compliance. Bellevue is currently in compliance, but further development likely will raise compliance issues."

Back to the number

Kirkland chose a different path. Unlike Bellevue, or Redmond or Issaquah, Kirkland's leaders established a different level of service that would allow significant congestion. And the number they used to describe that level of service was 1.4.

"We figured out what the V over C would be like in 20 years as a result of development and zoning," says David Godfrey, Kirkland's manager of transportation engineering. "And then we set it high to ensure it would always be realistic."

By doing so, City leaders said, we, as a City are willing to grow, to transform from a bedroom community into a place where people can live, work and play. But we don't want to build five-lane arterials that will attract overflowing freeway traffic. We don't want to continue investing all of our transportation resources into one form of travel—automotive. And to be this kind of a community, we recognize we will either have to tolerate more traffic congestion or continue investing in infrastructure, such as the Cross Kirkland Cor-

THE ISSAQUAH EXAMPLE: Why we can't just stop growth

In response to the public's demand for less traffic congestion, the Issaquah City Council in 1995, established a high level of service for its streets. This slowed the pace of in-city development. Development outside the city, however, continued. With it, came traffic, which "tripped"

Issaquah's concurrency threshold in many areas. This resulted in a seven-year halt to development throughout most of the city, which slowed the rate of congestion. Even that wasn't enough, however. To become compliant with its concurrency standard, says Mark Hinthorne, special proj-

ects director for Issaquah's mayor, the City Council knew it had to build more capacity, including an estimated \$24 million project to widen a section of Issaquah-Pine Lake Road to five lanes. It also changed the way it measures concurrency and established a high level of service.



Northeast 130th Street and 120th Avenue Northeast, left photo, has a Volume-over-Capacity ratio of .39, lowest of the 52 intersections Kirkland tested in 2013. The intersection of Juanita Drive Northeast and Holmes Point Drive had a ratio of 1.10, the highest. The difference? Lanes vs. signal phases, says transportation engineer Thang Nguyen.

ridor, which expands transportation choices.

“You don’t want gridlock,” says Thang Nguyen, Kirkland’s transportation engineer responsible for testing concurrency. “With limited resources, it becomes a question of how much can you tolerate and how much can you afford.”

What about now?

The intersection with the City’s worst Volume-over-Capacity ratio is at North Holmes Point Drive Northeast and Juanita Drive Northeast. That ratio is 1.1.

It is comprised of two three-way intersections, separated by a few hundred yards.

“But they work as one system,” says Nguyen.

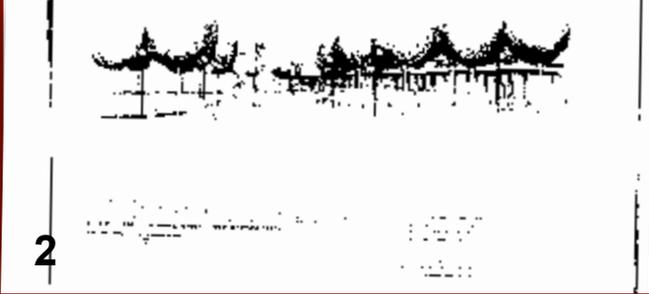
More signal phases means fewer vehicles get through. Despite this, traffic congestion is a problem “only when there’s an accident,” says Bach Tram, owner of Family Cuts, a hair salon, which sits on the corner. Meanwhile, over at Northeast 130th Street and 120th Avenue Northeast, the City’s best intersection, Cathy Devine, the 32-year owner of Compound Pharmacy, says traffic outside her window is a daily reality.

“From early in the afternoon, it’s backed all the way up the hill,” says Cathy Devine. So what explains the discrepancy between the intersections’ Volume-over-Capacity ratio and their neighbors’ experiences with them? “Perception,” Nguyen says. ◀

CONCURRENCY TEST

Fifty-two of Kirkland’s intersections function systemically to regulate the City’s entire traffic flow. These are called “Concurrency Intersections.” Whenever a proposed development requires a State Environmental Policy Act review, engineers test all of the City’s Concurrency Intersections for their Volume-over-Capacity ratios. The intersections with the highest ratios are listed below.

Intersection	Volume	Capacity	V/C ratio
North Holmes Pt/ Juan. Drive NE	1,506	1,375	1.10
Juan.-Wood. Way/ 100th Ave. NE	1,414	1,375	1.03
NE 85th St/ 132nd Ave NE	1,381	1,375	1.00
NE 124th St/ Slater Ave NE	1,378	1,375	1.00
NE 85th St/ 122 Ave NE	1,382	1,425	.97
NE 145th St/ Juan.-Wood. Way	1,324	1,375	.96
116th Way NE/ NE 132nd St	1,292	1,375	.94
NE 124th St/ 116th Ave. NE	1,246	1,375	.91
Simonds Road/ 100th Ave. NE	1,781	1,500	.90
NE 70th St/ 116th Ave. NE	1,224	1,375	.89



PERFECTING *the* PROTOTYPE

By April 2015, Kirkland will have its model for the Kirkland of 2035.



When Kirkland's planners asked its residents this year to write down a single word that describes their ideal for their city, one in five chose one of three words:

Walkable. Vibrant. Green.

That one-in-five includes Kirkland's most business-focused residents, as well as its most neighborhood-focused residents. It includes teenagers and senior citizens; thought-leaders on transportation, development and social services.

These residents were idealizing about the Kirkland of 2035. But they could have been idealiz-

ing about a place in Kirkland in the year 2015. That place: Park Lane.

By then, you see, the City of Kirkland will have completed an ambitious \$3 million makeover of the downtown plaza.

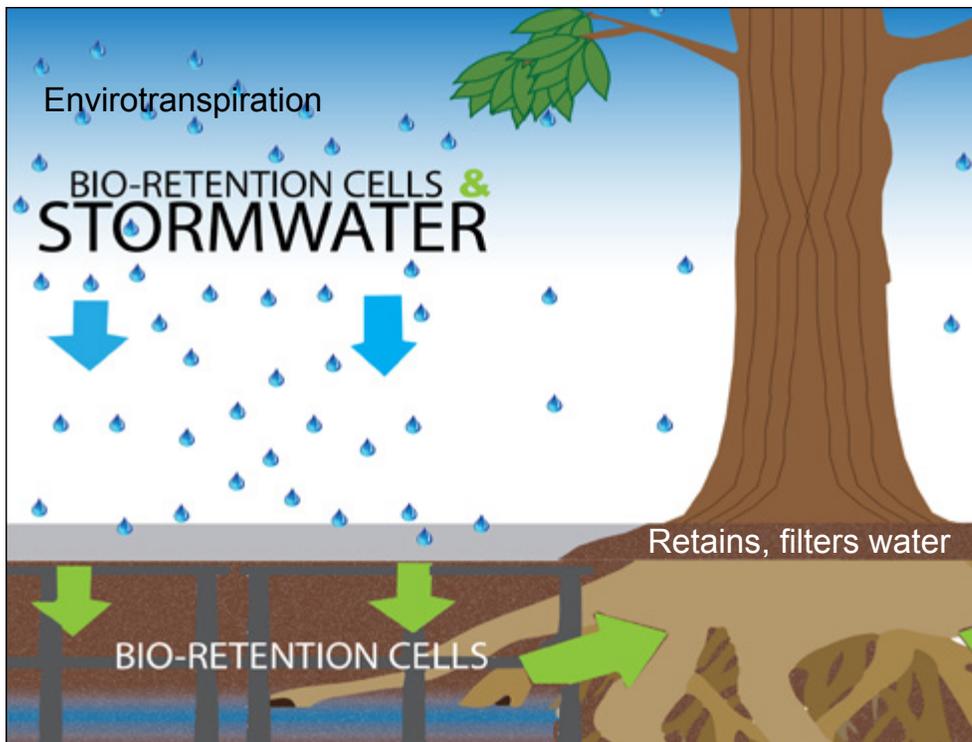
The new road will be the most visible component of the makeover, which also includes replacement of the 59-year-old concrete water

TO LEARN MORE

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OPPOSITE PAGE, 1) Before it was Park Lane, it was a two-way street called Commercial Avenue; 2 & 3) Commercial Avenue businesses taxed themselves \$140,000 in 1979 to design and build the one-way, curvilinear street; 4) Time has eroded some of Park Lane's cohesive charm; 5, 6, 7) Public feedback and analysis of Park Lane's existing conditions influenced the final design of Park Lane, which is illustrated in image No. 8.



Silva Cells prevent roots from buckling sidewalks by providing them with loose, moist and aerated soil. **BELOW:** Workers install Silva Cells along Park Lane near the King County Pump Station at Third Street.

main. On this new road, walkers and drivers will travel along the same surface. Rather than using a six-inch concrete curb and elevated sidewalks to separate walkers from drivers, Park Lane's new street will separate them with landscaping, bollards, surface textures, rain gardens and street furniture.

This could allow Park Lane's galleries and restaurants to absorb the streetscape into their storefronts as their customers absorb summertime sunshine while dining or shopping. With a few automobile-blocking bollards, the street could transform into a European-style plaza for community events. And on most days, drivers will still be able to meander through the corridor.

The point is to create a street people go to, not just through.

The 2014 objective

How to do that specifically is what 2014 has been all about.

Throughout the year, the Park Lane project staff has worked with design consultants and the community to create a place in downtown Kirkland, where people can gather, shop, dine and stroll. The place will feature a one-level surface of red and beige brick pavers. It'll use trees, rain gardens, street furniture and bollards to separate walk-

ers from drivers. To reduce conflicts between walkers and drivers, it will close the Lake Street parking lot's exit onto Park Lane. And with a few bollards placed on each end of it—on special occasions—it'll become a car-free, pedestrian mall. The City Council approved these concepts on Sept. 2, 2014.

What about construction?

Another objective for the year 2014 has aimed to answer one question: How can we ensure the steady flow of commerce to Park Lane remains steady during construction?

To answer this question, the project team has planned for a construction period that reconsiders nearby parking lot policies, that ensures pedestrian access to each of Park Lane's 23 shops, that compresses the time of construction and picks the least impactful season of construction—winter.

The project team has also explored ideas to increase

"The point is to create a street that people go to, not just through."



City of Kirkland Urban Forester Deb Powers discusses tree health on Park Lane during a fall 2008 stakeholder workshop. Through a series of workshops and design charettes in 2008, business-owners, property-owners and community leaders agreed on a preferred concept for Park Lane.

visitation during construction through a series of field trips that will capitalize on the rare real-time opportunity to demonstrate—to students, stewards and engineers—the green-technology tools Kirkland will install on Park Lane. Those green-tech tools will help protect Lake Washington from the stormwater Park Lane sheds, and the street,

\$1.6 M

The contribution of two grants to the Park Lane project from the Transportation Alternatives Program and the Department of Ecology.

itself, from sidewalk-buckling tree roots. To achieve this, contractors will build stormwater gardens. They'll use pervious surfaces that allow stormwater to seep through them into the soil below. The City will also plant trees in a network of Silva Cells that ensure tree roots will grow down—rather than up—by

providing its roots with loose soil that can, in turn, absorb substantial amounts of stormwater.

To make this all possible, the Washington state Depart-

Guiding principles for Park Lane

Through a series of workshops and surveys, stakeholders devised five basic principles to guide the Park Lane project.

- Develop visual connections along Park Lane
- Enhance Park Lane as regional destination
- Encourage economic vibrancy and diversity
- Ensure equitable access for all
- Create high-performance green spaces

Coming into FOCUS



The new Park Lane will feature a one-level, plaza-style street of red and beige brick pavers, on which people can walk, ride or drive. The street will use trees, street furniture, bollards and storm gardens to separate the drivers from the walkers. On special events, the community can open up the entire street to walking. To build this street, however, the City of Kirkland will have to replace many of the trees along Park Lane with more disease-resistant, appropriately sized species. This map details that plan.

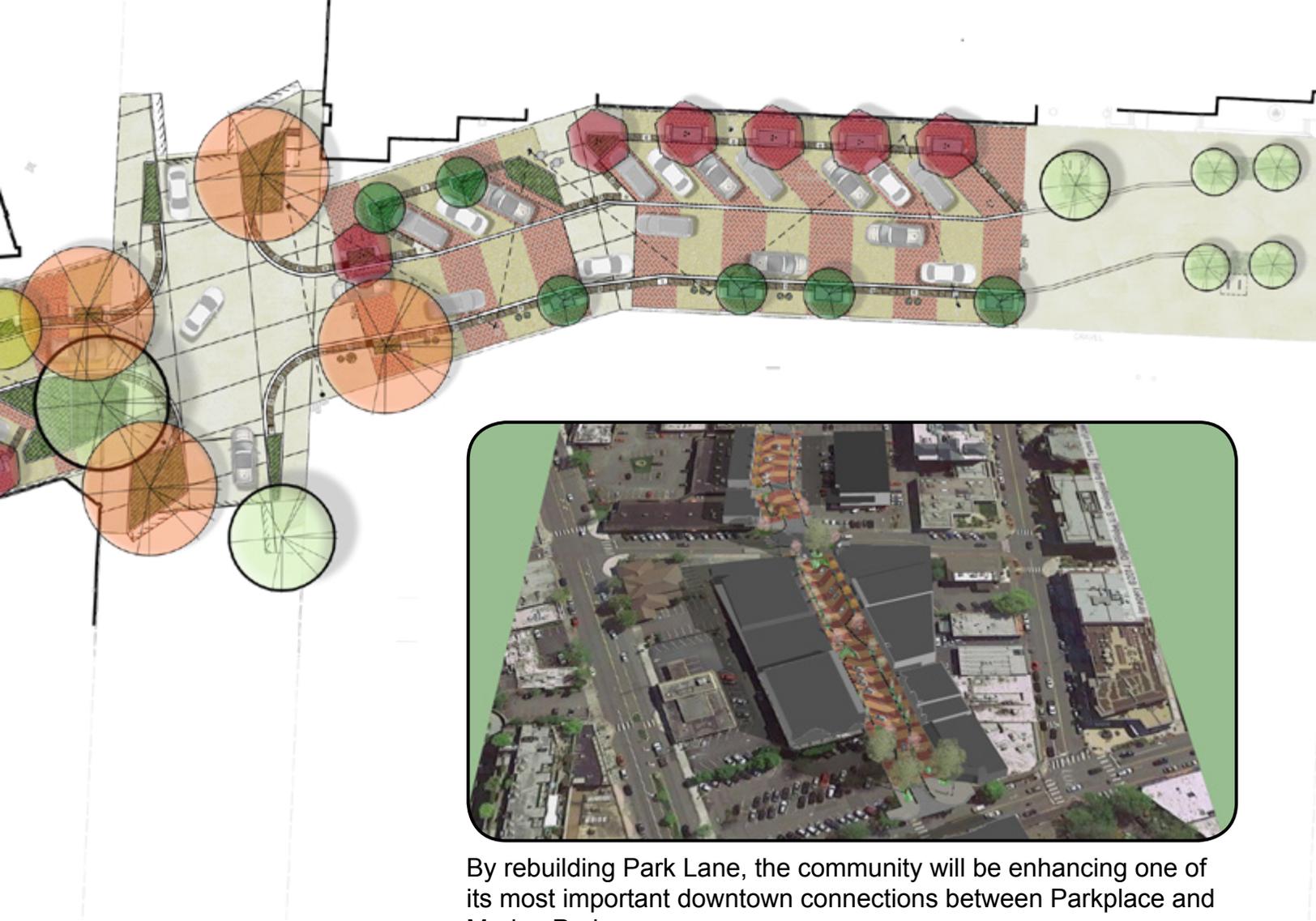
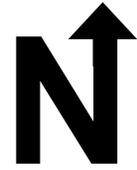


Park Lane's new street trees will be planted in silva cells. Silva cells prevent tree roots from buckling sidewalks by allowing them to grow deep into loose, aerated soil. In these images, workers are installing silva cells in 2014 along Park Lane near the King County Pump Station at Third Street.

LEGEND

-  Existing tree to remain (10 trees)
-  Red Maple (8 trees)

-  Zelkova (7 trees)
-  Katsura (10 trees)
-  Musashino (11 trees)



By rebuilding Park Lane, the community will be enhancing one of its most important downtown connections between Parkplace and Marina Park.

**Some of the tree species illustrated this map could change.*



Commercial Avenue was a typical street before property owners taxed themselves \$140,000 to rebuild it. **BELOW:** Local Improvement District No. 117.

ment of Ecology awarded Kirkland in 2012 with a \$739,000 grant.

On Commercial Avenue

This isn't the first time the street has been at the intersection of 'Need' and 'Opportunity.'

"In 1976, the real problem downtown was not enough parking, from day 1," says Bob Neir, author of "A City Comes of Age" and Kirkland's mayor from 1974 to 1979. "It was all parking. And that was it. The only problems downtown was parking. It was always parking. Parking, parking, parking. For many years. People didn't ride bikes in those days."

And to solve that problem, City leaders began creating parking where they could and when they could. One of those places was along a two-way street known as Commercial Avenue.

"It was not a very pretty street," Neir says. The solution, proposed by Kirkland's hired consultant, was to reduce Commercial Avenue's two-way street to one and use the remaining lane's worth of space to transform the Avenue's character from a typical downtown street into a "curvilinear" streetscape, which would meander through an urban park-like setting. This would also create pockets of angled parking.

The most ambitious idea was to capitalize on a stream that still meanders through Everest Park underneath Sixth Street South and the Cross Kirkland Corridor, along the Parkplace property and into a concrete pipe buried beneath Kirkland Avenue.

"The consultants suggested that stream be brought to the surface," Neir says. "And that Commercial Avenue should be redone as a semi-mall with sidewalks, trees, benches and art. This stream would be a major attraction. And that's what they recommended. There was going to be a price tag. The only way to pay for this is if the downtown property owners got together."

The downtown property owners did get together—to vote 'no.'

Three years later, the parking problem had worsened.

"All of the sudden they decided something had to be done," Neir says.

This time the property owners said yes—to a \$140,000 levy that would help create the wide sidewalks of exposed aggregate, and the curvilinear streetscape, lined with trees, benches and art.

"After that, they said 'we can't call it 'Commercial Avenue,'" Neir said. "Not after we've beautified it."

They called it Park Lane.

Foundation of the pedestrian environment

Very quickly, Park Lane fulfilled its objective as a street to go to, not just through. And the ben-



A couple enjoys a stroll Jan. 14 along Park Lane. The Kirkland Downtown Strategic Plan said Park Lane was one of two foundations for walkability in downtown.

efits of Park Lane’s new role extended throughout all of downtown.

In the summer of 1999, for example, the City Council appointed 31 of Kirkland’s most active thinkers on land-use. Their task: Develop a strategy for continuing downtown development. For the next 18 months, the team collected data. It interviewed scores of community leaders, organized a city-wide forum, and delivered presentations to business, senior, youth and neighborhood groups.

The result was the 12-page *Kirkland Downtown Strategic Plan*, which repeatedly highlighted the importance of a functioning Park Lane to the rest of downtown and as the best connection from Parkplace to Marina Park.

“The downtown has many positive pedestrian features,” the 2001 report says. “The small block grid pattern and Park Lane are two of the foundations of this comfortable pedestrian environment.”

Time, money and opportunity

Time, however, has eroded some of Park Lane’s charm and replaced it with a patchwork of temporary solutions: Tree roots buckled sidewalk panels, forcing the City to replace sections of exposed aggregate with temporary rubber panels. Some of the trees have died and disappeared. Automobiles have worn wheel ruts, alligator cracks and potholes into the street’s pavement. The edges of the sidewalk curbs are cracking. And beneath this eroding surface are the World War II-era concrete pipes that deliver drinking water to downtown and 100-year-old gutters that gush untreated stormwater directly into Lake Washington.

“Maintenance was becoming such an issue down there,” says Kirkland Streets Manager Ray Steiger. “And every time we maintained it, when we put in the rubber sidewalks, or cut down a tree or graded a lifted sidewalk panel with black



The corner of Park Lane reveals the effects of a decades-worth of quick-fixes: Three sidewalk surfaces and a tree stump.

asphalt, it chipped away at the overall feel of Park Lane.”

In 2008, Steiger, added the Park Lane renovation to a list of more than 100 other Capital Improvement projects in need of funding.

That funding came in two rounds: First from the Washington State Department of Ecology in 2012, then from the Transportation Alternatives Program in January 2014 for \$857,479.

“Your project was one of 16 projects approved by the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Executive Board in December ...” wrote Josh Brown, the Puget Sound Regional Council’s executive director in a January 2014 letter to Kirkland Mayor Amy Walen. “There was strong demand for this round of funding, with 62 project proposals, totaling nearly \$70 million.”

Kirkland’s City Council accepted the grants and agreed Jan. 7 to resume progress on Park Lane’s new design by allocating the remaining \$1.4 million to the project.

The prototype for 2035

Of course rebuilding a street into a prototype for the walkable, vibrant and green city so many residents have envisioned requires more than money and heavy machinery.

It requires imagination, curiosity and commerce. Those are the essentials. And providing them is a calling for all those who share that vision and for the thousands of residents who already shop and dine on Park Lane.

Five principles for downtown

The Downtown Action Team developed five principles to guide the recommendations of the 2001 Downtown Strategic Plan, which would guide land-use decisions:

- Maintain pedestrian orientation
- Balance the need for vehicular circulation with downtown’s vital pedestrian character
 - Acknowledge Parkplace as an integral part of downtown by establishing clearly defined pedestrian connections with the core area and the waterfront
- Enhance core area of downtown by assuring ... a human scale for any development
- Celebrate the waterfront by re-orienting downtown to the lake

That sounds daunting. But really, it’s not. To build the prototype for the Kirkland of 2035, all they have to do is keep coming to Park Lane. ◀