

KIRKLAND DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

August 13, 2007

From July 5th to July 31st, 2007, the city posted an online survey on the main page of the City's website. The survey was timed to support the July 16, 2007 Community Meeting by providing additional opportunities for public comment both before and after that forum. The community was notified of the survey availability via the City webpage, the project listserv electronic newsletter, the City's Neighborhood e-bulletin, the Kirkland Downtown Association and Chamber of Commerce weekly electronic newsletters, and the Eastside Digest column of the Seattle Times. The City received 47 electronic survey responses and one general e-mail comment in this time period. Survey responses were anonymous.

Survey participants were asked for their responses to three prompts:

- 1. The most important thing to me about downtown Kirkland is _____.*
- 2. What would make downtown Kirkland a better place is _____.*
- 3. A question I have about the future of downtown is _____.*

Results are reported below. Key themes that emerge from survey responses are those related to access (both pedestrian and automotive), the waterfront, scale, retail, and community character. In the "questions about the future category", another theme emerged around the community vision for downtown.

SECTION I – Responses by Survey Prompt

MOST IMPORTANT THING:

Access:

Pedestrian:

- Access to Lake Washington.
- That it is a good transportation to other locations and I can get there by bus. Also that it be a comfortable place to walk around and bike to.
- Walking friendly.
- The walkability
- The pedestrian friendly environment.
- Walking to enjoy the waterfront, restaurants, art galleries, and movie theater.
- Pedestrian friendly
- The walkability aspect of town.
- Walkability. Open spaces that have a connection for community.

- Its development as a pedestrian-friendly city with fun things to do and places to live
- The walkability and access to the waterfront
- Easy access for pedestrians/bikers.
- Proximity to Lake Washington and walkability.
- Ability to walk and integration with the water.
- Making it more accessible to get there without a car, and increasing the area that is zoned like the downtown area.
- Very safe and friendly for peds.

Automobile:

- I really love downtown the way it is right now, except that parking is a pain.
- It will be accessible to all Kirkland residents and visitors. Until Metro expands bus service, people get here primarily by car. I hope the city will partner with a new development and create an underground parking garage in or near downtown core. The cities I visit with free underground parking make it easy and convenient for me to shop. I happen to live in downtown Kirkland so I walk downtown all the time. But it is a pain for people to visit me.
- User friendly, i.e. low cost or no cost ample parking, provides for a good cross section of businesses, therefore there should be adequate space, which includes being able to go vertical.
- Access to parking, parks, beaches, restaurants, shops.

General:

- Its convenience.
- An ability to access the businesses with convenience.
- Its convenience.

Waterfront:

- ...its proximity to Lake Washington and the ease with which the lake can be accessed. It feels like a small, easy-going community, a welcome relief from Bellevue and Seattle.
- The waterfront.
- Public access to waterfront
- Access to, and views of, the waterfront!
- The waterfront.
- Access to the water.
- The beauty of the lakefront and park areas.
- Inviting waterfront.
- Keeping it unique, preserving the waterfront, and improving pedestrian and bike friendliness.
- The Water front park and Peter Kirk Park are two vital parts of the down town that you do not see in most towns around.
- Connection to the lake and open, light feeling makes me want to linger.

Scale:

- Limit the growth of multiple story buildings, by keeping the number of condominiums down.
- Low profile buildings (lower building heights that allow more visible sky to those walking along the streets.)
- Keeping the downtown building levels at one story. This will keep the views of the sky water, and trees. This will keep the downtown core a place where people like to "hang out."
- The openness provided by the pedestrian-scale (low) building heights along Lake Street, Park Lane, and Central Way add to the appeal.
- The low height requirements.
- Low rise, small town feel
- The small town nature of the city ... the fact that it is not full of high-rise buildings (with the exception of the eye-sore Portsmouth).
- The relatively low buildings giving small town rather than city/urban feel.

Retail:

- Availability of outstanding restaurants.
- Vibrant and diverse restaurants.
- Interesting shops, great restaurants.
- I enjoy the restaurants mostly, but I like the idea of the diversity of businesses that have sprung up downtown.
- The interesting quality of the shops. Not just cookie cutter.
- Having businesses that serve nearby Kirkland residents. WE don't need any more beauty salons, banks, or boutique clothing stores.
- I live downtown, the most important things to me are the QFC, the pharmacy in the QFC, the library, and the transit center.

Character:

- Keeping the downtown core vibrant and family friendly. There seems to be a teetering balance between the 20-something bar scene and activities that kids can participate in.
- Family friendly.
- It is vibrant
- Safety - keep patrols around the teen center and especially the transit center. Too many drug addicts/criminals down there! Also, too many bars and drunks that frequent the
- Living in an environmentally sustainable, people and family friendly, safe, mixed and vibrant community.
- The trees and the recreational amenities.
- Its quaintness, give some tax concessions to first class men stores maybe drug stores otherwise its pretty nice the way it is.
- Small town character such as the 4th of July parade events.
- The library and Peter Kirk park area.

- The small town feel. Please let us not lose the feel.
- Keeping the "small town" atmosphere.
- Keeping the character outlined in the vision above - diverse, pedestrian friendly, etc, at least for the two blocks closest to the water. In other words, start at the water and head two or three blocks east
- A small town feeling. Feeling welcome. Not feeling as if its just about growing "business".
- A good "style". That means more buildings in eccentric colors, shapes. We need to ensure that we keep Kirkland from becoming more of "suburbia" (like parts of Redmond and Bellevue), but build on what is truly unique: the views, the lake, the arts, the parks, the fact that we are actually so small so most people SHOULD be able to walk to downtown from ANY part of town (it is no more than 30-45 minutes)
- Small & green enough to be peaceful, big enough to be interesting.
- Like the music and art related activities.
- The concentrated core of shops, restaurants, galleries, library, pool, etc.
- The city is doing a good job with flowers, parks, etc.

WHAT WOULD MAKE DOWNTOWN BETTER

Access:

Pedestrian:

- Repair and widening of sidewalks.
- Enforcement of pedestrian crossings. This is absolutely not being done.
- Blocking of flow of through traffic through the center of town.
- More availability for parking and free parking.
- A few more bike racks would be a good way to encourage the city's goal of healthy citizens.
- Keeping it pedestrian friendly.
- Wider sidewalks / paths down Lake St towards Carillon Point. Bike lane down entire length?
- Get rid of traffic. Would love to see a pedestrian only block or two.
- Improve pedestrian access and space (wider sidewalks along waterfront!)
- Pedestrian only access between Central, Lake, 1st Street (Portsmith) and 3rd Ave. The new parking garages, along with the library parking and the new parking planned for Park Place, would provide a parking and entry point to this pedestrian only area.
- Make it more pedestrian-friendly by increasing the number of cross-walks along State Street. There are none between 2nd Ave S and 7th Ave S, whereas Lakeview has many more. Also improve State St's lighting. Also the northbound bus stop in the 100 block of State St should be reinstated now that construction allows it.

- Better pedestrian connections uphill and into residential areas. Feel like I have to walk through a lot of blank space to get from the library to the downtown area, though that's probably not true. Landscaping etc. to help add interest or friendliness where you walk by parking lots or other utilitarian stuff would make it feel less onerous. I like what you did with Central Way bump-outs etc.!
- Access to the water. Easy access for pedestrians/bikers.
- Improve the sidewalk along the lake into a promenade with art and landscaping like they have in many Canadian cities such as Vancouver or even Nanaimo.
- Establish intermodal rail/bus stops at the South Kirkland P&R, off of 85th/Kirkland Ave, and in Totem Lake. Also create an inexpensive way to help people go from the intermodal stop off of 85th towards the water, perhaps following the current pedestrian route.
- I live on Rose Hill, and it feels pretty dangerous to walk to downtown. You should try it sometime.
- Something that ties Parkplace with the rest of downtown

Automobile:

- Improved parking (perhaps underground / out of sight somehow)
- Put in a parking structure under Peter Kirk Park.
- More parking.
- Get rid of the traffic calming circles, they cause more harm than good. Or shrink the circles to widen the lane area around them, so cars can get by without coming so close to the opposing traffic.
- Less commute traffic; regular traffic isn't an issue
- I see tremendous pressure by real estate people to develop downtown. We add several minutes each year, on to the "Kirkland Crawl". Put the high-rise city of Kirkland at Totem Lake where it's connected to the freeway.
- No parking fees. Even though I live in Houghton, I hadn't been back to the Cactus Restaurant since I received two \$20 parking tickets. I had joined two friends, who parked in front of the Cactus a couple years ago. I parked around the corner at around 5 p.m. Not familiar with the restrictions, I arrived back to my car at 7 p.m. and found \$40 worth of parking tickets. I haven't been back to that restaurant since due to the harsh parking fees.
- Parking garages (set into hillsides) at the sites across the street from 3rd Floor Fish Cafe and on the north side of Central Way where the Christmas Store used to be. The sites both need pedestrian overpasses and could be up to four stories of parking if the top level is left uncovered with planter boxes. Also a decent hill climb with benches and a water feature leading to the Market and Norkirk Neighborhoods next to the (new) Central Ave. parking garage (where that REALLY steep parking lot is now).
- A by-pass route for commuters skipping the freeway congestion.
- Less bus service. Moving the bus service a little farther north would cut down on noise and also safer for pedestrians.
- Free parking. Keep the free parking there is and make more. If I'm going to pay for parking, I might as well go to Seattle. If I can't get free parking here, why

wouldn't I just go to Bellevue and enjoy all the amenities there - with free parking?

Waterfront:

- More of public access waterfront
- Increase access to, and views of, the waterfront.
- Buy up waterfront properties and convert them to public open space!
- I think Marina Park needs to get bigger, it's getting crowded. I'm favorable towards marina park lid to get more park plaza above and keep parking below if we can make it work.
- Totally redoing the entire Marina Park block including ALL the buildings from Central Way to Kirkland Ave and having something that actually works for the people, businesses and visitors.
- Better integration of the Lake with the nearby businesses.

Scale:

- Making sure there's no high-rise construction that would block the views of or access to the lake, especially in the core downtown area (the area near the Central Way and Lake Street intersection)
- Keep it low rise, to minimize the big city, tunnels-with-no-sun, and over congested feel. Less density!
- Refuse to permit high rises!
- Refuse to give in to state pressure to overcrowd our downtown. The GMA is mistaken! Higher density downtown will NOT create less urban sprawl or less downtown traffic!
- Keep the buildings small ... do NOT increase the height limits.
- I don't mind two story buildings being built. I would even live with three or four story buildings being built if we step them back wedding cake style.
- Get rid of the antique store that wastes so much space or subsume it within a multi story development
- Keep development at a scale consistent with what is already in the downtown core. Resist temptation to relax height limit codes, encourage creative design of buildings that synthesizes natural beauty with buildings (for instance, beautiful Montreux, Switzerland on Lake Geneva has lakefront promenade and beautiful buildings that get smaller as they get taller and have trailing plantings growing down their sides. very lovely and diminishes the urban sterile feel of higher buildings. Make sure that development is people centered, not only based on increasing tax base.
- Completely redo the area between Central and Kirkland Ave and between Lake Street & 3rd. Create a cohesive design with multi stories, gathering places, that is more pedestrian friendly, more protected, but less dark than the current corridor e. Implement a themed theater festival with venues at the current theater, an outside venue at Waverly Park and perhaps a third venue.
- St. John's consolidated their lots into 1 lot as far as I know. Consider running 4 story zone over to State?

- Continuing to extend the mixed-use zoning (commercial street-front with residential above) to more areas of the City, extending the walkable downtown area.
- I was terribly disappointed in the council for not going forward with the Lake and Central development, to leave that corner a parking lot was a huge mistake. I look at the buildings in down town and they are very "tired". I do not see why two stories would not work. Look at the redevelopment in down town Lake Oswego, I think it has helped in making that town a better place. Believe me I love Kirkland, it just needs a bit of a face lift.

Retail:

- Improved retail and more office space to use it.
- Improved shopping opportunities.
- More interesting and useful shopping sites.
- Encouraging small businesses and shops to come to and get established in the area.
- Bars/clubs/restaurants which attract a more sophisticated and mature crowd and less tolerance for "dive" bars pulling in immature (if not under-age) drunken kids that vandalize the town and create noise nuisances at bar closing time.
- Keeping the "big box stores" out of downtown but supporting their growth in the Totem Lake Mall area.
- Some stores that are useful like a hardware store. Less galleries.
- More retail variety! We need shops with affordable children's clothing, shoe stores, a drug store. I'd prefer to spend my retail dollar in Kirkland, not Bellevue and Redmond.
- A better grocery store
- Retail that appeals to a more diverse audience; maybe some affordable clothes for women (Something other than over-the-top designer and consignment)
- Less turnover of businesses, an increase in the number of galleries (we've lost so many in the last 5 years), and more free parking
- A wider variety of shops...with all the boats coming here, what about a nautical theme shop? A Christmas shop (ornaments)? A toy store with stuffed animals?
- Improved retail and more office space to use it.
- Make it possible to meet most of my shopping needs without having to leave downtown.
- We need downtown shops that stay open a few weeknights or weekend nights. I work 9-5 p.m. weekdays and can't start seriously shopping until after 6:30 p.m. or Saturdays so it limits my local shopping. I'd love more basic household stores like a hardware store.
- We need at least two good sized grocery stores close to downtown, what currently is available is inadequate and of poor quality. Along with at least two large fitness facilities in the downtown core. A place to go to shop, be entertained, work out, and rest, instead of going to downtown Bellevue or Redmond.
- More shopping, restaurants and services, and a sincere effort to keep the place clean, especially in the summer, especially in the parks and along the waterfront.

- Downtown also need to see a bit more of "long term/lower rent" tenants. The galleries and the upscale shops are great, but they come and go. The rents are simply too high for most businesses to endure in the newer construction. Property owners should take more of a "community" approach and look towards tenants that might not be paying as much per month, but their businesses (anchored in the community) would be more stable and hence better in the long term. What is now lost in empty spaces could easily be made up by keeping commercial space occupied all the time.
- What businesses could we need? A baker. Florist. Independent coffee shops. Family eatery (not a trendy spot). PC/electronics repair store. Cobbler. Small thrift shop. Store front for non-profits. Just look to Capitol Hill to get a better "neighborhood" feel. The truth is, and that was made vocal during the annexation forums, there are MANY residents who never shop in downtown Kirkland (apart from their java) since there is nothing that they are looking for. Many can not afford the restaurants, and are not interested in the bar scene.
- A stronger effort from the bar owners to keep the "scum" out of Kirkland would help as well. Be it residents, or visitors, those who can not behave at our bars, should be taken to the "city line" and not welcome back. Well, maybe a bit harsh, but there's still some rowdiness in Kirkland.
- More every day retail. There are no decent bookstores, newstands, drug stores and way too many hair/nail stores, banks and other limited use stores.
- A cool indoor market that would be run all the time would be great. The Antique Mall would be a perfect place.
- More mixed use developments like Kirkland Central, but with stores providing what residents want to buy daily.
- Create something similar to the Third Place books environment in Kenmore, on the site of the Lake Street parking area/US Bank property with a gathering place, lectures, activities, retail and perhaps even multi family residential
- Rent control of retail in downtown Kirkland to slow turnover of retail and build a better mix and balance of shops
- I would hope that the future of Downtown would create a better shopping district in town. New businesses have come in and that is good but a wider variety would be great.
- Diversity of property ownership so that all available space is not held in the hands of a few individuals.

Character:

- Please keep Kirkland small. We chose Kirkland as a place to live because it was a small town in a larger suburban area. I was disappointed to hear that the annexation was a real possibility.
- More art!
- Continue smart growth of the core.
- Less condos and apartments.
- No more condos!

- More development of the areas between Parkplace and Downtown, and very importantly, to me, is to clean up and develop the industrial area - 87th street starting at the Highlands and going down. It seems like this could become residential or some other use. It's really junky looking.
- Newer, nicer buildings. Please remove that old antique store by the bus stop. It's an eye sore.
- Should Kirkland have a "theme"? A "mascot" i.e. Kangaroo??
- More places to hang out in the evenings. Walking is nice in the summer but somewhere to go AFTER dinner in the winter would be good.
- Garbage cans so the city can be kept clean (since there still are those who thinks it is "alright" to drop wrappers/cigarettes everywhere)
- A good "style". That means more buildings in eccentric colors, shapes. We need to ensure that we keep Kirkland from becoming more of "suburbia" (like parts of Redmond and Bellevue), but build on what is truly unique: the views, the lake, the arts, the parks, the fact that we are actually so small so most people SHOULD be able to walk to downtown from ANY part of town (it is no more than 30-45 minutes)
- Replicate the good points about downtown Kirkland to Juanita and Totem Lake areas as they continue to develop, creating other attractive "downtown cores" that can attract people and be "third places" that have their own unique character and attraction.
- Keep protecting and acquiring parkland, open spaces.
- Try and leave it basically like it is
- Parkplace center as a pedestrian area with parking on the perimeter, garage or underground. Definitely no high rises along the water. Further up by park place would be fine.
- Take the "bank parking" (corner of Lake Street and Central and make it into a European style "piazza", or a "Grand Place", or "Plaza Major". Yes, we'll lose some parking spots, but they can easily be regained in nearby neighborhoods (once again, short walking distance, if we even need them). A properly designed plaza should have a central water feature, benches and areas where you actually can sit down and relax, get out of the sun in the summer, and meet people at the same time. Merchants will likely oppose this initially (loss of parking), but the mere fact that a "plaza" will allow for more people to "hang around" more and longer, should easily make up for the eventual (and short term) impact of a few lost parking stalls (67 stalls if I remember).
- A clear vision for the highest and best PUBLIC use of the SE corner of Lake St. and Central.

Other:

- More comfortable, safer streets at night after 9 PM.
- Enforcement of noise control ordinances, with emphasis on motorcycles and nightclubs.
- More police presence.
- Also, enforce scoop laws south along lake wa blvd.

- Downtown would also be better if we got a better grip over the boaters. I own a boat, but far too many are now "guest" moored there longer than is permitted. They just "swap" spots with friends and hence they get a new 72 hour period, while locking us out, looking for a spot to tie up to during a few short hours. KPD and KC Sheriff also need to duly enforce existing noise ordinances when it comes to boats. "Open pipes" is loud and obnoxious, and disturbing the peace and beauty the lake provides + give most responsible boaters a bad and undeserved rap.
- Garbage cans so the city can be kept clean (since there still are those who thinks it is "alright" to drop wrappers/cigarettes everywhere)
- Redevelopment of Parkplace.
- The city has a plan for KTUB and the Senior Center to grow in place. I want to see them grow and perhaps be part of the Parkplace redevelopment.
- Slow down tearing down of smaller homes and replacing with huge McMansions with nearly zero setback. (create zoning that prevents this)

QUESTION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN

Access:

Pedestrian:

- How can we encourage more folks to leave their cars behind and ride the bus or bike to downtown?
- When will we address pedestrian pathways from other parts of Kirkland into downtown?
- Kirkland is easy to walk around once you are there, parking is hard and traffic can be bad. How can we make it easier for people to use mass transit?

Automobile:

- ...where will people park? Parking seems pretty well maxed out in the core area, and any kind of high-rise parking garage would not be in keeping with the feel of the community. Remote parking with a shuttle bus system maybe? Underground parking? In any case, discouraging cars and encouraging walking and some kind of shuttle system will help maintain Kirkland's "Sausalito feel."
- How will the traffic from all the additional building and development be handled?
- How is the four-way stop by the library going to be improved?
- Will there be more than one public parking garage?
- Will the city build a free, underground municipal parking garage in or near downtown to encourage shoppers to stay and spend money? Can the city partner with downtown merchants to build a bigger underground parking garage when one of the new downtown buildings is built?
- What's with 1 lane on Central Avenue? Seems like a great idea to create more congestion. Most cities in this country look to expand lanes since cars are 96% of the means of transportation of the citizens, not busses!

- How is it going to handle the traffic generated by all the new housing?
- How are we going to handle the increase in traffic? Can we have a more consistent/better bus route configuration for within Kirkland city limits?
- Could we build, modify or designate a route as a "bypass" for through traffic and make the central corridor pedestrian only? (Probably a little late and a lot expensive and just shifts the impacts elsewhere. The current "one-laning" approach effectively shuts out through traffic, except for the truly patient drivers.)
- Is the narrowing of Central really a good thing? The additional traffic congestion caused by this move is disheartening. Heavier traffic is not pedestrian friendly either.

Waterfront:

- Are there any plans to purchase privately owned waterfront?
- What will the Marina Park lid look like and can it be fair to street level merchants?
- How to keep and enhance the waterfront with the series of parks- what steps do we have in place so that it doesn't become condo-city and block the view along the water- like the big fancy condo as you approach Houghton beach park?

Scale:

- Will the City begin to restrict the volume of multi-family development? There seems to be no end in sight to the number of large commercial/residential developments that seem to be eating up the downtown corridor.
- Who really drives the vision for downtown Kirkland? I sense there is a real disconnect between what the people who live in Kirkland want and what developers and certain Kirkland council members want (multi story downtown).
- How do citizens get involved and give our input about building height restrictions? I am concerned that even when height restrictions are set, the developers are able to cut deals with the city so that a four story building turns into a five story building because there is retail on the ground floor. I think four should mean four!
- Can we keep height and/or scale restrictions so we don't get the dark canyon effect and block the lake?

Retail:

- Will it retain the eclectic nature or begin to have the "big box" franchise feel?
- Will Kirkland turn into another Bellevue with no character? (Hope not) Will Kirkland turn into another Fremont renovation (building height growth) disaster which changed its "feel" for the worse?
- Could Kirkland get more quirky places to eat and drink like getting Hale's Ales to come back to open another store in Kirkland or get a McMinamins pub to take over a place?
- Is there a way to calm rent fees and rate of increases so the turn over of retail shops slows? The turnover is disheartening.

Character:

- Will Kirkland keep its small town character or sell out to the county and developers via annexation and relaxed building restrictions?
- Do we want to be a destination point or do we want to figure out how to get our downtown residents to support and use the downtown?
- Can we keep it from becoming a Lincoln Center feel? I guess I see Kirkland as being more like Half Moon Bay, than downtown Bellevue. However, I'm completely in favor of higher rise buildings at Park Place and between Park Place and downtown, such as the Heathman Hotel development. I like that.
- How will we address the dirge of incoming people and how will we be able to keep the same quality of life?
- How well it will survive and grow to keep the young crowd living downtown with all the new condos? Want the young crowd - not the second home people.
- Is it possible to maintain and provide more affordable housing to promote economic diversity within our community in spite of the high land values?
- Is it possible to allow development while still maintaining the small town atmosphere?

Vision:

- Will we be able to agree on and execute a real creative "out-of-the-box" solution?
- Can we really reach agreement on our long-term vision/image for Kirkland? What is our motto? How about leaving future generations a better city than the one we now enjoy." Or something like that...If we can truly agree on a motto, the rest is implementation.
- How will the powers that be keep "in touch" with keeping the vitality in the city, and not approve more "assisting living" housing which does not bring vitality rather the opposite?
- Why can't our city council, along with our community get its act together and get us moving forward in a timely fashion? Look at the growth the City of Bellevue has going on (along I do not want Kirkland to be like Bellevue), they do get things done.
- How much "real" power does the city really have in shaping our future? Or, are we really in the hands of the "gracious" developers?
- Why does Kirkland city government allow small groups of vocal dissenters to come late to the party to influence development decisions? Not only are these people selfish NIMBY's, but they also don't speak up during the planning process when decisions are properly made. Planning becomes almost futile when the city council listens to these people. The same applies to some businesses (i.e., Honda on 85th).
- Do the citizens of Kirkland really want the city to prosper, or do they want things to stay where they are, with the emphasis on lowest tax structure in the area, no highrises to block views, and no developments that will increase taxes?

Other:

- Why do the residents of Kirkland not have a vote on the annexation issue?

- How would the proposed annexation affect the future of downtown Kirkland? No to annexation!
- I've heard that Park Place is up for redevelopment and plans are slowly being considered. I would be interested to know how this fits in the future development of Kirkland.
- Does the city have a plan for KTUB and Senior Center to grow in the downtown area? Will they be a part of Park Place redevelopment? Will the Park Place redevelopment or downtown development have more community rooms for park and rec classes and public rental?
- Are we going to get more law enforcement to discourage the late night vandals and round-the-clock stop sign-runners? A few well-publicized heavy fines would work wonders but nobody ever hears about anyone being caught.