

**MEMORANDUM**

**Date: June 16, 2010**

**To: Central Houghton Advisory Group**

**From: Angela Ruggeri, AICP, Senior Planner  
Dorian Collins, AICP, Senior Planner**

**Subject: CENTRAL HOUGHTON ADVISORY GROUP – JUNE 22 MEETING  
REVIEW OF DRAFT POLICY DIRECTION FOR NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN  
File ZON09-00016**

**I. MEETING AGENDA – JUNE 22, 2010**

The agenda for the meeting on June 22<sup>nd</sup> is included as Attachment 1 to this memo. At the meeting, the advisory group will begin to finalize the direction for the recommended changes to the Central Houghton Neighborhood Plan. Attachment 2 to this memo contains the existing neighborhood plan, and Attachment 3 provides a summary of the policy direction the advisory group has provided on the topics to be included in the updated plan.

We will begin the meeting with a review of the options for Houghton Center and the non-conforming density in multifamily areas. The next part of the meeting will be devoted to a review of the existing neighborhood plan and the preliminary draft policy direction from the advisory group.

The group should review the text of the existing plan, and identify what part of this text they would like to retain and include in the updated neighborhood plan. Next, the group should review the policy direction in Attachment 3, to confirm that the statements accurately reflect their direction and should be included in the plan update. The result of these two steps will be compilation of existing and new text, which will represent the Central Houghton Advisory Group’s recommendation to the Houghton Community Council.

**Since these steps will be time-consuming, please take time before the meeting on June 22<sup>nd</sup> to re-read the existing neighborhood plan, and come prepared with suggestions for text to be retained. Also, please review the policy direction to confirm that you support the statements included in this document (Attachment 3).**

**II. DIRECTION FROM MEETING OF MAY 25, 2010**

Following the presentation on transportation issues at the meeting in May, the advisory group discussed a wide range of issues related to pedestrian and bike connections in the neighborhood, non-motorized connections to the eastside corridor and to parks, and improvements to the safety and visual

appearance of 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The direction from the group on transportation issues is presented in Attachment 3, in Section V, Transportation.

Additional issues were brought to the group for clarification of direction following the transportation discussion. Staff offered to bring options back to the meeting on June 22<sup>nd</sup> to focus discussion and elicit a recommendation on each topic. These issues and options are presented below.

### Houghton Center

At the meeting on May 25<sup>th</sup>, staff asked the advisory group members for clarification on the issue of building height for the Houghton Center area. Earlier discussions had indicated some interest and support for additional building height in future redevelopment of the site in order to encourage a pedestrian oriented mixed use development. Mr. Markl summarized comments made in his presentation at the advisory group meeting in April, in which he discussed the need for building height of five to six stories to accommodate floor area expansion and an underground parking structure. He noted the site's topographic conditions that are conducive to partially burying a parking structure and minimizing the impact of taller buildings.

Minutes from the April discussion had indicated general support for greater building height than exists today from advisory group members, but not specific direction as to whether or not conditions should be required of a proposal, such as a pedestrian-oriented site design with internal pathways and buildings built out to the street, provision of community gathering space, inclusion of affordable housing in mixed-use projects, or other elements in order to achieve additional height. While a specific number of floors or building height measurement does not need to be provided in the neighborhood plan, language providing guidance in this area would be helpful for the subsequent development of regulations.

Under existing regulations, additional building height beyond three stories may be granted for the Houghton Center area. Current zoning regulations allow three stories (30 feet in height) outright, with the potential to exceed 30' if it is determined through a review process that the increase meets certain criteria: it is not inconsistent with the neighborhood plan provisions of the Comprehensive Plan, does not block designated local or territorial public views, and would be designed to be modulated, with the front yard increased by one foot for every foot in building height above 30 feet. No specific maximum height is provided.

Options that the advisory group might consider in their recommendation for addressing building height in this area could include:

1. Neighborhood plan language that is supportive of taller buildings in this area, acknowledging the elevation change across the site. Language could be relatively general, citing the existing topography as well as the objectives for expansion, such as the growth of a commercial center for the neighborhood, opportunities for upper level residential use, etc., or
2. Language that would provide guidance to be considered when evaluating a proposal for additional building height. The text could address elements that the advisory group believes would be beneficial for the neighborhood and/or city as a whole. For example, the text could state that additional height above three stories may be appropriate, when amenities such as pedestrian-oriented site design, upper story step-backs, public gathering spaces, or providing for the future siting of a transit station on the property, etc. are provided. Other objectives,

such the inclusion of affordable housing in residential development could also be included in this type of approach.

### Multifamily Areas

The issue of non-conforming densities in multifamily zones was discussed by the advisory group at its meeting on March 30<sup>th</sup>. At that time, the strategy of preserving the more affordable housing that exists in some of the older, higher density projects was discussed. Techniques used to retain this stock of more affordable housing can include allowing these parcels to retain their existing densities with redevelopment, if certain criteria are met, such as the provision of some percentage of affordable units.

#### A. West of Houghton Center

At the meeting on May 25<sup>th</sup>, staff also offered to bring options for advisory group members to consider for the multifamily area located directly to the west of the Houghton Center. The area is currently designated for medium density residential use, and is developed with a mix of medium density and high density apartment structures. The higher densities conformed to zoning regulations when they were built, but are now legally non-conforming due to reductions in allowable density that were later established.

Doug Waddell, a property owner in the area has asked the advisory group to consider changes to the planned uses and/or residential density for this area (included in packet for the May 25<sup>th</sup> meeting). Mr. Waddell plans to attend the meeting on June 22<sup>nd</sup> to provide comments and additional information about his request. Mr. Waddell's letter suggests that a designation for commercial use, similar to that which exists to the north and east would be appropriate for this area, particularly since the 100-foot wide rail corridor abuts the area to the west, providing a significant buffer between this area and residential properties farther to the west. His letter also suggested that provisions for maintaining existing residential densities should be allowed, and that some additional height above that currently allowed should be permitted to support redevelopment at the greater densities.

The issue of expanding the boundaries of the commercial area at 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue/NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street was discussed by the advisory group at its meeting in April. At that time, the members generally agreed that they did not support allowing the boundaries of the commercial area to expand.

Options advisory group members could consider to address the property west of the Houghton Center could include:

1. Provide support for increased residential densities (up to 24 units per acre) on parcels with existing non-conforming densities in this area, to allow for these densities to be maintained with redevelopment. Variations on this option could include:
  - a. In recognition of the proximity to the Houghton Center, allow for additional building height, up to five stories, to accommodate additional residential units if some percentage of units that meet the City's definition of affordable housing are provided, or
  - b. Without allowing for additional building height, allow redevelopment to occur at higher densities if some percentage of units that meet the City's definition of affordable housing are provided, or
  - c. No change to existing planned densities and building heights in the area.

## B. Other Areas of Central Houghton Neighborhood

Structures containing legally non-conforming densities greater than that which would be allowed under current zoning also exist east of 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, south of NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street (see Attachment 4). The group discussion in March indicated some support for allowing the greater densities to remain in redevelopment, but staff did not hear a clear consensus on this issue. Direction on these options would be helpful in drafting policy direction for the updated neighborhood plan:

- a. Without allowing for additional building height, allowing redevelopment to occur at higher densities if some percentage of units that meet the City's definition of affordable housing are provided, or
- b. No change to existing planned densities and building heights in the area.

## **III. NEXT STEPS**

If more time is needed to complete the tasks scheduled for the June 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, the advisory group will have an opportunity to continue this discussion on June 29. Following that last scheduled meeting of the advisory group, staff will prepare the draft recommendation memo for review and signature of Betsy Pringle, Chair of the Central Houghton Advisory Group. The recommendation will be presented to the Houghton Community Council at a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Houghton Community Council, tentatively scheduled for July 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Attachments:**

1. June 22 Agenda
2. Central Houghton Neighborhood Plan - existing
3. DRAFT Memorandum to Houghton Community Council - Preliminary Recommendations from Central Houghton Advisory Group
4. Map – Central Houghton Non-Conforming Densities

cc: ZON09-00016

CENTRAL HOUGHTON ADVISORY GROUP

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**June 22, 2010  
6:30-9:00  
Peter Kirk Room  
Kirkland City Hall**

**Neighborhood Plan - Draft Policy Direction**

- 6:30 p.m. Review of Agenda
- 6:45 p.m. Review of options and provide direction for Neighborhood Plan
- Houghton Center
  - Non-conforming densities in multifamily areas
- 7:15 p.m. Review of existing Central Houghton Neighborhood plan
- 8:00 p.m. Review of preliminary policy direction presented in Attachment 3
- 8:45 p.m. Discussion of remaining issues to be discussed and addressed in Neighborhood Plan
- 9:00 p.m. Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting June 29<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m.: Topic: Advisory Group Neighborhood Plan recommendation



**Central Houghton  
Neighborhood**





## XV.B. CENTRAL HOUGHTON NEIGHBORHOOD

*Note: The Houghton Neighborhood Plan had its last major update in 1985. Therefore, references in this chapter to goals, policies, or specific pages in other chapters may be inaccurate if the other chapters have since been updated.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

***Major policy direction in this neighborhood is to maintain the predominantly low-density residential character.***

The Central Houghton Neighborhood, lying between the Burlington Northern railroad tracks and I-405, is a predominantly new single-family residential area. Other, more intensive activities in this neighborhood include Northwest College, the Lake Washington School District facilities, the Houghton Shopping Center, and multifamily developments along NE 68th Street. The primary policy direction is to maintain the low-density residential character and to buffer the single-family areas from economic, institutional, and multifamily uses. Emphasis is also placed on identifying lands for future parks.

***Discussion of format for the analysis of the Central Houghton Neighborhood.***

Specific land use designations for Central Houghton are illustrated in Figure CH-1. These designations are based on several factors including the natural environment, adjacent uses, traffic patterns, land use inventories, and other relevant concerns. For convenience, the following analysis of Central Houghton has been divided according to functional headings. The use of a particular piece of property is influenced by all applicable functional considerations (namely, natural environment, living environment, economic activities, open space/parks, public services, and urban design).

### 2. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

***Environmentally sensitive slopes are identified. Slope stability analyses should be required and development should be regulated accordingly.***

Environmentally sensitive and potentially unstable slopes are present in Central Houghton near the railroad tracks and in the City's old watershed. The slopes are expected to remain stable if left in a natural condition. However, construction on or adjacent to these slopes may cause landsliding, excessive erosion, and drainage or other problems. Therefore, a slope analysis should be required prior to development in order to minimize the problems. If landslide or drainage problems are likely to occur as a result of the proposed development, then the type, design, or density of land use should be restricted as necessary to avoid the problems. Existing vegetation should be retained to the greatest extent possible to help stabilize the slope.

***The natural configuration and functional integrity of watercourses should be maintained or improved.***

The open watercourses in this neighborhood should be maintained in, or restored to, their natural condition, not only to provide storage and flow for natural runoff but to provide natural amenities for the community (see Natural Environment Policy 4). Structures should not be located near these streams (see Natural Environment Chapter).

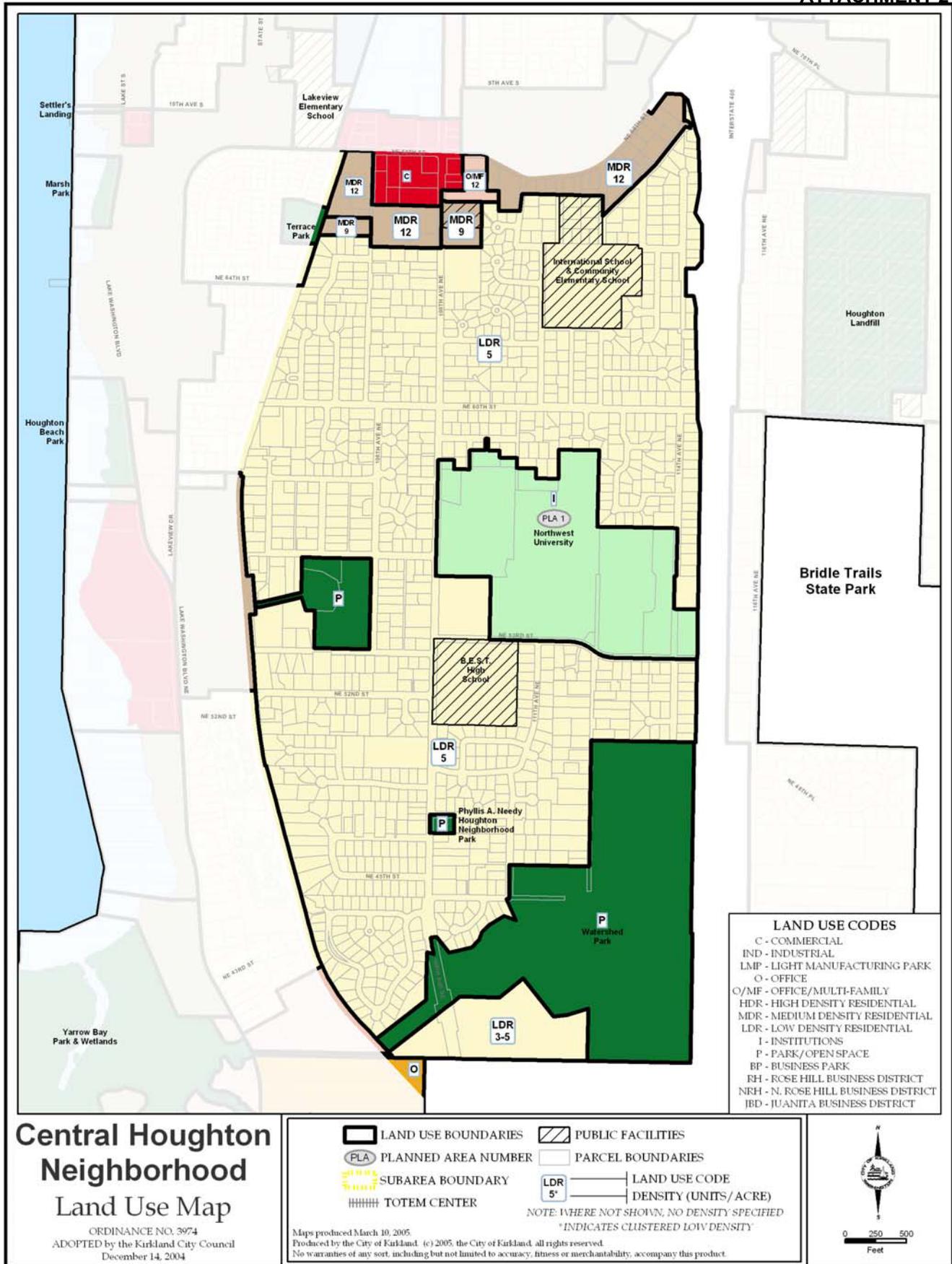


Figure CH-1: Central Houghton Land Use

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### 3. LIVING ENVIRONMENT

*Low-density residences should be maintained in most of Central Houghton. Medium densities should be permitted around Houghton Shopping Center.*

Central Houghton is composed primarily of detached single-family residences. The primary policy thrust for this neighborhood is to maintain residential use at present densities (four to five dwelling units per acre). Medium-density uses (12 dwelling units per acre) should continue along NE 68th Street and adjacent to the Houghton Shopping area. The block east and west of 108th Avenue NE is better suited to densities up to nine dwelling units per acre.

*View and noise impacts should be minimized. New housing types are considered.*

Housing types should generally conform to the present character. However, due to various factors, cluster or attached housing types should be considered. Height and bulk limitations are of particular concern to those residents with a view of the Olympics and Lake Washington. This should not be construed to prohibit two-story or common-wall homes, but rather calls for a sensitivity to the terrain and the neighboring structures in order to reasonably maintain existing views. Bordering the Central Houghton Neighborhood on the east, I-405 creates noise impacts on adjacent land uses. Residential developments of two dwelling units or more should be required to protect against noise through site and building design or construction techniques.

*Residential development densities on environmentally sensitive slopes should be limited.*

An environmentally sensitive slope has been identified east of the railroad tracks from NE 62nd Street to NE 47th Place. All permitted developments should be preceded by adequate slope stability investigations. The presence of an open stream, limited access, and existing small lot sizes impose limits on the residential densities that are feasible. Densities of four to five dwelling units per acre should not be exceeded.

*Residential development will be severely limited on the environmentally sensitive slope area.*

The area east of the railroad tracks and south of NE 45th Street has been identified as part of the environmentally sensitive Houghton slope. This slope area is heavily wooded and of significant aesthetic value. A large part of this slope is contained by the Kirkland Watershed and, as discussed in the Open Space/Parks section, this land should be devoted to limited passive recreation.

*The rehabilitation and maintenance of older housing units should be encouraged.*

There are some pockets of housing deterioration within the Central Houghton Neighborhood. To maintain the residential character, rehabilitation and continued maintenance of the older housing units should be encouraged. Coordination with possible public improvements should be considered. Housing deterioration should not always be considered justification for a change to higher-density uses.

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***Land south of NE 68th Street, and east and west of the Houghton Shopping Center is suitable for medium residential densities.***

The area east and west of the Houghton Shopping Center and fronting on NE 68th and between the railroad tracks and I-405 should be considered for medium-density residential development (12 dwelling units per acre). The lower residential densities to the south and direct traffic access problem to NE 68th Street restrict the residential densities in this area to medium levels. Topographic features, landholding patterns, and unique neighborhood conditions also reinforce this determination. Higher densities would tend to have an adverse impact on nearby single-family uses.

***Land immediately south of the Houghton Shopping Center is suitable for medium residential densities, subject to special development standards.***

The Houghton Shopping Center is bordered on the south by an undeveloped parcel approximately 350 feet deep. This parcel, which is bounded on the east and west by 108th Avenue NE and 106th Avenue NE, is appropriate for medium residential densities (12 units per acre). This parcel should provide transition from the commercial area to the low-density uses to the south.

***Standards are listed which create a compatible interface between low- and medium-density residential uses and commercial activity.***

Interface of these medium densities with the single-family areas to the south creates some limitations on possible development around the shopping area. The permitted densities can be concentrated on the side of the parcels closest to the commercial activity to provide a lower-density perimeter on the side of the residential uses.

The standards listed below are intended to encourage this density concentration and create a compatible interface with low-density uses and with commercial uses.

- (1) Thirty-foot structures should be permitted. Structures over 30 feet in height may be permitted if processed as a Planned Unit Development and the following criteria are met: Topography and/or setbacks minimize impacts on adjacent single-family areas, building mass is terraced or modulated to reduce visual impact off site, and all other PUD criteria are satisfied.
- (2) Vegetative buffering should be used towards the low-density uses and the commercial activities.
- (3) Access should be arranged so that it will not adversely impact adjacent residential uses.
- (4) Traffic analysis should be done to identify mitigating measures.
- (5) Views and vistas of existing residential uses should be maintained.
- (6) Buildings should be set back and placed to take advantage of topographic variation and minimize visual impacts.
- (7) Parking areas should be visually screened from adjacent uses.
- (8) Any development at a density of greater than nine units per acre should be processed as a Planned Unit Development.

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*Small professional offices/medium-density residential uses should be permitted at the southeast quadrant of NE 68th Street/108th Avenue NE.*

Land in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of NE 68th Street and 108th Avenue NE is designated for professional offices or multiple-residential use (see Figure CH-1). Small professional offices that are in scale with the present building pattern (east of 108th Avenue NE) are permitted. Limited commercial uses commonly associated with offices are appropriate along the 108th Avenue NE frontage (extending east approximately 150 feet). Medium-density multifamily uses (12 dwelling units per acre) also should be permitted.

### 4. PLANNED AREA 1: NORTHWEST COLLEGE

#### *Discussion of “planned area” concept.*

Within Central Houghton, one tract of land has been designated as a “planned area.” This designation is based on unique conditions including interface conflicts, large parcel ownerships, traffic patterns, topographic conditions, and other factors which may influence future development of the land. The complex problems unique to this Planned Area can be overcome best through coordinated development of the whole area.

*Northwest College is designated as a Planned Area because of its broad impacts on adjacent areas.*

Northwest College provides a unique educational environment within the City. The College has been designated as a Planned Area due to the size of the facility and the magnitude of potential impacts on the surrounding residential areas. Facilities associated with the College include dormitories, offices, and

classroom buildings. The planned area designation will permit the application of special development procedures and standards to minimize adverse impacts resulting from the natural growth and operation of the facility.

An updated Master Plan showing the future development of Northwest College was approved by the City Council on April 2, 1979, under Ordinances 2452, 2453, and 2454.

Further revisions, including addition of a headquarters and practice facility for the Seattle Seahawks, were approved on August 5, 1985. Future development on the campus is to be reviewed by the City to ensure consistency with the approved Master Plan and the adopting resolution.

Should Northwest College seek either expansion of the Master Plan boundaries, development in addition to that which is indicated on the approved Master Plan, or development that is inconsistent with the Master Plan, such proposal will be reviewed by the City through the public hearing process. Such review should ensure conformance with the following development standards:

- (1) No College expansion should occur beyond 108th Avenue NE and NE 53rd Street, on the west and south respectively.
- (2) Anticipated growth of the College on the existing land will necessitate construction of student housing of more than one story. Large structures on campus should be located far enough from single-family residential uses and separated by dense vegetative buffer so as not to create visual or noise impacts or reduce the privacy of those living within the single-family homes.
- (3) As the student body grows, more traffic is likely to be generated from this complex both in terms of students and faculty and staff. The major entry to the campus should be from 108th Avenue NE and not be routed through local residential streets. There should be an internal access system off 108th Avenue NE which should serve the access

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needs of the College to the greatest extent possible. Adequate parking should be provided on campus in order that on-street parking in these adjacent residential areas will not occur. Additionally, students, faculty, and staff commuting to these facilities should be encouraged to car-pool and use public transit as much as possible.

- (4) The College should buffer its activities adequately with vegetated buffer strips on all sides with special emphasis on adjacent single-family residential developments.

### 5. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

*The Houghton Shopping area should be contained to its present boundaries. Facilities should serve the needs of the neighborhood.*

The Houghton Shopping area is the primary retail commercial center for the neighborhood (see Figure CH-1). It contains several convenience stores along both sides of NE 68th Street as well as a bank and a state liquor store. Additional commitments of land for commercial use is not necessary. Most of the existing businesses in this shopping center serve primarily neighborhood needs (namely, supermarket and drug store). Future development or redevelopment of this commercial land should continue to meet these localized needs. Large office structures or new commercial facilities serving more than neighborhood needs should not be permitted in this area. The intensity of present community commercial zoning should be reduced to encourage continuation of the neighborhood-type business.

No other economic activities should be permitted in the Central Houghton Neighborhood.

### 6. OPEN SPACE/PARKS

*Existing park facilities are inventoried and acquisition priorities are cited.*

Within the Central Houghton Neighborhood there are few facilities developed as parks. These are mostly small facilities in the form of open spaces in subdivisions. Some park and open space needs are met informally on undeveloped lands. As development occurs, most of the undeveloped land will be used for residential purposes. More residential development will generate additional demands for additional parks and open space. Opportunities exist to meet the additional needs for this neighborhood and the community.

*Some public lands should be acquired to meet open space/park needs.*

Several undeveloped lands are presently in public ownership and are considered for acquisition and/or development as parks. Two areas are deemed as high priority sites: land south of the Lake Washington School District Administration Building and the area surrounding the Yarrow Point Watershed (Water District Number 1). These areas should be acquired before they are committed to uses that would preempt recreational activity. Also, the Kirkland Watershed presents opportunities for meeting park and open space needs. These areas are discussed in turn below.

*Neighborhood recreational uses south of the LWSD Administrative Center site.*

The school district offices at 108th NE/NE 53rd Street adjoin an undeveloped five-acre tract to the south. The City should jointly develop or acquire, if necessary, the property for park use.

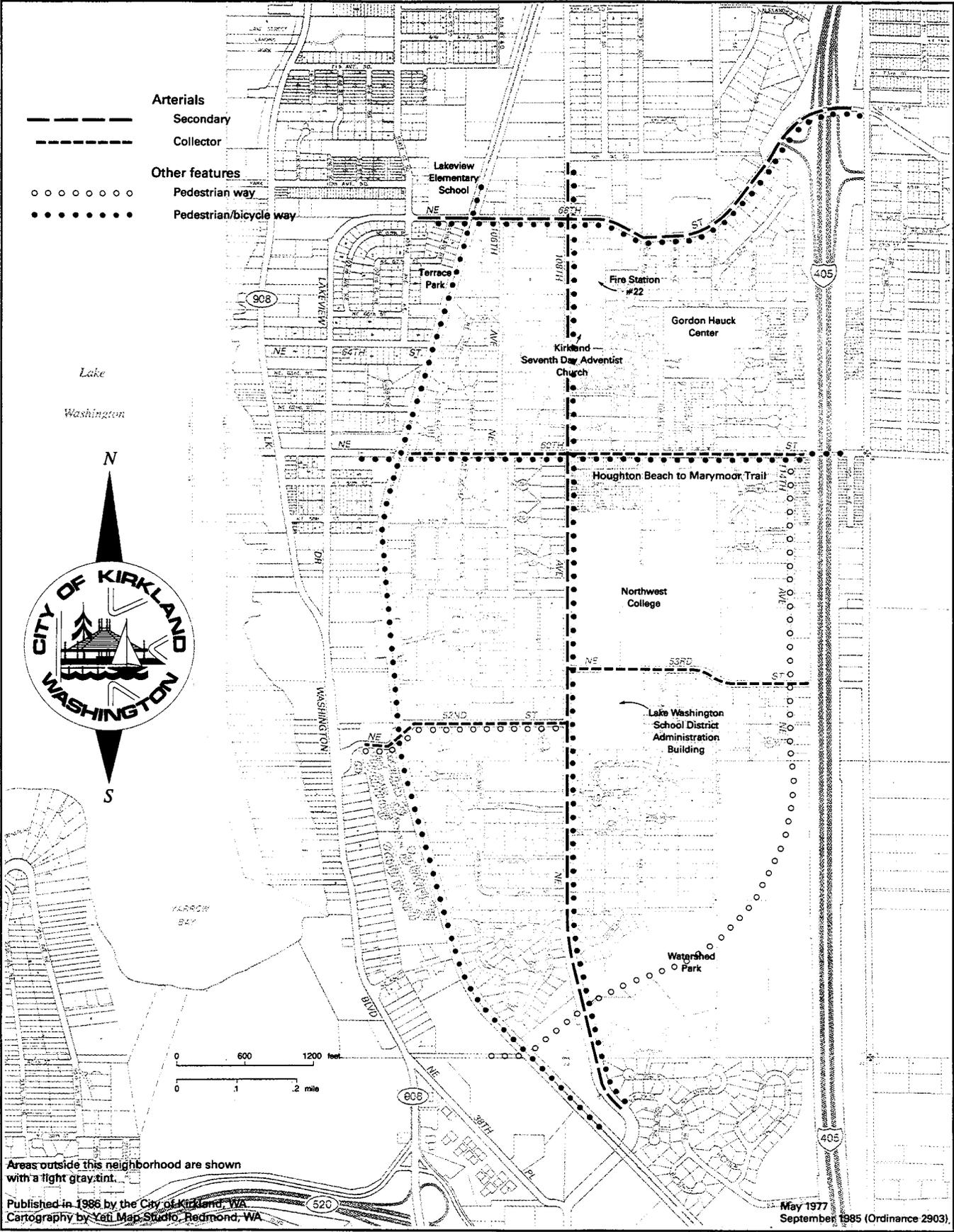


Figure CH-2: Central Houghton Circulation

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### *Yarrow Point Watershed can serve neighborhood needs.*

To serve the residential area between the railroad and 108th Avenue NE, the City should seek an agreement with Water District Number 1 for use of the 6.4 acres surrounding the Yarrow Point Watershed. Much of the heavy tree cover should be retained. Precautions would be necessary not to impair either the integrity of the slope above the well field or the water quality within the watershed. If Water District Number 1 should ever abandon the watershed as a water source, the City should seek to acquire the entire ownership including the well field and the upland area.

### *The Kirkland Watershed may be developed for passive recreational uses.*

The City-owned Kirkland Watershed is a 77-acre wooded parcel of land with varying terrain and potential for limited recreation uses. The north and west portion with heavy woods, ravines, and slopes could provide excellent nature trail areas. Other limited forms of recreation, such as exercise tracks, could be accommodated in the central and southeast portions. Access and parking for future park activities may be a problem. If possible, access and parking should not be located within or adjacent to existing residential uses. At present, minimum impacts on residential uses would occur with access on NE 45th Street.

### *Major pedestrian and bicycle system is discussed.*

Pedestrian and bicycle pathways are also part of the park and open space system, in addition to providing a transportation function. Major pathways in the Central Houghton Neighborhood should be established according to the designations in Figure CH-2. Two of these pathways which traverse the Central Houghton Neighborhood should receive top priority for implementation:

- (1) The NE 60th Street trail from Houghton Beach Park to Marymoor Park;
- (2) The Yarrow wetlands to Watershed Park trail.

These trails will cross a combination of City parklands, City rights-of-way, and public access easements. Their funding should be a part of the City's capital program and their design should improve neighborhood access as well as enhance the unique areas they traverse.

### *The railroad pathway and I-405 overpass are two important elements in the path system.*

Within the Central Houghton Neighborhood, the path system shown in Figure CH-2 does not include all existing and future sidewalks, but rather shows only the major elements of the path system. The spine of the system is formed by a proposed path/trail within the railroad right-of-way that winds its way through town near most major and many secondary activity centers.

## 7. PUBLIC SERVICES/FACILITIES

### *Vehicular circulation patterns are described and the following provisions are recommended.*

Vehicular circulation patterns in the Central Houghton Neighborhood are fairly well established. North-south access and some through flows are accommodated on 108th Avenue NE. NE 68th Street provides through access from the Lakeshore east to Redmond. Other streets provide primarily local access for residents.

In recent years, 108th Avenue NE and NE 68th Street have been increasingly used as commuter routes by people living and working outside of Central Houghton. This trend is symptomatic of a Citywide and regionwide trend resulting from rapid

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urban development. To alleviate this problem, the City should undertake a Citywide evaluation of the existing street system, projected future growth, and the relationship of regional traffic factors. A capital program should be developed which identifies improvement projects and methods of implementing them. This program should recognize the regional context of the City's street system as well as the neighborhood needs of local residents.

Future modifications to circulation patterns in the Central Houghton Neighborhood should include the following provisions (see Figure CH-2).

### ***(1) Through traffic on 108th Avenue NE should be limited.***

One hundred eighth Avenue NE, designated as a secondary arterial, passes through a predominantly single-family area. Several schools front on this arterial. Heavy through traffic on this street could produce several adverse impacts and should be avoided if possible. Improvements to this right-of-way or any expansion of the 108th Avenue NE/SR 520 interchange that would facilitate traffic passing through the Central Houghton Neighborhood from and to areas outside of the neighborhood should not be permitted. This street should serve as a collector of primarily locally generated traffic. Any improvements to this right-of-way should include provisions for a bicycle path separated from traffic flows.

### ***(2) NE 68th Street east is a secondary arterial.***

NE 68th/70th Street, designated as a secondary arterial, is the only east-west through corridor. Uses along this route are primarily commercial and multi-family.

### ***(3) Signalization of the intersection of 108th Avenue NE and NE 68th Street to be considered.***

Increasing traffic on 108th Avenue NE and NE 68th Street has created congestion and safety problems at the intersection of these arterials. Signalization would help alleviate these problems and should be considered at the earliest possible opportunity.

### ***(4) Improvements to NE 52nd Street to be limited.***

NE 52nd Street is designated as a collector arterial. Improvements to this street should not facilitate its usage as a through route in conjunction with 108th Avenue NE. Any attempt to reduce the grade of this road would require expensive right-of-way expansion and a cutback configuration. However, safety improvements to the railroad grade crossing should be investigated.

### ***(5) Sidewalks to be completed along 108th Avenue NE.***

In addition to its role as an arterial, 108th Avenue serves as major pedestrian route. Sidewalks, however, are missing at its southern end. Such sidewalks should be installed to provide a complete pedestrian connection. In this regard, the City should work cooperatively with the City of Bellevue to continue sidewalks southward.

### ***The State Highway Department should seek to mitigate existing and possible future impacts to I-405.***

The freeway, bordering this neighborhood on the east, creates severe noise and land use impacts on the lands adjacent. If the State Highway Department makes further improvements to this facility, the City should insist on certain mitigating

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efforts by the State. Widening the right-of-way for increased through lanes should be discouraged. First, the State should seek to purchase all vacant lots adjacent to the right-of-way that were rendered undevelopable due to small size and strange configurations that resulted from the original right-of-way purchase. Second, the State should attempt to mitigate the severe noise impacts through a program of berm construction or other means.

***Water and sewer facilities should be upgraded prior to the occupancy of new developments.***

Most of the Central Houghton Neighborhood is adequately served by water and sewer service. Some parcels are not serviced at all. Prior to occupancy of new developments in this area, the water and sewer facilities should be extended and/or upgraded to meet the requirements of designated land use for the neighborhood.

***Natural drainage systems should be maintained and runoff from new developments limited.***

Developments adjacent to existing watercourses should maintain or improve the watercourse to a natural, stable condition. Structures, obstructions, and impervious surfaces should not be placed in the proximity of watercourses, and there should be regular removal of debris and restoration of banks when necessary (see Public/Services/Facilities: Drainage Policy 1).

No activities should degrade the quality of the water, particularly adjacent to (1) the Yarrow Point Watershed which is still used as a public water supply and (2) Cochrane Springs Creek which runs from Watershed Park to Yarrow Bay and may be capable of supporting anadromous fish runs. Storm runoff from developments should not be greater than predevelopment levels. This should be accomplished by maintaining vegetation, limiting impervious surfaces, and providing retention/treatment systems if necessary.

### 8. URBAN DESIGN

***Urban design assets are identified. 'Edges' are discussed.***

The Central Houghton Neighborhood has a very clear visual image (see Figure CH-3). Its 'edges' are sharply defined by the railroad tracks, NE 68th Street, I-405, and the Kirkland Watershed.

***'Visual landmarks' are discussed.***

Major visual landmarks are the watershed, Northwest University, and the Houghton Shopping Center. The first two are open, green areas within the neighborhood which reinforce a tranquil, residential image, while the shopping area, on the edge of the neighborhood, plays a different role. As an activity node, the Houghton Center and environs constitutes 'downtown Houghton' as the focus of daily local commercial needs.

***'Pathways' are discussed.***

The major pathway by which the majority of residents enter and traverse this neighborhood is 108th Avenue NE. It is along this route that most of the neighborhood's landmarks and gateways are located and is the means by which impressions of neighborhood character are formed. This pathway has two well articulated gateways.

***'Gateways' are discussed.***

Gateways to a neighborhood provide an important first impression of the area's character and quality. Clear and vivid gateways enhance identity by conveying a sense of entry into something unique. The Central Houghton Neighborhood has two very clear gateways, both of which make use of a change in topography to convey a visual sense of entry.



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At the City's south border, 108th Avenue NE drops dramatically to meet Cochrane Springs Creek where it flows out of Watershed Park. The open green buffer astride this natural ravine provides a very clear gateway. At the north end of the neighborhood, 108th NE rises as one leaves the Houghton Center southbound. This vertical rise and the institutional uses (church, firehouse) along the road help convey a transition from the activity node into the residential area.

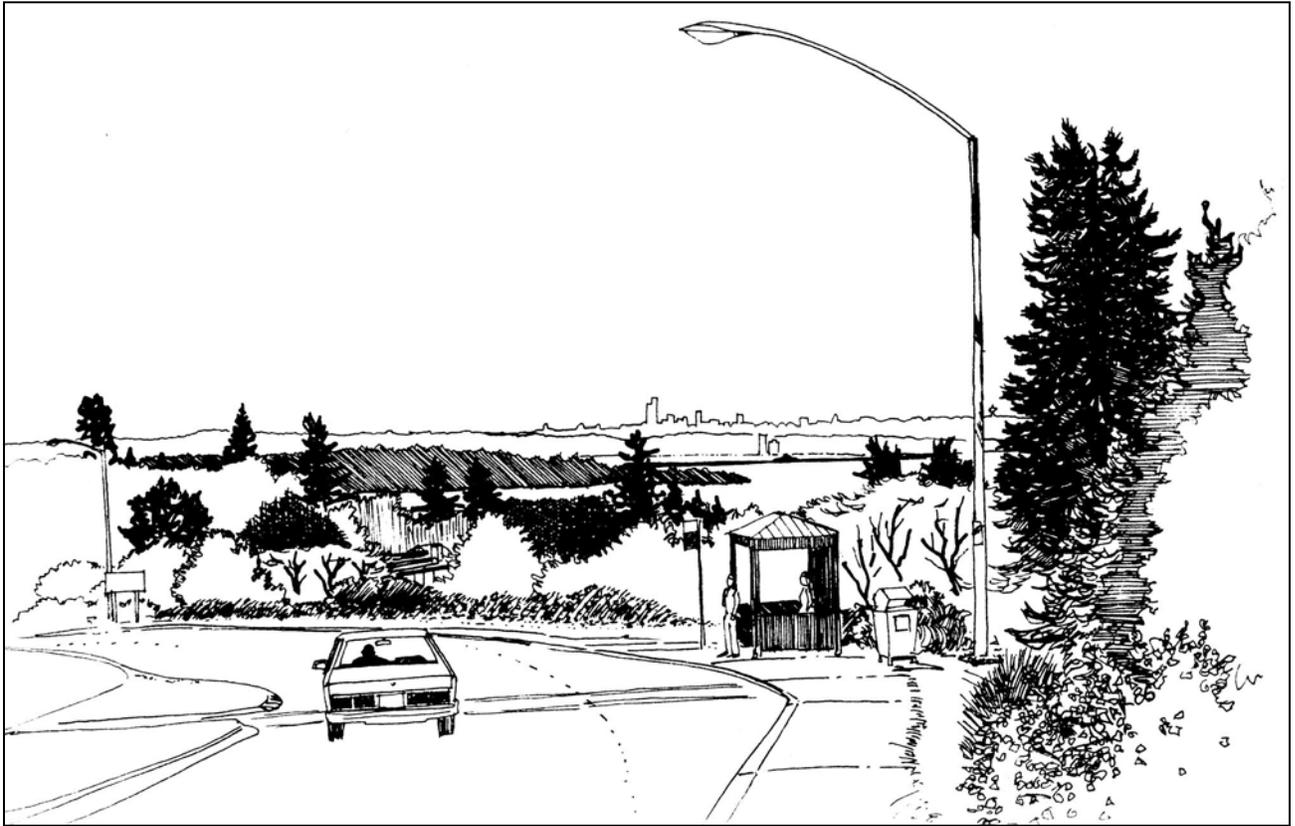
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### *'Major views' are discussed.*

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Two major views in this neighborhood are identified on Figure CH-3 - Urban Design: NE 70th Street, where it crosses I-405, and NE 68th Street at the intersection of 108th Avenue NE. Both present sweeping territorial views of Lake Washington, Seattle, and the Olympic mountain range (see Figure CH-4). The NE 70th view can be protected by limiting building heights of future structures north of NE 68th Street in the south portion of the Everest Neighborhood. The NE 68th/108th NE view can be significantly improved by removing pole signs in the area and either undergrounding or relocating overhead poles and wires.

## XV.B. CENTRAL HOUGHTON NEIGHBORHOOD



**Figure CH-4: Central Houghton Gateway**

The NE 70th Street overpass of I-405 is a PATHWAY connecting the Central Houghton and Bridle Trails Neighborhoods. It constitutes a GATEWAY to these neighborhoods from the Interstate. Its most significant urban design asset is the TERRITORIAL VIEW it affords of Evergreen Point, the floating bridge, Madison Park, the Seattle Central Business District, and even the Space Needle. This VIEW is priceless in conveying a 'sense of place' and should be protected by limiting or prohibiting obstructions.



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Houghton Community Council

**From:** Betsy Pringle, Chair, Central Houghton Advisory Group

**Date:** June 16, 2010

**Subject:** CENTRAL HOUGHTON ADVISORY GROUP **PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS** FOR CENTRAL HOUGHTON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN UPDATE (ZON09-00016)

### Background

The Central Houghton Advisory Group was formed to provide input on the update of the Central Houghton Neighborhood Plan. The advisory group met from January to June, 2010 to discuss various topics to be addressed in the neighborhood plan. The group's recommendations and comments regarding concepts to be incorporated in a future vision statement, as well as comments responding to the study topics we discussed are noted below. Remaining unresolved issues that will need to be accomplished with the neighborhood plan update process are also presented below. There will be a reference at the beginning of each main topic heading to the applicable general chapter in the Comprehensive Plan. This is to serve as a reminder that the goals and policies in the general chapters also apply to the Central Houghton neighborhood.

We look forward to the opportunity to review and comment on the draft neighborhood plan later in the process.

### I. VISION STATEMENT

The first meeting of the advisory group included a visioning exercise which prompted group members to identify the aspects of our community that were most important to us, as well as to consider the kind of community we would like to see the neighborhood evolve into over the next 10-20 years. Additional thoughts were added at later advisory group meetings. The key concepts expressed by the advisory group that we would like to see incorporated into the new neighborhood vision statement are presented below:

- ◆ The Central Houghton neighborhood has a rich and unique history.
- ◆ Central Houghton residents value the neighborhood's predominantly low density residential character.
- ◆ Neighborhood oriented businesses are attractive, economically healthy, and have located in existing commercial areas.
- ◆ A full range of lifestyles are promoted through an inclusively diverse residential housing stock, in terms of income, age and housing type.
- ◆ The neighborhood provides resources for retail opportunities for local neighborhood-friendly businesses.
- ◆ A gathering place for friends and neighbors to meet exists at Houghton Center.
- ◆ Use and development of institutional uses within the neighborhood include opportunities for integration and cooperation with neighbors, to ensure compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.
- ◆ Traffic on 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE is managed, and the street is designed to be compatible with surrounding development.
- ◆ The eastside corridor serves as the backbone for safe non-motorized transportation and recreation through the neighborhood.
- ◆ The community encourages an active lifestyle, and provides opportunities for safe walking and bicycling.

- ◆ The community supports and values schools.
- ◆ Parks are maintained and enhanced, including stewardship of native parks. Parks continue to meet the varied recreational needs of a diverse population.
- ◆ Pedestrian and bicycle trails link parks to the eastside corridor.

*The concepts included in the preliminary direction for the vision statement were taken from the visioning “dot” exercise (those statements that garnered more than 3 dots in the ranking exercise), as well as from discussions of the advisory group.*

**Questions or remaining issues to discuss:**

- *Are there questions or remaining issues regarding the vision concepts?*

## **II. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

The Central Houghton Neighborhood Plan will have a new section on the historic context of the area. The group discussed including a discussion about the unique history of Houghton as a separate city prior to consolidation with the City of Kirkland. Advisory group members are interested in including text and policies that will keep the history alive through measures that may educate current and future residents about the neighborhood’s past. The group would like this section of the plan to address the following comments:

- ◆ The Central Houghton area has a “political history” that is significant and unique.
- ◆ The community identity of Central Houghton is affected by its political history.
- ◆ Opportunities to educate residents and visitors to Central Houghton may include the installation of physical markers or a compilation of photographs from the past as well as current development in locations with notable history.

### Implementation

Development standards for Central Houghton may need to be amended to require physical markers or photographs with new development.

**Questions or remaining issues to discuss:**

- *Are there additional issues that should be addressed in this section?*

## **III. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

The Central Houghton neighborhood plan will contain goals and policies for environmental features unique to Central Houghton. The advisory group would like the Natural Environment section to address the following comments:

- ◆ The process of neighborhood involvement in environmental restoration and stewardship should be encouraged and supported.

*The advisory group acknowledged the overlap that exists between Parks and Open Space and Natural Environment (see preliminary policy direction in Parks and Open Space section). The group discussed having a general statement under Natural Environment that would express the general values of the group with respect to the natural environment, rather than specific policies.*

**Questions or remaining issues to discuss:**

- *Would the group like to provide statements regarding the neighborhood values related to the natural environment?*
- *Are there comments provided under the Open Space and Parks section that should be included in this section instead?*
- *Are there additional issues that should be addressed in this section?*

**IV. LAND USE**

Existing text is supportive of maintaining low density residential uses throughout most of Central Houghton, with medium densities permitted around Houghton Center. The existing text which addresses commercial use states that businesses in the area should be neighborhood-oriented. The group supports addressing the following concepts in the neighborhood plan:

**Residential**

- ◆ Maintain the existing boundaries of areas designated for single family development.
- ◆ Allow for small lot single-family provisions within the neighborhood.
- ◆ Manage housing size and bulk in the neighborhood through use of floor area ratio regulations.
- ◆ Maintain planned densities in multifamily areas, with consideration of an approach to allow existing legally non-conforming multifamily development that occurred at higher densities to be redeveloped at its original density, if affordable housing is provided.
- ◆ *(Place keeper for comment related to multifamily area west of Houghton Center)*

**Implementation**

Floor area ratio limits will need to be added to the code for Central Houghton. They already exist for all single-family residential zones in the City, except those under the jurisdiction of the Houghton Community Council.

Small lot single-family provisions will need to be added to the code for Central Houghton.

Development standards will need to be developed to address redevelopment at higher densities where legal non-conforming densities exist, when affordable housing is provided.

**Questions or remaining issues to discuss:**

- *Does the direction noted above accurately reflect the positions of the advisory group?*
- *Direction is needed on issue presented in memo from staff regarding the multifamily area west of the Houghton Center (should additional building height be allowed?).*

**Schools and Churches**

- ◆ Parking impacts from schools and churches in residential areas should be mitigated.
- ◆ Public safety issues, such as those associated with dropping off students at schools and traffic congestion at key intersections around schools should be addressed.
- ◆ Opportunities for early community involvement in expansion plans for schools and churches is important.
- ◆ A strong partnership between schools, churches and the surrounding community is key to ensuring compatibility and minimizing conflicts.

**Questions or remaining issues to discuss:**

- *Does the group want to see a new policy addressing parking impacts from institutional uses in neighborhoods?*

**Northwest University (Planned Area 1)**

The existing Central Houghton Plan contains a section on Planned Area 1: Northwest College which describes the planned area concept and also the Master Plan for Northwest University. The group supports including an updated version of this section in the new plan.

In addition the following policy statement should be included:

- ◆ A strong partnership between Northwest College and the surrounding community is key to ensuring compatibility and minimizing conflicts

**Questions or remaining issues to discuss:**

- *Are there additional issues the group would like to address related to Northwest University?*

**Commercial**

- ◆ Existing boundaries of the area designated for commercial use should not be expanded.

**Questions or remaining issues to discuss:**

- *Are there additional issues the group would like to address related to commercial land use in the neighborhood?*

**Houghton Center**

This section will be updated following the Houghton Center discussion on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

- ◆ Residential use above ground floor commercial use should be encouraged at Houghton Center (*see question below*).
- ◆ Additional building height is appropriate in the Houghton Center area, when amenities such as gathering space available to the public or other community-oriented elements are provided.

**Implementation**

A Planned Area with special zoning requirements would be added to the code for Houghton Center.

Design Guidelines for the Houghton Center would be added to the code.

**Questions or remaining issues to discuss:**

- *Does the group want to encourage residential use above commercial uses at the Houghton Center? Existing zoning already allows this use, but by choosing to encourage them, the policy would be more supportive of implementing measures that may support some additional building height in the area.*

- *The staff memo for the June 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting asks for additional direction from the advisory group regarding two options presented related to building height at Houghton Center.*
- *Are there additional issues the group would like to address related to Houghton Center?*
- *Should design guidelines and design review be required for the Houghton Center?*

## V. TRANSPORTATION

Following a presentation on regional and local transportation issues, including proposed changes to the SR 520 interchange and eastside corridor, the group had the following comments.

- ◆ Connections from the rail corridor to the following parks should be provided:
  - ◆ Terrace
  - ◆ Watershed
  - ◆ Carillon Woods – with a note that the connection for foot traffic is difficult due to instability at this time. Could support a connection in the future if the area is restored.
- ◆ Text should state that connections to the rail corridor should occur at all street ends or other natural connection points, noting that east/west streets should access the rail corridor whenever possible. Suggested text was discussed to state that these connections should be **“encouraged wherever feasible”**.
- ◆ Priority should be given to connections at NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street, where Houghton Center, Lakeview Elementary and other uses are located.
- ◆ The eastside rail corridor is an important part of the neighborhood’s non-motorized plan. Language such as **“The trail is a major transportation option in the neighborhood”**, and **“Neighborhood-oriented access to the trail should be available for non-motorized options, including walking, biking and transit”** should be included.
- ◆ Transit connections to the eastside corridor should be made, particularly at Houghton Center or the multi-family area west of the Center. A transit center or hub at the Houghton Center may be appropriate.
- ◆ Pedestrian connections should be acquired with new development. These could include:
  - ◆ Large parcels should maintain through connections
  - ◆ Lighting on pedestrian connections should be sought to improve safety and appearance of paths. Lighting should be an objective for connections.
  - ◆ Language such as **“As development occurs, the City should seek opportunities for potential pedestrian and bicycle connections and require them accordingly”** should be included.
  - ◆ Policy language could also include something regarding funding such as, **“Funding opportunities for non-motorized connections should be sought”**.
- ◆ Bike connections should be completed along 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue and NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as at the intersection of 108<sup>th</sup>/NE 68<sup>th</sup>
- ◆ Continuity of connections is important – paths should be completed, even if bikes are diverted to another street with a safer connection

- ◆ 108<sup>th</sup> should be improved to be more compatible with the surrounding neighborhood:
  - ◆ Overhead utility lines are unsightly and detract from the street's visual appearance.
  - ◆ A landscape strip should be located between the curb and sidewalk along 108<sup>th</sup>, and could possibly be acquired with new development.
  - ◆ Language such as, **“Look for opportunities to remove obstructions in the sidewalk, and to improve sight distance at intersections”** should be included.

## Implementation

### Questions and remaining issues to discuss:

- *Are there additional policies the group would like to see incorporated into the transportation section?*
- *Should a streetscape design be developed for NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street?*

## **VI. OPEN SPACE AND PARKS**

The group would like the Neighborhood Plan parks and open space policies to include these comments:

- ◆ A Master Plan for Watershed Park should be developed to guide future use and development of the park and ensure protection and preservation of the natural quality of this community asset.
- ◆ Consider re-naming Watershed Park to “Watershed Natural Area”, to emphasize the sensitive environment in this area, and the need to limit human activities.
- ◆ Watershed Park should continue to be preserved and enhanced as a natural area (may be addressed in Watershed Conservation Plan, N.E.-4.2)
- ◆ Non-motorized connections to Watershed Park are appropriate.
- ◆ Trails in Watershed Park should be improved following storms and other events.
- ◆ Neighborhood schools contain fields and other recreational resources that can be made available to the community, thereby expanding the open space and parks assets of Central Houghton.

### Questions or remaining issues to discuss:

- *Are there other concepts related to parks and open space that should be identified?*

## **VII. PUBLIC SERVICES/FACILITIES/UTILITIES**

The Group did not spend much time discussing this section of the Plan since there are very few issues to discuss. The Public Services Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan will be referenced. No additional goals or policies are recommended.

## **VIII. URBAN DESIGN**

Page XV.B-10 (and Figure CH-3) of the existing neighborhood plan for Central Houghton identifies important “edges” (railroad tracks, NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street, Kirkland Watershed), visual landmarks (Northwest University, Houghton Center), “pathways” (108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE), “gateways” and “major views” (NE 70<sup>th</sup>/I-405, and NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street/108<sup>th</sup> Ave NE).

The advisory group continues to support these elements, as well as additional, more specific direction related to the Houghton Center commercial area.

- ◆ Key public views from the following locations should be identified in the neighborhood plan:
  - NE 55<sup>th</sup> Street toward Carillon Woods Park and Lake Washington
  - NE 60<sup>th</sup> pedestrian bridge
  - NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street toward Lake Washington

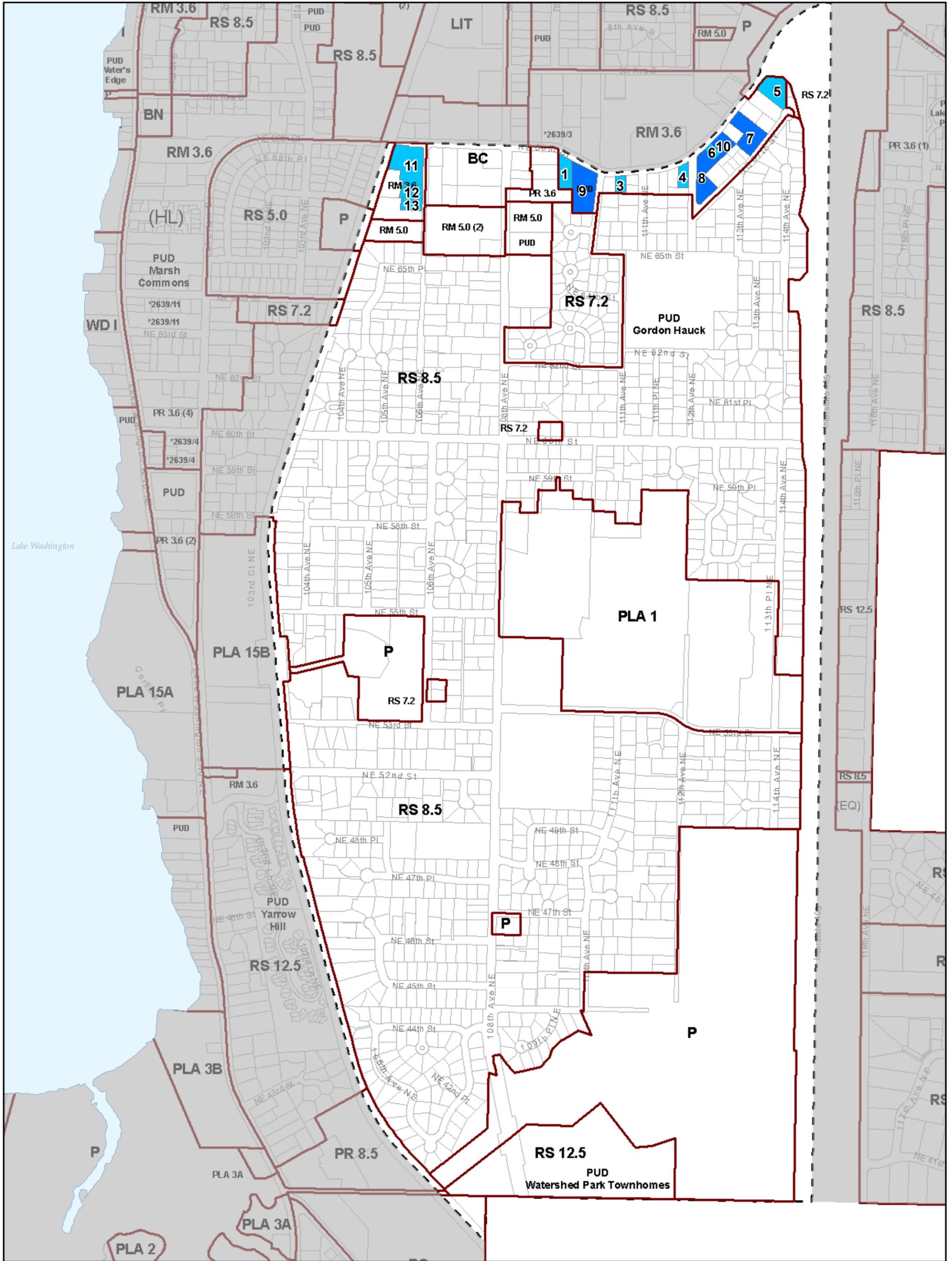
**Questions or remaining issues to discuss:**

- *Does the introductory paragraph above accurately represent the direction of the Central Houghton Advisory Group?*
- *Would the group like to discuss anything more on views, particularly for the NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street/108<sup>th</sup> intersection?*
- *Are there other urban design features that should be identified?*

cc: File ZON09-00016



# Existing Non-conforming Density in Multi Family Zones



## Legend

- Parcels with Density Ratio > 1
- Apartments
- Condos
- Zoning Boundaries
- Central Houghton Neighborhood Boundary
- Tax Parcels



1,000

Feet

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