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# ABOUT GROWTH



A CONTINUING REPORT ON THE 2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



*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 growth

**M**indy 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 ga-

### TO LEARN MORE

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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.

rages 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 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 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



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.

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 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

## 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

# 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



*“We wanted to create a neighborhood down there. This is the county-wide objective. This is Growth Management.”*

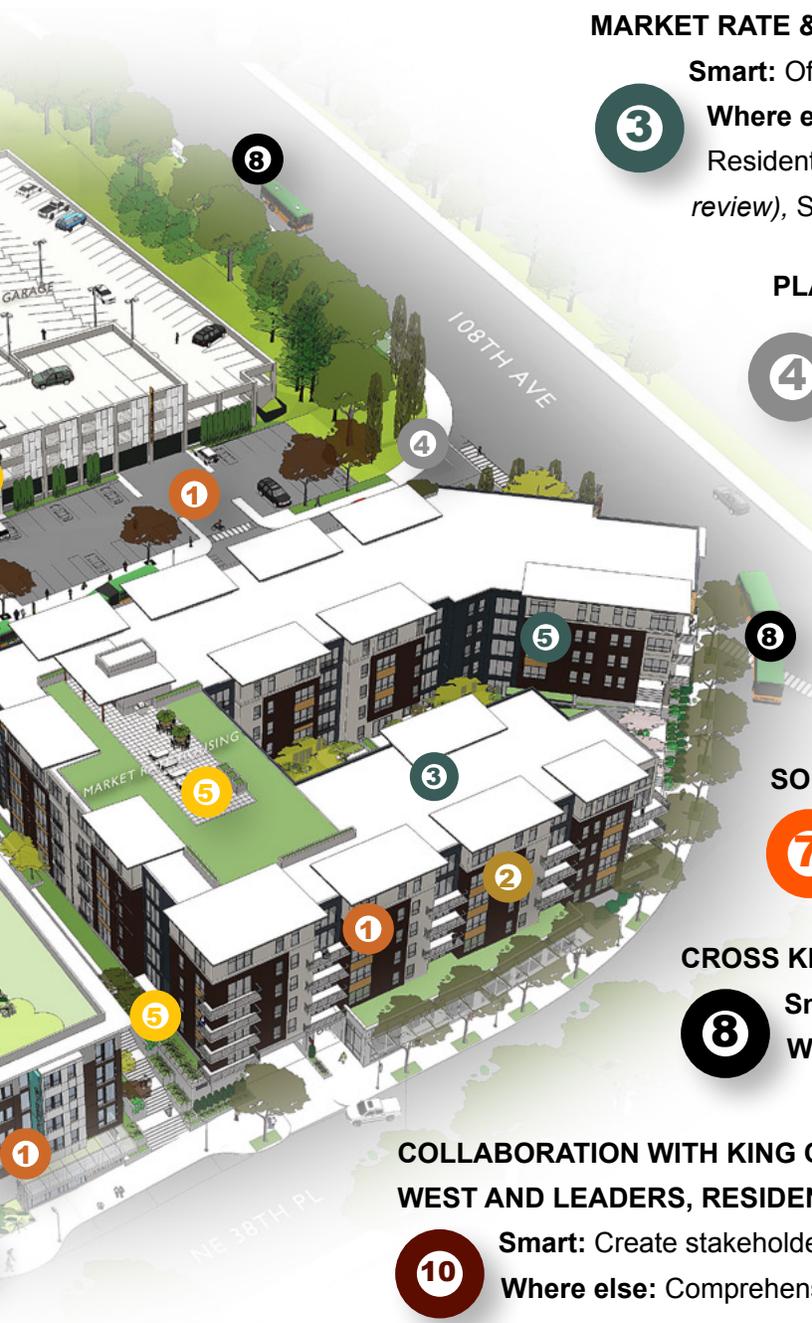
—Gary Prince  
special projects economist  
for King County

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, 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



**MARKET RATE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**Smart:** Offers variety of housing choices



**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



**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



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

**SOUTH KIRKLAND PARK & RIDE SITE**

**Smart:** Directs development toward existing communities



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

**CROSS KIRKLAND CORRIDOR, TRANSIT CENTER, MIXED-USE**

**Smart:** Provides transportation choices



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

**COLLABORATION WITH KING COUNTY, ARCH, IMAGINE HOUSING, POLYGON NORTH-WEST AND LEADERS, RESIDENTS & BUSINESSES FROM KIRKLAND & BELLEVUE**

**Smart:** Create stakeholder collaboration in development



**Where else:** Comprehensive Plans, Neighborhood Plans, master plans, etc.

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,

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The number of acres that will support 243 homes, 6,700 square feet of retail space and 858 parking stalls

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 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

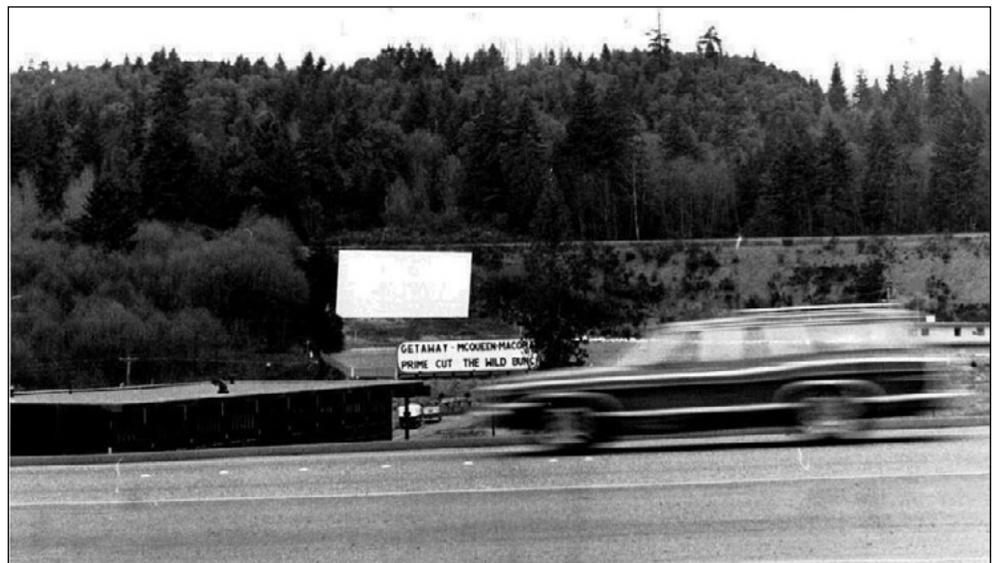


Photo courtesy of The Seattle Times public domain

The Eastside drive-in (pictured here) opened May 28, 1967 on the present-day site of the South Kirkland Park and Ride. It featured 138 indoor seats. It was, at the time, the area’s only indoor-outdoor drive-in. However, its run was short-lived. It closed in 1973. The 1970s were the beginning of the decline for drive-ins, hastened by the increasing value of real estate and proliferation of the VCR.



*Photo courtesy of the Metro Transportation Archive*

The authority to zone for segregated uses allowed developers to build residential subdivisions in farmlands and forests. The construction of freeways is what allowed millions of Americans to buy homes in those new residential communities and still be able to commute to work in a reasonable amount of time. Combined, zoning and freeways transformed American culture into a “drive-to-buy” culture, says Dr. Don Miller, professor emeritus of planning and urban design at the University of Washington. Four years after President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, the federal government began recording statistics on car-ownership. At that early stage in the 25-year freeway construction era, Americans owned nearly 62 million automobiles—or one automobile for every three households. Two decades later, car ownership had doubled.

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



Late for soccer practice, a young athlete races across Crestwoods Park October 17, 2013 to his team. Building parks and protecting open space in Kirkland has been a 50-year ambition in Kirkland, which started with a group of Kirkland residents who sought 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.

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,

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

**—Norm Storme**

retired transportation engineer and current chair of the Kirkland Alliance of Neighborhoods

monster. And then they hated us. The vision for transportation in the 1950s dictates what we’re sitting in right now.”

which it would call “I-605.” Near Seattle’s Montlake Cut, the state built a portion of 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

**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 whole experience of living in one of the nation’s best small cities will improve. ■