

HE.6th

- HOUGHTON / EVEREST NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER
- 6TH STREET CORRIDOR

Community Workshop Summary

November 2, 2016

I. OVERVIEW

The City of Kirkland hosted a community workshop on November 2, 2016, at Northwest University as part of an integrated land use and transportation study of the Houghton/Everest Neighborhood Center and 6th Street Corridor. The goal of the workshop was to (1) share information gathered through the online survey and consultant team research and (2) provide a forum for discussion of options to inform the recommendations for further review by the Planning and Transportation Commissions.

A summary of agreements, opinions and preferences that emerged from small group workshop discussions include the following:

Neighborhood Center

Areas of agreement:

- The area should continue to serve as a neighborhood center, maintaining its character and mix of land uses.
- Implementation of pedestrian-oriented design would improve the neighborhood center.
- Broad concern about existing traffic conditions and the additional impacts that increased intensity in the Neighborhood Center would have on traffic and circulation.
- General uncertainty about what the options for increased development intensity would result in for the neighborhood. These uncertainties generally focused on building design, building heights, traffic, the mix of uses, and the loss of existing businesses.
- Interest in more retail and restaurants.
- Concerns about traffic impacts from new development.

- General support for design guidelines, especially to help retain current community character even with more intensive development. General interest in getting a better understanding of how design guidelines work.

Areas of difference in opinion:

- Both support and opposition for allowing development of up to five stories. Some support for this type of development on specific properties, including two properties along 68th Street adjacent to the Cross Kirkland Corridor that currently have multi-family residential and office buildings. Strong opposition from some to five stories on the Metropolitan Market site and at the intersection of NE 68th Street and 6th Street S/108th Avenue NE. Strong opposition from some for development of up to five stories at any location in the Neighborhood Center.
- A mix of support and opposition for allowing development of up to three stories.
- Some felt there is a risk of retail amenities declining over time if redevelopment opportunities limited by maintaining current zoning and development standards. Others felt that the surrounding area would always support and maintain a healthy neighborhood center.
- Some identified a desire for buildings to be set back from the street and opposition to buildings being developed up to the street frontage. Others support development to the street frontage as being more friendly to pedestrians.

6th Street Corridor

Regarding the 6th Street Corridor, participants most valued improvements that would

- Move people through corridor (most supported)
- Safely connect community and neighborhood destinations (well supported)
- Reduce congestion (supported)

The value of providing capacity into the future was least supported by participants.

Participants recognized that capacity improvements to reduce congestion are very limited in the corridor and that transit is the best and easiest option for moving people. Some thought more transit could be provided on 108th; others thought more transit connecting to Bellevue would help. A few thought running buses on the Cross Kirkland Corridor might be the best way to increase transit ridership. All agreed there are currently too many transit stops in the area.

Most acknowledged that closing driveways and putting in medians would improve safety and enhance connections for all modes in the Neighborhood Center, especially if redevelopment occurs with changes to zoning.

Some recognized that the demographics of the Houghton neighborhood could change over this study's 10- to 20-year planning horizon, making the process challenging for many participants.

Transit comments and suggestions:

- More buses are needed in the northern portion of the corridor
- Prefer more frequent bus service and later service hours

- Improve transit services with frequent destinations
- Need dedicated bus lanes along 6th Street/108th Avenue Corridor
- Bus riders use the entire corridor as an informal park & ride
- Consider providing a local circulator shuttle

Bicycle/pedestrian comments and suggestions:

- Physical barriers are needed between bike lanes and vehicular traffic
- The Cross Kirkland Corridor needs more access points
- Provide a north-south greenway for neighborhood connections
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to Houghton Park & Ride
- Find ways for more kids to walk to school or carpool
- Create continuous bike lanes
- Provide safe walking routes in the neighborhood center and across surface parking lots
- What's the deal with the private shuttles? Amazon, Facebook, Google

General comments and suggestions:

- The city's maintenance budget for streets, sidewalks and adjacent plantings is insufficient
- Provide more east-west connectivity along the corridor
- Limited parking in the neighborhood center forces parking into surrounding residential neighborhoods
- Improve safety by improving sight distance near the old train bridge on Kirkland Way and on NE 68th Street.
- The bridge over I-405 at 70th Street needs to be widened for traffic, sidewalks and bike lanes



II. COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

The community workshop provided a forum for discussion of Neighborhood Center and 6th Street Corridor options to inform recommendations for further review by the Planning Commission and Transportation Commission. Foundational information shared at the workshop included preliminary results from an online survey, 6th Street Corridor transportation data, and neighborhood center land use information, along with potential development scenarios. This section describes the discussion and findings of the workshop.

Workshop Notification

Advertising of the community workshop was conducted through multiple methods, including:

- Announcement on project web site
- E-mail notice to those who provided address on project web site or at prior events
- Flyers posted on dedicated project road signs and on neighborhood billboards and windows
- Press release sent to neighborhood groups and Kirkland Reporter

Workshop Attendance

A total of 81 people signed-in, were offered name tags and received audience response devices. Couples arriving together were encouraged to each sign-in and take a device separately. Participants arrived throughout the informal open house portion of the event—only a few arrived during the presentations immediately following.

Conducting the Event

As shown in Attachment 1, the workshop agenda broke the event up into three major sections: (1) informal open house, (2) presentations and instant polling, and (3) small group discussions.

OPEN HOUSE

The workshop began with an informal open house session during which attendees could review display boards with detailed information on public outreach to date, analysis of the transportation network and land use and development potential in the neighborhood center (see Attachment 2). City of Kirkland staff and consultants answered questions and conversed with attendees viewing the exhibits. Questions focused on online survey findings, transportation network and land use and development scenarios.

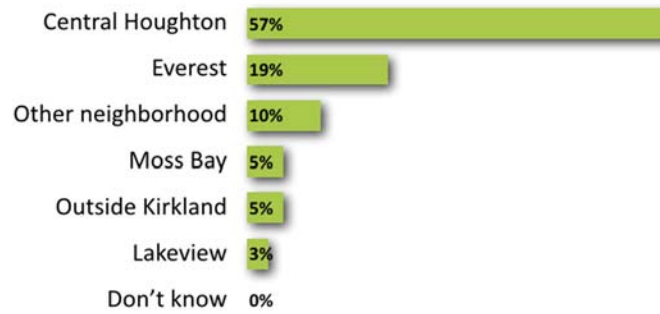


PRESENTATIONS AND INSTANT POLLING

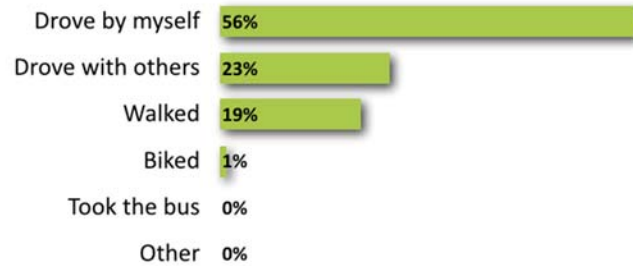
Opening remarks by City of Kirkland Planning Director Eric Shields preceded an overview of the agenda and presentations on survey findings, transportation research and analysis and land use research and analyses conducted to-date (see Attachment 3). Questions and comments from attendees were noted, though in the interest of staying on schedule, responses were limited.

Following the presentations, an electronic audience response system was employed so that participants express their views on a series of questions with instant results available for all to see. The first two questions were intended to allow participants learn how to use the polling devices and the remaining questions focused on participant opinions about the Neighborhood Center and 6th Street Corridor. Some of the questions were intentionally set up to force choices among priorities and opinions that have been expressed in the community. Some participants found this aspect of the question structure frustrating. For example, in response to questions #4 and 5, some objected to the lack of an option to respond “all of the above.” In those cases, some respondents elected to select the choice “none of the above” as a way to express “all of the above.” Questions and responses are shown below and in Attachment 4.

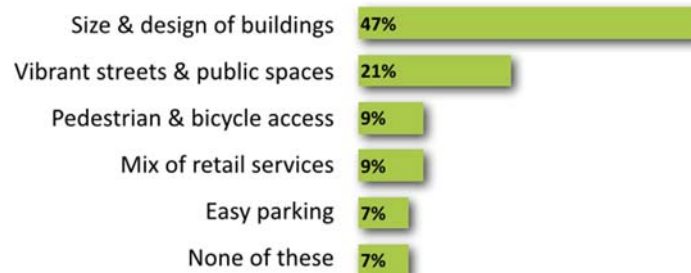
1. Where do you live or work?



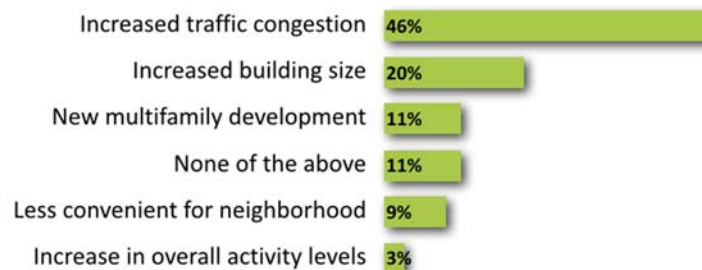
2. How did you get to tonight's meeting?



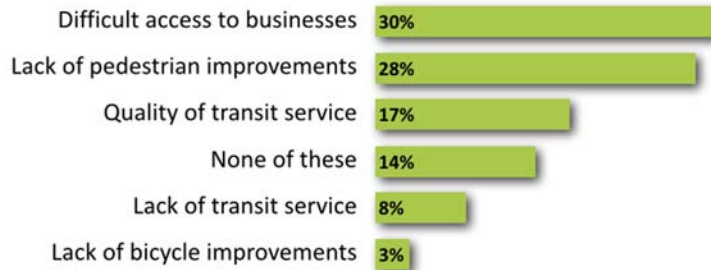
3. What is the most important aspect of community character to you?



4. What is your biggest concern about development in the Neighborhood Center?



5. In addition to traffic congestion, what is the most important mobility challenge for the 6th Street Corridor?



6. What is the highest priority for improvements to the 6th Street Corridor?



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

For the final hour, participants gathered in groups to discuss issues and ideas related to either the transportation network or growth in the neighborhood center. Questions posed to the small groups were intended to solicit preferred land use and zoning in the neighborhood center and design improvements to the 6th Street Corridor. Facilitators and scribes guided and recorded the conversation. At the conclusion of the working session, a member from each group prepared a brief statement of findings and reported to the full audience.

The discussion and findings of the small groups are described below.

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Participants addressing neighborhood center development issues worked in three groups of approximately eight persons each. Their collective discussions and key points are summarized below.

Questions Asked

1. Current zoning and development standards provide limited opportunity for infill and redevelopment. What are the benefits and risks of maintaining existing zoning and development standards versus increasing opportunities for infill and redevelopment by allowing taller buildings? What changes would you recommend for the Neighborhood Center?
2. Kirkland has a set of design guidelines, focused on pedestrian-oriented design, that guides redevelopment in some commercial neighborhoods. The topics addressed by the design guidelines and a few specific examples are provided in the handout. Do you think that design guidelines would be useful in achieving a high quality community character in the Houghton/Everest Neighborhood Center? What would

be the most important topics for design guidelines to address? What concerns would you have about design guidelines?

Report Out Highlights

Consensus was not reached on the degree of change participants would like to see in the Neighborhood Center, with some participants in support of maintaining current development standards and others willing to consider some level of change if it was accompanied by transportation/congestion improvements.

Areas of agreement included:

- The area should continue to serve as a neighborhood center, maintaining its character and mix of land uses.
- Most acknowledged that implementation of pedestrian-oriented design would improve the neighborhood center.
- Broad concern about existing traffic conditions and the additional impacts that increased intensity in the Neighborhood Center would have on traffic and circulation.
- Broad uncertainty about what the options for increased development intensity would result in for the neighborhood. These uncertainties generally focused on building design, building heights, traffic, the mix of uses, and the loss of existing businesses.
- Interest in more retail and restaurants.
- Concerns about traffic impacts from new development.
- General support for design guidelines, especially to help retain current community character even with more intensive development. Some comments noted that retaining views and allowing for natural light throughout the Center were important. Also, that building modulation and massing should be used to prevent a “tunnel affect” if five story buildings were allowed along the street. General interest in getting a better understanding of how design guidelines work.



Areas of difference of opinion included:

- Both support and opposition for allowing development of up to five stories. Some support for this type of development on specific properties, including two properties along 68th Street adjacent to the Cross Kirkland Corridor that currently have multi-family residential and office buildings. Strong opposition from some to five stories on the Metropolitan Market site and at the intersection of NE 68th Street and 6th Street S/108th Avenue NE. Strong opposition from some for development of up to five stories at any location in the Neighborhood Center.
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- Some felt that there is a risk of retail amenities declining over time if redevelopment opportunities are limited by maintaining current zoning and development standards. Others felt that the surrounding area would always maintain a healthy neighborhood center.
- Some identified a desire for buildings to be set back from the street and opposition to buildings being developed up to the street frontage. Others support development to the street frontage as being more friendly to pedestrians.

TRANSPORTATION

Participants addressing transportation issues in the neighborhood center worked in two groups of approximately 12 each. Their collective discussions and key points are summarized below.

Questions Asked

1. Which of these statements best represent your values for the corridor? (There are no wrong answers.) The 6th Street/108th Corridor must:
 - a. be designed to reduce congestion
 - b. move people (not just vehicles) efficiently throughout the entire corridor (not just 6th/108th) now and into the future
 - c. provide capacity into the future to help the city achieve future growth objectives
 - d. connect community and neighborhood destinations, safely
2. Looking at the air photo, can you tell us where you would like to see changes or investments for various modes of transportation? Please place the color coded “Mode” stickers where you would like to see improvements.
3. Using the “like” and “don’t like” stickers, can you show us what ideas you like and don’t like? Explain how we might develop solutions.

Report Out Highlights

Both groups recognized that capacity improvements to reduce congestion are very limited in the corridor and that transit is the best and easiest option for moving people. Some thought more transit could be provided on 108th; others thought more transit connecting to Bellevue would help. A few thought running buses on the Cross Kirkland Corridor might be the best way to increase transit ridership. All agreed there are currently too many transit stops in the area.

Ideas for increasing safety included improving sight distance near the old train bridge on Kirkland Way and on NE 68th Street. Most acknowledged that closing driveways and putting in medians would improve safety and enhance connections for all modes in the Neighborhood Center, especially if redevelopment occurs with changes to zoning.

Finally, some recognized that the demographics of the Houghton neighborhood could change over this study's 10- to 20-year planning horizon, making the process challenging for many participants.

The ranking of statements that best represent participants' values for the corridor were as follows:

- Move people through corridor (highest support)
- Safely connect community and neighborhood destinations (well supported)
- Reduce congestion (well supported)
- Provide capacity into the future (lowest support)

Concerns included:

- The 6th Street/108th Avenue Corridor is one of only two north-south arterials connecting Kirkland neighborhoods, other than I-405
- More buses are needed in the northern portion of the corridor
- Prefer more frequent bus service and later service hours
- East-west traffic is forced onto side streets due to insufficient I-405 crossings
- Physical barriers are needed between bike lanes and vehicular traffic
- The Cross Kirkland Corridor needs more access points
- Insufficient maintenance budget for streets, sidewalks and adjacent plantings

Key points included:

- Provide a north-south greenway for neighborhood connections
- Improve transit services with frequent destinations
- Provide more east-west connectivity along the corridor
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to Houghton Park & Ride
- Limited parking in the neighborhood center forces parking into surrounding residential neighborhoods
- Need dedicated bus lanes along 6th Street/108th Avenue Corridor
- Find ways for more kids to walk to school or carpool
- Address limited sight distance at Kirkland Way trestle
- Create continuous bike lanes
- Bus riders use the entire corridor as an informal park & ride
- Provide safe walking routes, especially across surface parking lots
- Consider providing a local circulator shuttle
- Widen the bridge over I-405 at 70th Street for traffic, sidewalks and bike lanes

- What's the deal with the private shuttles? Amazon, Facebook, Google

Each group marked up a map with features that they liked and didn't like, see Attachment 5.

WRAP-UP

During a brief wrap-up discussion, staff stated that the notes and findings from the workshop would be posted on the project website (kirklandwa.gov/HE6th). City staff also noted that future public comment opportunities will be provided at Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, Houghton Community Council and City Council meetings. Attendees were encouraged to sign up for future notifications of meetings on the project website and to attend upcoming public meetings to voice their opinions.



III. ATTACHMENTS

1. Workshop Agenda
2. Open House Displays
3. Slideshow Presentations
4. Instant Polling Results
5. Small Group Transportation Maps

