



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
**Planning and Building Department**  
**123 5th Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033**  
**425.587.3600- [www.kirklandwa.gov](http://www.kirklandwa.gov)**

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Planning Commission

**From:** Dorian Collins, AICP, Senior Planner  
Joel Pfundt, Transportation Engineering Manager  
Adam Weinstein, AICP, Deputy Planning Director

**Date:** April 2, 2018

**Subject:** TOTEM LAKE URBAN CENTER ENHANCEMENT AND MULTIMODAL  
TRANSPORTATION NETWORK PLAN  
File PLN18-00220

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Receive a presentation from staff on the Totem Lake Urban Center Enhancement and Multimodal Transportation Network Plan
- Provide comments to staff

### **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION**

The Totem Lake Business District is a key economic engine for the City of Kirkland and the City's Designated Urban Center, but it has struggled to develop a distinct identity and "sense of place." The district is also challenged by its physical geography and bisection by I-405 and NE 124<sup>th</sup> St., which hamper movement between its subareas and create significant barriers to non-motorized travel. The [plan](#) for the Totem Lake Business District and Urban Center contained in the City's Comprehensive Plan contains policies intended to establish visual connections between the district's subareas, create effective transitions within and around the district, and provide a collective identity for Totem Lake. The plan calls for the development of an "urban design and amenities plan" for the district to address not only identity issues, but also to provide a plan for wayfinding, concepts for improved intersections and streetscapes, and techniques to highlight connections to the Cross Kirkland Corridor. The plan also encourages "placemaking and a dynamic public realm by integrating publicly accessible plazas, open spaces and other gathering places with development in public and private projects." Other policies call for improvements to the district's gateways, and the creation of a "Circulator", a landscaped boulevard that provides a visual connection between the subareas of the business district through enhanced landscape and public amenities. The alignment of the Circulator uses existing rights-of-way, including Totem Lake Boulevard, 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, NE 128<sup>th</sup> Street and 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE (see Attachment 1).

The street plans and design standards for Totem Lake need to be reviewed and updated to ensure that the resulting infrastructure supports the area's land use vision by improving non-motorized circulation and access, enhancing the comfort and safety of non-motorized facilities, and improving transit access and service. Current non-motorized infrastructure standards are either based on a combination of suburban commercial design standards, which generally don't sufficiently prioritize walking, biking and transit use, or on downtown Kirkland's design standards, which don't work for Totem Lake, with its higher traffic volumes, wider arterial street grid and barriers posed by I-405.

At the City-sponsored Totem Lake Symposium in 2016, the deficiencies in identity, connectivity and wayfinding were identified as barriers to economic development in the district. That year, the City Council approved a service package to support the development of a Totem Lake Business District Enhancement Plan to improve the district's appeal for businesses, residents and visitors. The City Council has also provided funds for engineering and planning services in order to support infrastructure planning in Totem Lake. These efforts were supported by City Council through the [Totem Lake Resolution](#), approved on May 2, 2017.

## **PLAN SUMMARY**

In August of 2017, the City contracted with a consultant team including members from Alta Planning and Design (multimodal transportation) and PLACE (architecture/urban design) to develop an enhancement and transportation network study for Totem Lake. The study also included the engagement of stakeholders from several City commissions, major employers in the urban center, and the development community. The report was completed in March 2018, and can be viewed [here](#). Note that the recommendations begin on page 39.

Staff will present the contents and recommendations of the report at the Planning Commission meeting on April 12. Comments from the Planning Commission will be helpful in identifying implementation measures to be included in the Totem Lake code amendments project this year.

Key highlights from the report include:

- Plan builds on past planning efforts to:
  - Identify improvements to create walking and bicycling friendly environments
  - Identify strategies to improve the overall identity and appeal of Totem Lake
- Recommendations include:
  - Improvements to each of networks for biking, walking, transit, and motor vehicles
  - Strategies for placemaking enhancements and wayfinding
  - Specific dimensions and amenities for select street design concepts
- Top recommendations:
  - Design and implement the concepts for improvements to streets within

the Circulator

- Reduce block sizes with new streets to promote walkability
- Establish continuous and interconnected biking and walking networks
- Create a “gateway hub” at NE 124<sup>th</sup> St & 124<sup>th</sup> Ave NE with distinctive elements to establish a district identity, indicate arrival and create a core gathering place

Staff presented the draft report to the Transportation Commission on February 28, 2018. Comments from the Transportation Commission are presented in Attachment 2.

### **Next Steps**

Staff will continue to provide briefings on the enhancement study to Council committees and the Totem Lake Conversations group during April and May, 2018. On May 1, 2018, the City Council will consider a resolution for approval of the general concepts recommended in the report.

Staff will identify actions to implement the recommendations included in the study. It is expected that many of these measures will require amendments to the Zoning Code and the Totem Lake Design Guidelines. Others may be addressed through changes to the City’s Pre-Approved Plans, which are handled by the Public Works department. The report’s strong recommendation that the City develop a comprehensive wayfinding/signage plan for Totem Lake would likely be a task that would require additional funding. Page 95 of the [report](#) presents specific “next steps” recommendations for the City.

### **QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING COMMISSION CONSIDERATION**

- Are there specific recommendations from the report that the Planning Commission would like to see implemented?
- Does the Planning Commission have comments for staff to provide to the City Council?

Attachment 1: Totem Lake Circulator Alignment, Figure TL-10, Kirkland Comprehensive Plan

Attachment 2: Comments from Transportation Commission, February 28, 2018

cc: Totem Lake Enhancement/Transportation Network Advisory Committee Members  
Fred Young, Alta Planning and Design, 1402 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Suite 206, Seattle, WA 98101  
Ellen Miller-Wolfe







Enhancement and Transportation Network Study  
Transportation Commission Comments  
2/28/18

- Pedestrian access across NE 124<sup>th</sup> Street is a challenge for residents on the south side of the street (Athene development). Could islands be located within the NE 124<sup>th</sup> Street r-o-w?
- Connections to TL core from eastern industrial area should be improved. Employment growth will continue in this area (Astronix, other), and employees should have easy access for lunch, etc.
- The “Circulator” should be renamed to avoid confusion with transit term and to convey a positive image.
- Concerns about “totem” concept for design elements in the district. May be viewed as cultural appropriation. Also, clusters of the totems look like fences.
- See opportunities to identify each quadrant in the corners/gateways along the circulator.
- Improve pedestrian experience on 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE between NE 124<sup>th</sup> Street and NE 128<sup>th</sup> Street, particularly since TOD will be developed at the Kingsgate P&R.
- CKC crossing under I-405 – consider providing for active uses, such as a sport court or other public activity space.

