



KIRKLAND DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

Recommendations of the Kirkland Downtown Action Team

*Adopted by the Kirkland City Council
June 5, 2001 (Resolution #R-4294)*

McKeever/Morris, a division of
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KIRKLAND DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

An Introduction

The Downtown Action Team is pleased to present the Kirkland Downtown Strategic Plan – our community’s plan to transform our central city area into a high-quality pedestrian village. This document summarizes the key elements of the recommendations of the Downtown Action Team (DAT), and was adopted by the Kirkland City Council on June 5, 2001 (Resolution #R-4294).

The DAT members, listed below, were appointed by the City Council in the summer of 1999. For the past two years, the DAT was charged to develop a series of recommendations on the desired changes for downtown Kirkland. The recommendations in this document set forth a series of public actions and private opportunities. This plan is more strategic in nature and less of a physical building plan. Detailed physical planning will follow as necessary and appropriate.

This plan is structured to explain the background for the plan’s recommendations. The first section

of the document explains the overall reasons behind the plan’s conclusions, then discusses specific functional issues: circulation, retail, office and housing, and parking. The second half of the document summarizes the specific recommendations within their general central city physical areas: the Lakefront Area, the Core Area and Park Place. Although described this way, the plan was developed to consider the recommendations as a collective, integrated whole.

The process to develop the plan was multifaceted to ensure that all views were considered. The broad-based DAT met regularly for 18 months to develop the plan. In addition, over 60 community leaders were interviewed at the start of the process, 22 presentations were made to community and neighborhood groups, and a citywide forum was conducted with over 100 attendees. Drafts of the plan were circulated for public review and information was distributed throughout the project.

We feel that this is a first major step in making downtown Kirkland into a high-quality pedestrian village.

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SUMMARY OF KEY ELEMENTS

This document summarizes the key elements of the recommendations of the Downtown Action Team. The Downtown Action Team has been gathering community ideas, concerns, and recommendations about the Team's conclusions since the summer of 1999. Ongoing community involvement will be key in implementing the Plan.

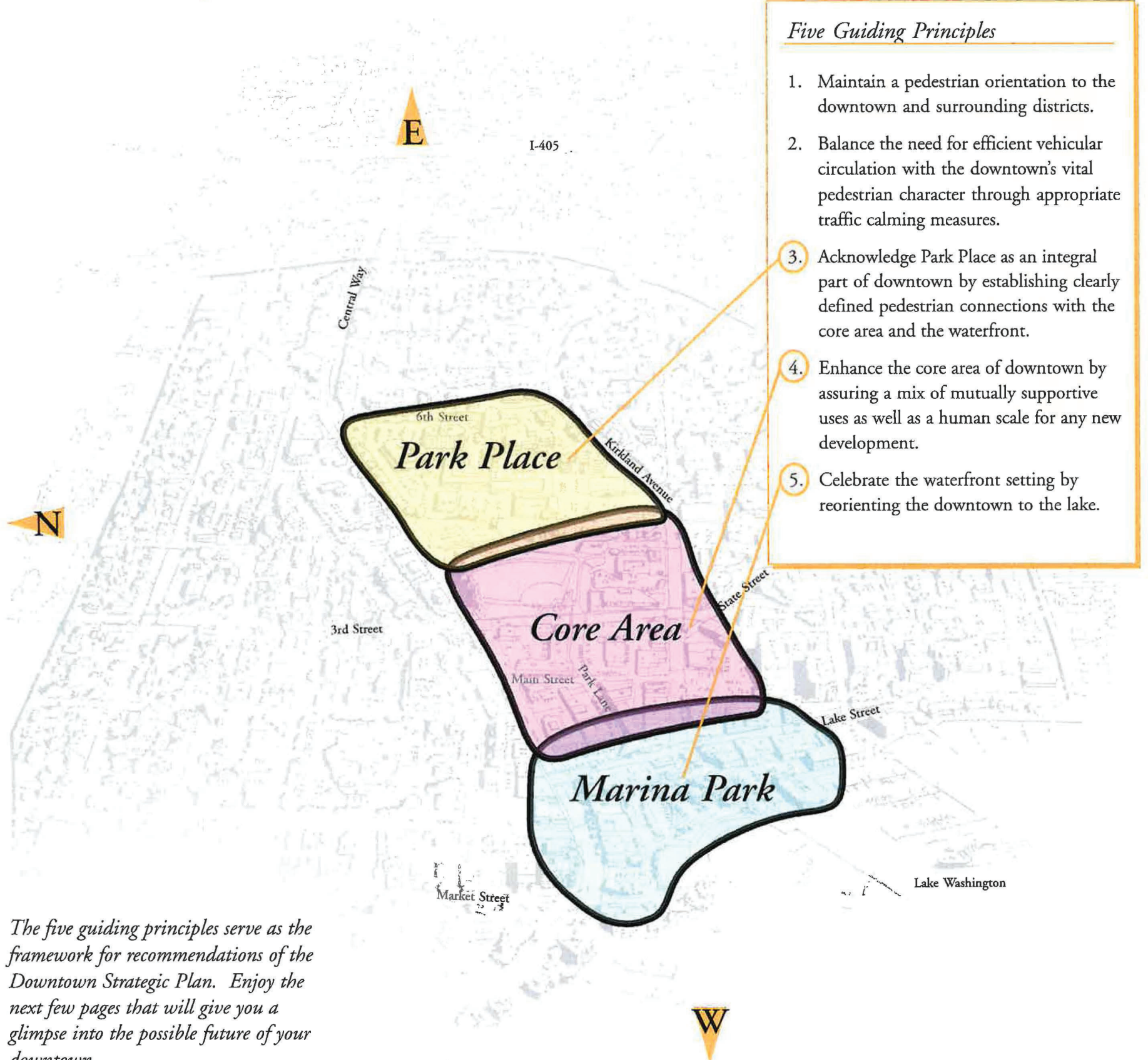
The publication you are about to read is a result of many months of sincere effort on

the part of citizens, city staff, city officials and a team of consultants expressly chosen for their expertise in planning for the future of downtown.

During the planning and design process, the consultant team and the Kirkland Downtown Action Team developed five core principles that would guide the process through to completion. The five principles kept all of the efforts focused on a comprehensive strategy for addressing the

issues and opportunities facing downtown Kirkland. You will find these five points illustrated in the vignettes surrounding the map illustration of downtown (pages 6, 7) and throughout the text of this document. Two of the five principles speak to the overall function of the study area. Three others address issues found in each district of the downtown. The principles will be highlighted in those portions of the text that relate to the specific district to which the principle applies.

Illustration of Downtown Kirkland



The five guiding principles serve as the framework for recommendations of the Downtown Strategic Plan. Enjoy the next few pages that will give you a glimpse into the possible future of your downtown.

FOUNDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Rationale for Plan Recommendations

For ease of reading, the following recommendations are presented by topic, recognizing that some have an impact on or will need to be integrated with others.

General Conclusions

- Downtown Kirkland belongs to the entire city. Citizens view it as their “living room” regardless of whether they live downtown, near downtown, or elsewhere in the city.
- Research from successful downtown revitalization efforts throughout America show that residents and businesses city-wide realize tangible economic and social benefits when a downtown area thrives.
- Downtown Kirkland has many strengths, including its public spaces, spectacular art, and proximity to Lake Washington (Figure 1). In some respects the downtown enjoys a generally healthy environment, especially for selected restaurants and retail such as art galleries and specialty shops. The area has a strong history, a nice pedestrian feel, and small town scale. However, in other respects the downtown has a very challenging and fragile economic climate; it certainly has the potential to become much more. Realizing this potential requires that the varied interests within the community continue to build trust with each other

and reach agreement on the future direction for the downtown – in total and in the details.

- The goal of transforming downtown Kirkland into a high quality pedestrian village is broadly supported – it is the bedrock of common ground in the community!
- Marina Park is a wonderful part of the downtown (Figure 2). Public events are well attended and people often speak of taking out of town guests to visit the lakefront and enjoy the surrounding properties. However, its huge potential public benefits and central role in



Figure 3: Development Concept for Marina Park

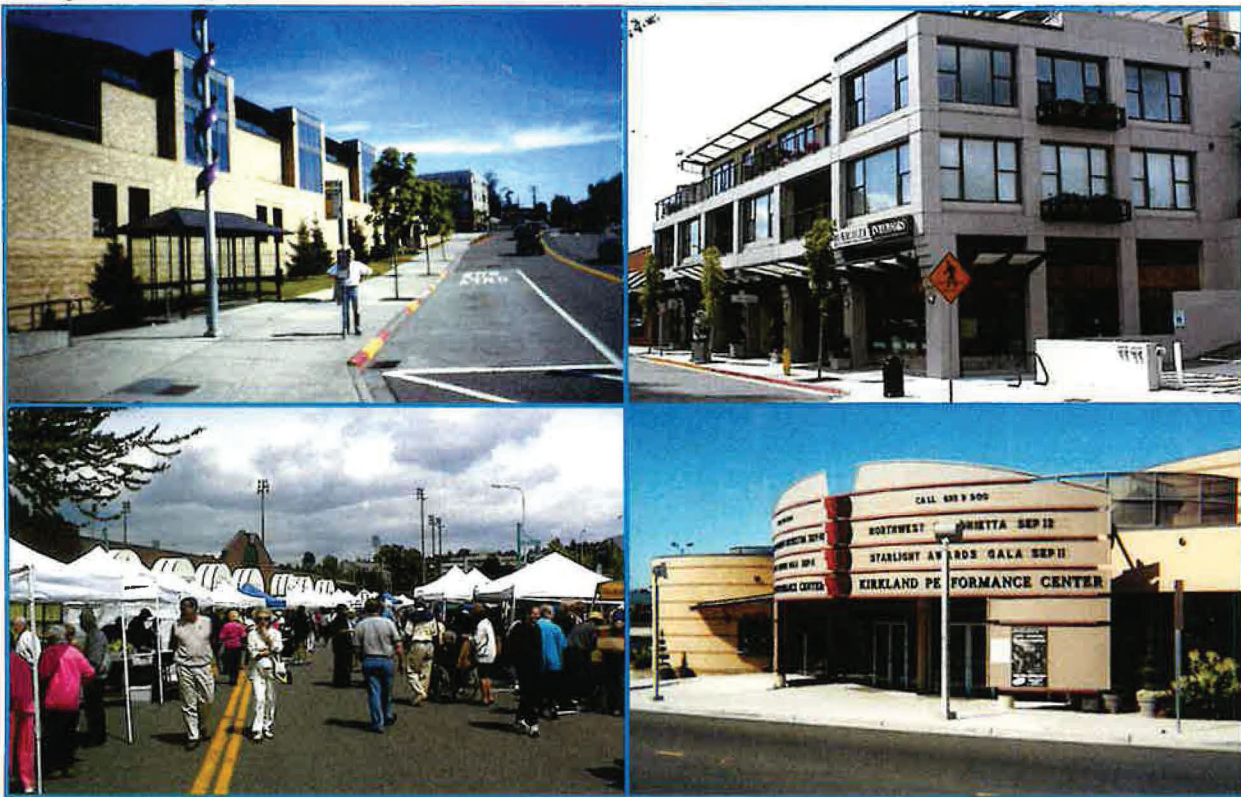


Figure 2: Marina Park

downtown are not fully realized because the existing surrounding retail buildings turn their back to the lake and the Marina Park parking lots act as a barrier between the downtown and the waterfront. A commitment to a major increase in visual and pedestrian access to the lake is the kind of big picture idea that can transform the downtown: “Bring downtown to the lake – bring the lake to downtown.” (Figure 3)

- The Pacific Northwest’s rainy climate necessitates weather-protected pedestrian linkages. The linkages will help create a downtown that remains active 365 days instead of only coming alive when the sun shines.
- Downtown is comprised of interconnected components. Some of these connections are not currently well developed or defined. A successful Downtown Plan must be developed and implemented as an integrated package. Dealing with any of the components in isolation from the whole significantly increases the likelihood that the downtown will fall short of the excellence that is within reach.

Figure 1: The Many Faces of Downtown



Circulation Network

- The downtown has many positive pedestrian features. The small block grid pattern and Park Lane are two of the foundations of this comfortable pedestrian environment. However, as with the lakefront, there are many pedestrian opportunities unrealized and in some cases, problems unaddressed. For example, the strong pedestrian features of Park Lane (Figure 4) do not extend throughout the entire downtown; linkages between the core area, Peter Kirk Park, and Park Place have limitations; some streets are challenging for a pedestrian to cross; and many existing sidewalks are too narrow and/or in poor repair.

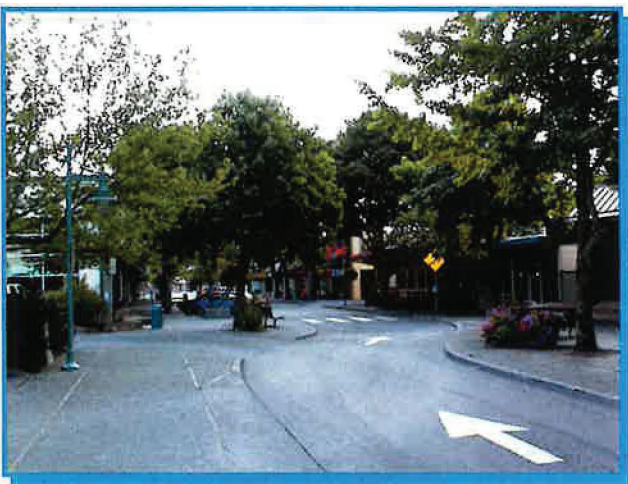


Figure 4: Park Lane

- The opportunities for bicycle travel through and within downtown are limited.
- The current circulation system emphasizes the needs of the automobile at significant expense to pedestrians. The mixture of cars and pedestrians, particularly on Central Way, is neither attractive nor safe for pedestrians. This seriously restricts connections between the surrounding neighborhoods and the downtown, as well as movement within the downtown.
- The Downtown Action Team believes it is realistic to manage current and anticipated traffic volumes on Central Way and Lake Street in a way that better meets pedestrian needs, while retaining cars needed to support a healthy retail environment (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Concept Design for Central Way

Through thoughtful implementation, this can be accomplished without creating detrimental diversion or adverse impacts on adjoining neighborhood streets. Eliminating or significantly reducing traffic on downtown streets is not the goal – improving pedestrian safety and circulation is. Traffic needs to be slowed, calmed, and better managed in order to improve pedestrian safety.

- Mass transit, transit riders, and a transit center are important parts of downtown Kirkland, both today and in the future.

Retail Uses

- Many involved in the planning process to date have stated a desire to create significantly more local-serving retail businesses in the downtown core. The lack of apparel stores and the recent closing of the hardware store in Park Place are two of the most frequently cited examples to support this point of view.
- The potential buying power near the downtown is substantial. The percentage of average household incomes higher than \$75,000 within a three-mile range of downtown is significantly higher than the national average. It should be possible to make local-serving retail thrive in downtown Kirkland. The recent influx of housing in the downtown area should start the process of strengthening existing retail and attracting new retail.



Figure 6: Park Place Today

- The downtown core is currently served by restaurants and art galleries, some of which are doing acceptably financially, and small 'mom and pop' retailers, many of which are struggling. Reasons include:
 - low sales,
 - high rents,
 - limited store hours,
 - weather, and
 - lack of a critical mass of customers and similar retail and related problems.



Figure 7: Redevelopment Potential for Park Place

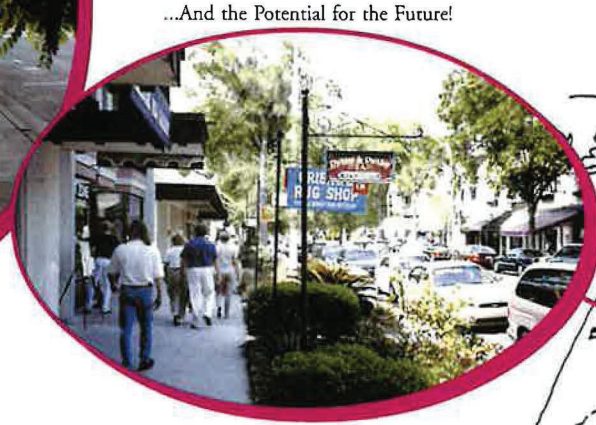
- Customers are choosing to shop elsewhere, including in nearby regional shopping centers.
- There are key opportunity sites (e.g., corner locations) for retail that are underdeveloped at this time.
- Park Place is an important part of downtown retail. Its existing retail tenants provide some of the needed local-serving businesses (e.g., grocery, pharmacy) (Figure 6). It is important to preserve these uses, which serve as key 'anchors' in downtown. However, space limitations, limited parking, the challenge of paying higher rents in a remodeled center, competition for space from higher-paying tenants, and competition from stronger markets limit the ability to expand convenience retail in Park Place (Figure 7).
- The types of uses and activities that get value from a lakefront environment and access include restaurants, housing, hotels, and "destination-retail" – specialty shops that depend more on name recognition and less on pass-through vehicular traffic. Most retail uses do not benefit from, or need, direct lakefront access. Shops continue to rely on traffic.
- Both by location and historic use the core area (the four blocks bounded by Lake Street, 3rd Street, Central Way, and Kirkland Avenue, the area south of Kirkland Avenue and the northern side of Central Way and southern side of Kirkland Avenue) becomes the logical target to provide more opportunities for both specialty and local-serving retail. New retail should be encouraged while maintaining strict design standards that retain the quaint historic, small town feel of the current downtown (Figure 8).
- Some properties need to redevelop at higher intensities to make it economical to provide better retail space. The income from upper story uses often is what makes redevelopment economically feasible.

Kirkland Downtown: Public

The goal of transforming downtown Kirkland into a high quality pedestrian village is broadly supported — it is the bedrock of common ground in the community.



Central Way Today...

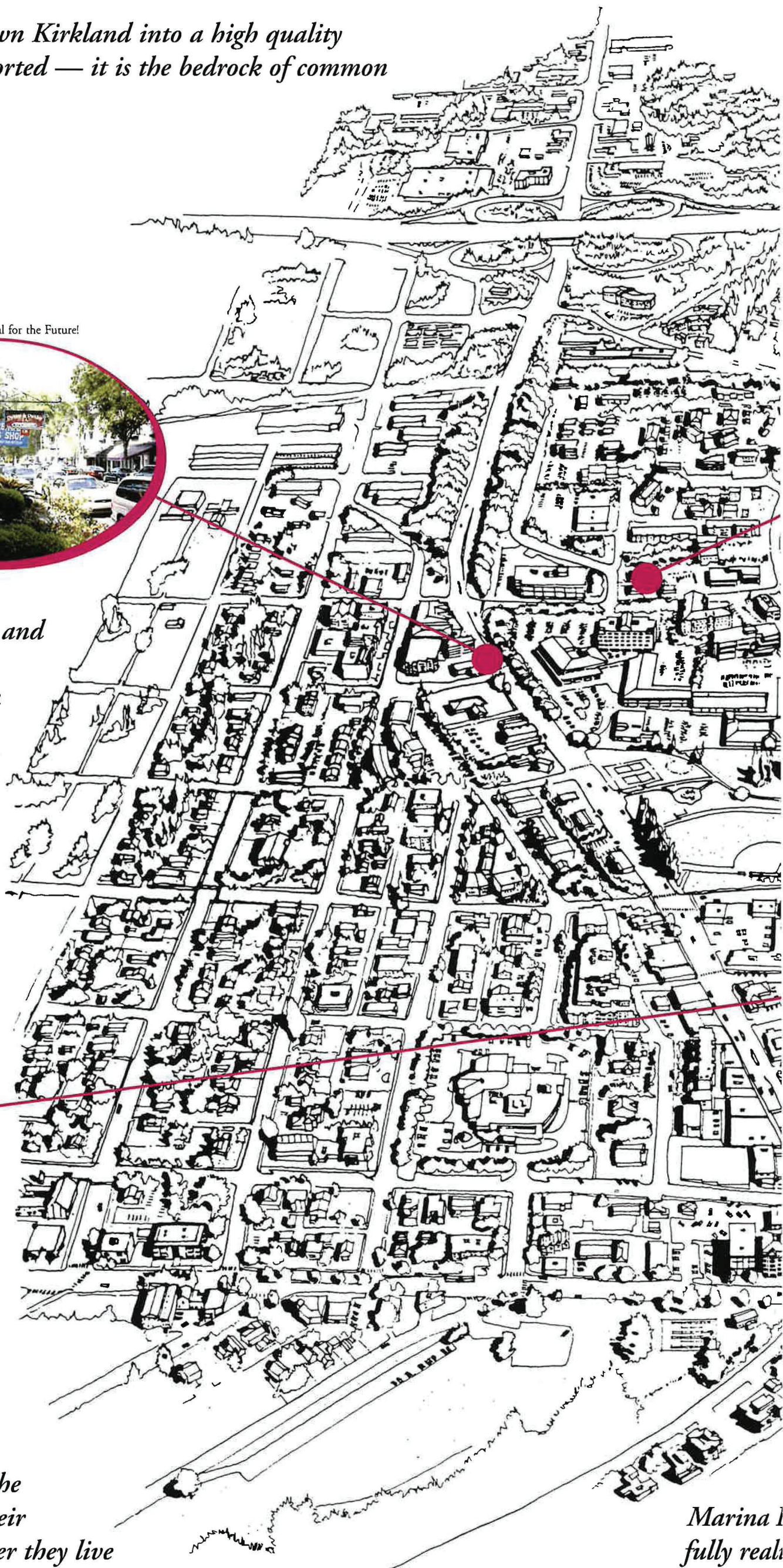


...And the Potential for the Future!

...it is realistic to manage current and anticipated traffic volumes on Central Way and Lake Street in a way that better meets pedestrian needs while retaining cars needed to support a healthy retail environment.



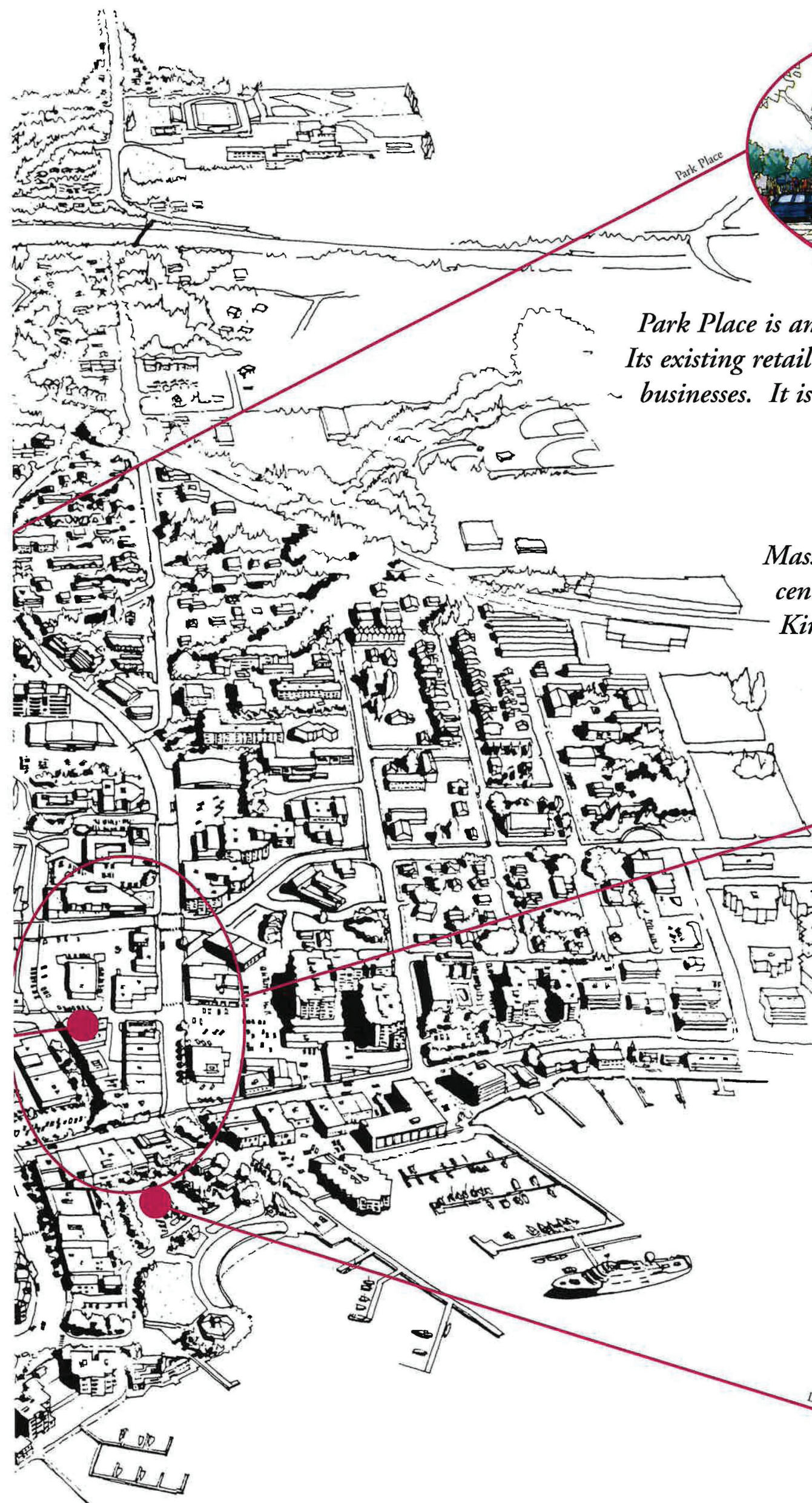
Existing Downtown



Downtown Kirkland belongs to the entire city. Citizens view it as their “living room” regardless of whether they live downtown, near downtown or elsewhere in the city.

*Marina 1
fully real*

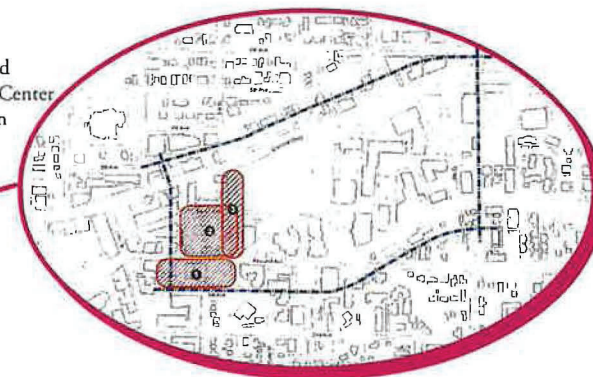
Actions, Private Opportunities



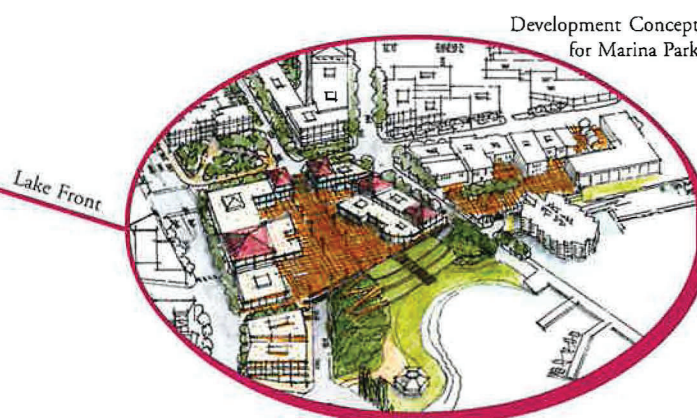
Park Place is an important part of downtown retail. Its existing retail tenants provide needed local-serving businesses. It is important to preserve these uses that serve as key “anchors” in downtown.

Mass transit, transit riders, and a transit center are important parts of downtown Kirkland, both today and in the future.

Proposed
Transit Center
Location



Some properties need to redevelop at higher densities to make it economical to provide better retail space. The income from the upper story uses often is what makes redevelopment economically feasible.



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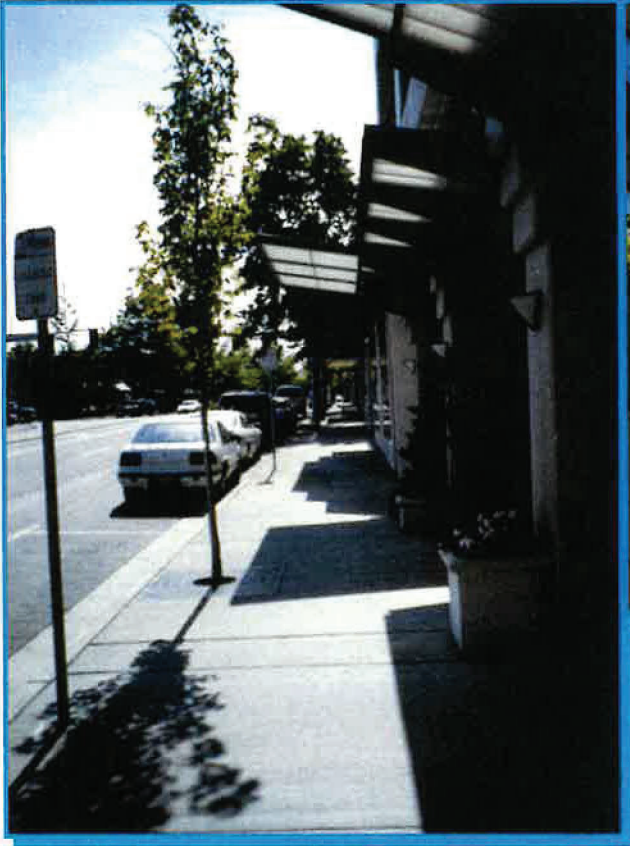


Figure 8: Downtown Shopping Streets

- A large percentage of the cars on Central Way, Lake Street, and Kirkland Avenue are commuters traveling through the downtown to other destinations. More of these commuters need to be converted to shoppers in order for the downtown to thrive.

Office and Housing

- Office uses have the following general characteristics in downtown Kirkland:
 - Strong economic viability and demand – although the market is cyclical, office space currently has a very low vacancy rate
 - Provide good paying jobs, some of which may be held by Kirkland residents (Figure 9)
 - Generally require large building ‘floorplates’ with large amounts of square footage on a single floor (although this is not true for smaller tenants such as professional services)



Figure 9: Commercial Office in a Mixed-Use Building



Figure 10: Housing Above Central Way Retail

- Compared to housing, office generates more peak hour downtown vehicle trips, has higher parking requirements (usually about 3 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of floor area), and taller floor-to-ceiling heights.
- Housing uses have the following general characteristics (Figure 10):
 - Strong economic viability – at least equal to office uses in today’s Kirkland market
 - Generally require smaller building floorplates than office buildings
 - Generally have a more varied and articulated exterior design than office buildings
 - Generate fewer vehicle trips and parking requirements per square foot (usually 1 to 1.5 parking spots per unit or about 1.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet, which is roughly half that of office)
 - Shorter floor-to-ceiling heights
 - Support local-serving retail better than office
 - Provides “eyes on the street” year-round, “24-7,” promoting safety
 - Provides foot traffic during non-business days and hours that promotes vitality when the downtown might otherwise be less active
- There are currently an estimated 5,649 units of housing within a one-mile radius of downtown Kirkland, and 1,576 housing units within the Central neighborhood (soon to be renamed Moss Bay Neighborhood).
- The general conclusion from these comparative characteristics is that the upper floors of development in the core area of downtown Kirkland should primarily be used for housing and not

office space. There are specific locations where exceptions make sense (such as the office park focus of CBD 5, and local-serving smaller office spaces in the core and along Central Way and Kirkland Avenue).

Parking

Successful retail requires an adequate supply of parking that is convenient and affordable. On-street parking and nearby structured parking with good access are critical for retail success. Centralized, shared parking facilities will be more effective and efficient than requiring each facility to provide its own off-street parking. The City should play a leadership role in providing parking in the downtown that is consistent with these principles (Figures 11, 12).

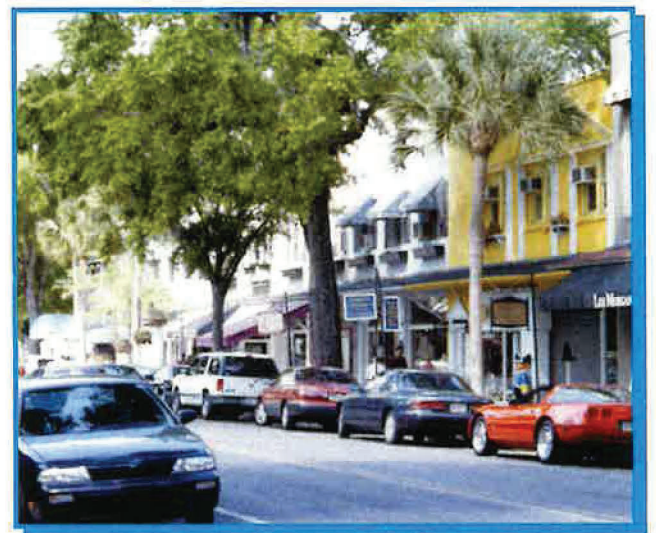


Figure 11: On-Street Parking

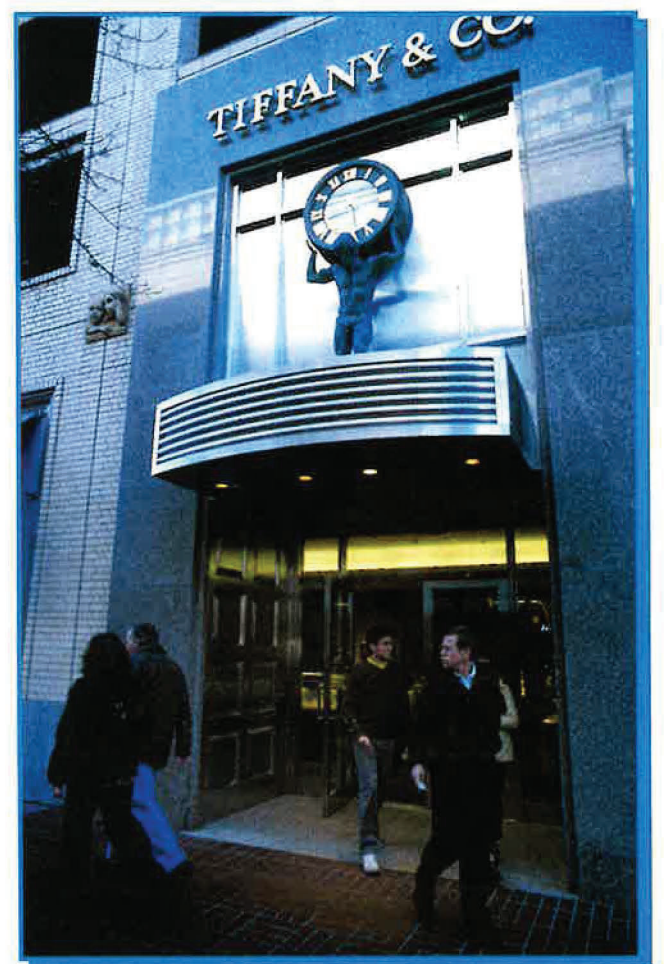


Figure 12: Parking Structure with Retail

RECOMMENDATIONS

Lakefront

Celebrate the waterfront setting by reorienting the downtown to the lake.

1. Establish major increases in visual and pedestrian access to the lakefront. This should include a strong connection extending west to the lakefront from Park Lane. The lakefront should feel and function like an integral part of the downtown.
2. Build a covered parking structure capped with a significant public plaza over the current surface parking lot adjacent to the waterfront, and possibly extend the parking structure and plaza south of Kirkland Avenue:
 - a. Parking structure would extend south of Kirkland Avenue and could expand the number of parking spaces from 128 to as many as 500 (this figure to be validated through more detailed design work during implementation). Approximately 367 spaces will be north of Kirkland Avenue and approximately 129 spaces will be in an expanded parking area south of Kirkland Avenue. As a point of reference, the public garage at the Library has approximately 400 parking stalls.
 - b. Plaza would be approximately 1 to 1.5 acres of public open space and would provide a seamless connection from the downtown to the waterfront. The plaza would be at the same grade as Lake Street and Central Way with access from a series of at-grade pedestrian connections from Central Way and Lake Street - some of which already exist.
 - c. Buildings next to Central Way, Kirkland Avenue, and Lake Street would be allowed to extend onto



Figure 14: Wider Sidewalks

the plaza some, but most of the plaza would be dedicated to public uses. Any structures would be human scale.

3. Automobile access to the lakefront should be limited to access to and from the parking garage with no surface road separating the structure from the park.
4. Allow two-story buildings "outright" along both Lake Street and Central Way in the waterfront area.
5. Land uses surrounding the plaza should be:
 - a. Retail, restaurant, hotel, housing, office, and civic uses allowed; and
 - b. Only retail uses and other generators of pedestrian traffic allowed on the ground floor (office, 'dot-coms' or housing not allowed on ground floor) (Figure 13).
6. A complete and comprehensive redevelopment package for the entire waterfront area is preferred so that the parking structure, plaza, public access, building development, and redevelopment are integrated.
7. The City should take the lead to pursue partnerships and joint development opportunities to finance and construct the parking deck and public plaza.
8. Add a vehicular roundabout at the intersection of Central Way and Market.
9. Make the following changes to Lake Street:
 - a. Coordinate existing signals on the east side of Lake Street at Central Way and Kirkland Avenue and provide more green time for northbound traffic in the PM peak period.

- b. Install curb extensions (bulb outs) on Lake Street at the intersections with Kirkland Avenue and Park Lane and eliminate lane for northbound right-turn movements.
 - c. Continue studying ways to increase sidewalk width, particularly on the west side of Lake Street, while retaining on street parking (Figure 14).
10. The merits of the following waterfront area ideas should be studied in the future:
- a. Developing a breakwater with renovation/expansion of the City marina; and
 - b. Adding a water taxi.

Core Area

Enhance the core area of downtown by assuring a mix of mutually supportive uses as well as a human scale for any new development.

1. Substantially increase the retail floor area in the core area.
2. Design the core with a Main Street "quaint" and historic character while ensuring economic feasibility (Figure 15).
3. Facilitate redevelopment at key opportunity sites, including:
 - a. Existing parking lot at the corner of Central Way and Lake Street in conjunction with the adjacent U.S. Bank site;
 - b. Bank of America site on Kirkland Avenue and other areas south of Kirkland Avenue;
 - c. Peter Kirk Square; and
 - d. Antique Mall site.



Figure 13: Pedestrian Generators and Amenities



Figure 15: "Quaint" Mainstreet Infused with Economic Vitality



Figure 19: The "Park Lane" Character at Lake Street

sides of the street (assuming the transit center is re-located from its current site on 3rd Street); and

- c. Pay particular attention to high quality pedestrian crossing at Park Lane and 3rd Street to encourage a safe connection to Peter Kirk Park.
- d. Enhance the entry/access points into Peter Kirk Park.

10. Kirkland Avenue changes (Figure 20):

- a. Reduce travel lanes in each direction from 14 feet to 11 or 12 feet, and increase the width of the sidewalks.
- b. Eliminate the right-turn shortcut from eastbound Kirkland Avenue to State Street.
- c. Signalize the intersection at Kirkland Avenue and 3rd Street (provided the other improvements to Kirkland Avenue and 3rd Street are made, particularly a Park Lane pedestrian crossing solution across 3rd Street, and elimination of the right-turn shortcut from Kirkland Avenue to southbound State Street).
- d. Study the inclusion of a bicycle lane and how to best add to the sidewalk width.

11. Park Lane

- a. Retain the current circulation system of one-way between Lake Street and Main Street and two-way between Main Street and 3rd Street;

- b. Pay particular attention to creating and expanding a pleasant pedestrian environment; including possibly adding a covered walkway along Park Lane and along the southern edge of the current path through Peter Kirk Park to Park Place (Figure 21).

12. The City should take a strong leadership role in ensuring adequate parking in the core area and waterfront:

- a. Recommended right-of-way changes will add to the on-street parking supply;
- b. Prohibit surface parking lots in core;
- c. Develop the parking structure at lakefront to provide expanded parking service to the core and waterfront;
- d. Develop a public parking structure to serve retail and employee needs in the core. If it is not provided in connection with a new transit center south of Kirkland Avenue, it should be provided elsewhere in or immediately adjacent to the core;
- e. Develop a parking strategy for the downtown that leverages public investment in parking to:
 - Encourage shared parking
 - Target the addition of key community-desired uses in the core
 - Promote quality design

Parking requirements for some or all retail uses in the core and waterfront should be eliminated within the context of a parking strategy that accomplishes these goals. Specific uses to target and methods for leveraging the parking investment to be determined in future phases. Uses other than retail within the core should continue to provide their own onsite parking, although shared parking between multiple properties is encouraged.

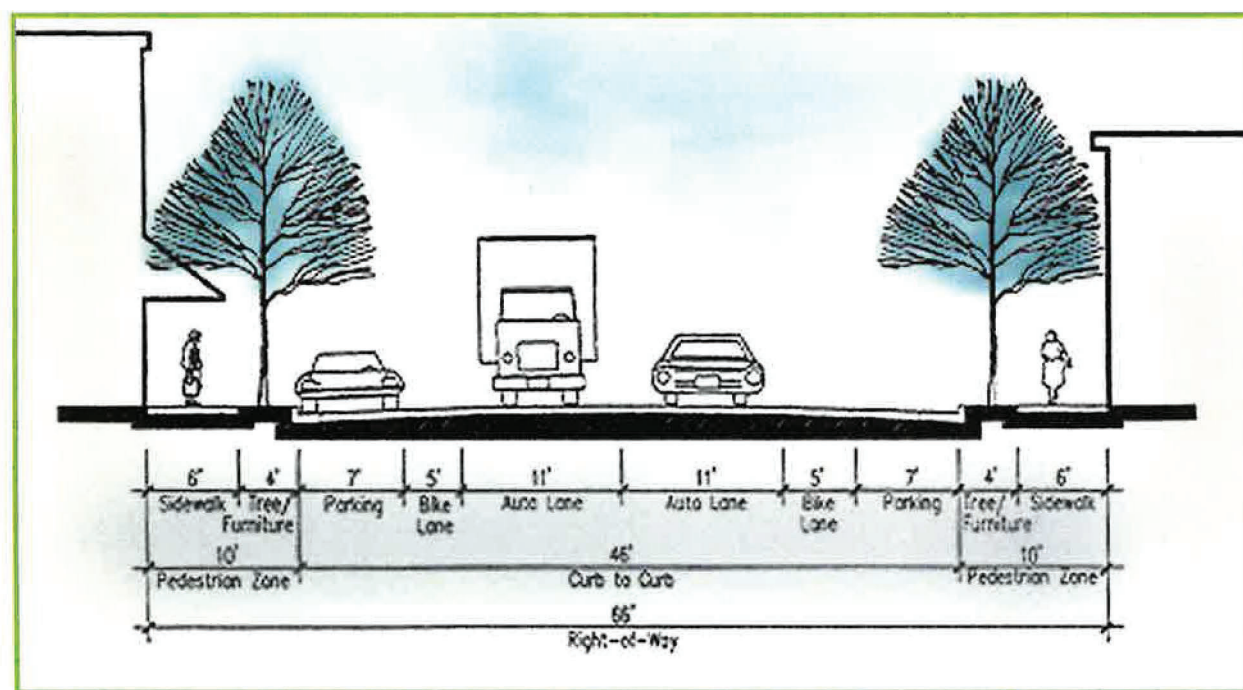


Figure 20: Kirkland Avenue Concept

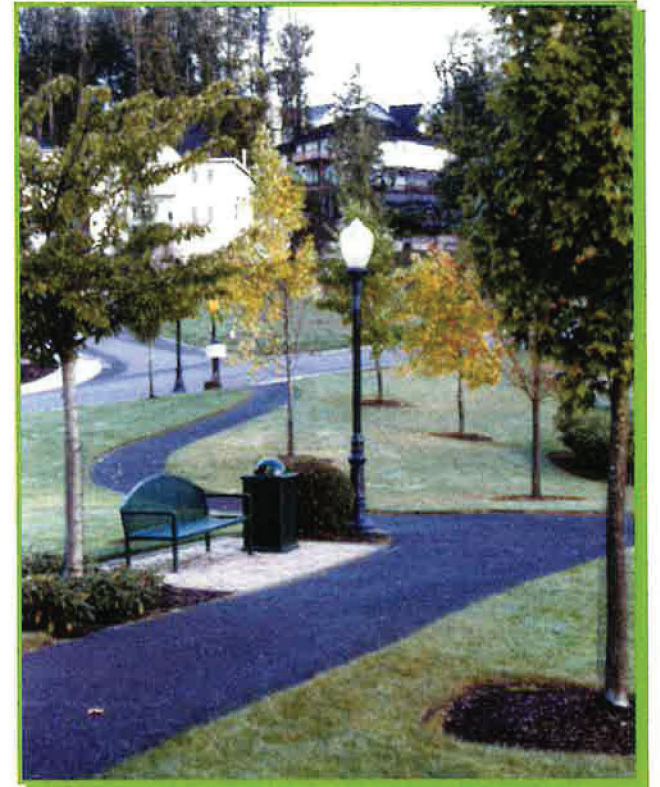


Figure 21: Connection through Peter Kirk Park

Park Place

Acknowledge Park Place as an integral part of downtown by establishing clearly defined pedestrian connections with the core area and the waterfront.

Recommendations relating to the Park Place shopping center and abutting areas (CBD 5) of downtown include the following:

1. Any new development in this area should be urban in character to promote a better integration of Park Place with the core area.
2. Enhance the intersection of Central Way and 6th Street as a "gateway" to the downtown (Figure 22).



Figure 22: Gateway Area

3. Encourage local-serving uses such as grocery, hardware, and pharmacy within Park Place as it redevelops.
4. Encourage retail uses and similar pedestrian-generating activities on the ground floor of all buildings, including those on Central Way.
5. Establish (through policy) a 'friendly' connection of Park Place to Peter Kirk Park (with no net loss of park land). Prohibit blank walls facing the park, enhance pedestrian connections by adding appropriate walkways and paths,

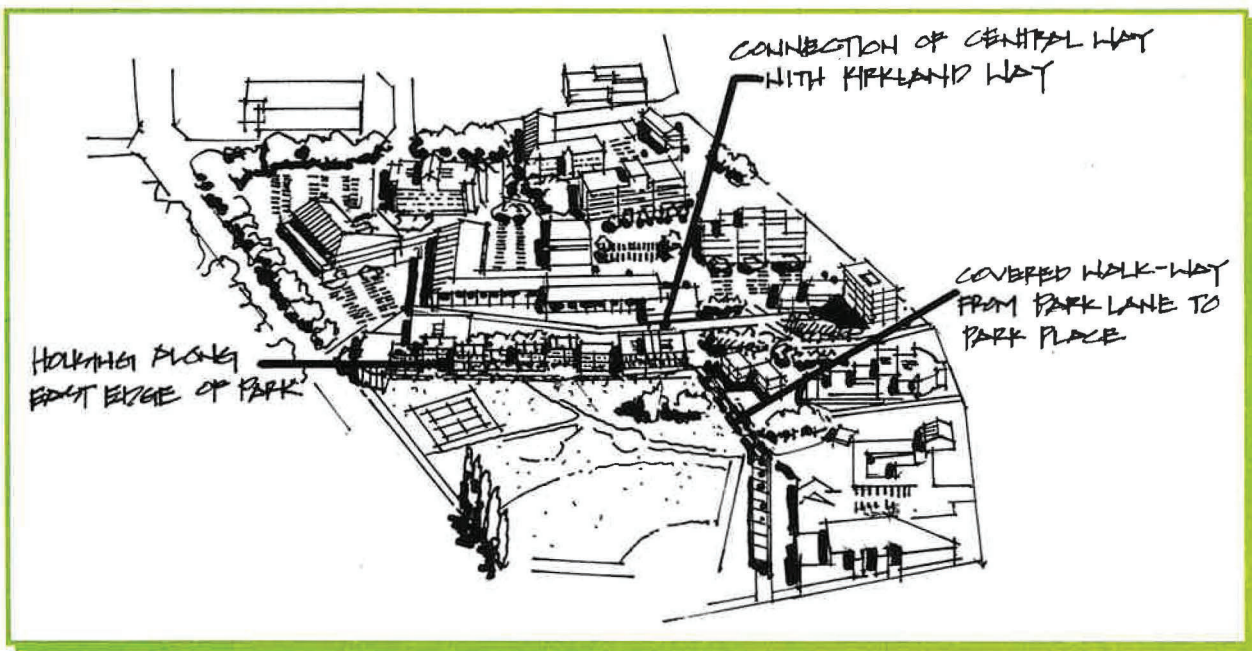


Figure 23: Park Place becomes "Connected"; Redevelopment Concept for Park Place

and use design to help make the transition from the shopping center to the park (Figure 23).

6. Add on street parking on Central Way to support retail and enhance the pedestrian environment.
7. Hide rooftop parking at Park Place such that it is not visible from Central Way or Peter Kirk Park.
8. Encourage underground parking and street parking along surface streets. Minimize and, over time, eliminate surface parking lots.

9. Reduce travel lanes in each direction on Kirkland Avenue from 14 feet to 11 or 12 feet, and increase sidewalk widths.
10. Complete a street in the form of a meandering lane running north-south between Central Way and Kirkland Avenue to provide an urban retail street environment (Figure 24).
11. The Salvation Army property located south of Kirkland Avenue represents an important redevelopment opportunity. Conduct further studies to determine the most appropriate uses for this site, possibly emphasizing uses that complement the civic facilities on the north side of Kirkland Avenue.

12. Preserve the designation of the CBD 5 area as a Class A office district while allowing limited housing subject to the following guidelines and limitations:
 - a. Ensure that design guidelines are consistent with the character and image of the district;
 - b. Ensure that Peter Kirk Park retains its function as an active park, with activities for all ages of users and activities that extend into the evening hours. Future residents of housing on all sides of the park should understand that these active uses take precedence over concerns they may have over conflicts with residential uses.
 - c. Housing will be minor percentage of any project, and allowed only on western edge of CBD 5 (west of the north-south road that is to be added).
 - d. Housing will be designed within the current height limits for CBD 5.



Figure 24: Potential Concept for Meandering Retail Street

*Key
Elements*

*Foundations and
Conclusions*

Recommendations

Summary

SUMMARY

The conclusions and recommendations described in this document represent the work effort of a very diverse group of Kirkland leaders – neighborhood leaders, historians, developers, bankers, retailers, property owners, main street enthusiasts, and others that love Kirkland. The process began, as it does in so many communities, with distrust. Over the past year, the Downtown Action Team has forged a remarkable process of trust and interaction. Personal agendas, while not gone, have melted down while the desire for holistic and comprehensive solutions to downtown revitalization continue to gain more and more support from the entire team. Many, if not most, of the recommendations were reached with unanimous support.

The Downtown Action Team encourages the citizens of Kirkland to approach this opportunity as they have – determining what is in the best interest of Kirkland and how all the parts can be understood and resolved simultaneously. We encourage your involvement and look forward to the discussions together about our future.

Next Steps

The strategies identified in this plan will become projects and each will carry a life of its own. The DAT will continue to provide oversight and direction on the details of implementing this plan and ensure that each project achieves the vision of making downtown Kirkland a high quality pedestrian village.

