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University District Integrated Parking and Urban Mobility Strategy

The University District Integrated Parking and Urban Mobility Strategy focuses on the relationship between parking and urban form. The project concentrates on an integrated parking strategy and incorporates broader transit, pedestrian and mobility interests.

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FOREWORD

Zooming in on The University District, the framing documents addressing parking and mobility clearly state our community ideals to elevate people-friendly mobility options. Spokane's Comprehensive Plan, for example, notes that pedestrian and bicycle paths should contribute to a system of "fully connected and interesting routes" to all destinations and as many activities as possible should be located within easy walking distance to transit options.¹ The University District Strategic Master Plan (UDSMP), completed in 2004, goes further to assert this ideal and expresses that the fundamental goal of place making for The District hinges on establishing a pedestrian community designed to make connections *among* people, rather than *for* cars.

While working on issues related to parking and mobility in Spokane, it was initially encouraging to recognize the long standing civic minded leadership championing a people-first environment and hailing our city's unique urban-by-nature condition. However, this claim also becomes unsettling when tracing this priority, re-inscribed over the course of many years in updated plans and publications, without significant changes to the surrounding urban condition. There is a troubling disparity between our ideal state and our current conditions. Plans reveal the ambitions to create better pedestrian networks, enhanced transportation resources, and create a more bike-able city, yet, reports document the increasing traffic complications and expanding parking demand. The UDSMP acknowledges this disconnect between current and desired conditions, pointing to the lack of pedestrian amenities and the uninviting streetscape.

¹ "City of Spokane's Comprehensive Plan, Revised Edition," (2012), 12.

The current automobile-first environment is recognized as a barrier to attract the types of development consistent with our community vision.² In the past, several studies have been done to address parking in and around The University District. As long as the study and problem of parking and mobility is framed in terms of divining some scheme balancing parking inventory and primarily on how to effectively move cars through our city, the most compelling research concludes that we are only exacerbating our problems. As urban reformer and city planner Jan Gehl has observed, “In every case, attempts to relieve traffic pressure by building more roads and parking garages have generated more traffic and more congestion.”³ This disconnect, between current practices and desired outcomes, appears to not be new. Reading updated reports, some calling attention to the failure to implement past recommendations, underscores that even in the face of warnings and confronting the deadening moat of asphalt surrounding our human environment we have not done enough and are presently still not doing enough.

The overused idiom of ‘rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic’ points to well-meaning, but misplaced efforts in the face of an endeavor that is, in fact, doomed. As apologia for evoking this cliché in the face of another study on parking, is the magnitude of what is at stake as we chart our future direction and the need to anticipate our desired paths far in advance. Though the analogy does not need to foretell a tragic outcome, it correctly dramatizes the need to change course, now, before it is too late. We not only want to avoid clear hazards ahead for our community, associated with unwanted commutes and congestions, but moreover, have pledged ourselves to chart a way forward to a bold vision for our future as one of the healthiest communities. This is a vision of Spokane as an exceptional city and The University District as a national model

² As Jeff Speck points out in his book *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time* “We’ve known for three decades how to make livable cities—after forgetting for four—yet we’ve somehow not been able to pull it off.” Jeff Speck, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 3.

³ Jan Gehl, *Cities for people* (Washington: Island Press, 2010), 9. For a discussion of this observation in light of promoting better pedestrian environment, see: Speck, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*, 97.

of a healthy and vibrant pedestrian community. Accordingly, we must calibrate our action not only to abate the problems of an urban environment that can be hostile to pedestrians, but also recognize the exceptional efforts that will be required to realize the community and urban conditions we desire. It is worth being reminded that this vision for our near future also holds fast to preserve what our most celebrated urban pioneers and first developers saw would make Spokane a great city. More about that history later.

The *University District Integrated Parking and Urban Mobility Strategy* arose out of The City of Spokane and The University District Development Association's interest in promoting a better understanding of the relationship between parking and urban form. This project, funded by The City of Spokane, supported new discussions about parking and mobility in relation to the vision of The University District, specifically, and the overarching ambitions to improve the community health, broadly, through urban planning.⁴ Samuel I. Schwartz, the former New York City traffic commissioner attributed with coining the term "gridlock", promotes that moving away from auto dependency can serve these far-reaching goals.⁵

This project took shape to set the stage for a different approach to parking. One of the explicit intentions of the proposal for this project was to engage key stakeholders in The University District to elevate awareness of the importance of parking governance and to develop a leadership coalition to attain a more vibrant urban core. The project has informed a community dialogue, helped build advocacy, and further constituted a community process re-charting our course to realize the vision and goals of The University District.

⁴ "City of Spokane's Comprehensive Plan, Revised Edition," 5.

⁵ Samuel I. Schwartz, *Street smart : the rise of cities and the fall of cars*, ed. William Rosen, First edition. ed., Street smart : a fifty-year mistake set right and the great urban revival (PublicAffairs, 2015).

Throughout 2016, The University District convened the Development Committee around the topic of parking and mobility. The elevated importance of the topic promoted many initiatives related to mobility in The District. Early in 2016, we held several meetings with University Partners to account for current parking plans. In February, The University District Smart City Accelerator (now Urbanova) led a collaborative application for the USDOT Smart City Challenge, proposing The University District as a proving ground for transportation innovation with the goal to make our community more “vibrant, healthy and productive”.

On April 21st, The University District Development Committee hosted a Parking Forum that was attended by a diverse and engaged group including legislators, planners, city officials, property owners, and developers. The purpose of the forum was to learn more about parking needs, resources, and primarily to advance an integrated parking approach and strategy. The goal was to engage and mobilize community leaders to be change agents related to issues of parking and mobility in The University District. Strategies addressed in the Parking Forum, for an increasingly pedestrian urban environment, were expanded in a series of visioning exercises led by The University District and funded by the organization in partnership with stakeholder organizations. A series of surveys administered by The University District have provided additional insights.

This report is a summary of these processes, throughout 2016, addressing the future of mobility in The University District. This report will map out strategies to engage the expanding market of development interests in a manner to serve our community vision to put people first in our planning priorities.

This report has been prepared by The University District Organization, a 501(c)(3) non-profit Development Association and Public Development Authority, dedicated to economic prosperity, smart urban growth, historic preservation,

environmental restoration, transportation improvements, housing, and improved public health, safety and quality of life. ⁶

⁶ The University District Development Association (UDDA) and the University District Public Development Authority (UDPDA) have a shared board and organizational goals. The University District is used when applied to both organizational entities. However, as each organization has discrete powers and responsibilities, when appropriate, they will be identified in relation to their specific agency.

INTRODUCTION

Mobility priorities of The University District concentrate on pedestrians, yet parking constitutes one of the largest single land uses. Far beyond just addressing an inventory of space for idle vehicles, parking has a far-reaching impact on several issues including influencing mobility choices as well as the very form and character of our community. Consequently, decisions about parking policies and practices shape the lifestyle and livability of our community.

The *University District Integrated Parking and Urban Mobility Strategy* focuses on the relationship between parking and urban form. The project's aim was to develop a model that can inform and lead development in The University District towards new urban possibilities and mobility priorities aligned with its Master Plan. The project concentrates on an integrated parking strategy incorporating broader transit, pedestrian and mobility interests. The goal is to help optimize the role played by parking in economic development and the mobility chain in The University District. Importantly, the model of economic development for The University District is founded on realizing a vibrant, pedestrian-first, urban community with a mix of uses. The economic strategy functions when The District becomes a center for intellectual exchange and promotes a development model encouraging these human connections.⁷

This project emphasizes the future conditions when considering the current state of parking and mobility. Different from past parking studies, parking will be addressed primarily as a vehicle for change to realize a people-first rather than automobile dependent development environment. Singling out parking is helpful to understand its discrete impact as both a problem and as a solution.

⁷ Founding reports emphasize the "place making" strategy to engage the knowledge workers of the "new economy". See, "Spokane's University District: Policy Options for a New Urban Center," (U.S. EPA Smart Growth Implementation Assistance for Spokane, Washington, 2007), 1.

Questions about parking gave rise to this project and parking has proved to be an enticing topic to engage many different community interests. Many are quick to recognize that it is a problem, although how the problem is defined varies greatly. Is it a problem that one must circle a block three times to find a parking place? Is it a problem that parking displaces more pedestrian friendly places? Should we increase parking capacity as a strategy to reduce congestion and pollution? Should we decrease parking in lieu of more sustainable solutions? Which of these questions is the most important to ask for the stated vision of The University District?

Regardless of how you might answer these questions, there has been a utility in acknowledging the impact of parking, not only despite differing answers, but, because of them. The details, objectives, and planning principles of the UDSMP change the way that “parking problems” are defined as well as how to evaluate potential solutions. It suggests that too much supply is harmful, that parking should be regulated in a manner to promote higher priority uses of the land. Many are interested in solving the problem but, how we approach and define the problem will determine what needs to be done. However, as it stands, we are not doing enough if we define the problem correctly, which is ultimately not about parking.

Approach

The title: *University District Integrated Parking and Urban Mobility Strategy* calls attention to the inclusive scope of the study. Coordinating parking plans with the related land-use plans, infrastructure investments, and urban services is a complex process. Parking functions with a calculus of intricate interrelation of the urban environment. Given that there already exists several studies of parking inventory and demand, this project emerged out of a desire to emphasize the way parking is interrelated into larger concerns to provide a better way to

approach the so-called problem of parking better, assuring that as Spokane grows, it will grow as desired.

By *integrated*, we look at parking in relation to other mobility strategies and a matrix of planning concerns. Parking is an important component of larger land use and transportation issues. As we re-think development, we intend to take a holistic approach. This is consistent with established development values. Spokane's Comprehensive Plan, for example, promotes that "all planning should be in the form of complete and integrated communities".⁸ We intend *integrated* to also call attention to the necessary coordination of key stakeholders and the extensive partnerships required not only to deal with the challenges of parking and mobility in the area, but also to use it as a development instrument to create the conditions for transformation to our desired state.

An integrated approach is also merited when considering transit options as Jarrett Walker points out "virtually every transit rider is also a pedestrian, so transit ridership depends heavily on the quality of pedestrian environment where transit stops".⁹ Thus, our planning must not consider transit, or bike, or pedestrian alternatives to the single driver automobile which currently dominates our roads; rather it should consider complete systems and environments to support different mobility choices.

As parking is part of larger city systems led by many stakeholders, The University District is poised to play a leading role because of its design to advance the associated interest of the principle stakeholders. An integrated approach is the modus operandi of The University District – focusing on the greater impact that the associated organizations, institutions, and individuals can have in working

⁸ "University District Strategic Master Plan," (Spokane, Washington: City of Spokane Office of Economic Development, 2004). Should this reference be City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan, Revised Edition," 5.

⁹ Jarrett Walker, *Human transit : how clearer thinking about public transit can enrich our communities and our lives* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2012), 15.

together. Collaboration is the *raison d'être* of The University District and collectively, the university partners play a leading role in shaping expectations, choices and behavior related to parking and mobility.

Focusing on strategy, the process and discussions have targeted action that will be required to achieve the organization's goals. The right strategy will help determine tactics and action. The right tactics will enable us to be successful in reaching our goals. As will be recounted, there are already many clearly stated goals including a vision to move away from automobile dependence and a movement towards an active, healthy city that expands and elevates pedestrian possibilities. By shifting the focus from how to accommodate or park cars to how we think about urban mobility, allows us to free ourselves from the level of thinking that created the transportation problems of our cities to a level of thinking that can provide new insights.

Currently, policies and process fail to manifest the people-first vision and transform our current conditions. Yet, we expect and plan for growth, anticipating a generation migration to our urban centers. Much of the literature on urban transformation highlights the need to plan for millennials, the biggest population bubble in fifty years. By one account, seventy-seven percent of millennials plan on living in an urban environment and sixty-four percent of millennials choose first where they want to live and then where they look for a job.¹⁰

Growth, under the current conditions, will make our challenges related to parking and mobility even greater.¹¹ This realization should help calibrate the magnitude of change in plans to not only correct the deficiencies, but

¹⁰ Speck, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*, 21.

¹¹ The president of the Institute for Transportation and Development has suggested that transportation, unlike some other aspects of development get worse, rather than better. Enrique Peñosa, president of the Institute for Transportation and Development and former mayor of Bogota, disusing problems of developing societies, cited in: Cervero Robert and Robert Cervero, *Transforming Cities with Transit : Transit and Land-Use Integration for Sustainable Urban Development* (2013), xxii.

recognize we must take a fundamentally different approach. The Gateway Bridge and recent investments in the Central City Line mark significant investments and commitments to the vision of The University District. Today, because of the expanding development interest, there is both an unprecedented opportunity and threat relative to the vision of the Master Plan.

BACKGROUND

The most celebrated aspects of our city and city planning connect us to nature and the unique landscape of Spokane. At the beginning of the 20th century, John Charles Olmstead traveled through Spokane and reflected on the opportunity for this frontier boom-town to develop into a great city. He advocated for the integration of the natural environment and urban landscape and suggested that, the people of Spokane “ought to preserve some of the river before it is too late” and added “some of the pine-clad hills.”¹² This thinking would have a formative influence on development when, in 1913, the city of Spokane employed the Olmsted brothers, John and Frederick Jr., to develop a master plan for Spokane. The brothers were working in and with the legacy of their father, Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed Central Park in New York City. The Olmsted brothers recommended neighborhoods integrated with parkways, generous pedestrian circulation, and winding picturesque drives through a landscape fortified with new plantings of local deciduous and evergreen trees.

Another key moment of Spokane’s history is when it hosted the World’s Fair in 1974. This marks another time when Spokane was recognized as a great city. It is worth being reminded that Expo ’74 was the first environmentally themed world’s fair. The development displaced industrial rail yards and the festive grounds on Havermale Island. This location created a fitting and unique stage for the event, surrounded by the dramatic features of the Spokane River and with a skyline of the surrounding mountains and hills. Expo is also a powerful frame of reference in thinking about Spokane’s future because of the visionary efforts, its landmark development, and the enduring legacy of its impact.

The City of Spokane’s Comprehensive Plan, suggests that this venerated vision of an “urban by nature” condition for Spokane persists. The plan details Spokane’s

¹² J. Hockaday, *Greenscapes: Olmsted’s Pacific Northwest* (Washington State University Press, 2009), 101.

ambition for the future. It underscores the value of parks, open-spaces, and gives a heightened value to the natural environment, emphasizing the ecological as well as environmental importance.¹³ The development of The University District is in accord with and extends these important moments of transformation. In fact, John Olmstead noted that Spokane might fail to reach its potential as the railroads had used prime land in the heart of the city that he wanted to reserve.¹⁴ Today, The University District is in the process of redeveloping these grounds, adjacent to the river, with the plan to, again cultivate our natural assets and create a vibrant hub for our community.

Planning documents

This section highlights a select number of planning documents relative to land use and the existing standard related to parking and mobility in The University District. These documents informed the discussion among stakeholders.

University District Strategic Master Plan (2004)

The University District Strategic Master Plan details 19 core planning principles to guide and assure that the vision for The University District is implemented. The strategic path for redevelopment specifies The District as a hub for a multi-modal system of transportation including light rail, buses, pedestrians and bicycles. Core planning principles related to transportation and infrastructure call out the intent to use this model to change behaviors moving away from personal vehicles and toward sustainable options.

Spokane University District: Policy Options for a New Urban Center (2007)

This report articulates a community vision of The University District defined first and foremost as “a vibrant, urban pedestrian friendly place”. The study links the physical development of The University District, as a pedestrian-friendly place, to the model of economic development noting, “An urban, pedestrian-first

¹³ "City of Spokane's Comprehensive Plan, Revised Edition," 5.

¹⁴ *Greenescapes: Olmsted's Pacific Northwest*, 105.

University District supports the city's goal of becoming a destination for knowledge workers by creating a place that provides the amenities and quality of life that they desire." ¹⁵

Spokane Master Bike Plan (2009)

The Master Bike Plan promotes setting a new priority for transportation. It recognizes that city policy must put pedestrians first and move away from existing auto-dependent conditions. The Plan calls attention to deficient disconnected networks of routes and numerous barriers that currently make cycling inconvenient and even dangerous in Spokane. The Plan details actions to make Spokane more bicycle-friendly and connects this with the goal of a healthier community. The plan expresses the goals to increase the use of bicycling for all trip purposes, throughout Spokane. The report calls attention to our unique geography and the opportunity to create a bicycle network. It promotes the infrastructure as well policies, education, and law enforcement to make Spokane a great city for bicycling.

University District Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge Health Impact Assessment (2011)

The study documents the potential health impacts of The University District Gateway Bridge on the community. The research makes additional recommendations to extend the impact of these benefits by reducing on and off-street parking and encouraging alternate forms of transportation in and through the district. It promotes enhancing transit services and making pedestrian and bicycle environments more attractive.

City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan (2012)

Ambitions for the future are broadly situated in an imperative to continue to transform into a healthier community. The Comprehensive Plan promotes

¹⁵ "Spokane University District: Policy Options for a New Urban Center ", (U.S. EPA Smart Growth Implementation Assistance For Spokane, Washington, 2007), 2.

creating value by promoting “the best patterns of urban development” and articulates community principles that “housing, jobs, daily needs and other activities are within easy walking distance” and as many activities as possible should be located within easy walking distance of transit stops.”¹⁶ Under centers and corridors, the plan promotes shared parking facilities. *Centers and Corridors Design Guidelines* limit the impact of automobiles by limiting parking in front of and between buildings, curb cuts, and land use, such as for drive-through restaurants.

Economic and Land Use Impacts of the Spokane Central City Line (2014)

This report addresses land use and economic impacts of the Central City Line (CCL). In addition to providing enhanced mobility options, the CCL is expected to increase property values and encourage new development complimentary to the University District vision.

WSU Health Sciences Spokane Master Plan Update (2014 – 2024)

The 2014-2024 Master Plan Update defines the vision of the campus around the goal of an “integrated campus community” prioritizing open space and connected with the greater University district and “meaningful connection with the Spokane River”¹⁷ The Master Plan Update identifies transportation improvements, parking policies, and future development of the campus. Echoing tenants of the Riverpoint Campus Master Plan established in 2000, and revised in 2003, to create a pedestrian oriented campus that integrates with the soundings, Gonzaga University and downtown.¹⁸

¹⁶ "City of Spokane's Comprehensive Plan, Revised Edition," 11.

¹⁷ Washington State University Health Sciences Spokane, "2014 - 2024 Master Plan Update," (Spokane, Washington 2014).

¹⁸ Washington State University, "Riverpoint Campus Master Plan Spokane, Washington," (2003).

Spokane Pedestrian Master Plan (2015)

The Pedestrian Master plan promotes the development of better walking environment.¹⁹ It calls out that “parking lots and drive-through facilities introduce hazards and psychological barriers to people on foot as each driveway introduces potential conflict area with motor vehicles.”²⁰ The South University District is identified in the plan as a priority zone. Similarly, Hamilton Street, near Gonzaga University, is prioritized as a corridor that both divides many university uses and separates residential areas from the campus. It also serves as a highly-trafficked corridor including parks, groceries, employment and schools.²¹ The plan specifies policies, and tactics to improve the pedestrian experience.

Spokane Housing and Economic Report (2015)

The housing report calls attention to the shift in demographics driving a “strong opportunity for private development”. It notes that parking needs to be addressed relative to the desired residential growth. The study highlights The University District Pedestrian Bridge among select significant capital improvement transforming the market by providing new circulation improvement across Martin Luther King Jr. Way and the rail lines, creating a pedestrian connection to the South University District area. The report underscores the development opportunity at the south landing plaza of the Gateway Bridge and along the Sprague Avenue corridor.²²

Central City Line Strategic Overlay Plan (2016)

The Central City Line (CCL) is a high-performance bus transit corridor operated by the Spokane Transit Authority. The CCL will connect the University District with downtown Spokane, Browne’s Addition and Logan and Chief Garry

¹⁹ Ordinance amending the City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan adopting a Pedestrian Master Plan as a subarea plan, October, 26 2015 (November, 2 2015).

²⁰ City of Spokane, "Pedestrian Master Plan," (Spokane, Washington 2015), 17.

²¹ Composite Pedestrian Needs Map, illustrating where pedestrian needs are the greatest by spatially representing high demand and deficiency scores resulting in pedestrian priority zones. Ibid., 35.

²² Applied Development Economics Inc., "Spokane Housing and Economic Report," (Spokane, Washington: University District Development Association 2015).

Neighborhoods. The work integrates pedestrian priorities, amenities, and parking considerations to make an inviting streetscape and enhanced pedestrian conditions. The CCL Overlay Plan addresses the interface with private development. It calls attention to the dynamic reduced parking requirements illustrating that developers could be incentivized for providing structured parking.

Discussion of planning documents and key planning principles

The starting point for all planning discussions on parking and mobility in The University District should recognize the objective to create a strong pedestrian-oriented District. This overarching ambition is tendered repeatedly in the related planning documents, highlighted above. This directive is a key planning principle of the UDSMP. The plan also explicitly states the inverse, that “Automobile access should be somewhat limited in The University District”²³

The University District planning principles are intended to provide an essential reference point to ensure the implementation of The District vision. Many of these principles directly reference mobility and parking interests. The Planning Principles emphasize that it is essential to support transit links, remove pedestrian barriers, and develop the built environment in a manner designed to link people to places. It points out that current conditions are unacceptable, where “people feel out of their element near the speeding traffic” and where surface parking displaces pedestrian traffic. It promotes vibrant urban development that stands out from the surrounding neighborhoods by its unique identity and sense of place. Principles de-emphasize the automobile and seek to lead practices connecting to nature, using green infrastructure, expanding parks, and “providing people with convenient places to relax in nature and children with places to play.”²⁴

²³ "University District Strategic Master Plan," 24.

²⁴ Ibid.

Though it is worth revisiting all 19 Planning Principles, items on transportation and infrastructure are particularly relevant. For example: planning principle #18 – Create a transportation hub: regional connections and multi-modal services.

The University District should be a transportation hub for a multi-modal system of transportation options, including light rail, trolleys, buses, pedestrians and bicycles. Centralized exchange and transfer locations would also serve as social gathering spots. Routes should be designed to provide connections both within The University District and from the District to the downtown, surrounding neighborhoods and the rest of the region. Service levels should be high enough that people are more inclined to use these alternative modes of transportation than to drive their personal vehicle, thus supporting the “green” theme inherent in The University District vision. In addition, travel routes should endeavor to not interrupt wildlife corridors, especially in the areas nearest to the river.

The master plan explicitly states that surface parking should be discouraged and that when parking is needed, “structured parking facilities should be the rule (rather than surface parking lots), in order to preserve the streetscape for pedestrian activity.”²⁵ Development principles discourage parking lots along corridors (specifying that they are incorporated below, behind or in buildings). The Master Plan details the enhanced environment to attract complimentary development practices, highlighting that a “system of bicycle trails and pedestrian pathways should weave throughout The University District, connecting the river, the Centennial Trail and Ben Burr Trail, neighboring colleges, the medical district, surrounding neighborhoods and the downtown.”²⁶

The document is an artifact of a community process and guide for leaders committed to envision the long-term future of the community. These principles support the intended compact, mixed use development, prioritizing pedestrian and transit to make it highly livable. This is intentionally part of a strategy for regional and national competitiveness to attract talent, firms, and knowledge based industries complimentary to the universities, and serving as a conduit to additional investment. Fundamental research supports that “developing the district as a vibrant, 24-7, pedestrian-first place with an eclectic mix of uses”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 25.

supports the goal to “become a center for intellectual and research excellence and an economic engine for the new economy.”²⁷

Current Situation

Though many reports and plans currently prioritize the pedestrian environment in planning efforts, as noted in the introduction, this fact stands in high contrast to the current conditions of The University District. Aerial imagery of the area makes apparent that the conditions of The District reflect the problem across the United States where, for every car, there may be eight parking spaces.²⁸ Studies of the district show an overwhelming number of underdeveloped parcels, vacant land, and surface parking throughout the district. Contrary to our ambitions, The University District reflects planning that does not consistently prioritize pedestrians first.²⁹

The University District Gateway Bridge must be celebrated as the result of the steady and exceptional commitments to supporting the pedestrian vision of the district. Unfortunately, this great project is also an exception to the overall character of the area. A mapping exercise of The University district, overlaying a quarter mile / five-minute walk radius, suggests both strengths and current weakness. Though the area has a great potential for urban mixed use development, currently it is not walkable. Jeff Speck, a city planner and proponent of smart growth and sustainable design provides a general theory of walkability, suggesting that to be favored, “a walk has to satisfy four main conditions it must be useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting. Each of these qualities is essential and none alone is sufficient.”³⁰ Though there are paths along

²⁷ *Policy Options for a New Urban Center*, a report created with a EPA Office of Policy, Economics and innovation Smart Growth Program, Transit oriented consulting groups, and a local, Spokane team “Spokane’s University District: Policy Options for a New Urban Center,” 1.

²⁸ David Biello, “No Such Thing as Free Parking,” *Scientific American*, January 9th 2011.

²⁹ The master plan, as one reference point, notes that citywide, 38% of the roads suitable for sidewalks are without. The result is over 381 miles of 981 miles of roadway could be said to be for cars and not for people. Spokane, “Pedestrian Master Plan,” 11.

³⁰ Speck, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*, 11.

the river and through campuses and though we have a unique Centennial trail with spurs connecting across Iron Bridge and to downtown; overall, there is a disconnect between surrounding neighborhoods, bifurcated networks for cyclists, and uneven conditions for a pedestrian to traverse through The District.

VISION

The vision for The District is inseparable from the plan of economic and community development. A report from 2007 on policy options for making The University District a new urban center emphasized that “An urban, pedestrian-first University District supports the city’s goal of becoming a destination for knowledge workers by creating a place that provides the amenities and qualities of life that they desire.”³¹ Because of this interrelationship, concepts such as walkability, and transit oriented development become both a means and a measure of our progress toward the economic and community development plans. As Speck notes, “walkability is perhaps most useful as it contributes to urban vitality and most meaningful as an indicator of that vitality.”³²

The World Health Organization, in a report on cities and health, observed that “For most of us from now on, life and death will be an urban affair,”³³ The introduction of this report calls attention to meta-trends towards more urban living. One of the greatest opportunities The University District and Spokane has is to cultivate the unique assets of our urban core. The *Spokane Housing and Economic Report* noted that baby boomers and millennials are both looking to live more urban in Spokane.³⁴ As millennials choose, first, where they want to live, making The District appealing for the student population is also an

³¹ "Spokane's University District: Policy Options for a New Urban Center," 1.

³² *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*, 4.

³³ Programme United Nations Human Settlements, Organization World Health, and Centre Kobe, "Global report on urban health : equitable, healthier cities for sustainable development," (Kobe, Japan: WHO Kobe Centre, 2016), 6.

³⁴ Inc., "Spokane Housing and Economic Report."

enticement to capture the knowledge workers and creative class.³⁵ Our walkable, bike-able, transit-oriented community is part of a strategy to attract businesses, citizens, and the creative class. The body of work by Richard Florida points out that place is more important than ever before.³⁶ Essentially, our urban development plan is inextricable from our economic development plan. Or, expressed in the quip of the subtitle of Edward Glaeser's book *Triumph of the City*, our urban development has the potential to make us "richer, smarter, greener, healthier, and happier."³⁷

Visioning sessions

What are the unique attributes that will make us the "city of choice"?³⁸ The Master Plan for The University District emphasizes that it is made for a community of people to interact and to promote quality of life. This vision for an active community, networks for bicycles and pedestrians, greenways and parkways are also avenues for health. Over the past years, The University District Development Association has brought together community interests to engage this question and, as part of the work on parking and mobility, led a series of visioning exercises to rethink urbanism in The University District.

Building on the work of The University District Strategic Master Plan, the visioning sessions project the desired population growth and urbanization. They were structured to curate the vision of The District in a forward-looking projection of the landscape, land use and buildings per The University District Development principles. Input from stakeholders, the community, the city, engineers, and future users all constituted a process to explore and generate future possibilities. The visioning exercise connected with the community principles of Spokane's

³⁵ Speck, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*, 21.

³⁶ Richard L. Florida, *Who's your city? : how the creative economy is making where to live the most important decision of your life* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

³⁷ Edward L. Glaeser, *Triumph of the city : how our greatest invention makes us richer, smarter, greener, healthier, and happier* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).

³⁸ The "city of choice" is used as a local slogan and branding for City and campaign for efforts to develop in a manner to make the community safer, stronger, and smarter.

Comprehensive Plan.³⁹ Accordingly, the concepts encourage bicycles, pedestrians, and expanding public transit options as an essential element for building this community.

The visioning sessions brought together community members. Over a hundred local leaders and stakeholders contributed during a two-day workshop. As follow up, a public open house in September provided a forum to explore a series of design boards and to share ideas about future developments. Underlying the physical form presented in renderings of potential district transformation is a system process that promotes an iterative design process with connected, involved citizens and community stakeholders. The potential for new types of civic engagement and innovative development are already in the works with the advancement of Urbanova, The University District's smart city accelerator. The promise of an open data platform, intelligent infrastructure, and connected systems promise rich analytics and smart governance.⁴⁰ Transit consultant Jarred Walker suggests that this scale of planning is important for transit-friendly development, noting, "The physical design of cities determines transit outcomes far more than transit planning does."⁴¹ Strategic developments of green-streets and parks are intended to align land-use to integrate the mobility options. The articulated densities depicted in the renderings would create open, public spaces and encourage different urban densities in residential areas and concentrated densities along transit corridors. This scheme reconceives of the public right-of way. And where this might seem radical to some, in fact, the recent parklets in Spokane, converting on-street parking spaces into outdoor seating areas, reflects that we are already exploring the premise of this model.

³⁹ "City of Spokane's Comprehensive Plan, Revised Edition," 11, 12.

⁴⁰ For a study of smart city platforms and community engagement, see, Stephen Goldsmith and Susan P. Crawford, *The responsive city: engaging communities through data-smart governance* (2014).

⁴¹ Walker, *Human transit: how clearer thinking about public transit can enrich our communities and our lives*, 7.

Exhibits from this process project an urban model that not only tends to the business of health, but also to a truly healthy city. As such, the rendering projects the development principles and community's expressed interest in expanding people first mobility options and providing better access to our river and nature. Innovative proposals suggest reconceiving the asset of our public right-of-ways and in converting concrete and asphalt, currently just for cars, into green corridors. They illustrate networks of footpaths and cycle paths with amenities such as lighting and benches in a landscape of parkways with public plazas and artwork. Illustrations project more walkable, connected neighborhoods, with greater density and more open green spaces.

As part of the visioning exercise, we captured the ideas through transcriptions, questionnaires, and on-line surveys. Combined, these positions largely underscore and extend elements of the Master Plan. Select ideas related to desired land use, parking and mobility are:

Principles

- Promote "people first" developments
- Safety and quality of life
- Mixed use; amenity rich
- Higher-density urban village living
- Environmental preservation and restoration
- Transportation improvements

Processes

- Reconsider land use
- Path of Progress – phased infrastructure investments
- Identify potential neighborhood formation
- Strategic co-location of synergistic interests
- Support a range of housing options
- Create vistas and corridors to connect to the river
- Protect and expand green corridors and nature
- Create urban parks
- Identify key transportation corridors
- Expand transit options
- Increase dedicated bicycle and pedestrian routes
- Reduce car dependency

Priorities

- Create an integrated parking strategy
- Reinvest property tax revenue in the area
- Construct quality public infrastructure to encourage private investment
- Co-locate community elements
- Achieve strong transit networks and Central City Line rapid transportation
- Link network of trails, paths, and parks
- Increase river access and waterfront improvements
- Create pedestrian plazas and thoroughfares
- Expand the number of street trees and “green” areas
- Preserve historic structures and promote cultural identity
- Reduce car dependency

Parking Survey

A key priority of this visioning work was to contextualize catalytic developments, and explore the conditions of transformation for the desired urban environment consistent with The University District development principles. This project, understanding parking as vehicle for change, seeks to address parking, not by our current needs, but, rather as an instrument to achieve desired outcomes. However, the work also considers our current state to best posit a strategy to move The District from current conditions to desired states. Accordingly, several strategies related to parking management, as well as reform, were presented when The University District convened a parking forum in the spring of 2016.

In November, a follow-up survey (see Appendix 1) was created to get feedback on the perceived relevance of the strategies presented at The University District parking forum. As was apparent in the process of discussing these issues, asking ‘what is adequate parking’ will elicit different answers depending on if the question is staged in relation to 1) their personal reflection of the conditions today; 2) the ambitions for near term urban development or specific project development; or, 3) the specific ambitions to elevate an active pedestrian and transit environment over the automobile. The importance of each strategy was to be considered in relation to supporting the 19 development principles. Each proposed strategy was also prioritized based on the urgency of acting. This

survey was not primarily administered to determine the right strategy to transform the district, rather to gauge the aptitude for the community to support the strategies needed for change. The right strategy clearly relates to the plans and tactics that can achieve the goal of the master plan, but also must have confidence to mobilize support to garner the necessary commitments and investments.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

To reverse the trend of surface parking and automobile dependence, it stands to reason that The University District will need to take a leading role to challenge many status quo assumptions that have created the current conditions. Ten recommended strategies, promoted through the series of meetings, forums, studies, visioning exercises, and questionnaires referenced in this report, are intended to empower The University District to take a leading role on issues of parking and mobility.

10 Strategies

Overall Strategies to lead issues on parking and mobility in The University District	
1.	Take an integrated and holistic approach to mobility issues
2.	Establish a mobility development group
3.	Communicate the vision of parking and mobility in the district
Strategies to reduce parking demand	
4.	Create attractive conditions for walking and cycling
5.	Implement policies to support development principles
6.	Create University District parking / mobility management area
7.	Consolidate parking
8.	Centralized parking management for a contiguous UD parking / mobility management area
Support strategies	
9.	Establish a Mobility Fund
10.	Invest in innovation

Strategies Explained

1. Take an integrated and holistic approach to mobility issues

One of the most intriguing aspects of this work is the opportunity to realize a development model that transcends the market conditions of parcel-by-parcel investments to support a shared, community vision. An integrated approach promotes connected systems and a collaboration of actors that crosses property lines and addresses parking comprehensively for the entire district. An integrated approach is required to deal with the complexity of transportation systems and mobility priorities and the related governance issues, infrastructure requirements, and land use conditions. Effective integration and interconnection between different transport networks will make mobility efficient and facilitate the necessary shift towards more environmentally friendly and healthy mobility options.

2. Establish a mobility development group

The recommended integrated approach suggests a need to coordinate the overall interest and implement systems across The University District. To realize the vision of The University District and build an inspiring pedestrian environment, it will likely require a body that can create actionable plans coordinating the associated stakeholders of the organization. The University District could assemble the appropriate leadership and technical expertise across the associated organizations.

Because of the central importance of the issue of parking and mobility in The District, and because of the significant investment in transit solutions and infrastructure, it is recommended that a dedicated body be convened to address these issues. A mobility development group would have representatives from the key university stakeholders and would be appointed and empowered

to develop a plan with the expectation of implementing District wide initiatives. The existing University District Development Committee could serve this function, but would require expanded coordination and commitments from the university partners and property owners. A Mobility Group could review and implement tactics and establish district wide parking management including systems, policies, and rules.

3. Communicate the vision of parking and mobility

We need to elevate the vision, inherent in our planning documents, into our collective consciousness to better inform our daily actions. There is a need for a common, shared, communication plan that crystalizes the overall mobility plans for The University District. This communication should set a clear and consistent message about The University District mobility priorities to the city, developers, and the community at large. This communication is needed to promote the necessary advocacy and activism that will be required to the ultimate success of the people-first vision of The University District. This messaging should be incorporated into all relevant messaging and broadcast through all stakeholder organizations.

Part of a communication strategy could include a charter that would align others with the development goals of The University District. The pledge could begin something like, "We, advocates, enablers, innovators, and developers of The University district, work together to capitalize on our common commitments of a people first environment ...

A charter would most likely build upon the 19 development principles and strategies presented here, but should come out of a process involving the stakeholder of the organization so that they would sufficiently identify with and support its mandate.

Each new development, each developer not adhering to the highest principles of the *UDSMP* can potentially undermine the long-term goals of the area. The charter could provide the private sector with a public pledge to supporting vision of The University District, and, in the process build an advocacy base for further policy and development work. It would communicate the vision and standard of streetscapes and pedestrian environment amenities to developers. The signed charter would reflect a commitment to plan in concert with the broader district principles. The charter would allow others to self-identify with the vision of the District and pledge to uphold the development principles. Potentially, this charter could align with the criteria for investment of University District Revitalization Funds (UDRA) for improvements in the district.

4. Create inspiring conditions to encourage walking, cycling, and transit use

Investment for transportation and mobility options correlates with use. Accordingly, significant investment is needed in the mobility options that we want to encourage. This project recommends applying the level of engineering, planning and investment given to automobiles, to the desired forms of mobility for The District. Plan and develop networks of circulation paths throughout the district, connecting to transit station and parking facilities. Investment could, for example, provide facilities for parking bicycles. Initiatives could encourage lockers and facilities with showers within developments to support a community of active workers.

The University District Public Development Association should consider investing and leading development that, if not for the efforts of the organization, might not be accomplished. Improved access linkages between the districts and the surrounding areas are greatly needed. Could these efforts support a network of footpaths and sidewalks, street furniture, trees, and accent lighting? To achieve the vision of the district, there is a need to elevate the priority of pedestrian

routes, creating dedicated corridors, overpasses and crosswalks so that destinations can be reached without unnecessary detours.

The Gateway Bridge is a monumental commitment to the pedestrian vision, scheduled to be completed in 2018. Will there be dedicated bike lanes to and from the bridge? Street engineering should be considered through the pedestrian priority taking into account, for example, block size, lane width, direction of flow, and other factors that influence a car's speed and a pedestrian's safety. There must be reasons to walk as well as places to walk and there is a need to connect open spaces with pedestrian amenities, establish view corridors and more access to The Spokane River.

5. Implement policies to support development principles

The plans for the University District will require strong leadership from the city and community leaders. Use the advocacy and support of the organization to support policies to prohibit surface parking. Establish parking maximums. Cap and reduce the on-street and off-street parking to encourage alternate forms of transportation. Use policy instruments to promote parking requirements and land use to achieve the mixed-use development vision. Use the unique coalition of university and private stakeholders to promote parking standards for transit, biking, and walking.

6. Create University District parking / mobility management area

Currently, the city, Universities, and private businesses have varied parking inventories and parking plans. There is some overlap with the on-street metered parking and a downtown plan. Development ambitions will benefit from a unified mobility management area and map. This includes the surrounding neighborhoods, such as the residential neighborhoods adjacent to the Gonzaga campus. Building on past parking studies, this would provide the basis of further management of parking inventory.

7. Consolidate parking inventories

Related to and extending the strategy for a mobility management area is the opportunity to manage consolidated parking inventories. Shared parking undergirds the integrated approach of parking and mobility, reduces the need for smaller parking lots, and improves the conditions for desired patterns of development. It combines inventory for two or more distinct uses and promotes the desired mixed-use developments.

Much of the existing parking supply in The University District is currently off-street parking, dedicated for specific use and not always accessible to the public. Integrating different demand options allows a restructuring of the development model and allows property owners and developers to support the larger mixed use vision of The University District. There is a significant opportunity to optimize the existing parking before constructing new parking facilities. Additionally, changes can be made by street reconfiguration or re-striping, such as has recently been applied to the block of Main avenue West of Division.

8. Centralized Parking Management

Parking management is essential for treating parking as instrument of change and moving from near term states to the desired long-term development goals. Building on the strategy of consolidated parking inventory, is the ability to lead an integrated approach to parking management. The mobility development group could lead the program to provide centralized parking management and The Executive Director of the University District, as one option, could oversee and facilitate the mobility program and parking management plans.

This coordinated management would also allow for other district wide programs such as residential parking permits, ride sharing programs, and car-sharing

programs. Coordinated management would provide the structure for possible relationships of sharing, leasing, selling and developing parking facilities.

9. Establish a Mobility Fund

Shared parking system and centralized parking management would potentially integrate management, enforcement and revenues. Dynamic pricing is a means to regulate parking. Parking revenues could be applied to stakeholders and operation expenses of management and enforcement. Profits could be invested to support and further mobility and goals of The University District. These funds could invest in needed infrastructure and technologies, leverage private investment in public-private partnerships, and compliment UDRA funds to spur the development in accord with the 19 planning principles.

10. Invest in Innovation

The University District Gateway Bridge represents a significant financial investment for the mobility priorities advanced in the University District Strategic Master Plan. The path of realizing the construction of the Gateway Bridge reflects how a steady commitment to a bold vision can act as a flywheel to generate subsequent, complimentary development. The vision of The University District that seeks to transform, not just improve the local conditions, will require significant investment in new ideas, resources, and technologies. As an illustration, two concepts that garnered a great deal of interest in the process of this study were a dynamic parking / mobility management system and repurposing public right-of-ways.

A concept that would enable centralized management and facilitate shared parking inventories is a pay-by-phone system. It potentially could be implemented across the entire district, combining private, public, and institutional parking. It could direct wayfinding for on-street, surface, and off-

street parking. Other cities already deploy GPS based platforms that use a unique vehicle identifying, rather than a parking space (doing away with much of the need for street meters and stall based systems). Include all parking structures and invite property owners with strategic adjacencies to the plan to also be involved (e.g., Iron Bridge Office Campus).

Another innovative idea was rethinking the highest and best use of our right-of-ways currently used almost exclusively for parking and motor vehicles. The community can reconsider this asset in terms of greater community plans and goals. The visioning charrettes explored how we might rethink the value and utility of our roads. The aspirations of “near nature near perfect” promote the consideration of how our planning can reconsider Spokane’s post-industrial landscape and serve as a model for other cities. Investing in this type of transformation illustrates how parking management, could support overall reform of land use to better support our mobility priorities.

CONCLUSION

Development is not a linear process; it is iterative and better understood as a sequence of plans and activities that, ideally, moves closer to a desired result. An integrated approach to parking and mobility promises to facilitate a better approach resulting in a higher likelihood of achieving the urban transformation we desire. An integrated approach benefits from an enlarged focus, past parcel lines, past boundaries, and concentrates on how we might move through the city and the overall desired conditions.

Spokane is not unlike cities across the nation, dealing with issues of congestion and lengthening commutes at a time when reducing our carbon footprint is critical. Above and beyond these challenges related to our automobile dependent culture, the vision for The University District elevates the possibilities of Spokane exemplified by our “people-first” priorities, displacing the automobile,

and a city that helps create a healthier citizenry. We must confront the challenges created by our current dependence on cars and the resulting practices, most often planning for automobiles before people. The mission of The University District requires that stakeholders be vigilant in articulating the vision and leading transformation for the community in which transit and pedestrians thrive. As current practices have resulted in unacceptable conditions, it stands to reason that a different approach is needed to achieve the desired outcomes. Such an exceptional future will need equally exceptional efforts, and we will need to, at a time when many choose to fan the flames of deep ideological divisions of our country, come together to create our desired future.

The University District has a vision for transforming the map of our city and the practices of our community in a manner to connect and bring us closer together. Tod Marshall, Washington State Poet Laureate, evoked this idea in a poem composed for the Connecting Washington ceremony, highlighting University District transportation projects.⁴² At that event, Governor Inslee, Secretary Peterson, and Senator Andy Billig unveiled signs for The University District Gateway Bridge and The Central City Line. Marshall read his poem, concluding with the line, “We can choose to say connect and mean closer together.” Marshall noted that, in writing the poem, he was thinking about bridges and public transportation routes and how people can be brought together and in the process, how life might be improved.

The University District represents a shared vision of Spokane as the hub of innovation in the Inland Northwest and a model of vibrant urban living close to nature. The promise of The University District becomes clear when we realize new ways to connect our interests and enrich our community. Perhaps no other single initiative can transform our land use to the ideal state expressed by The

⁴² Connecting Washington Sign Dedication Ceremony was held Friday, January 29th.

UDSMP as does the focus on mobility and parking. This project concludes that planning, coordinating, and managing the interests of parking and mobility must move across the boundaries of property ownership. Collectively, the university partners and the community leaders that make up The University District have an opportunity to play a leading role in shaping expectations, choices and behavior related to how we move around and connect; on the lifestyle and livability of our community.

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APPENDIX 1: University District Integrated Parking and Mobility Strategy Survey

Links to University District Integrated Parking and Mobility Strategy Survey:

<https://universitydistrict.typeform.com/to/OVy85Z>

http://www.spokaneudistrict.org/uploads/publication/files/object/UD_Integrated_Parking_Mobility_Study_Survey_-_December_2016.pdf

APPENDIX 2: University District Integrated Parking and Mobility Strategy Survey Results

- UD provided City with Excel data via an email dated January 30, 2017
- UD provided City with General Report summarizing the multiple choice question responses via an email dated January 30, 2017; also available here <https://universitydistrict.typeform.com/report/OVy85Z/Qw0z>
- UD provided City with metrics showing the survey information by device type via an email dated January 30, 2017