Great Neighborhoods

urban design framework

Newport
Neighborhood Area

Community Development

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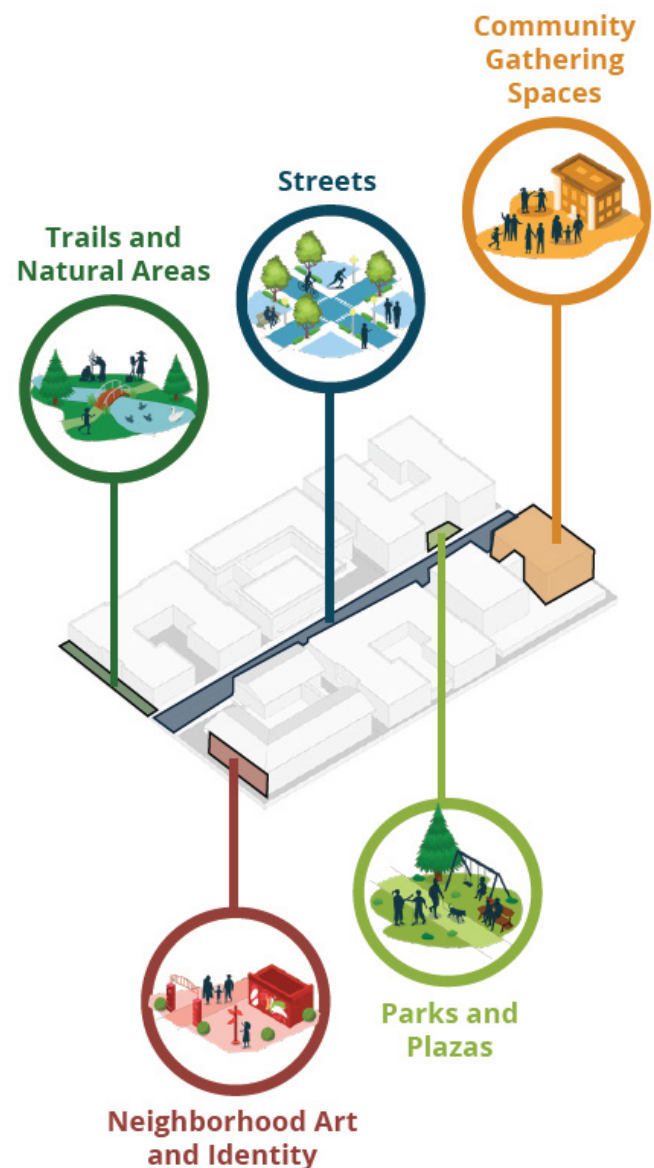
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Introduction

Urban design is the practice of planning and designing the physical environment of a community. Within a neighborhood area plan, urban design can improve the design and function of public spaces, including community gathering spaces, parks, plazas, streets, trails, natural areas, and public art. Rather than focusing on the design of a specific place, urban design considers how experiencing different public spaces throughout a neighborhood provides for enhanced gathering and social interactions, a more attractive public realm, improved neighborhood connectivity, and a clear neighborhood identity.

The purpose of the Newport neighborhood area urban design framework is to document strategies responding to community's priorities for accessing and improving public spaces in the neighborhood area. The development of this framework includes:

1) Engagement activities to understand and establish urban design priorities; and

2) Maps, precedent imagery, and narrative to document and visualize urban design opportunities

During the Discover Phase (Phase 1, October – December 2024) of engagement, the City conducted community engagement activities to learn what values and qualities were important to Newport's future. Input from the Discover Phase was used to develop draft urban design guiding principles on how to enhance and develop public spaces throughout the neighborhood area to build upon these values and qualities. Following

Community Gathering Spaces

Streets

Trails and Natural Areas

Neighborhood Art and Identity

Parks and Plazas

this, the City conducted pop-up neighborhood walks and workshops during the Define Phase (Phase 2, January – March 2025) that provided community members opportunities to evaluate public spaces within their neighborhood and document what and where new urban design opportunities may exist.

The urban design framework translates months of community input into guiding principles, opportunities, and concept maps to inform policies within the Newport neighborhood area plan. The strategies from this framework are intended to be advisory and do not represent proposed projects or designs. Other planning work will be necessary to assess opportunities identified within this framework. The City will continue to coordinate across departments and collaborate with community partners to develop and implement the shared vision for the Newport neighborhood area.

Community Gathering Spaces

Community gathering spaces are indoor and outdoor public spaces that foster a sense of belonging and serve as the heart of the neighborhood for events and social interactions. Community gathering spaces may include civic facilities such as schools, libraries, community centers, performance venues, and community parks. The Newport community has expressed a desire for more public places to gather and make intergenerational connections, as many of these opportunities are located outside the neighborhood area.

Third places are places that people go to when they are neither home nor at work that are seen as spaces to provide connection and build community. They can occur informally in any publicly- or privately-owned place as long as it is known to the community as a safe and welcoming space.

Community workshop participants voiced strong support for having more indoor gathering spaces, potentially using existing spaces that could be adapted for public uses. For older Newport residents, indoor spaces were seen as important so they could get together and be active regardless of the weather.

Guiding Principle: Cultivate public gathering spaces within Newport that foster community belonging and intergenerational connections.

Opportunity 1a: Identify and repurpose existing sites for community use.

- Coordinate with Bellevue School District on redeveloping their former school sites for community-serving uses.

- Coordinate with faith-based properties to serve the broader community with their facilities.

- Enhance the Neighborhood Center around Newport Hills Shopping Center and reinforce its role as a community hub with opportunities that connect people of all ages.

Opportunity 1b: Organize temporary indoor pop-up markets, exhibitions, and events within existing spaces.

- Partner with businesses in the Neighborhood Center as locations for indoor events and pop-up activities.

Parks and Plazas

Parks and plazas are outdoor areas for leisure, socializing, and exercise that bring people together. They often have a combination of active and passive recreational facilities, and include neighborhood parks, pocket parks, playgrounds, sports fields, and gardens. City parks such as Newcastle Beach Park and Newport Hills Woodlawn Park exemplify many of these features – both of which have fantastic access to nature. However, there are few parks in the neighborhood that have space for organized recreation.

Community input focused on providing smaller plazas and pocket parks throughout Newport. Some participants wanted to see more playgrounds and play structures. Others felt that providing facilities that support wellness and exercise should also be provided.

Guiding Principle: Cultivate neighborhood parks with active and passive recreation opportunities, especially in areas not well-served by parks today.

Opportunity 2a: Identify vacant or underutilized parcels for the development of future parks and plazas.

- Identify opportunities to create more small-scale parks and playgrounds that allow for recreation and play.

Opportunity 2b: Design multifunctional spaces for relaxation, comfort, and wellness.

- Create small plazas near retail and commercial areas that support outdoor seating and organized activities.

- Develop exercise amenities within parks and trails to increase health and wellness opportunities in the neighborhood.

Streets

A street's usability and visual appeal can invite more people to walk, bike, and hang out on the street and interact with their neighbors, contributing to a more vibrant street life. Urban design can impact all components of a street, including sidewalks, roadways, landscaping, street furnishings, and transit stops. Arterials such as 118th Avenue SE, 119th Avenue SE, Coal Creek Pkwy, SE 60th Street are primarily how people move in and out of Newport's neighborhoods. These corridors are cited as challenging from a walking and biking standpoint. There is also a network of public and private local streets serving sub-neighborhoods and larger multifamily developments.

Urban design related community input identified the need for improved transit stop amenities, such as shelters and benches, and better connections to destinations in and around Newport. Community workshop participants also said that more landscaping and street trees should also be prioritized.

Guiding Principle: Support streets as inviting and safe places to connect various parts of the neighborhood area by walking, biking, and rolling.

Opportunity 3a: Improve existing intersections for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Use flashing beacons and other traffic safety management tools to improve safety for locations in high-traffic areas.

- Improve street crossings in areas with higher traffic and residential or commercial development.

Opportunity 3b: Through redevelopment of large parcels, create a circulation pattern that is pedestrian friendly.

- Explore new pedestrian connections from commercial and mixed-use areas within the Neighborhood Center to nearby development.

- Create safe pedestrian connections across 119th Avenue SE, especially as pedestrian oriented uses are developed.

Opportunity 3c: Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between neighborhoods and key destinations.

- Improve pedestrian access to Newcastle Beach Park, including from Eastrail and from surrounding neighborhoods.

- Improve connectivity for bicycles and pedestrians to neighboring communities, including Newcastle.

- Improve connectivity between the Newport neighborhood and the Newport Hills Park & Ride.

Opportunity 3d: Improve speed and reliability of transit service.

- Coordinate with transit providers to increase and expand transit service, as feasible.

- Enhance transit stop amenities, including benches and weather protection.

Opportunity 3e: Use traffic-calming techniques to reduce vehicle speeds.

- Where feasible, use landscaping and modified lane striping to slow traffic naturally.

- Provide traffic calming measures in areas where there are a high number of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Opportunity 3f: Use greenery, trees, and landscaping to enhance walking and biking environments.

- Develop a landscape palette that uses plants appropriate to the conditions and context of the neighborhood and can be used to highlight areas in Newport.

Opportunity 3g: Create a cohesive wayfinding system that enhances connectivity.

- Install consistent wayfinding and signage to maximize visual recognition for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

- Coordinate with the owners and managers of parks and paths in the neighborhood to implement signage.

Trails and Natural Areas

Trails and natural areas are public spaces that connect people to nature. These can include greenways, nature trails, wildlife corridors, streams, wetlands, and lakes. These features are abundant in the Newport neighborhood area, with trails such as the Eastrail, Mountains to Sound Greenway, the Pipeline Trail, and Coal Creek Trail connecting people to and through the neighborhood area. Many of these trails also provide fantastic views and opportunities to interact with Lake Washington, Coal Creek, and the surrounding landscape.

Community workshop participants identified improving connections between trails and neighborhoods to make them more accessible was an important element to connect with nature. Workshop participants also felt that enhancing wildlife habitat and improving wayfinding would improve accessibility to the neighborhood's amenities.

Guiding Principle: Strengthen and better connect people to Newport's abundant system of local trails, regional trails, and natural areas.

Opportunity 4a: Create a network of multi-use trails connecting parks, nature reserves, urban green spaces, and conservation areas.

- Provide streetscape enhancements on streets that connect Newcastle's local trails, including pedestrian amenities such as seating.

- Improve connections to regional trails, such as the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail and Eastrail, from surrounding neighborhoods.

- Enhance access to Coal Creek Natural Area and its trails.

Opportunity 4b: Integrate natural elements and innovative design features across both habitat restoration/enhancement work and future development projects.

- Increase tree canopy in areas with high percentages of impervious surfaces.

- Develop projects that treat stormwater through swales and other green features to support habitat, native planting, and water quality.

Opportunity 4c: Improve access and wayfinding to natural areas and green spaces.

- Install wayfinding signage to help orient people to the location of natural areas and trails, such as Coal Creek Natural Area and Lake Washington.

- Activate trails and natural areas through environmental education signage.

Neighborhood Art and Identity

Neighborhood art and identity are creative elements of the public realm that reflect and allow for expression of the local community, their history and heritage, and what makes it unique. Examples are murals, sculptures, signage, gateways, and other public art that mark the presence of diverse communities, significant people and events within the neighborhood. Newport's history began long before the arrival of settlers into the area, with tribes as stewards of the lands on which they continue to live. Histories of mining, logging, agriculture, and earthwork projects (such as the completion of the Lake Washington ship canal) also shaped both the natural environment and the migration of workers and families into the neighborhood area over the decades.

Community workshop participants were focused on recognizing the history and culture of the neighborhood. They also shared they wanted to see more locations for holding cultural events as well as murals and artwork that reflect the history and diversity of Newport.

Guiding Principle: Highlight Newport's pride in its diversity, history, and natural beauty as parts of its neighborhood identity and expression.

Opportunity 5a: Transform public spaces through art displays, such as murals, sculptures, and other forms of public art, that reflect the neighborhood's identity and history and adds to their vibrancy.

- Identify local neighborhood partners, such as school PTAs, arts groups and other non-profit organizations to host afternoon indoor/outdoor events for residents and businesses.

- Use art and other creative elements to activate and draw attention to important cultural assets within the neighborhood area.

- Incorporate art and interpretive elements along Newport's trails.

- Coordinate on public art for Newport that can help tie together the neighborhood's network of trails and open spaces.

Opportunity 5b: Create defined thresholds into the neighborhood that have a unique look and feel.

- Create a distinct identity for the neighborhood, particularly within the Neighborhood Center.

- Highlight historical and culturally significant places and events through interpretive signage using pictures and stories.
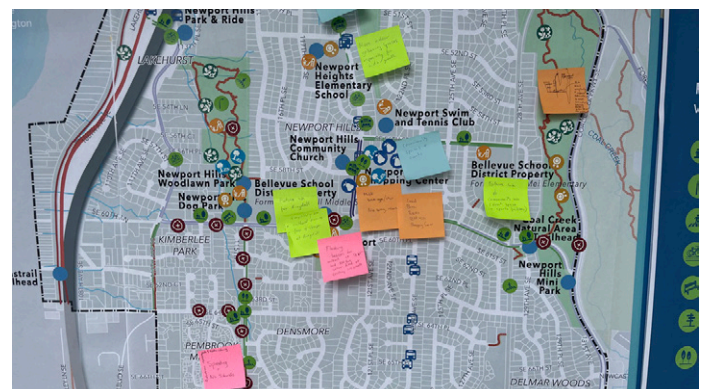
Framework Concepts

Building from the guiding principles, opportunities and strategies outlined on previous pages, the following concept maps visualize opportunities and provide policy direction for improving public spaces within the Newport neighborhood area. They communicate one set of urban design possibilities for achieving the neighborhood area vision.

Rather than a prescriptive set of actions and projects, the guidance from these concept maps should be interpreted flexibly as the City balances different priorities and considers technical and economic feasibility when implementing the policy direction provided in the Newport neighborhood area plan. These concept maps are also a tool to support internal collaboration amongst city departments, as well as collaboration with external community partners.

The framework concepts are organized into two themes: enhancing neighborhood connectivity and enhancing community gathering spaces. Each concept map includes existing public space assets, such as parks and streets, and illustrates different high-level urban design opportunities to improve upon those assets.

Concept: Enhancing Neighborhood Connectivity

The following concept map and descriptions provide high-level guidance on how to better connect community members to destinations inside and near the Newport neighborhood area. Newport is challenged by few access points in and out of neighborhoods, lack of connectivity between local and regional trails, and incomplete pedestrian infrastructure along arterials such as SE 60th Street. The concept map illustrates where the following improvements may be desirable based on existing conditions, community feedback, and technical analysis of potential opportunity areas.

Enhanced Through-Connection: Enhanced through-connections improve pedestrian circulation by breaking down larger blocks, development sites, and long stretches of arterials with opportunities for people to pass through safely. Depending on context, they may be designed to include elements such as seating, landscaping, and areas for eating, playing, and organized events. Through-connections could be developed as part of future public and private development.

Enhanced Access to Transit: Enhanced transit access improves the quality of the pedestrian and cyclist access to transit services provided by King County Metro and Sound Transit.

Improved Pedestrian Crossings: Intersection crosswalks and midblock crossings provide designated areas for pedestrians to cross high-volume arterials to get to their destination. Improvements at these crossings can help increase pedestrian visibility and safety from oncoming traffic and serve as a traffic calming measure.

Thresholds: Thresholds are markers to indicate when people are crossing into the neighborhood area or special destination within the area, such as a Neighborhood Center, business district, park, or other civic and cultural assets. These markers can reflect the unique identity of those who live, work, and play there and can take many different forms: a distinct landmark, a natural feature, signage, or public art.

This map shows the key opportunities for enhancing neighborhood connectivity within Crossroads. Each opportunity resulted from a combination of community input and analysis of current gaps.

Concept: Enhancing Community Gathering Spaces

The following concept map and descriptions provide high-level guidance on enhancing different places that can serve as community gathering spaces today or in the future – making it easier for people to connect with their neighbors in their own neighborhood. Newport has very few public gathering places today, although privately owned facilities such as the Newport Shores Yacht Club and Newport Hills Swim and Tennis Club often host community events. One challenge is having access to gathering spaces that are public, multi-functional, and easy to get to. The map illustrates where the following improvements may be desirable based on existing conditions and community feedback on potential opportunity areas.

Third Places with Community Partners: Neighborhoods comprise of publicly- and privately-owned Third Places – schools, shopping centers, community centers, and other shared communal areas – where people gather and socialize. For these spaces to better meet the needs of the community, the City can look toward community partnerships with organizations, business owners, property owners, and faith-based communities to create new programming and activation opportunities.

Potential Park Opportunities: Opportunities for new neighborhood-scale parks, plazas, and recreation facilities increase community access to open space and recreation, especially in areas that are not well-served today. There are different tools that the City can pursue to expand access, including development opportunities, land acquisitions, public easements, and public-private partnerships.

Environmental Enhancements: Improvements to natural features, such as wetlands, lakes, and streams, can enhance their aesthetic and functional qualities, provide urban wildlife habitat connectivity, and boost ecological awareness.

Gathering Space Connectivity: Street, trails, and corridors through public and private development sites help to connect pedestrians safely, comfortably, and directly to gathering spaces within the neighborhood, helping to create a connected and complete network. These connections can be further enhanced with landscaping and amenities to serve as linear open spaces and gathering spaces as well.

Thresholds: Thresholds are markers to indicate when people are crossing into the neighborhood area or special destination within the area, such as a Neighborhood Center, business district, park, or other civic/cultural assets. These markers can reflect the unique identity of those who live, work, and play there and can take many different forms: a distinct landmark, a natural feature, signage, or public art.

Streetscape Enhancement: While arterials function primarily to carry high volumes of vehicular traffic, they are also valuable public spaces for the community. Enhancing arterials with landscaping, lighting, furnishings, and other pedestrian-oriented features make more attractive, safe, and comfortable corridors for people to walk and bike to gathering spaces throughout the neighborhood area.

CONCEPT MAP - ENHANCING NEIGHBORHOOD GATHERING SPACES

Key Features
- Neighborhood Area Boundary
- City Boundary
- Highway/Freeway
- Arterial
- Existing Park and Open Space
- Stream
- Trail

Existing Community Assets
- Public Schools
- King County Housing Authority (KCHA) Properties

Urban Design Opportunities
- Neighborhood Center
- Third Place with Community Partner
- Potential Park Opportunity
- Environmental Enhancement
- Gathering Space Connectivity
- Treshold
- Streetscape Enhancement

This map shows the key opportunities for enhancing neighborhood gathering spaces within Crossroads. Each opportunity resulted from a combination of community input and analysis of current gaps.

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